

Love of Indian cuisine

Fulfilling a dream in doing something to close to their hearts

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picture sean middleton

TURNING a passion into a job is something many people aspire to, but only a few are courageous enough to take that next step and actually make the transition.

Leederville-based foodies Nico Moretti and Latasha Menon are among those lucky enough to be fulfilling a dream in doing something that is so close to their hearts.

In their case, it is sharing a love of food and culture with others.

Nico, who emigrated from Canada to Australia several years ago, worked as an engineer before deciding to follow in his Italian-born father's footsteps (he is the owner of the first Italian restaurant in London, Canada) and open a home-based catering service (Urban Provider) and cooking school (Cooking Passions).

Similarly, Latasha gave up a management career with GoldCorp, at Perth Mint, to follow her passion for cooking and start up Leederville Indian-style cafe, Latasha's Place, 12 months ago.

"Everyone was telling me to follow your passion and make it a business, so I did," she said.

Now, after driving her cafe to success in its first year of trade, Latasha has teamed up with Nico at his Cooking Passions cooking school to co-host an Indian cooking class.

"I used to teach at home – I would invite friends over for dinner and they would watch me prepare dinner while enjoying a bottle of champagne or whatever," Latasha said.

"And I initially had that intention of hosting cooking classes at the cafe, but with the turnover things just became so busy so it was put on the backburner."

With their children attending the same local primary school, it was Nico's wife, who encouraged him to venture down to the cafe for a meal.

"I had a lot of people asking me about the possibility of Indian classes, but I had been quite busy with my other classes," Nico said.

"I understood Indian food, but I wanted to make it more authentic so I approached Latasha to develop some recipes and also to get involved in doing masterclasses."

However, compiling the recipes proved a challenge.

"Developing and adapting recipes and so forth is something that just comes very



Latasha Menon and Nico Moretti with some of their tasty treats.

naturally to me after years of cooking," Latasha said.

"But it involved about three days of writing because I had to look at it from the point of view of someone who has never worked with any of these ingredients before."

The result is a mouth-watering menu with an emphasis on fresh and aromatic dishes, drawing inspiration from Latasha's family's Southern Indian origins (the family later moved to Malaysia).

The two-and-a-half hour class covers basmati rice; cabbage, carrot and stringless beans thoran – keralite stir-fry with fresh ground coconut masala; south Indian sambhar – dhal curry with mixed

vegetables; Latasha's home-style chicken curry with potatoes; cucumber, onion and chilli raita; and spicy tomato-ginger relish.

Nico said one of their motivations was breaking down some of the misconceptions of Indian cuisine and cooking.

"A lot of people have the impression that Indian food takes so long to prepare – there is some preparation beforehand that's required, but putting together one of the curries is quite simple," he said.

"However, the classes demystify a lot of that."

Classes are held regularly, depending on demand. For additional information and bookings, contact Nico at Cooking Passions on 9228 0507 or 0402 154 358.