



Neela's

contemporary indian cooking

ABOUT THE CHEF

As a child growing up in Bombay, Neela Paniz was drawn to the fragrant kitchen aromas conjured by her family's skillful cook, Chandan. His traditional Indian cooking—based on practicality and subtle application of spices—inspired her love of this warm and cultured food, which she has elevated with her own original style. Using fresh ingredients as in the India of her childhood, seasoned with freshly ground spice blends (never powders or pre-mixed), Paniz prepares dishes with her distinctive technique of tilting the pan to form a pool to infuse the spices, thus allowing less use of oil to ultimately create light, clear flavors for her bright and innovative dishes.

In the 1980's, Paniz defied the stereotypes of rich, heavy Indian dishes with her unique brand of restaurants in Los Angeles: Chutney's Indian take-out, and the hugely successful Bombay Cafe with partner David Chaparro. Her book, *The Bombay Cafe* published in 1998, put her on the national map as one of the leading voices of contemporary Indian cuisine. In 2007, she sold her partnership in the cafe and in 2008, she and her husband devised a plan to move to Napa where she would open Neela's—featuring contemporary Indian cooking.

Neela Paniz is a guest chef at cooking schools nationally. She has also served as a board member of the Los Angeles chapter of Les Dames D'Escoffier, the Southern California Culinary Guild, and the International Association of Women Chefs and Restaurateurs.

ABOUT NEELA'S INDIAN CUISINE

Characterized by its sophisticated and subtle use of spices and vegetables, the food of India is considered to be one of the most diverse and exciting cuisines in the world. In Indian homes, marketing is done daily, primarily at the farmers' markets. The produce is never more than a day old and the chickens are plucked to order. In most meals, meat is used as a supplementary ingredient while combinations of lentils and rice provide complete proteins.

True to the culture, Neela's menu features the many different provinces of India—vegetarian dishes from the south and tandoor-cooked dishes from the north, as well as chaat (street foods) and classic dishes of the British Raj—all made with the freshest ingredients available to create bright, home-style fare. Neela's also features Bollywood music videos in the bar, plus Thursday Bread Night—a selection of stuffed flat breads served with salads and raita.