

*Chef Aarti Sequeira on the Spirit of Food, Bridging Traditions
and Overcoming Imposter Syndrome*

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Breaking Bread

“The fact that I am here continues to feed that joy that you see when you watch me because I’m totally and utterly grateful.” —Aarti Sequeira

**Aarti
Sequeira**

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Food
Personality,
Journalist,
Cookbook
Author





It's no secret that **Aarti Sequeira** has made a multi-faceted name for herself. Some of her titles include reality competition show winner, cooking show host, cookbook author, food personality, former producer and journalist—and on top of all that, she's also a wife and mom. As a third-culture kid, it's not surprising that Sequeira has a gift for juggling these identities, but her upbringing has also given her a special perspective on the relationship between home, culture and family recipes.

» Long before becoming a Food Network mainstay or a cook, Sequeira had a special relationship with food. Born in India, raised in Dubai and taught in a British school, her palate wove an intricate, multicultural tapestry that celebrated food. "Cooking is such a huge part of my family's identity," Sequeira explains. "It was really tied into a reminder of where we came from. [It was] how we lived every day, how we celebrated things, how we went through things and how we stayed connected to our roots."

After finishing her schooling and watching the Gulf War unfold in the early 1990s, Sequeira discovered a passion for journalism and attended Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. She later worked as a journalist for CNN, then as a producer for HBO's "Sand and Sorrow," a documentary that covered the genocide in Darfur.

Then in her early 30s, Sequeira's life began to shift gears. "I had gotten married and moved in with my husband, and I was unemployed. That's when I really started cooking," she says.

After interning under James Beard Award-winner Suzanne Goin at Lucques in West Hollywood, Sequeira began her own cooking vlog, "Aarti Paarti." Then, with her husband's encouragement, she auditioned for

season six of "Food Network Star," won the competition and has been a TV personality ever since. "It's extraordinary," she beams. "I can't say it's been a dream come true because I don't think I ever dared to dream that this could happen."

Despite all her accomplishments, Sequeira has experienced her fair share of self-doubt. "I have always really struggled with imposter syndrome," she shares. "That's because I didn't go to culinary school, and I didn't work in restaurants for years. So when I started making these cooking videos, it was almost like an experiment—I was doing it because something in me was compelling me to do it," Sequeira continues. "I remember the first time that someone hired me to make cooking videos; there were cameras in my tiny little studio apartment in LA, and [I thought], 'Oh my gosh. I'm getting paid to do this. Maybe this is something that God's made me to do.' I think that was the first moment where I thought, 'It doesn't matter what I think is the right way to go about things.' I think that this is something that's been ordained for me, and I just have to trust that."

Trusting herself and having faith have served Sequeira well; she's amassed an impressive stack of professional triumphs. Among them: hosting "Aarti Party" and "Hidden



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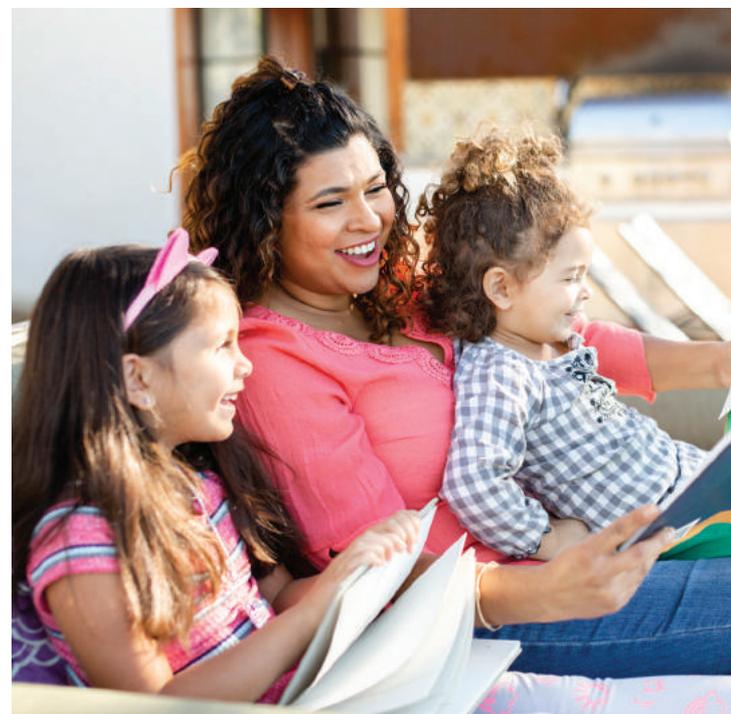
—Aarti Sequeira

Sequeira's Must-Have Ingredients

» Five ingredients Sequeira always has on hand are ginger garlic paste, cumin seeds, basmati rice, eggs and a spicy condiment like harissa, gochujang or spicy Indian mango pickle.

The Best Thing She Ever Ate (in LA)

» "I would drive miles to a restaurant called Sticky Rice in Grand Central Market for their Khao Soi. It's a soup with a ton of really warm spices in it...There is so much flavor and texture and warmth—it's euphoric."



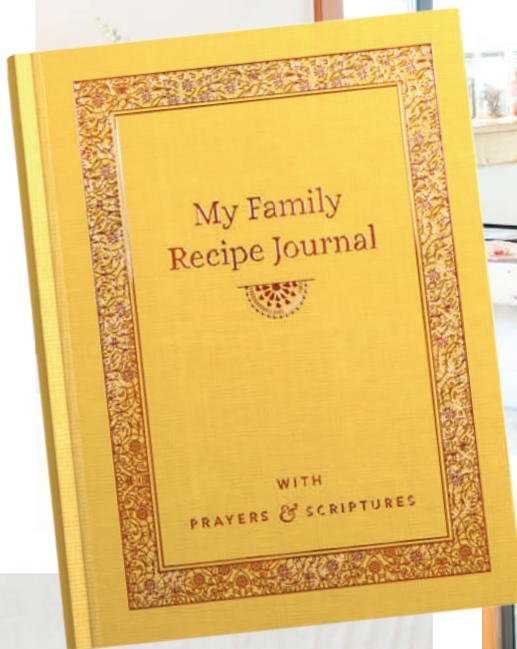


Curry Up

» Some of the toughest dishes for Sequeira to master were the traditional curries that she grew up with. “Not because they’re complicated,” she says, “but I have a little mental block about it. I’m like, ‘Oh gosh, how can I possibly make it as well as my mom and my grandmother did?’”

To the Next Generation of Chefs

» “It’s such a gift, what we get to do. When we feed people, it’s one of two things: you’re feeding them [and] meeting them in their need, or it’s a special occasion. You, by virtue of the food you’re serving them, get to be part of their lives for that moment. These are two really precious things that we get to do.”



Eats,” winning “Chopped All-Stars,” “Cutthroat Kitchen All-Stars” and “Guy’s Grocery Games” as well as creating her own cookbook (with a second one on the way soon!).

While her career teems with swiftness and excitement, Sequeira hasn’t forgotten to celebrate and appreciate what food means to her at her core, and that’s the beauty of coming together. So many of her important memories revolve around bonding over food, from her grandmother, Winnie, winking at her over freshly churned butter as a young child to enjoying granola with her husband and her eldest after swimming on a hot day.

Sequeira sees food as a vehicle for connection—not only across cultures but across generations. Now as a mom to her own multicultural kids, she’s even more determined

to keep those special family recipes alive and help others do the same. Inspired by her mother’s and her own recipe journals, Sequeira created a Family Recipe Journal so others can document their home’s unique traditions and flavors.

“These recipes connect us to our family, whether we’re sitting at the table eating with them or not, whether they’re with us or they’ve passed, whether we knew them or we didn’t,” Sequeira notes, adding that one of her daughters is already interested in filling the recipe journal with her own creations.

“Food is unbelievably powerful. It’s one of the few things that can really connect us across time and space,” Sequeira says. “When we eat together, we are not in our heads at all. It’s a really visceral, soulful experience.” ■

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