

# Pakistan food diverse, rich in flavour



Shabnum Nasir enjoys cooking Pakistani favourites, such as tandoori chicken (inset), for her family.

Pictures: ISABELLA MOORE

## VERA BERTOLA

WITH four beautiful little girls, Shabnum Nasir is always busy but she still finds time to prepare traditional Pakistani cuisine for her family each night.

Her eldest daughter is nine and already interested in helping in the kitchen and discovering for herself where all those delicious flavours and tastes are created.

Shabnum, of Minto, immigrated with her family from the Punjab region in 1998.

She met and married her husband, who had come from Lahore in 1995, in Australia.

She said Pakistani food varied from region to region, with Punjab cuisine very similar in style to that of cooking on a barbecue.

"It's cooked outside, on charcoals, in what we call a tandoor (hard oven)," she said. "We don't have electric ovens. Everything is open."

Many of the dishes feature mutton, chicken, tandoori, naan and

yoghurt. One of the regulars on Shabnum's home menu is biryani: rice-based foods made with spices, rice (usually basmati) and meat, fish, eggs or vegetables.

Her family also enjoys laheeme, a tasty combination of dahl, rice and spices. The dish is slow-cooked all day to blend the ingredients and flavours.

The Nasir household is often a hive of activity with friends and family getting together over a feast of dishes. Shabnum explained Pakistanis celebrated a

festival almost every month and the community came together to mark the occasion.

A sense of community, bound by a love of socialising and enjoyment of food, is strong in Pakistan.

Shabnum said food streets were popular in Pakistan. "Many people cook outside then they walk around eating," she said. "It is very community oriented."

■ Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative runs a healthy food for new arrivals class in Minto each Wednesday. Details: 4627 1188.



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