

PREENA CHAUHAN

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

GRADUATE LAUNCHES LINE OF INDIAN COOKING INGREDIENTS

While most five-year-olds flipped through pop-up books, Preena Chauhan and her brother Paresh were pointing out dishes in cookbooks, anticipating what Mom would cook up in the kitchen later that evening.

Now Preena—a U of T Mississauga environmental management graduate—has launched Arvinda's, a line of Indian spice blends and cooking ingredients. Her new venture grew out of teaching at her mother Arvinda's Indian cooking school, making appearances on the Food Network, CFTO, CityTV, and the Life Network, and pursuing a master's in environmental studies at York University.

Starting off as part of Preena's research on the relationship between food and sustainability, Arvinda's products became a hit when Preena and Paresh set up shop in front of wide-eyed restaurant owners at trade shows. "That's when I thought, this is no longer hypothetical," says Preena.

Now, Preena says Arvinda's products have evolved as tools to encourage creativity in the kitchen, exciting people about food and helping them understand cooking can be fun, from making channa masala to chai latte.

And it's been one learning experience after another for the two young entrepreneurs, whose products are on sale in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. "We're now exploring fully compostable corn-derived polylactide material as an alternative to our tins for packaging," says her brother Paresh, a U of T Mississauga biology graduate.

Preena, who also participates in annual charity events such as the Eat to the Beat fundraiser for Willow Breast Cancer, is now busy sprinkling the final touches on her cookbook, which she plans to publish this winter. NADEEM BASARIA