



With Rashmita Solanki. Contact her at rashmita@amg.biz

Bay Leaves

Bay leaves are one of the most familiar culinary spices. They are used in many cuisines around the world and the bay plant can be grown in many climates. It is an evergreen tree that can grow up to 30 feet in height.

The Greeks and Romans believed the bay tree was the tree of the Sun God and it symbolised wisdom, peace and protection. Bay leaves contain many volatile active compounds that are known to have antiseptic, anti-oxidative and anti-cancerous properties.

They are an excellent source of vitamin A, folic acid and B-complex vitamins. Bay leaf infusions are used to relieve flatulence, colic pain and stomach ulcers.

Here are some recipes which were taken from *Gennaro's Easy Italian* by Gennaro Contaldo. Published by Headline Publishing group. ISBN: 978 0 7553 1789 9

Patate al forno con alloro e rosmarino (Roast potatoes with bay leaves and rosemary)

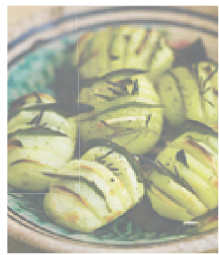
(Serves 4-6)

Ingredients:

- 8 medium potatoes, all roughly the same size and shape
- 12 bay leaves
- A few sprigs of rosemary
- Extra virgin olive oil for drizzling
- Salt and pepper

Method:

- Pre-heat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6
- Parboil the unpeeled potatoes in plenty of water for 10 minutes. Drain, cool a little and then peel.
- Using a sharp knife, make some slits across the width of each potato but do not cut the whole way through as the potatoes need to stay together. Insert bay leaves in the slits, alternating with rosemary needles.
- Place the potatoes in an ovenproof dish or roasting tin, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast in the oven for about 15-20 minutes until golden and cooked through. Serve immediately.



Carote brasate al forno (Baked braised carrots)

(Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 800g/1lb 12oz carrots, peeled
- 3 shallots, sliced into segments
- 1 celery stalk, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons coriander powder
- 3 bay leaves
- 4 sage leaves
- 50g/1 ¾ oz butter
- 250ml/9 fl oz vegetable stock, made with the water from the carrots



Method:

- Pre-heat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Parboil the carrots for 15 minutes and drain, reserving the cooking liquid to make the stock.
- Put the shallots and celery in an ovenproof dish, and place the carrots on top. In a bowl combine the olive oil, salt and coriander, and pour this over the carrots. Scatter with the herbs, dot with the butter and pour the vegetable stock over the top. Cover with foil, place in the oven and bake for 25 minutes until the carrots are tender and cooked through.
- Remove from the oven and serve.

'I cried after every

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already have a smile on my face, so I guess people know the answer. It's very exciting! I didn't realise until I got a message saying that I was number three in 2013, then in 2014 I got a message saying I was number two. I was jumping with joy, I just wanted to party.

How do you feel about the fact more girls voted for you than guys?

Yes I know! It's a good feeling. I'm really proud they are my fans. I love them but just one complaint, they keep sending me gifts and I don't like it because I feel very weird taking everything from them. Their love is enough.

Did you always want to be an actress growing up?

Honestly I never really thought about acting as a kid. I first wanted to become an airhostess, then a choreographer.

Then my mother thought I should become a psychiatrist or IAS officer, and I was like 'really?'

When college was over my friend started going to auditions. I went along with her and got selected for an advert. Then I did a music video and more ads. After that there was no looking back.

How did you make the move to television?

I got a call for a show, but thought I would become a slave to TV because they were like 22 hour working days. You'd have no life etc. But I went for the *Dill Mill Gayye* audition and was selected.

With *Dill Mill Gayye*, it was just following the director and not having my own say in things. I think *Geet* is when I realised I couldn't do anything better than acting. When I did *Madhubala* I was like bang on, I can't do anything besides this now.

Did you ever imagine Geet - Hui Sabse Parayi would become so iconic?

I never thought it would become so big. (Laughs) In fact I never wanted to do *Geet* because that was my first show as the main lead. I went for the audition, but left halfway.

Nissar had directed me in *Dill Mill Gayye* and called me for *Geet*. I left crying and said: 'I can't do this. I'm not meant to do main leads, give me some sister role in the background'. He calmed me down.

I went for the audition again and got the lead. For the first week I used to cry every day after every shot. I was like: 'You should replace me'.

Really?

(Smiles) Yes! Nissar had faith in me, but I didn't have faith in myself. Then after four months we watched a scene together and he said: 'Do you think anyone can play this character better than you'. I was like: 'No'. I was surprised *Geet* got so much appreciation. It's a blessing that people loved the show.

You must have loved that you and Gurmeet Choudhary in Geet were voted the hottest soap couple of all-time in an Eastern Eye poll?

Yes, very much. I think a lot of people appreciated just the way the scenes were directed and the script. Everything just fell into place, so it felt great when it was voted at the top.

What is your fondest memory of Madhubala - Ek Ishq Ek Junoon?

There are so many great memories from that show, but one scene in particular that is a favour-

'I want to come back to work'

ite is the first time RK leaves me. I was in shock. I suddenly came to my senses and started crying. That was the best seen by far I did in that series.

Everybody wants to know what you are going to do next?

(Laughs) Oh my god, honestly I have no clue. I haven't been called for anything exciting so am just chilling and having a nice break. I went to the US. Now I am spending time with my mum. I am in a relaxed mode right now.

I'm just seeing how it goes. It's not like I don't want to work. I want to come back as quickly as possible of course, for the fans who are waiting for me and because I want to be back. I am done taking my share of rest. When something great comes I will tell everybody. I have nothing to hide.

What about acting in Bollywood films because I know producers are interested in you?

It's surprising, people tell me about Bollywood,

GROUNDING: (Clockwise from this image) Drashti Dhami in *Jhalak Dikhlaja*; with Vivian D'Sena in *Madhubala-Ek Ishq Ek Junoon*; and with Gurmeet Chaudhary in *Geet-Hui Sabse Parayi*



but I don't get calls. So I don't know what is going on. A lot of people told me when my last series was over that I would be bombarded with offers, but I haven't been getting called as such.

Nothing like 'this is it and I need to take it up'. Nothing that exciting. I haven't planned what I want to do. Of course, if the right offer comes along I would definitely think about it.

Do you have a wish list of characters that you want to play?

There are many Asjad. I would like to play Kangana's (Ranaut) character from *Queen* and Priyanka's (Chopra) role in *Fashion*. Then if somebody gave it to me, I would love to do a movie like *Devdas* or *Andaz Apna Apna*.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I have been catching up on my sleep. I have been taking care of my health. I'm trying to fix my body