

'Curries and Bugles' remembers 'The Raj'

It was called "The Raj" — a time when England, at the height of its colonial powers, administered the opulent Indian subcontinent with a paternalistic but iron hand.

The TV series "The Jewel and the Crown" and the film "A Passage to India" glimpsed the collision between two distinctively different cultures. Now, in "Curries and Bugles: A Memoir and Cookbook of the British Raj" (HarperCollins; 1990; \$25; black and white illustrations throughout, plus eight pages of color), Jennifer Brennan illuminates this era with details of those most revealing of social activities, cooking and eating.

Brennan is a third-generation "India-hand" and the daughter of a British major-general. She lived there from 1936 through World War II and the early, turbulent days of rising Indian nationalism — the end of the Raj. Her own memories, those of her mother, and much meticulous research make "Curries and Bugles" part memoir, part social history and part cookbook.

Isolated from home, the British socialized relentlessly, in seasonal cycles dominated by the sunbent, tinent's sweeping changes of weather. "Curries and Bugles," in 10 chapters, covers such colonial diversions as breakfasts "large and small," children's fare, and buffets and other "grand tamashas" (big events). "Picnics and Shikars" deals with outdoor meals, "Meats on the Move" details food on trains or other modes of transport (the British seemed to be constantly on the move, as they sought relief from heat, dust and monsoons), and "A Proper Tiffin" gives recipes for lunches modest and otherwise.

"DINING OUT and In" covers grand dinner parties both at home and in the regimental mess. "The Raj Preserved" details the chutneys and pickles so dear to the English palate, and "The Raj at Tea Time" illustrates the chockers India wrought on that most British of rituals.

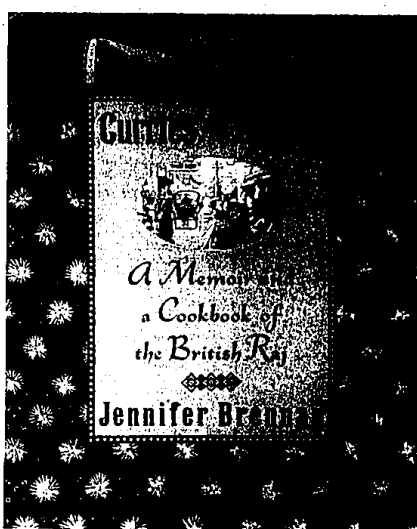
Though modern Britains are not known for taking culinary risks, the Edwardians and Victorians loved well-seasoned and hotly spiced food, and far from taming India's exotic fare, they often preferred it zesty than the natives did. The recipes in "Curries and Bugles" thus contain authentic Indian color and fire, joined occasionally by a nostalgically English or Scottish dish, with both sorts of recipes changed inevitably by the cultural mix.

Among the recipes are Cool Green Almond and Watercress Soup, Kedgeroe of Smoked Haddock, Melon and Chutney Shellfish, mild and creamy lamb-based mdras Club Quorma, violently flattened and grilled Steamroller Chicken, and Raised Game Pie. Desserts include Ginger Souffle, Granny Whitburn's Pound Cake and the Buccala Club Souffle. Lady MacFarquhar's Tomato to Chutney adds relish (but no more so than the chutney of Colonel Skinner), and A Classic Gmlet, Hla Hignee's Champagne Curry Egg or The Sargodha Club's Tennis Pig all help cool the heat of the noonday sun.

"Curries and Bugles" also contains a detailed discussion of the essential herbs and spices of Indian cookery (it was, after all, England's urge to control the spice trade that first led her to subdue India), as well as a glossary of colorful colonial words and phrases.

While many of the techniques are authentic, the British, their cooks and the author have all made adaptations that render these recipes suitable for modern kitchens everywhere.

Though Brennan (author of "The Original Thai Cookbook," "The Cul-sins of Asia" and "One-Dish Meals of Asia") has lived all over the world and held many different jobs, from hosting the Beatles in Hong Kong to teaching Indian and Southeast Asian cooking in her own school in Los Angeles, she remains at heart an "old India-hand."



Jennifer Brennan, third-generation "India-hand," has written her newest cookbook, "Curries and Bugles," about the time when England ruled the Indian sub-continent.

- WHITE PILAFF WITH PINE NUTS**
 6 green or white cardamom pods
 One 3-inch stick of cinnamon
 8 whole cloves
 2 bay leaves
 5 tablespoons vegetable oil
 2 large onions, peeled and finely chopped
 23 ounces (3 cups) best-quality long-grain rice (preferably Basmati), washed well, then drained and dried
- 1 teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon sugar
 1 tablespoon melted ghee (clarified butter)
 3 ounces (1 cup) pine nuts
1. Fill a kettle or medium saucepan with water and place it over high heat for use in Step 5.
 2. Place the cardamoms, cinnamon, cloves and bay leaves in a

- small square of cheesecloth or muslin and tie it into a little bag with string — much as you would make a bouquet garni. Set it aside for use in Step 6.
 3. Place a large, heavy saucepan (with a tight-fitting lid) over medium-high heat and add the oil. When the oil is up to temperature, add the onions and fry, stirring constantly, until they are translucent and shiny but have not turned golden.
 4. Now add the rice and thoroughly stir it until every grain is coated. Pour in enough water to cover the surface of the rice by 1 1/4 inches.
 5. Measure in the salt and add the bag of spices. Cover the pan and bring the rice mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and let it simmer for 20 minutes, or until the rice is just cooked.
 6. Remove the lid and discard the spice bag. Now add the sugar and ghee, blending them into the grains. Stir in the pine nuts and turn the pilaff on to a large serving platter. Serve at once.
- Notes: If you postpone serving the rice for some time, you may keep it warm in a low oven, covered with a damp cloth.*
- TIPS LAIRD**
 Passed to my mother by a member of the MacDonald Clan, this Scottish recipe for trifle is just a little different from others. The difference is, of course, the noble liquor, Drambuie. Let the trifle grace your buffet table with the other desserts and I promise it will disappear before most of the others.
- 12 ounce (approximately) sponge fingers/ladyfingers, each split in half
 16 ounces good raspberry jam
 2 small boxes of fresh raspberries, washed and drained
 8 fluid ounces sweet cherry
 8 tablespoons Drambuie
 7 egg yolks, beaten
 7 1/2 ounces (1/2 cup) sugar
 1 pint milk
 1 tablespoon cornflour/cornstarch
1. Spread all the fingers with a coating of raspberry jam. Line a 6-quart (approximate) glass bowl with them, standing up, jam-side inward. Sprinkle the raspberries over the sponge fingers. Combine the cherry and 4 tablespoons of the Drambuie and pour it over the sponge and fruit. Cover and chill while you make the custard.
 2. Stir the egg yolks and sugar together in a small bowl. Scald the milk in the top of a double boiler and stir about 2 tablespoons of the hot milk into the yolk mixture. Pour the egg-yolk mixture into the upper saucepan with the milk and stir it constantly until it thickens to the consistency of heavy cream but does not set (approximately 15 minutes), adding the cornflour mixture to hasten the thickening.
 3. Remove the custard from the heat and place the pan in a large bowl filled with ice. Stir in the vanilla and let it cool and thicken for about 10 minutes, stirring from time to time to avoid a skin forming on top. Pour the custard over the chilled cake and fruit mixture and cover the bowl, returning it to the refrigerator.
 4. Refrigerate a whisk and mixing bowl. Beat or whisk the cream until it forms stiff peaks. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons of Drambuie and continue beating for several more seconds until it is blended in.
 5. Spoon the cream over the custard. Smooth the edges and decorate with the cherries, almonds and angelica. Cover and refrigerate until you are ready to serve. Serves 8-10.
Notes: You may like to add a layer of peeled and sliced fresh peaches over the raspberries.

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