

**Thanksgiving Garbage/
Recycling Schedule**

Collection for residents who normally get their trash and recycling picked up on Thursday, November 28 will have it picked up **TWO DAYS EARLIER** on Tuesday, Nov. 26.

Collection for residents who normally get their trash and recycling picked up on Friday November 29, will have it picked up **TWO DAYS EARLIER** on Wednesday, Nov. 27.

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Bay Leaves

The official news magazine serving the village of Whitefish Bay *WISCONSIN*



Cooking is Love: Meet Alamelu Vairavan and her Family



Best Version Media

Photo: Boutique Photographer Linda Gumieny



Cooking is Love:

It has been quite a journey for Alamelu - from moving half way across the globe, raising a family, writing multiple cookbooks, to having her own cooking show broadcast across the country. Through it all, Alamelu has discovered that "cooking is love" and continues to share this love with others.

Alamelu and her husband, K. Vairavan (often referred to as KV), grew up in India. Alamelu and KV were married a year before he completed his Ph.D. studies in Engineering at the University of Notre Dame. Alamelu joined him at Notre Dame following their marriage. While in Indiana, Alamelu had absolutely no idea how to cook; however, she was eager to learn because it is an important everyday living skill. Alamelu visited her only other family member in the U.S., her aunt, who lived in New York. While there, Alamelu began to learn how to cook from her aunt's personal chef.

After Alamelu and KV had their daughter, Valli, they wanted to move somewhere quaint, where Valli could walk to school. KV was offered a job at UWM as a professor in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. They discovered Whitefish Bay, which was exactly the type of community they were looking for, so Alamelu and KV moved to their house on Shoreland Ave in 1974, where they have lived ever since. A few years after moving to WFB, they had their son, Ashok. At times, they thought of getting a larger house somewhere else, but no place could compare to their location in WFB, as well as the school system.

Alamelu and KV also enjoyed their neighbors, especially Patricia and Bill Marquardt. Alamelu wanted to continue experimenting with food after her lessons from her aunt's chef. Patricia and Bill could smell the aromas coming from Alamelu's cooking and eventually made their way into her kitchen asking her to teach them. From

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Meet Alamelu Vairavan and her Family

that, Pat would watch Alamelu and then reproduce the dish exactly as the original. They began a great friendship from cooking together. Bill and Pat became like aunt and uncle to Valli and Ashok.

During this experimentation with food, Alamelu was getting her degree from UWM, while also raising her family. It took her 10 years, but she was proud of herself for completing it, after which she found a job as a Director for Health Information Management in a healthcare facility. After Alamelu graduated, KV was enjoying a delicious meal from his wife when he said, "You are a great cook; you should record your recipes." With Pat's help, Alamelu decided to do just that! Pat watched and wrote, reminding Alamelu to stop and measure as she cooked. The ladies would get together on weekends and had no idea what all their work would become. They continued this for many years, but it was more just a fun thing they did together. Other neighbors kept asking if Alamelu

was going to publish her recipes. KV is the visionary of the two and said, "All you need to do is write a proposal." Alamelu always thinks big, so she only sent her cookbook proposal to large publishing companies. Many replied back to her saying her cookbook proposal was interesting, but they didn't have the funds. After 16 weeks, Alamelu received mail from New York - a contract from Hippocrene Books wanting to publish her cookbook! Alamelu describes the evolution as, "Aromas, friendship, cookbook."

Soon after, Alamelu received a call while at work that the Discovery Channel wanted her to do a segment on TV! Alamelu flew to Philadelphia, not knowing what she was getting herself into. When she walked in to the brightly lit studio, she smelled her cooking and said, "I thought I was cooking?" Alamelu was obviously not experienced with how cooking on TV works - well not yet anyway! Alamelu also had no idea, but

Continued on page 12.



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Cooking is Love

Continued from page 11.



when she sat down to watch her segment, she realized she was immediately following Julia Child's in the Pantry! You can only imagine how many viewers there were!

Since her first book was received so well, Hippocrene Books wanted a second book, with pictures this time. Alamelu's goal was to create healthy Indian-inspired cooking for people to enjoy, with ingredients you can get at your local market. She wrote two more cookbooks with Pat as co-author - *The Art of South Indian Cooking* (1997) and *Healthy South Indian Cooking* (2008). Alamelu continued with her culinary passion because of all the talk about obesity and diabetes, as well as her experience working in the healthcare industry. The food being offered to patients in healthcare institutes really bothered her - it was just convenient, not healthy, wholesome food. KV supported Alamelu to follow her heart and resign from her job to concentrate on her culinary career. Right after she handed in her resignation letter, she was sitting in her office wondering if she did the right thing, the phone rings. "It's KV saying a reporter from USA Today just called asking for an interview. From that, I knew it was my calling!"

Alamelu asked herself, "What can I do? What will make a difference? Television!" Alamelu was offered a series on MPTV - *Healthful Indian Flavors* with Alamelu. Currently, it is shown all around the country on 222 Create PBS stations. "It's just magical that I'm on this culinary journey and so proud that a show out of Milwaukee is doing so well."

Alamelu went on to publish two more cookbooks. In 2010 she published her first cookbook in India called *Chettinad Kitchen*; her most recent being *Indian Inspired Gluten Free Cooking*, published in 2013. "This book was created because so many people kept asking me if my cooking was gluten-free. I began doing research, took classes on gluten-free cooking, and talked to a lot of dieticians, specifically Margaret Pheifer, who became my co-author."

In January 2013, Alamelu had just finished her *Gluten Free* cookbook, and she and KV were planning a trip to Japan while at their Arizona residence, where they enjoy the warmer weather to relax and unwind. Alamelu took her usual walk, but on this particular day, her life changed drastically. A pickup truck hit her, and she was hospitalized for 40 days with multiple injuries. Doctors said

she was a miracle because there was no major injuries to the head, neck, or spine. She and her family stayed positive, and Alamelu told herself she would be even better than before. She continues to work hard at physical therapy. She feels so grateful for all her family and WFB neighbors' support. "All this support, and my passion of cooking keeps me on track to a full recovery."

Alamelu's family has always supported her culinary journey, but they have also been busy with their own successes. KV's career at UWM spanned teaching and research in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science fields. He also helped with early development of the Computer Science program and served as the chairman of the program for many years. More recently, he was instrumental in starting an innovative interdisciplinary PhD program in Biomedical and Health Informatics in collaboration with the Medical College of Wisconsin, and served as the Program's Co-Director till his retirement in 2008. Although KV is retired, he still teaches a course and mentors students and faculty. He also follows the careers of his students adding, "I like to make a difference and it is so exciting to see them succeed."



Many of them have reached high level positions in industry and academia. He has just completed a book about a philanthropic industrialist in India that tells an inspiring story of human spirit and achievement. The book titled,

Dr. RM. Alagappa Chettiar—Life and Legacies of a Visionary is being printed in India.

Valli Gupta followed in her father's footsteps and attended Notre Dame. Then she went to Marquette for law school. She is now an attorney for US Trust (Bank of America) in Chicago. She and her husband, Dr. Atul Gupta, specializing in infectious diseases, blessed KV and Alamelu with twin grandsons, Surav and Mihir, now three years old. Valli loves to visit for the Fourth of July because nothing compares to the WFB festivities. She even brought her boys this past year while her parents were in Arizona.

Ashok received his undergraduate education at the University of Dayton before joining Dunn and Bradstreet (D&B), a global company that is also among the oldest in the country. He later teamed with two D&B employees in starting a new business in Atlanta and helped it grow dramatically creating several hundred jobs. In his capacity as the

Vice President, Ashok, is now helping grow another company e-Verifile, also based in Atlanta. Even with Ashok in Atlanta, Alamelu shares, "Ashok takes special pride in my culinary activities, and provides me with the extra energy I need to sustain my efforts and to keep me moving forward."

Right now, Alamelu and KV are back in WFB. KV is busy teaching a Computer Engineering course this semester at UWM. Alamelu is trying to stay busy while she heals. She is exploring volunteer opportunities to help spread her message about healthful cooking and eating especially to children, saying, "I want to even transform vegetable haters to vegetable lovers!" Of course, she is also busy with book signings and cooking presentations. Visit Alamelu's website at www.curryonwheels.com for information about her cooking classes, presentations, and much more!

Thank you to the Vairavan family for sharing a little piece of their life and home here in Whitefish Bay. Like the Vairavans, we would love to feature your family in an upcoming edition. Or if you would like to nominate a family please email sblankenheim@bestversionmedia.com.



Photos by: Boutique Photographer Linda Gumieny