

The
Veeraswamy Story

100 Years
1926 - 2026



Veeraswamy Restaurant in 1926
with Edward Palmer sitting in the rear



VEERASWAMY

1926

Foreword



March 2026, London

To
Veeraswamy supporters,

You never truly own a restaurant like Veeraswamy. Its history is too long, too important, too glittering to claim it for yourself. We are simply custodians of a great institution, hoping to pass on a thriving restaurant for future generations to enjoy, and to preserve a unique establishment that straddles two cultures.

As we write, Veeraswamy is exactly a century old. It may well be the oldest Indian restaurant not just in London, but in the world. But its future is uncertain. Our landlords, the Crown Estate, want to redevelop the building that Veeraswamy has occupied since 1926. We have campaigned strenuously to be allowed to stay where we are and have been hugely gratified by the outpourings of support we have received: from chefs, food writers and fellow restaurateurs, but – and perhaps most importantly – from you, our loyal customers.

Nearly 20 000 of you have signed our petition, and many of you have shared precious stories of your times at Veeraswamy, from recent birthday dinners to memories from much more distant times: we even received a letter from 89 year-old Lewes resident John E. Swan, who recalls dining at Veeraswamy as a young boy during World War II, while the German Luftwaffe dropped bombs on Piccadilly. You can read his story in these pages.

If Veeraswamy can survive the Blitz, surely it can succeed in overturning an ill-considered redevelopment.

Because Veeraswamy is not just a restaurant. To borrow the language of UNESCO, the cultural heritage of Veeraswamy is both tangible and intangible. Tangible, because the building itself is a powerful evocation of a history that spans Empire and Independence;

Intangible, as a repository for the memories of the hundreds of thousands of patrons who have dined at Veeraswamy over the past century, from all over the world: at each service, our reservations book invariably features the names of diners from at least a dozen nations.

We trust we have honoured Edward Palmer and William Steward's legacy. In an increasingly fractious and divided world, Veeraswamy survives as a beacon of civilisation, a place where people from all countries and all walks of life can meet and dine together in a spirit of mutual understanding and enjoyment, just as its founder envisaged a century ago.

This souvenir – written with gratitude to you, our staunch supporters – is a testament to that spirit, offered in the hope that good sense will prevail, and Veeraswamy can continue to nourish and celebrate the unique bond that exists between two great nations.

Ranjit Mathrani Namita Panjabi Camellia Panjabi

March 2026

History of Veeraswamy



Edward Palmer 1926 - 1930

Veeraswamy owes its existence to the passion of one man: the extraordinary Edward Palmer, a scion of the Palmer banking family in India that had traded on strong links both with the East India Company (his great-grandfather was Private Secretary to Warren Hastings) and with Mughal royalty: his grandfather was banker to the Nizam of Hyderabad, one of the world's richest men.

Palmer left India for London in 1880, but spice was in his blood: styling himself E. P. Veerasawmy, his forays into the worlds of retail (the Nizam brand of spices and condiments), cooking demonstrations and recipe writing are detailed below, culminating in his temporary but highly successful Indian restaurant at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924 and 1925.

He was a pioneer in several ways, not least in his advocacy of Indian pulses and vegetable dishes, promoting their health benefits in a way that pre-dated modern nutritional advice by many decades.

But it was not until 1926, three decades after his Nizam brand was launched, that Palmer, now 65 years old, managed to draw together all these threads and fulfil his dream: a restaurant that would not just serve authentic Indian food, but reflect the exotic splendour of the royal palaces he knew from his childhood. Veerasawmy's India Restaurant opened its doors on 16th March 2026.

It rapidly became London's unofficial Indian embassy, serving pukka Indian cuisine long before Jamie Oliver popularised the word. Its clientele was a heady mix of visiting Maharajas and other well-to-do Indians, wealthy businessmen (many of whom had picked up a taste for spice in India itself) and 1920s London high society, always on the lookout for somewhere fresh and unusual to dine and carouse.

Palmer was a pragmatist who realised that not all his diners would share his predilection for spice: employing both Indian and French chefs, his menus offered many popular British and French dishes alongside Indian fare.

Palmer retired in 1930, selling his restaurant to a Mr De Silva, probably the man who is described in an advertisement in the Daily Mail as “well-liked De Silva, the head butler, a widely travelled man who has served in the households of the aristocracy of five nations.”

In 1931, under De Silva's ownership, Veeraswamy's chefs were given the honour of cooking at the Indian Social Club which had been established to cater for myriad Maharajas and others who had descended on London for the second Round Table Conference, a series of meetings organised by Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald and the British Government to discuss the future of India, amid growing calls for Swaraj, self-government. Mahatma Gandhi could not be present at the first conference in 1930 – he was still in jail – but he did attend the 1931 conference, the only time he left India from 1914 until his death in 1948.



Sixth Nizam

William Steward 1934 - 1967

In 1934, William Steward, a gentleman farmer with a fascination for cookery, especially Indian cuisine, and a reverence for Palmer and his pioneering efforts, bought the restaurant: as his hand-written history of Veeraswamy makes clear, he was a huge admirer of Palmer and his achievements, and he shared the restaurant's founder's passion for both the food and the culture of India and decorated the restaurant in a really exotic Indian style. He later became a Member of Parliament.

Ranjit Mathrani and Namita Panjabi 1997 - Present day

After Steward sold the restaurant in 1967, it went through various hands for the following 30 years, until Ranjit Mathrani and Namita Panjabi bought it in 1997. The couple had already tasted success with Chutney Mary, their restaurant on New King's Road, and they were determined to restore the restaurant, which had become very run down, to its former glory. The original re-design, by Florida-based interior designer Robert Bilkey was strikingly modern, with mustard and plum walls, chrome stools and blond wood chairs, and – innovative though it was, especially for an Indian restaurant – it did not find favour with everybody.

Camellia Panjabi

When Namita's sister Camellia joined the business in 2001, together the threesome decided on another major re-design, lavishly redecorating the restaurant in retro-Indian style; meanwhile, their landlords, Crown Estate, extended the lease by 20 years and carved out a space from a retail unit on the ground floor so that Veeraswamy could have its own private street entrance and lift.

A chic cocktail bar was built in 2017, then – after the pandemic had receded, in 2023 – the owners decided that the restaurant should become even more glamorous. Veeraswamy closed its doors for a major refit. New hand-woven carpets were laid, furniture, silverware and other artefacts from the 1920s were installed, and a collection of royal and other Indian turbans was commissioned and put on display.

The kitchens were completed gutted and modernised, introducing better ventilation and induction cooking to foster better working conditions in the (rather small) kitchen, and to help the restaurant's chefs to maintain the standards that led to Veeraswamy being awarded a Michelin star in 2016, an honour they have proudly retained ever since.

Ranjit, Namita and Camellia, like Edward Palmer and William Steward before them, have travelled the length and breadth of India to research recipes and hunt for artefacts and, as the restaurant reaches its centenary – a century in which its walls have echoed with the secrets and indiscretions of princes and politicians, the whispers of lovers and the laughter of friends – their love and passion for Veeraswamy is as strong as ever.



*Major William Palmer with His Second Wife, the Mughal Princess Bibi Faiz Bakhsh
by Johann Zoffany (1733 -1810)*



Edward Palmer

Edward Palmer

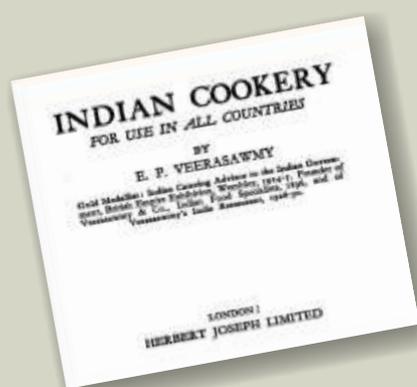


Veeraswamy's founder, Edward Palmer, was a remarkable character. Born in Madras in 1861, he was the great-grandson of General William Palmer (Military and Private Secretary to Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal and leading light of the East India Company) and the Mughal Princess Faizan Nissa Begum.

He moved to London with his mother and siblings around 1880, purportedly to read medicine, although there is no record of him completing his studies. Styling himself “E. P. Veerasawmy” – his initials, combined with his grandmother's family name – he instead pursued a career as an expert in Indian cookery and, in 1896, he opened his first business, selling spices, pastes, sauces and condiments under the Nizam brand, a tribute to his childhood in Hyderabad.

By 1898, he was conducting cookery classes for ladies at the fashionable Debenham & Freebody department store on Wigmore Street, which – as you will see from the article opposite – were rapturously received. Palmer was clearly not just a “celebrity chef” of the late Victorian and Edwardian era, but also well ahead of his time in pioneering the health-giving properties of pulses and vegetables.

He was a showman, too: another account of his cookery demonstrations tells of curries “cooked by a first-class Indian chef, Mr. Veerasawmy of Madras... clad in a superb Oriental coat of crimson brocade and snowy turban.” His Nizam brand of spices and condiments features prominently in each account, which was presumably the intention.



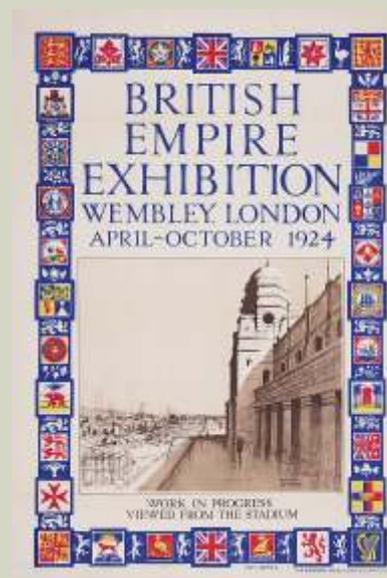
E P Veerasawmy's cookbook

In 1915, he published a cookery book: *Indian Cookery For Use In All Countries*, which was popular enough to be reprinted several times, but his dream of opening a fine Indian restaurant still eluded him.

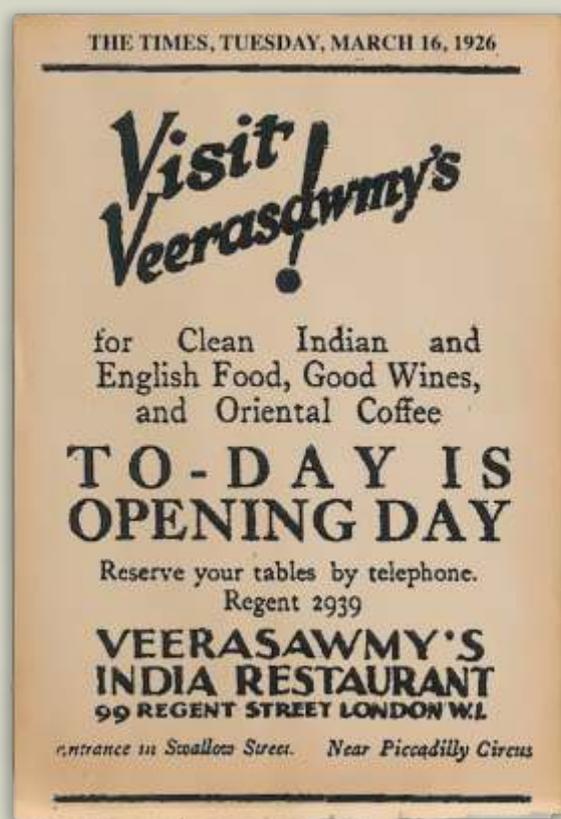
His big break came in 1924, when he was invited to advise on the restaurant to be opened in the Indian Government Pavilion during the British Empire Exhibition, held at Wembley (it would later become

Wembley Stadium) from April until October that year.

The restaurant was a huge success, serving a reported 500 curries a day: he repeated the same formula when the Exhibition returned to Wembley the following year, and could at last fulfil his dream of opening a permanent Indian restaurant in the centre of London. He opened Veerasawmy's India Restaurant on March 16th, 1926, at 99 Regent Street, proudly announcing it in *The Times*: “Visit Veerasawmy's! For Clean Indian and English Food, Good Wines and Oriental Coffee.”



British Empire Exhibition poster



1926 Advertisement

Palmer sold Veerasawmy to William Steward in the early 1930s, after the onset of the Great Depression, and spent his remaining years engaged in academic pursuits, tracing the history of the Palmer family and – unsuccessfully – seeking to recoup some of the losses his family had sustained when the Palmer banking empire collapsed in the mid-19th century in India.

But his seminal cookery book remained in print, inspiring new generations to try their hands at Indian cuisine, and the restaurant he founded still bore the name with which he had captivated London: even if, as we have seen, the spelling was a little different. He was married three times and is thought to have fathered 17 children. He died on 15th February, 1947, at the age of 86.

The Indian cooking Demonstration at Messrs. *Debenham & Freebody's* - 1898

Last month I gave a few recipes concerning Indian dishes; which are becoming justly popular among us; not only owing to the fact that there is in England a large colony of Anglo-Indians, to whom the food of the distant country which they have inhabited had become more or less necessary, but owing also to the pleasant and palatable nature of these foreign articles of food.

It is primarily to **Mr. Veerasawmy**, one of the principals of the firm who make it their business to import Indian condiments, &c., in their perfection, and also an eminent and accomplished chef, that we owe this "movement" in the culinary line; but we have also to thank Messrs. Debenham and Freebody, who by their Indian menu days (Wednesdays) have more generally, and in a very substantial manner, helped to introduce the new element. Last week another demonstration was held in the upper restaurant of the firm, and it was very important, because it introduced, as it were, to the English public the cereals grown in India, which by their excellency and great nourishing powers should become useful store-cupboard items for every household.

The menu chosen for the last demonstration of the season ran as follows:-

Cutlets à la Mogul
Ceylon chicken curry
Cocoanut rice
Dhall curry and riz à l'Indienne
Sweet dhall curry
Hot savoury Dhall pastry
Mashed Indian greens
Madras fresh chutney
Country captain
Rogni roti
Nizam pah-pahes
Nizam Bombay ducks
Nizam chutneys

The Indian terms for these several dishes are not so much to the point as the mode of procedure, especially wherever the experiment can procure a novelty for our European tables.

It is naturally specially to those that I wish to draw your attention; and to this effect the first dish shall be given in full, as it is one likely to be highly appreciated as a change from the ordinary egg and bread crumbed or plain grilled cutlet.

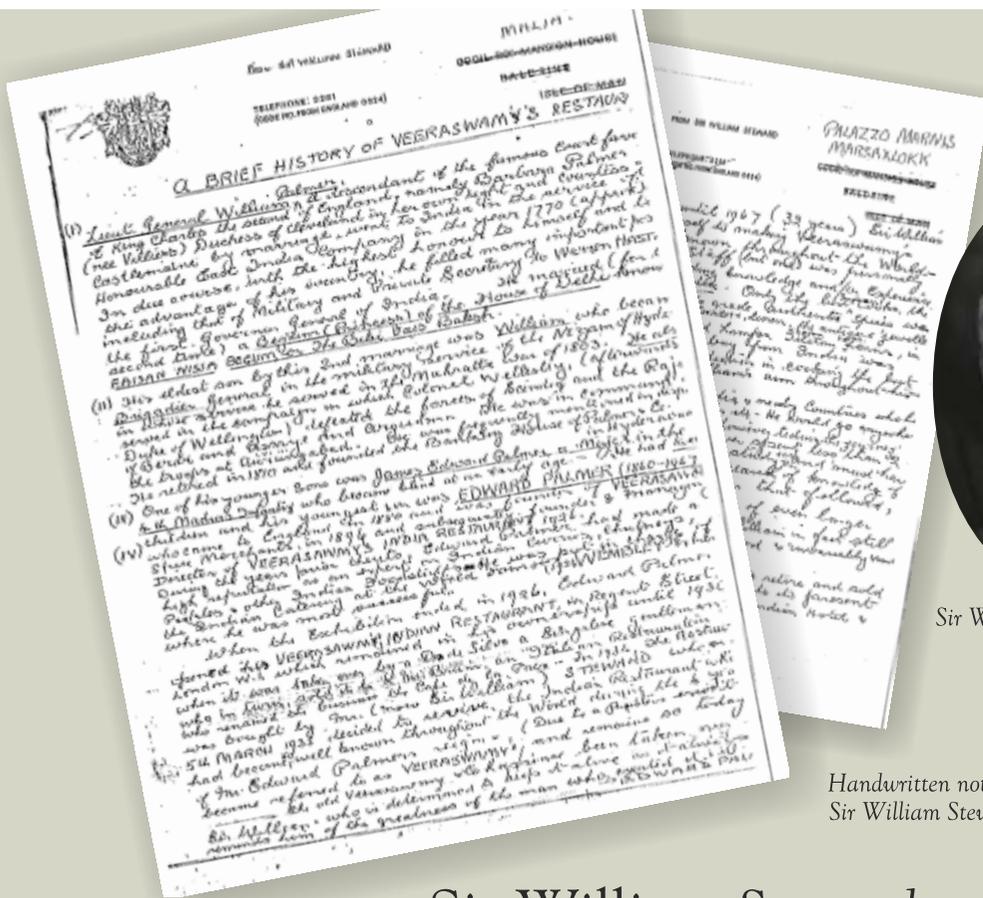
The recipes for the remaining dishes are too long to insert here, although they cannot fail to prove generally useful; the Ceylon Chicken Curry and the Cocoanut Rice were both delicious and not difficult to prepare. Mr. Bailey, the manager of Messrs. Debenham & Freebody's Restaurant Department, would, however, post a copy of the same to anyone who will take the trouble to apply for them. One or two were specially devoted to showing the nourishing properties of Indian dhalls or cereals, which the demonstrator is anxious to make more widely known among us.

All the ingredients imported by **Messrs. Veerasawmy & Co.** are to be had at Messrs. Stubbs & Co., 21, Wigmore-street, Army and Navy Stores, Harrod's, &c. The "Nizamette" a speciality of the above Indian firm, is a delicious preparation for hors d'oeuvre and sandwiches.

COSMOPOLITE



From *The Lady's Pictorial*, Saturday 25th June 1898:
Cookery and Household Matters Generally



Sir William Arthur Steward

Handwritten note by Sir William Steward

Sir William Steward

Sir William Steward was, in his way, as remarkable a character as Edward Palmer. According to his own hand-drafted history of Veeraswamy, written in the third person, he purchased the restaurant in 1934, and re-opened it on 5th March 1935.

He acknowledges the mis-spelling of the restaurant's name: "Due to a printer's error, it became referred to as Veeraswamy and remains so today. The old Veerasawmy & Co has since been taken over by Sir William who is determined to keep it alive as it always reminds him of the greatness of the man who created it, Edward Palmer."

From March 1935 until 1967, he "dedicated himself to making Veeraswamy Indian Restaurant known throughout the world - Every member of the staff (but one) was personally selected in India for his outstanding knowledge and/or experience and brought from India. Only the finest Indian cooks, the best waiters, and the top-grade authentic spices were good enough.

"Also, the furniture, linen, antiques, jewellery, hanging lanterns, standard lamps, Tibetan horns, in fact, everything that was possible to buy from India, was bought by him. Authenticity, and perfection in cooking the best of Indian foods, were Sir William's aims throughout his years of ownership." Steward was an indefatigable Indophile, visiting India at least once a year, and travelling hundreds of thousands of miles to track down chefs, recipes and artefacts for his restaurant.

Sir William Arthur Steward was born in Norfolk in 1901, and catering seems to have been in his blood: his grandmother gave him a stove when he was seven years old; he was Senior Catering Officer at the Air Ministry, retiring with the rank of Squadron Leader; and after being elected to Parliament in 1950 as MP

for Woolwich West, he became Chairman of the House of Commons Catering Committee the following year. He was also a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Distillers.

A “gentleman farmer” by profession, with a background in accounting, Steward was also an astute businessman: the Great Slump of 1930 to 1933, a worldwide fallout from the 1929 Great Depression in the US, led to Britain's overseas trade falling by half, but there was a strong rebound in the mid-to-late-1930s, just as Steward took Veeraswamy's reins, and, after the war, the restaurant thrived, attracting a host of celebrity visitors: Charlie Chaplin, Marlon Brando, Winston Churchill, Audrey Hepburn and Jawaharlal Nehru among them, as well as many maharajas and maharanis, rulers of India's “princely states”. Later, under his direction, the House of Commons catering operation actually turned a profit.

Steward sold the restaurant in 1967, but he and his wife – singer and actress Greta Gaye – kept control of the successful Veeraswamy Food Products business. The company's most pioneering product was “Curry in a Can”, an early version of a “ready meal” launched in the early 1950s that proved very popular. After selling the restaurant, they had moved to the Maltese fishing village of Marsaxlokk, but continued to own the business and visit India every year until Steward's death in 1987, aged 86.

The Enduring Misprint



If you study the wealth of old menus and advertisements from Veeraswamy carefully, you will notice one particular linguistic curiosity: at some point over the past century, the name changes from Veerasawmy to Veeraswamy.

The name itself is from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and is derived from the Sanskrit words “veera”, meaning brave or heroic, and “swamy”, meaning lord or master. But it can also be spelt “Veerasami”, “Veeraswami” or “Veerasawmy”, which was the name Edward Palmer used for E. P. Veerasawmy & Co, the spice company he founded in 1896, and for the restaurant he opened in 1926.

The most likely explanation for the change in spelling is that, when Palmer sold the restaurant to William Steward in 1934, a printer carelessly swapped two letters when producing Steward's new menus. It would have been prohibitively expensive to change them, so the name stuck; 92 years later, it must be one of London's longest-running spelling mistakes.



London Daily Mail Atlantic Edition



V·I·R
**VISIT INDIA
IN LONDON**
Society's Most
Fashionable . . .
Rendezvous . . .

In Regent Street there is a restaurant which is different from all others. It is the India Restaurant. Behind the hard stone face which hides it from prosaic London this romantic corner of the East basks in the cool warmth of sunshine as on India's Northern Hills.

Within the Eastern Palace there are five palaces. In every room, and vestibule, flowers and palms add a final touch of beauty to a scene than which there is none more wonderful in this great city.

In spacious model kitchens famous Indian chefs, trained in the royal palaces of the East, vie with Western chefs of high repute, whose dishes may a Persian epicure has praised above all others, whilst Rajahs and nobility from India compete with Anglo-Indians in praise of the pleasant and delicious dishes of the East. "Nowhere," says a famous epicure, "can such delicious food and fruit and wine be found." Perfect cuisine is served perfectly in London's India.

Here you will meet well-travelled De Silvas, the head broker, a widely travelled man who has served in the households of the aristocracy of five nations. Raj Inder Varma from the Palaces of the East, the All-India householder, once a naval steward of 1900— all these, with one hundred other native Indians.

Your Indian servant and your butler are by your side at your sign. As you order, silently, swiftly, courteously you are served. The company you keep is eminent. The hour of so, or less, which you may spend there, passes into pleasant memory, only to be forgotten as later visits rouse the thoughts of pleasant Indian hours.

Will you not visit London's India? Call the first day you are in London, inspect the balconies and the spacious model kitchens, choose your table and select your menu. Or telephone to Regent 399. The Chairperson will attend to your wishes instantly.

Visitors to London may have a table reserved for the duration of their stay.

**VEERASAWMY'S
INDIA
RESTAURANT**
"The finest Restaurant in London"
99, REGENT STREET, W.1.
The entrance is under the archway of
Savoy Street near Piccadilly Circus

Dining in the Blitz

A letter recently received from a Mr. Swan

Starting on 7th of September 1940, London was systematically bombed by the Luftwaffe for 56 of the following 57 days and nights. Piccadilly Circus Underground Station, just a short walk from Veeraswamy, was one of many tube stations that served as deep bomb shelters; above ground, the rectory of St James' Church and much of its roof were destroyed; a 2 200 lb bomb devastated the Piccadilly Arcade; and the 50 Shilling Tailors on Swallow Street took a direct hit.

The Blitz, as it was known, ended on 11th May 1941, but sporadic attacks continued, as a diner remembers: now 89, one of his early memories – “I was about five years old: it must have been 1941 or 1942” – was of being taken to see a matinée performance of Peter Pan, starring Alastair Sim as Captain Hook, then to dinner at Veeraswamy.

“During the meal,” he recalls, “London was bombed by the Luftwaffe and the waiters invited the diners to go downstairs for safety. Nobody went! We all stayed having dinner.

“It was the first time I had seen people from India and very splendidly dressed – such a sight stayed with me forever. When we left the restaurant to get our train home, parts of Piccadilly were on fire!”



Curry and Lager

Diners at Veeraswamy today have a wide selection of drinks to complement their meal, from inventive cocktails to fine Burgundies. But the association of lager with Indian food, often considered a very British predilection, may well have begun at Veeraswamy... and it started with a Dane.

In 1924, Prince Axel of Denmark visited Edward Palmer's Indian restaurant at the British Empire Exhibition, and by all accounts thoroughly enjoyed his meal, accompanying it with Carlsberg, the Danish royal beer, drawn from a barrel he had brought with him.

Later, after Palmer opened his Regent Street restaurant, the prince arranged for a barrel of Carlsberg to be delivered to Veeraswamy each year. Waiters who left Veeraswamy to start their own restaurants took the idea with them, and the connection between lager and curry became firmly entrenched in the British psyche.



Prince Axel

Maharaj of Cooch-Behar Luncheon



THE TIMES June 25th 1937

LUNCHEONS

THE MAHARAJAH OF COOCH-BEHAR
The Maharajah of Cooch-Bihar gave a luncheon party yesterday at Veeraswami's Restaurant.

The following were present:—
the Duchess of Sutherland, the Dowager Maharani of Cooch-Bihar, the Prince and Princess of Bihar, Countess Haugwitz Reventlow, Viscountess and Countess Adare, Sir John and Lady Milbank, the Earl of Kimberley, the Earl of Dudley, Sir Anthony Duff, and Viscountess Long of Wraxall.

LADY BRITAIN
Sir Harry and Lady Britain gave luncheon parties on Wednesday and yesterday at Cowley Street, Westminster. Among those who accepted invitations were:
the Turkish Ambassador and Mme. Okyar, the Greek Minister and Mme. Simopoulos, the Estonian Minister Mme. Schmidt, Mme. Zarine, the Iraqi Minister, Sir H. Duff, Lord McGowan, the Marchioness of

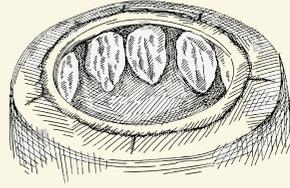


H.H. The Maharaja of Cooch-Bihar

Veeraswamy was a haunt of Edward, Prince of Wales, whose coat of arms was hung outside the door, and of visiting royalty and dignitaries. Indian Maharajahs travelling to London used Veeraswamy for entertainment of their English friends, and their own dining.

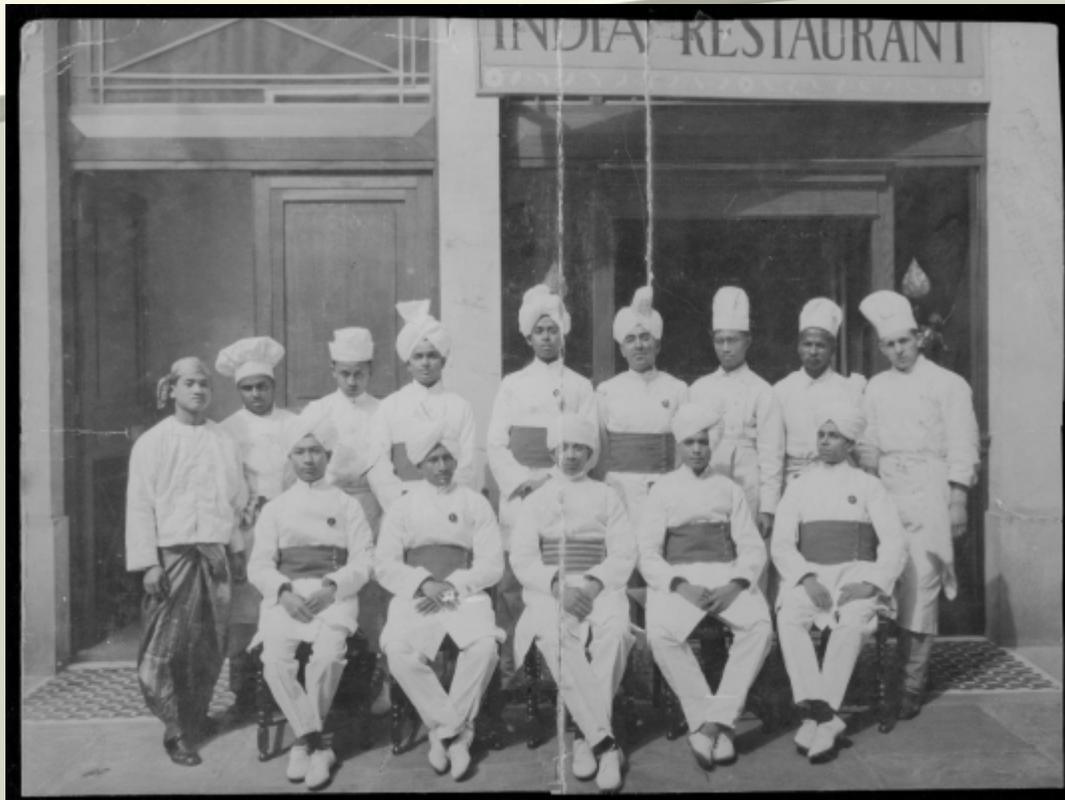
In 1948 Veeraswamy was appointed to do the catering for the Indian contingent at the London Olympics. In the seventies and eighties, Veeraswamy lost its glamorous reputation and became a traditional type of Indian restaurant.

Britain's First Tandoor



Tandoori cooking is now ubiquitous: every high street in the UK, even in small towns, has an Indian restaurant offering seekh kebabs, naan bread and the inauthentic (but hugely popular) chicken tikka masala, invariably cooked in a tandoor.

The tandoor, and other similarly shaped clay ovens, has been used to cook food since antiquity in India, and evidence has been found in the excavations of the ancient civilisations of Harappe in Sind dating to 2,500 B.C. and spread throughout South, Western and Central Asia. It was (and remains) an important cooking method in Indo-Persian Mughlai cuisine, used for breads, kebabs and marinated meats. But it was unknown in Britain until William Steward introduced the tandoor to Veeraswamy in 1959: the "tandoori chicken" on that year's menu is the first appearance of a tandoor-cooked dish on a British menu. Listed under "Specialities", it was priced at 10 shillings and sixpence (52½p today) and diners were warned that it would take 15 to 20 minutes to prepare.



Veeraswamy Restaurant staff in their uniforms

Catering for the Queen at Buckingham Palace



Veeraswamy chef with the royal chef in the Buckingham Palace kitchen

Edward Palmer may have grown up around the court of the Nizams of Hyderabad, with Maharajas of India's princely states as frequent visitors, and he certainly tried to emulate their palatial residences in his exuberant designs and décor at Veeraswamy, but it is unlikely he ever imagined that his restaurant's chefs would be called upon to serve at Buckingham Palace.

And yet they have, not once but twice. The first occasion was in 2009, for the state visit of the President of India, Pratibha Patil; the second was in 2017 at an event to celebrate 70 years of Indian independence.

In 2017, Veeraswamy's chefs, led by Executive Chef Uday Salunkhe, spent six weeks trialling dishes to adapt traditional Indian flavours into miniature forms for the event, finally collaborating with Buckingham Palace's chefs to produce more than 5 000 canapés. The Queen remarked to Veeraswamy's owners, Ranjit Mathrani and Namita Panjabi, that she especially liked the Veeraswamy chefs' hats.

Veeraswamy serves Air India
first class and business class meals
on all flights from London



Present Owners



Ranjit Mathrani

Ranjit Mathrani is the chairman of MW Eat, a company created and owned by him and his wife Namita Panjabi that also owns Veeraswamy, besides Chutney Mary, Amaya and Masala Zone.

He was a senior official in the British Government, handling Economic & Industrial Policy. He moved into merchant banking as a Director of Lazard Brothers and Managing Director of the merchant banking arms of Standard Chartered & West LB. Ranjit was High Sheriff of Greater London from 2010-2011, and currently serves on the Cambridge University Vice-Chancellors Circle of Advisers on Indian.

With his fellow MW Eat directors, was awarded Restaurant Magazine's R200 "People of the Year" accolade in November 2023.

His education was in London, Manchester, Cambridge, and Delhi – in the subjects of Economics, Business, Engineering and Physics.



*Ranjit Mathrani &
Namita Panjabi*

Namita Punjabi

Along with her husband Ranjit Mathrani – Namita is co-founder, co-owner and Group Director of MW Eat.

She started her career in banking (India's first woman merchant banker). She also had a long successful career in merchandising and fashion in India, supplying 40 of the top department stores in the world.

Her particular focus has been directing the culinary aspects of the restaurant business – where she is responsible for concepts, menu development, food presentation, overall direction of the kitchens, and sustaining food quality. She was ranked amongst the top 10 most highly through of Indians in Britain in a poll conducted by Channel 4 Television.

She has an Economics degree from Cambridge

Camellia Panjabi

A veteran of India's hotel industry with the Taj Group as Board Director and Senior Vice-President of Marketing, Camellia had huge career success in helping to create and develop some of the country's key tourist destinations, including Udaipur, Jaipur, Goa and Kerala and overseeing Taj's growth from one hotel in Bombay to more than 80 sites all over the world: in 1983, she launched the Taj-owned Bombay Brasserie, perhaps London's most trailblazing Indian restaurant at the time.

Camellia oversees the constant menu development and marketing of MW Eat's restaurants. She also takes a keen interest in the conceptualisation of the restaurants, including interior design. In February 2024, Camellia received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Food Food Top 50 Restaurants Award event in India, in recognition of her contribution to the industry for the past 50 years.

She is a hugely successful cookbook author: her book 50 Great Curries of India has sold more than 2 million copies worldwide. Her latest book, Vegetables The Indian Way, was released by Penguin UK in 2025.

She also has an Economics degree from Cambridge.



Camellia Panjabi





Interiors of Veeraswamy verandah room in 2023



Interiors of Veeraswamy verandah room in 2005

Veeraswamy Today



The restaurant's most recent refit was inspired by the ebullience of the Art Nouveau in the early 20th century, harking back to Edward Palmer's original vision for his restaurant: like a lavishly decorated Maharajah's palace, it features handwoven floral carpets, glass paintings from Rajasthan, and exuberant Kalighat paintings from Bengal, along with a host of other mementos and artefacts gleaned from the owners' extensive travels throughout India.

While featuring a number of inventive contemporary dishes – Edward Palmer might have raised an eyebrow at “Calcutta Beetroot Croquette with Bhutanese Chilli and Stilton Cheese” – the menu also harks back to the early days of the restaurant, with homage paid especially to the cuisine of Hyderabad, Palmer's hometown.



Raj Kachori



Shahi Patialia Raan Encroute

Silver Crescent

The cuisine of Veeraswamy has evolved over the last three decades to include not only the best of India's classical cuisine it was originally famous for, as customers seek out the very best of curries, kebabs and biryanis, but also extended to include some contemporary creations by its great team of chefs. For example, butter chicken now has a version incorporating Bordeaux wine in its sauce. Street food is elevated to a different level, and even the tandoori raan comes en-croute inspired by the Royal House of Patiala in Punjab. In its 90th year, that is 2016, Veeraswamy was awarded and has held a Michelin star ever since. The citation at the time of the award concluded "It may have opened in 1926 but this celebrated Indian restaurant just keeps getting better and better. The classic dishes from across the country are prepared with considerable care by a very professional kitchen. The room is awash with colour and it's run with great charm and enormous pride".



The Private dining room seats up to 22 guests



Restaurant Bar, 2017

The three recipes that follow tell a little of Veeraswamy's story: a classic Anglo-Indian soup, mulligatawny, that Edward Palmer often demonstrated to his audience at Debenham & Freebody's and later included in his cookery book; the tandoori chicken that appeared on the menu in 1959, the first time in the UK that a tandoori dish had been offered; and a classic chicken pulao, on offer from the same menu for 10 shillings and sixpence.



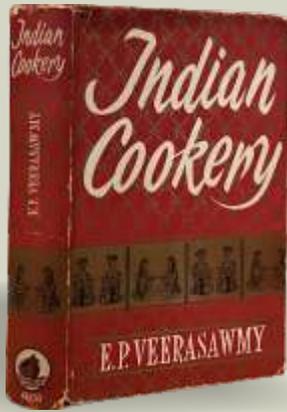
Edward Palmer's recipe for Mulligatawny

[This recipe makes a thin soup to be eaten alongside a dry curry: for a thicker soup, soak 100 g of yellow mung dal in cold water for an hour or two, drain and add to the recipe with the stock. Cook until soft, whisk, then add the coconut milk.]



Mulligatawny soup as made for Europeans and Anglo-Indians resident in India is anglicised to a very large extent. In Northern India, different kinds of dal and vegetables are usually used to produce shorbhas and rasams: thin soups.

In Southern India, the term mulligatawny, which literally means pepper or chilli water, indicates the character of this dish, and whenever a dry curry is eaten, pepper water of some kind or other is served with it. It is interesting to note that in cases of malaria and other fevers the Tamils take a pepper water made out of tiny salt fish known as karavhat. The fish has a slightly bitter but not unpleasant taste, and is supposed to reduce the temperature.



Mulligatawny

Serves 4 to 6

(adapted from Edward Palmer's *Indian Cookery
For Use In All Countries*)

Ingredients:

- 25 g of ghee or butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove of garlic, finely chopped
- 4 thin slices of peeled fresh ginger
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- ½ tsp chilli powder
- ½ tsp ground fenugreek
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- 1.2 l meat or vegetable stock
- 50 g tamarind pulp, soaked in 100 ml hot water and strained to remove the seeds
- 250 ml tinned coconut milk
- Salt to taste

Method:

Heat the ghee or butter in a saucepan over a medium heat and fry the onions, garlic and ginger until soft, then add the spices. Stir and cook for a minute or so until aromatic, taking care they don't burn.

Add the stock and the tamarind, allow the pan to come gradually to the boil, then add the coconut milk. Add salt to taste. Simmer gently for 5 to 10 minutes, then serve. The pan must be uncovered the whole time and the soup is not usually strained.

Serve with boiled rice.

Tandoori Chicken



The first marination, just with lemon juice and salt, is a classic Indian technique to soften the fibres of the chicken and allow it to absorb more of the spice and yoghurt marinade that follows. Chaat masala, widely available in Indian grocers and supermarkets, is a spice blend popular all over India, with a fruity tang from amchur, green mango powder, and a sulphurous hint of black salt.

Ingredients:

- Juice of a lemon
- 1 tbsp salt
- 800 g skinless, bone-in chicken thighs
- 300 g full fat Greek yoghurt, whipped
- 1 tbsp garlic paste
- 1 tbsp ginger paste
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- 2 tsp chaat masala
- 1 tsp salt
- 1½ tsp sugar
- 3 tbsp sunflower or rapeseed oil
- 2 tbsp mustard powder
- 1 tbsp Kashmiri chilli powder
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tbsp garam masala
- 30 g butter
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- ¾ tsp chaat masala

Method:

With a sharp knife, slash each chicken thigh to the bone two or three times, depending on their size. Whisk the salt with the lemon juice, combine with the chicken pieces, put them in a large plastic food bag and leave for 30 to 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, whisk together the yoghurt, garlic, ginger, black pepper, chaat masala salt and sugar. Heat the oil in a small pan and add the mustard powder. Stir well, remove from the heat and stir in the chilli powder, turmeric and garam masala. Let it cool for 5 minutes, then whisk into the yoghurt mixture.

Add the yoghurt mixture to the bag containing the chicken, seal the bag and scrunch the marinade gently into the flesh. Leave in the fridge for at least two hours, preferably four hours.

Take the chicken from the fridge 30 minutes before you want to cook it and pre-heat the oven to 230°C.

Arrange the chicken on a parchment-lined baking tray, flesh side up, and roast near the top of the oven for 14 minutes. Change the oven to its grill setting and grill for two or three minutes, until the chicken is starting to char. Remove from the oven.

Finish by heating the butter, lime juice and chaat masala in a small pan, then pour over the chicken while still in the tray, and serve.

Chicken Pulao



Pulao is closely related to the Persian pilaf, the first recipes for which date back to the 10th century. The chicken for this recipe needs to be cut into small pieces, through the bone: this can be achieved by using a heavy knife, cutting through to the bone, then giving the back of the knife a sharp tap with a rolling pin or a pestle. Or you might ask your butcher to do it.

Ingredients:

- 400 g basmati rice, thoroughly rinsed
- 600 g skinless, bone-in chicken legs, chopped into small pieces
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tbsp ginger paste
- 1 tbsp garlic paste
- 2 tsp finely-chopped green chillies
- 2 tsp salt
- 4 cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 6 black cardamom pods
- 6 green cardamom pods
- 1 blade of mace
- 10 black peppercorns
- 10 cm cinnamon stick
- 225 g ghee
- 10 g cumin seeds
- 300 g finely-sliced white onions
- 200 g full fat Greek yoghurt, whisked
- 2 tsp salt
- A pinch of saffron strands

To garnish:

- 2 tbsp rose water
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 20 g flaked almonds
- 20 g pistachios, soaked and thinly sliced
- 20 g raisins, soaked
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh coriander
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger, cut into julienne strips

Method:

Soak the rice in 750 ml cold water and reserve. Pat the chicken dry with kitchen roll, mix together the garam masala, ground cumin, ginger, garlic, chopped chillies and salt, and rub the mixture into the chicken. Leave for an hour in the fridge.

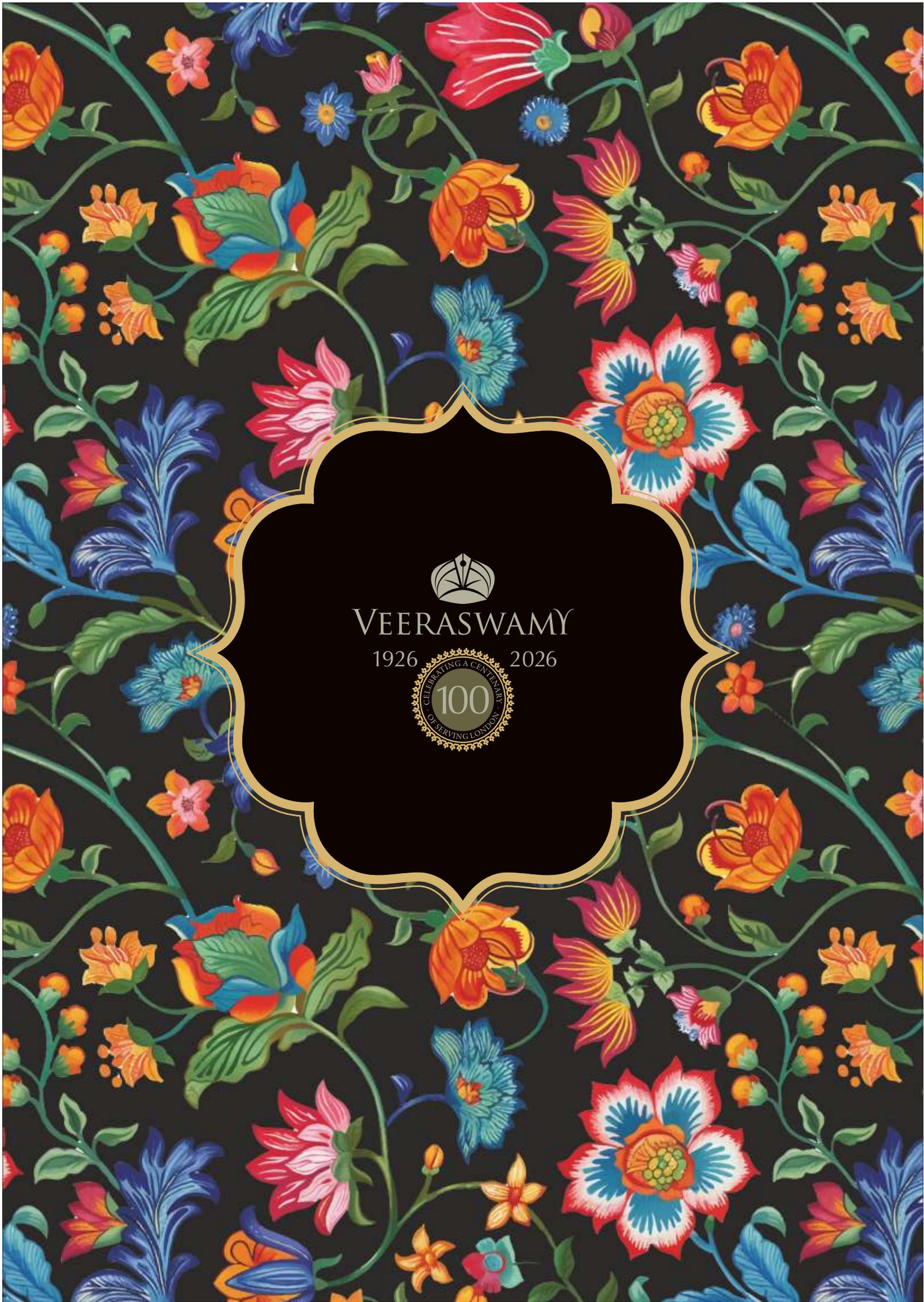
Put the cloves, bay leaf, black and green cardamoms, mace, peppercorns and cinnamon into a 20 cm square piece of muslin and tie it up into a bag. Heat the ghee in a large pan and add the cumin seeds. Cook them for 20 seconds or so, until aromatic, then add the onions and stir. Cook until light brown, stirring occasionally: add the spice bag after five minutes.

Add the chicken pieces and sauté over a medium high heat until nearly cooked and lightly browned. Remove from the heat and stir in the yoghurt and salt.

Turn the heat down to low and return the pan to the stove. Drain the rice and add it to the pan along with the saffron and 600 ml hot water. Bring to the boil and simmer for five minutes, then remove the spice bag. Cover with a lid and cook on a low heat for a further 10 minutes. The chicken should now be cooked through, and the rice should be dry: if not, remove the lid and keep cooking until done.

Sprinkle the rose water over the pulao, then heat the ghee in a metal ladle over a flame (or use a small pan). Fry the nuts and raisins for 30 seconds and pour over the dish, mixing them in gently. Serve with the coriander and ginger scattered over the top.





VEERASWAMY

1926 2026

