



Monica Saigal



STORYTELLER ~ WRITING COACH ~ GUEST SPEAKER

Food. Love. Life. Culture.

Monica Bhide is an internationally acclaimed storyteller, culinary innovator, cultural explorer and teacher who lives 'A Life of Spice.'



Monica Saigal (Bhide) is an award winning writer, accomplished literary coach, gifted poet, storyteller, keynote speaker and educator with a lyrical voice and universal appeal. As a bestselling fiction and internationally renowned cookbook author, Monica is known for sharing food, culture, mystery, and love in her writing. Having roots and experience in many places, Monica inspires readers everywhere with present day stories which transcend cultural, chronological, geographical, economical, and religious borders.



“The beguiling voice of a true storyteller who will lure you out of your self into her intriguing, fictional world.”

~ Diana Abu-Jaber,
Author of Crescent and Bird of Paradise

As a noted international food writer, Monica has built a diverse and solid audience through her books and articles in top-tier media such as:

The New York Times, The Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor, Bon Appétit, Town and Country Travel, Food and Wine, Cooking Light, Better Nutrition, and many others.

In the Press

Monica has appeared in and written for a wide variety of international publications and media.

Her work has appeared in:

REALSIMPLE



bon appétit



Parents®

In the Press

Monica has appeared in and written for a wide variety of international publications and media.

Her work has appeared in:

The Washington Post

1100 Jefferson

A blog of  Smithsonian Associates

SAVEUR

WASHINGTON
CITY PAPER

Bridging U.S.-India Relations
SPAN
magazine
اسپین سٹو

Chicago Tribune

The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
MONITOR®

The New York Times

 Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center

BIBLIOGRAPHY



FICTION

- *A Kiss in Kashmir* (2024)
- *The Soul Catcher* (2021)
- *Mother* (2018)
- *Telltales* (2017)
- *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken* (2016)
- *The Devil in Us* (2014)

INSPIRATIONAL

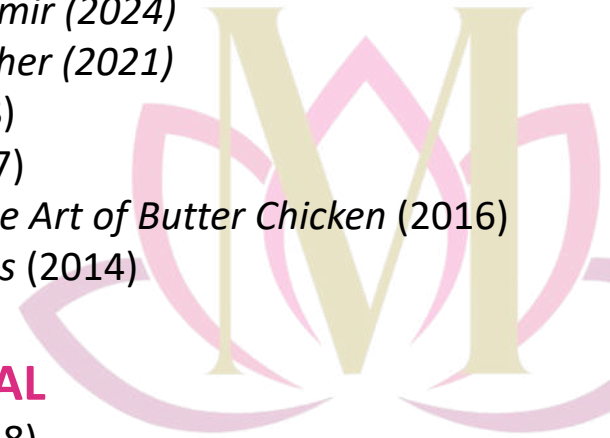
- *I See You* (2018)
- *In Conversation with Exceptional Women*

NON-FICTION

- *Read. Write. Reflect* (2018)
- *A Life of Spice* (2015)

COOKBOOKS

- *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken Cookbook* (2016)
- *Indian Express* (2015)
- *Modern Spice* (2010)
- *Everything Indian* (2004)



A KISS IN KASHMIR

Is it possible for a single glance to kindle a connection, or for one to find a soulmate twice? As a burgeoning love blooms between Sharmila and George, a startling revelation threatens to cut their story short.

With the breathtaking beauty of Kashmir as its canvas, *A Kiss in Kashmir* is a touching story of love, loss, and second chances.

“...a novel that explores the depth of loss, love and the many facets of the human heart. Bravo.”

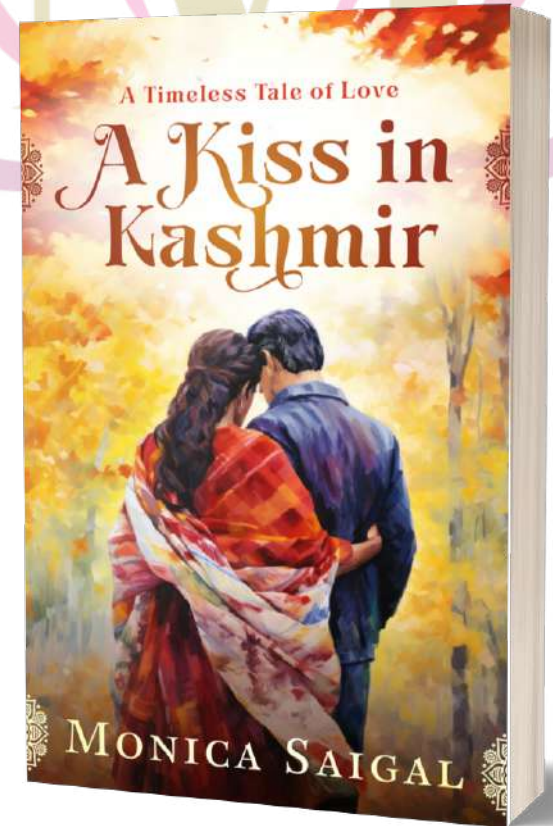
~ Mollie Cox Bryan, Agatha and Daphne du Maurier Award–nominated author

“From the first page, you’ll feel like you are at a banquet for this senses in this touching tale of later life love and the hope of new beginnings.”

~ Ramin Ganeshram, author, *Saffron: A Global History*

“Kashmir comes alive, not just as a backdrop but as a character, breathing life into Sharmila and George’s journey. Their story reminds us that even after loss, love can find its way back.”

~ Chef and filmmaker Vikas Khanna

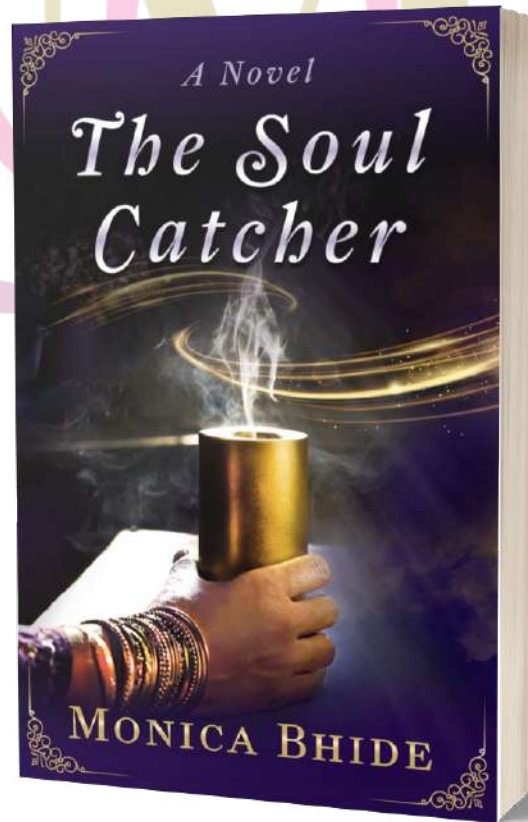


THE SOUL CATCHER

The Soul Catcher, a novel in stories, is a mosaic narrative about destiny, grief, loss, faith, love, and sisterhood. It takes us on a magical journey that begins with an unspeakable tragedy, and concludes with a surprising resolution. It chronicles the life of Yamini Goins — the Soul Catcher — a woman who transports souls from one body to another to keep people alive.

“Rife with rich imagery of an India that is at once real and fantastical, this magical novel will draw you in, hungering for more until every last page is turned.”

~ Ramin Ganeshram,
author, *The General's Cook: A Novel*



“Expect the unexpected in this rich novel from Monica Bhide. Shimmering prose is a hallmark of Bhide’s writing and nowhere is it more true than this novel.”

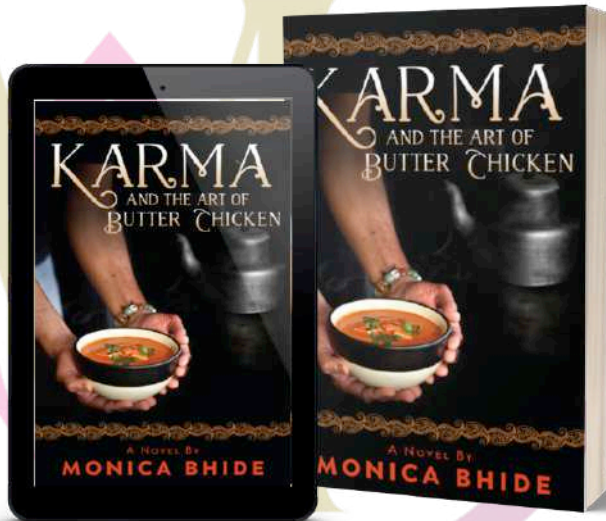
~ Mollie Cox Bryan,
Agatha and Daphne du Maurier Award–nominated author

The Soul Catcher explores that which makes us human—the desire to live, the fear of death, the longing for love and the release that comes with the acceptance of fate.

“The Soul Catcher is a mosaic novel packed with resilience and grief, magic and violence, love and loss.”

~ Gabino Iglesias,
author of *Coyote Songs*

KARMA AND THE ART OF BUTTER CHICKEN



“The past and present mingle in this charming story about the healing power of food.”

~ *Washington Independent Review of Books.*

Raised by Buddhist monks in Delhi after his mother’s untimely and tragic death, Eshaan sets out on the challenging quest to feed and nourish the hungry so they do not suffer her same fate. His attempts to achieve this monumental goal are constantly thwarted.

A page-turning story of sacrifice, determination, and an honest exploration of the human spirit. Set in contemporary India and seasoned with gentle love, dramatic loss, enchanting poetic verse, and exotic food, *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken* will take you to a place where past and present keep uneasy yet delicious company.

“[Bhíde] successfully turns her talents to the task of writing a consistently compelling and unfailingly entertaining novel, demonstrating her literary skills with deftly crafted and memorable characters embedded a carefully constructed storyline of unexpected twists and surprising turns.”

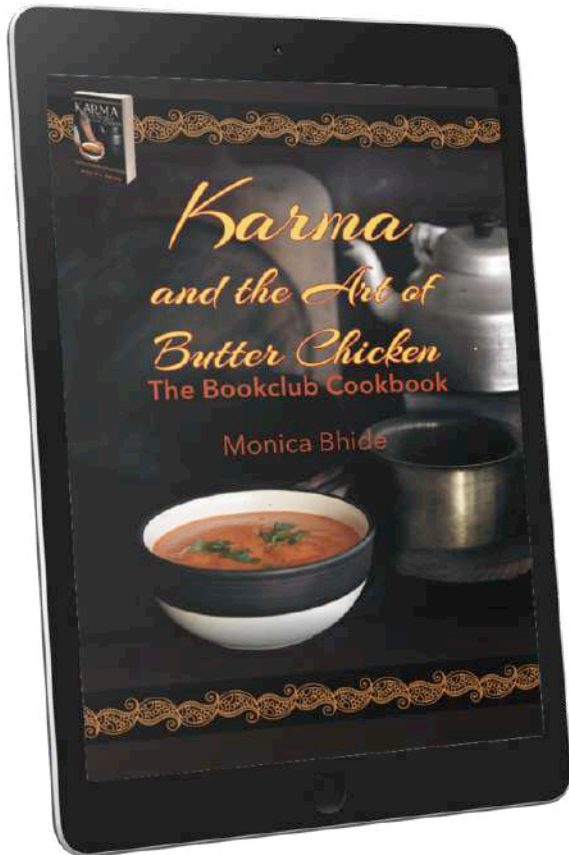
~ *Midwest Book Review*



José Andrés @chefjoseandres · 32m
My favorite book right now, shows us the entire Indian spirit through one boy.
[@mbhide](#) [@SanjeevKapoor](#) Buy it!!
amzn.to/2d9931K

KARMA AND THE ART OF BUTTER CHICKEN

Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken – The Bookclub Cookbook



KARMA AND THE ART OF BUTTER CHICKEN

IN THE MEDIA

A44  EAT, READ, LOVE

THE N
Indira Ahror

A metaphor for contentment

Monica Bhidé's debut novel, *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken*, is an ode to the Butter Chicken her father cooked and garnished with stories. The chef-author in conversation with Anita Aikara.

When food writer Monica Bhidé's father would return from his travels, he'd have one question for his kids: "What would you like to eat this weekend?" The answer was always the same: Butter chicken. Her father would prepare the dish for her with great love, and while cooking it he would narrate fascinating stories about Butter Chicken and eating this special Punjabi delicacy at Modi Mahal in Delhi.

Her debut, local fiction, *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken* is an ode to his to those memories. It's her seventh book but her first novel.

According to Monica, the novel is the story of a young man who tragically loses his mother to poverty and starvation, and makes it his life's goal to feed the hungry. The author discusses her journey as a writer, her childhood in India and why it took her 10 years to write the book.

What drew the engineer in you to fiction writing?

I always wanted to tell stories. Even as a young child, I would fill journals with stories of mythical creatures wandering amongst us. Engineering was a way to make a living. My writing, I later figured out, was to make a life.

I started writing very young — around eight or 10. I had books filled with poetry. My grandmother used to tell me many stories about a red prince who could fly and saved her family from destruction. I used to listen to her and then retell those stories in my own little world. Now as an adult, I tell those stories to my children.

Did your childhood and the culture you grew up in shape this book in some way?

I lived in the Middle East for most of my childhood. Then I spent many years in India (my engineering degree is from Bangalore). I went to IIM college of Engineering and then came to the US. I have worked in corporate America for 13 years.

The beautiful Indian culture greatly influenced the way I write. Since I have lived outside India for so long, sometimes I find myself as an outsider looking in and that also helps my writing as I try to figure out what things mean.

How did the idea to write *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken* come about? How long did it take to complete the book?

I have wanted to write this book for 10 years now. It took about three years from beginning to end. Over the past 10 years, I have written six books. I have written cookbooks, a collection of short stories and edited a book of inspirational interviews.

I don't think I could have written *Karma* when I started writing 10 years ago. I had so much to learn. (I still do).

The poetry that is featured in the book had started making a home in my mind and my heart about three years ago. I began to outline the plot of the book. It took time to travel to India to research, interview and observe people and the environment.

I think this book has always been in my heart... It is just manifesting now.

Why the title *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken*?

Oh, the title. The answer to your question is hidden in the pages of the book. I feel any good dish has both technique and art. But in this particular case, the meaning of the dish is the lead character is more critical than anything else. A beautiful human being with such a sacrificing heart — is protagonist Ishaan Vora Singh's character inspired by someone you know?

Actually there are so many wonderful people doing so much good work. The character is an amalgamation of many chefs. I know, both in the US and in India, who are working hard against hunger.

From a humble boy serving tea during local carous matches to a chef, Ishaan's journey is one that people will admire and be inspired by. How did you go about creating him?

I wanted him to be "any young man" without a silver spoon in his mouth. His journey, one I learned as I wrote the book, is a hero's journey where a young boy becomes a man through his trials, tribulations and his successes.

It's this character inspires someone. It will be such a big blessing for all of us, and I hope it will.

Was it a challenge to have a leventary and a cooking contest running parallel in storyline?

It makes the story deeper. It has more layers this way. It is like real life — complicated. I had to keep reminding myself to look at the lead character and what would ultimately be his learning and his lessons so as to speak and thus helped a lot in defining the plot.

I wrote various endings for the book — both for the love story and for the cooking contest. It took a few tries before I wrote the ending that I thought was the right one and the one that my early readers liked.

Is the character Radha Rand someone you know?

Yes! Radha Rand is based on a young girl I knew when I was in Bangalore. I lived in a convent (which offered boarding for students) for five years and she was one of the young girls there. I loved her spirit and her energy and her ability to tell the truth no matter what. If you could be a character in the book, which one would it be? (Tough choice!) I am not sure I could do justice to any of them. I don't want to give away the end, but it seems a little apt for a Bollywood movie, doesn't it? I hope!



Monica Butter Chi

- Makes 4 to 5 servings
- For the Chicken
- 1 cup whole milk Greek yogurt
 - 1 tbsp peeled, grated ginger
 - 1 tbsp peeled, minced garlic
 - 2 tbsp Indan lambert masala (Tandoori/Tikka mix)
 - ¼ cup canned tomato paste
 - 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
 - 2 tbsp melted butter or ghee
 - 8 skinless, boneless chicken thigh pieces
 - Salt, to taste

- 1. In a large bowl, mix together 1 garlic, Indian lambert masala, 1 lemon juice and butter. Add the well. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. In a 400-degree oven in a single layer is a roasting rack, place the chicken pieces on a rack.
- 2. Remove the chicken from the oven and place the pieces on a platter. Reserve the sauce.

- For the Sauce
- 4 tbsp butter
 - 1 tbsp peeled, grated ginger
 - 1 tbsp peeled, minced garlic
 - 2 medium tomatoes, finely chop
 - Salt, to taste
 - 1 curried chutney, finely minced
 - ¼ cup heavy cream

- 1. To make the sauce, in a large butter over medium heat. Add the butter and sauté for about 20 seconds.
- 2. Add the tomatoes and cook. Use the back of a spatula to mash the tomatoes and soft, about 10 minutes.
- 3. Add the reserved masala.
- 4. Add the salt, chili pepper, fenugreek and mix well. Simmer for 10 minutes.
- 5. Add the cream and simmer to serve hot.

Excerpted with permission from *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken* by Monica Bhidé. Well Publishing.



Asian Fortune Magazine
November 2014 • Vol. 22, No. 11 • AsianFortuneMag.com

Monica Bhidé
Local Food Writer
Pens Bestselling
Collection of
Short Stories

Voter Photo ID Law
The Law's Impacts on
the Asian American
Community

Healthcare
Enrollment Barriers for
Asian Americans Under
the New Healthcare Law

OCA-DC 41ST ANNUAL GALA
HONOR AWARDEES



Mynal Hoon

Christian Di

Jennelle Wong

KARMA AND THE ART OF BUTTER CHICKEN

The talented Alison Stein created a line of hand-made jewelry called The Due East Collection to pair with *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken*. One of her pieces is a specific ode to the book.

- The brass circle (sometimes called a karma circle) is a representation of the outside of a wheel, an important symbol in Buddhism.
- Chinese cord and gold silk are tied into knots that hold the bracelet together. These signify the sinewy web of twisting connections that bind us to one another.
- Natural stones were selected using a color palette inspired by Tibetan Buddhist paintings



KARMA AND THE ART OF BUTTER CHICKEN

On May 16, 2019, the NPR Café featured Monica Saigal and Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken.

Employees had their choice of a variety of tempting dishes prepared especially from the book (menu on the right).

Monica was on hand to chat with the NPR employees and sign copies of her book (free copies were distributed to everyone who dropped by!)

- Cream of Wheat Pancakes
- Eshaan's Childhood Soup
- Beet Salad with Yogurt Dressing
- Endive with Citrus Salad
- Butter Chicken, Rice with Peas and Green Beans Subzi
- Beggar's Potato Curry
- Red Lentils with Garlic
- Monica's Tomato and Coconut Fish Curry

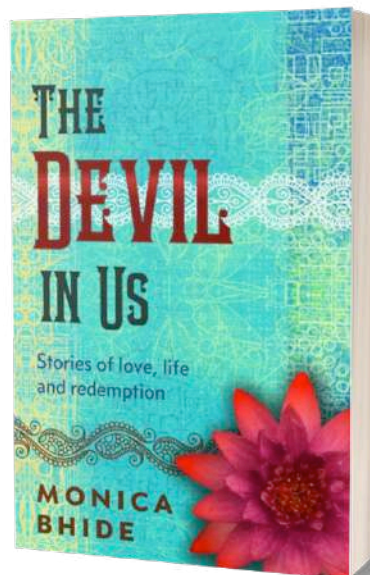


The Devil in Us

Spellbinding stories of fate, fortune, and love are woven into lessons for life. A startling train wreck inspires new passion in a disenchanting bride. A prophetic poet's love is hopelessly doomed by addiction. An enchanting woman literally steals a stranger's soul. These are but three of a dozen haunting, gripping stories in which each compelling character faces the fateful moment that may forever change them.

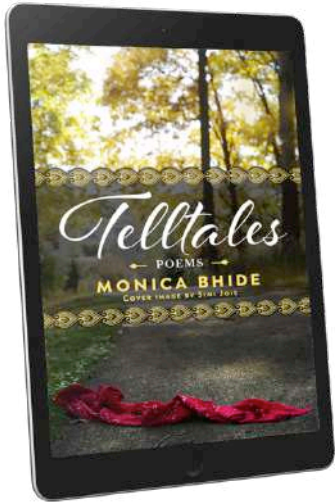
“This book and its characters will haunt you long after you finish reading it.”

~ Kathleen Flinn, author of *The Sharper Your Knife, the Less You Cry*



“Filled with surprises and heart, this book will pull you in and not let you go.”
~ Chitra Divakaruni, author of *Oleander Girl* and *Mistress of Spices*

MORE FICTION...



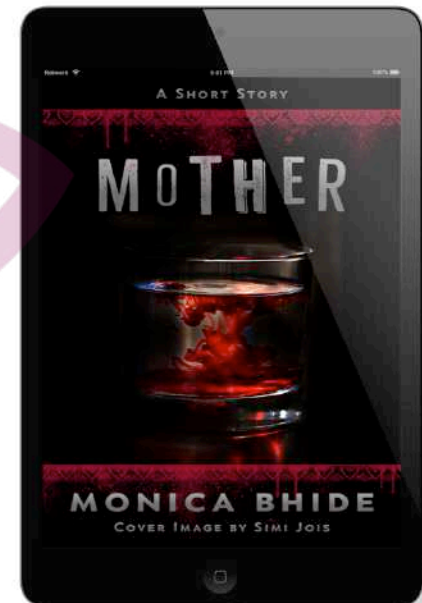
A collection of poems that explore the themes of love, loss, sacrifice, faith, healing, and the exquisitely simple experiences that connect us to one another and a deeper understanding of life.

Telltale

A book of poems

Mother
A short story

After his beloved mother's death, Eddie takes to the streets of Singapore, loathe to return to the home that only reminds him of her. On the streets, where no one knows him, he can be anonymous, but it comes at a price.

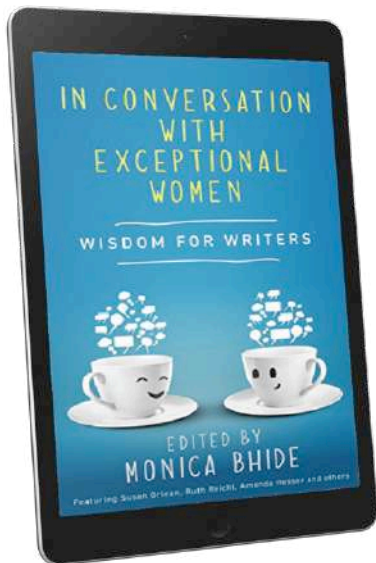
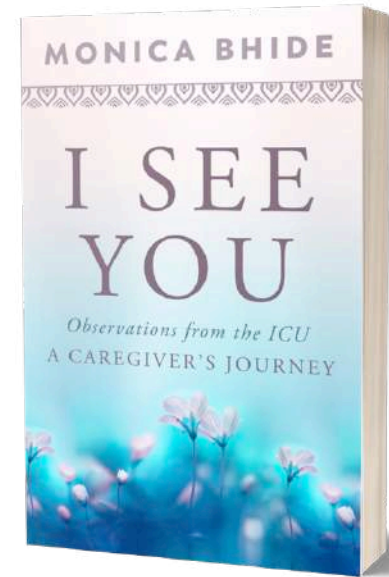


COVER IMAGE BY SIMI JOIS
MONICA BHIDE

INSPIRATIONAL

I See You – Observations from the ICU

With her trademark insight, wisdom, and evocative prose, Monica takes readers along on the emotional and transcendental journey of being a caregiver for a loved one — a journey filled with fear, helplessness, guilt, and frustration, but also humor, love, and the shining light of hope. Because “where there is hope, there is possibility, and possibility carries happiness in its folds.”

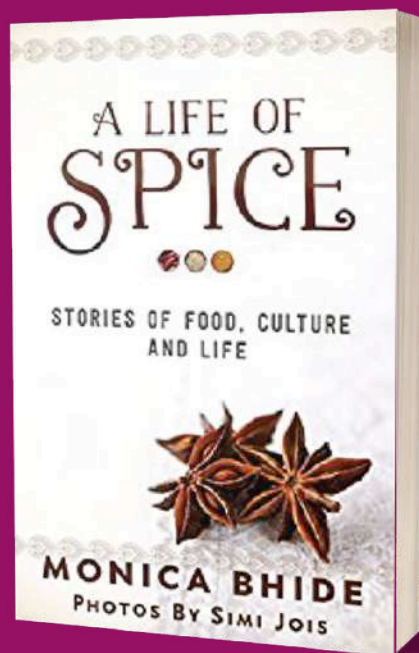


In Conversation with Exceptional Women

Real-life conversations and reflections from over 50 influential women that are practical, though-provoking and often humorous. This diverse group of fellow writers, chefs and assorted foodies candidly discuss how they successfully balance their personal and professional lives. This motivating book is a perfect guide for anyone embarking on life's larger path.

A Life of Spice

A celebration of Monica's romance with food. As in any romance, there are moments of great heartache and unbelievable happiness; betrayals and breakups; and, of course, intimacy. This collection of powerful and thought-provoking vignettes makes us examine our relationship with food deeply – and what food really means to us.



“Monica writes stories about food, but often they are really stories about searching. She looks for what the world will reveal if you ask questions of the things we usually keep silent.”

~ Francis Lam, Editor-at-Large, Clarkson Potter, and *New York Times Magazine* columnist

“Monica Bhide is more than a food writer. She's a chronicler of culture and family history. She is a romantic for the bond between parent and child. She is an essayist of her own heart and mind, fearlessly searching for the truth in both. She is endlessly fascinating to read.”

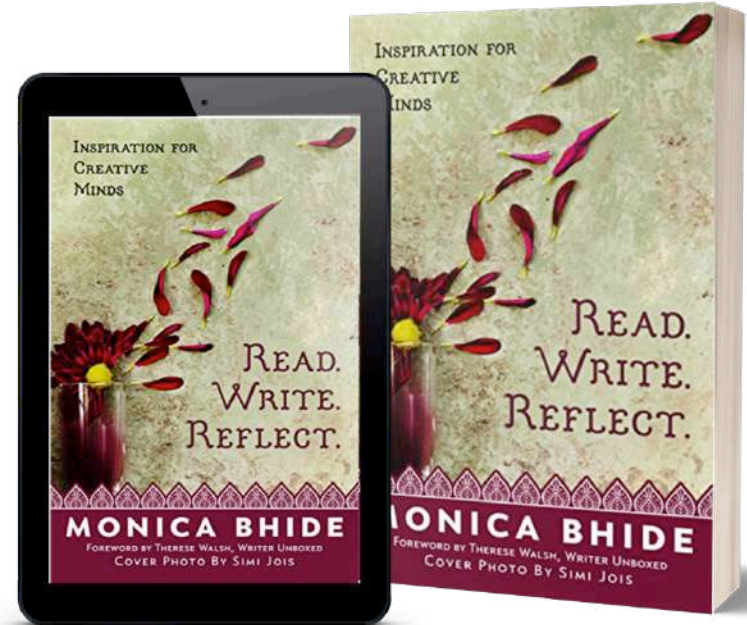
~ Tim Carman

James Beard award-winning food writer for the *Washington Post*

Read. Write. Reflect

There's no boilerplate or blueprint for being a successful creative artist. But Monica, through her decade of writing and teaching, has formulated easy-to-follow principles to help you unleash your creativity, whether it be writing a book, painting a canvas, or composing a musical opus.

Read. Write. Reflect. will show you how to face your fears, shoot down your demons, get yourself started, and follow through with persistence until you complete your creative project.



Be still. Believe. Persevere.

Bhide's gentle, lyrical voice guides you to a more inspired level of creativity. I recommend this encouraging guide for any creative soul that needs constant or occasional nurturing.

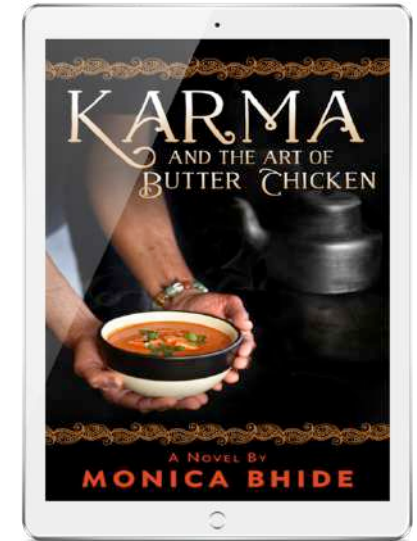
~ Sandra Beckwith, author and publisher, BuildBookBuzz.com

COOKBOOKS



The Karma Kitchen Book Club Cookbook

A compilation of recipes for book clubs reading *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken!*

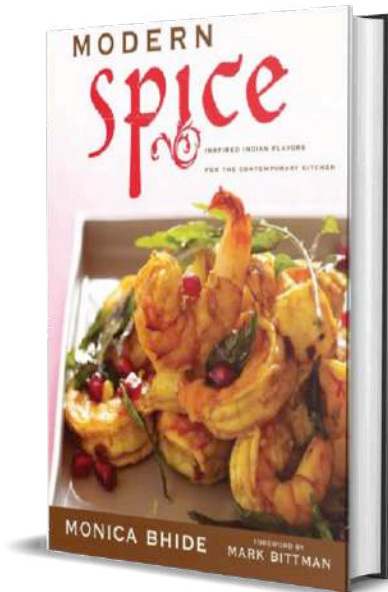


Indian Express

A collection of simple and fun Indian recipes.



COOKBOOKS



Modern Spice

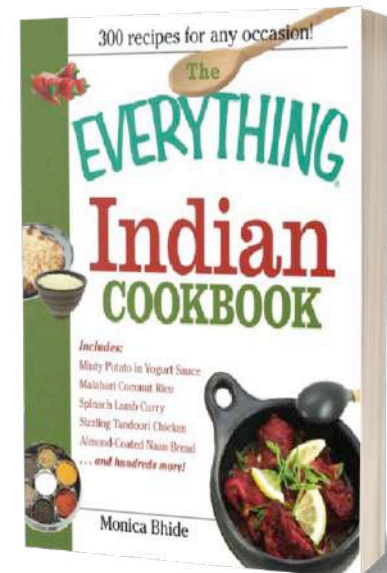
Respectful of the techniques and history of Indian cuisine but eager to experiment, Monica has written simple but deeply flavorful recipes. *Modern Spice* takes the vibrant tastes of India into the twenty-first century.

The author offers a refreshing look at the diverse and changing cuisine of India, with a new perspective that will be embraced by Indian food lovers everywhere.

~ *Publishers Weekly*

The Everything Indian Cookbook

Guides readers through preparing delicious Indian cuisine right in their own homes. From basic Indian flavors and spices to Indian cooking methods and meals, *The Everything Indian Cookbook* offers a diverse set of recipes perfect for both vegetarians and meat-eaters.





Writing Coach

Monica has taught all over the world including conferences in London, Dubai, US etc. She has also been the “Writing Coach in Residence” for the annual conference of the Association of Food Journalists. Her course offerings include:

Creative Writing

A hands-on seminar focused on making food writing come alive. Learn to write with all your senses: taste, smell, sound and more.

How to write a cookbook

This seminar focuses on all components of cookbook writing including: how to collect recipes and develop your own recipes, how to write engaging stories to go alongside the recipes, how to compile the book and, last but not the least, how to sell your book!

Understanding self publishing

An informative and engaging workshop where you will learn the basics of self-publishing and how you can get your book published.

Guest Speaker

A respected writing authority, Monica appears regularly on NPR and conducts sold-out workshops on writing, food, culture, and scheduled speaking events at prestigious venues as the Smithsonian Institution, Sackler Gallery, Les Dames d'Escoffier, Georgetown University, and Yale University.



Accomplishments and Recognition



As a noted international food writer, Monica has built a diverse and solid audience through her books and articles in top-tier media such as: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Bon Appétit*, *Town and Country Travel*, *Food and Wine*, *Cooking Light*, *Better Nutrition*, and many others.

Monica's work has garnered numerous accolades and has been included in four *Best Food Writing* anthologies (2005, 2009, 2010, and 2014). She has also sat on the judging panel for the Greenbrier Food Writers Scholarship and for the James Beard Awards.

Recognition

A Life of Spice was picked by Eat Your Books as one of the top five food memoirs of 2015.

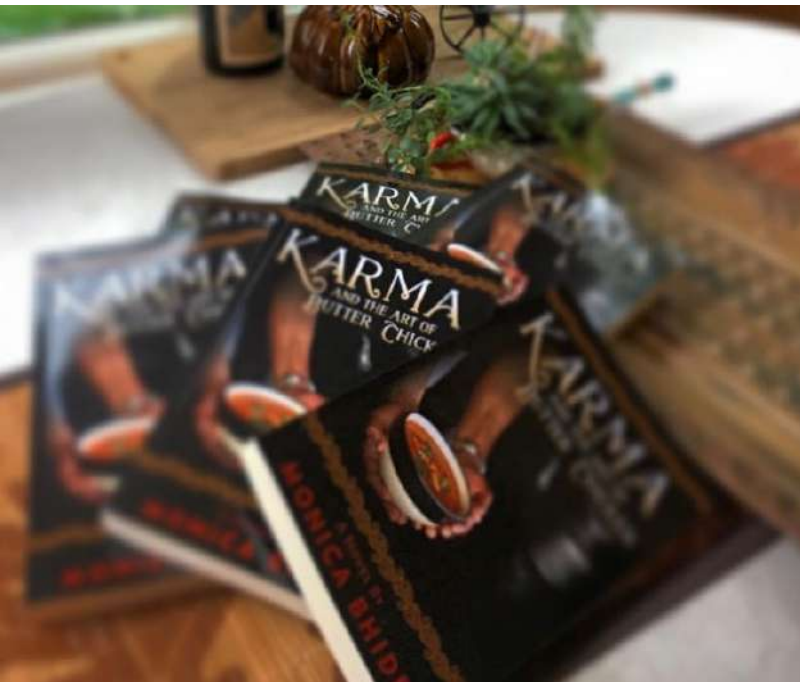
The Chicago Tribune named Monica “one of the seven food writers to watch in 2012”.

Top Chef’s Padma Lakshmi picked Monica’s *Modern Spice* as one of the “Best Books Ever” for Newsweek in 2009.

Recipient of the Susan B. Langhorne Scholarship for Food Writers at the Symposium for Professional Food writers (2004)

One of Mashable’s top 10 food writers on Twitter.

Winner of a full Greenbrier Scholarship (2011)



Recent Appearances

- National Press Club: Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken Dinner Event [December 2016]
- Whole Foods: 3-month store tour featuring Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken and a butter chicken tasting
- Pohick Regional Library (Burke, VA): Featured Author event [May 2019]
- NPR Employee Café: Special Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken. The café menu featured dishes from *Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken*. Monica was on hand to sign books. [May 2019]
- Smithsonian Associates: Deliciously Diverse - Madhur Jaffrey in conversation with Monica Bhide on Indian Cuisine [May 2019]



Contact

WEBSITE:

WWW.MONICASAIGAL.COM

EMAIL:

monica@monicasaigal.com



[@mbhide](https://twitter.com/mbhide)



[monica.bhide1](https://www.facebook.com/monica.bhide1)



[@monicabhide](https://www.instagram.com/monicabhide)



[mbhide](https://www.pinterest.com/mbhide)



For Inquiries:

- For book (print, digital or audiobook) inquiries
- For conference, workshop, book discussion/signing or book club appearance opportunities and requests
- For press inquiries and interview requests

Please contact:

stephanie@pastecreative.com