

# SEEVA

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**PLUS**  
A DESI  
THANKSGIVING  
FEAST

**COOKING  
WITH  
COMPASSION**

**OUR TOP  
10 NGOS**



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# Cooking with Compassion

*Entrepreneur Nupur Arora  
feeds those in need in  
her community*

## SWETA VIKRAM

**O**n Ashtami, the eighth day of Durga Puja, it is believed that Goddess Kali appeared from the forehead of Devi Durga and killed Chanda, Munda, and Raktabija — the asuras or demons who were with Mahishasura. If I remember correctly, this is the story my mother told me. Be it Asthami or Navami, my interest has mostly been in Kanya Puja and the Asthami prasad composed of halwa, puri, and kala chana.

Ever since my mom passed away, I haven't eaten any Asthami prasad. I make halwa, puri, and kala chana for winter brunch or other festivals. Just not on Asthami. I miss my mom's cooking. This year, most unexpectedly, I received a surprise prasad package for Asthami. What did it contain? Puri, halwa, and kala chana. It was finger-licking good and took me back to my childhood. This surprise delivery was from Nupur Arora,

the CEO of [Namastay Food and Bev Corp. NY](#). It was truly the taste of mom's love on a plate.

Arora has a larger-than-life personality and ginormous heart. I was almost teary-eyed as we devoured the box of prasad. Some of my friends saw the picture of the prasad platter in my Instagram stories and went, "That looked so good. I wanted to eat it."

I agree with them. Arora's food tastes delicious. I love to cook and throw dinner parties at home. But part of my self-care is getting a few of 's dishes on my plate. My personal favorites are her rajma and saag paneer. There are so many people who are gifted cooks with successful restaurant or catering businesses. There are numerous cooks and meal delivery services all over NYC. What spoke to me about Arora is the altruism in her work and the purpose behind what she does: feeding the community with love.



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### *Nurturing the Community*

“I believe in community,” Arora said. “My brand name, Queens Curry Kitchen, is built on the love I have for Queens and the diverse cuisines it has to offer. Community not only gives us the roots for a foundation but also gives us branches to network and expand and do work that feels rewarding and fulfilling.”

Arora walks the talk. When I was planning an in-person book reading event, she said, “I will supply snacks.” I asked how she wanted to set the pricing, so the host and I could include it in the ticket price. Arora replied, “Build a community. Get people together. I will do it for free this time.”

### *How It Started*

After her daughter went away to college and Arora lost her father, she felt an overwhelming sense of isolation and grief. To top that, Arora had to end her lease with the commercial kitchen for her spice manufacturing company due to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. She felt unsure about what she was going to do with her talent. But the universe was watching.

In 2020, Arora received a random phone call from

a community member during the lockdown, asking if she could take some food to this person’s aging parents in Arora’s neighborhood. This wasn’t an Indian family. For weeks, Arora cooked and delivered food to a rabbi recovering from knee surgery and his wife. She even cooked Sabbath meals for them.

That one phone call rekindled Arora’s love for homestyle cooking. Eventually, that became the bridge between her family’s restaurant in Manhattan (that was suffering due to lack of business) and the community in Queens. Today her clients include folks with young children, senior citizens, those unable to go food shopping, busy families, and individuals living alone. It has given them something to look forward to every week as the menu changes weekly.

“The community has been very supportive of this new side to our business with homestyle food, which is healthy and nutritious, offering something new every week, something that is hard to find in any restaurant,” she said.

The communities of Forest Hills, Rego Park, Briarwood, and Kew Gardens have been rooting for her business.

“They have really helped me establish a regular meal delivery service, bringing plant-based Indian food to people eager to eat healthier, but do not have the time to cook every

## “THE COMMUNITY HAS BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF THIS NEW SIDE TO OUR BUSINESS WITH HOMESTYLE FOOD, WHICH IS HEALTHY AND NUTRITIOUS, OFFERING SOMETHING NEW EVERY WEEK, SOMETHING THAT IS HARD TO FIND IN ANY RESTAURANT”

meal for themselves or their families,” she said. Arora cooks with olive oil, Himalayan pink salt, and low spice levels. She personally delivers the food to Roosevelt Island and multiple neighborhoods in Queens, NY. For her Manhattan clients, she has help for delivery.

### *Staying Authentic*

Another cool thing about Arora’s meal delivery service is that she stays true to her North Indian upbringing by offering dishes that her mother used to prepare daily when she was growing up.

I have combined this with weekly specials of street food from India or regional specialties and the community that I serve has very happily embraced each and every item that we have served up,” she said.

### *Nourishing the Sick*

If Arora finds out people in her community are sick (even if she doesn’t need to know them personally), she cooks and delivers meals free of charge. For a mom who had undergone gastric bypass surgery, Arora delivered five weeks of free meals for the entire family as the lady’s mobility was restricted. For families hit by COVID, she supplies 2-3 weeks’ worth of food. There is a mom undergoing chemotherapy for whom Arora has been dropping off fresh, free, homemade meals for six weeks now.

“I won’t stop till she tells me she’s had every item on my menu,” Arora says with a smile.

Her compassion is not limited by geography. When the Delta variant of the coronavirus engulfed India earlier this year, Arora donated all the revenues earned from her meal delivery service for one week to Hunger Heroes. Chef Aman Dhar, who is her nephew, started Hunger Heroes in 2020 to feed homeless immigrant workers on the streets of New Delhi. Many of them were abandoned by their employers during the lockdown.

Monetary contributions from Arora as well as her regular customers in Queens, NY to this campaign helped Chef Dhar arrange oxygen tanks, unadulterated medicines, and food supply to many COVID-hit families across New Delhi, Noida, and Gurgaon.

### *How to Help the Queen of Spices Sustain Her Queendom*

It’s the holiday season. Diwali and Bhai Dooj celebrations are winding down, and we are getting ready for Thanksgiving. Aren’t holidays about sharing food and love with your family, friends, and community? Isn’t Thanksgiving itself about sharing meals and practicing gratitude? Arora’s work makes each day feel like a special holiday for those she helps. If you sponsor a week’s worth of meal for a family in need, it gives Arora a break as well. You let her know and make the payment; and she will cook the food and have it delivered. For her business and selflessness to be sustainable, let’s support this woman who is feeding communities with love.

Arora’s parting words as we wrapped up the interview were, “If you are already a paying supporter, I want to say a heartfelt thank you! If you know anyone who is at a challenging time of their life due to illness, (mental or physical), financial challenges, or a family that lost a loved one, a mom working two jobs and doesn’t have the time to cook or even a senior citizen or college kid away from home or family who could use “moms love, on a plate” give them my number. If you can’t help with \$\$ please let them know a service like this exists!”

People are healing, their families are well-fed, and that makes Arora happy. “I know my purpose in the world: Usko nibha rahee hoon.”

### *Final Thoughts*

For anyone anywhere in the world who would like to order a week of food for their loved one in New York City (subject to delivery zones), here’s the link! There is a new menu every week and food is delivered to their door.

[Queens Curry Kitchen](#) is on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). You can call or text Nupur Arora at (917) 415-3823 to discuss any specific dietary needs for custom orders, group orders, events etc.