



Spice up Your Life with Sri Lankan Cooking with Ruwanmali Samarakoon-Amunugama

Nerdin' About Podcast Transcript, Season 2 Episode 9

Michael

Hey everyone welcome to Nerdin' About, I'm Space Michael, and with me as always, or usually with me as always, except for that one year she left me to go to Sri Lanka, and that's Dr. Kaylee Byers.

Kaylee

Hello, I did leave you and I missed you.

Michael

Uh huh. There was a bit of a pause there when you said "miss me".

Kaylee

I did miss you.

Michael

Well, we missed you a lot.

Kaylee

Yeah, I missed Nerd Nite a lot. I had a really fantastic time, and I'm really excited because today we're going to be talking about Sri Lankan cooking, and I have been missing the food a lot. So, I'm really excited to introduce everyone today to our guest. So today we're chatting with Ruwanmali Samarakoon-Amunugama, who's the author of the cookbook, "Milk, Spice, and Curry Leaves: Hill Country Recipes from the Heart of Sri Lanka". So, if you listened to our previous episode with Vanessa Vakharia, you know already that I love this cookbook, because it was my nerd out. So, really excited to nerd out more about it again today. Hi Ruwan, how are you?

Ruwan

I'm great. Thanks for having me. I'm really excited to be here.

Kaylee

Oh, my gosh, it is a joy. We're also really excited. So maybe to start I mean, I'd love to start talking a little bit about the cookbook. So, I just gave the title for everyone. But can you tell us a little bit about your cookbook? Where did you get the idea for this beautiful book?

Ruwan

I mean, my parents are both from the central province of Sri Lanka. They are both from [Kandy](#). From eight months of age, my mother started taking me to Sri Lanka, along with my sister, and we would have the opportunity to stop in various places along the way in Asia and in Europe. Then we would arrive to Sri Lanka to Colombo, the capital, and then we would have these journeys from Colombo to Kandy, and it was really an integral part of my upbringing. Then we'd go back home to Canada, and I'd have all of this stuff in my head. I think somehow, all of that sort of synthesized into the food, because that was the tangible piece that we had, apart from the way they raised us, and bringing some cultural elements. In our upbringing, they weren't really sort of strict on a lot of things, but the food was a fun thing about our culture. It was the



way I felt my mother connected, not only with other Sri Lankan Canadians, but it was how she connected with Canadians in general. It's how she built her community everywhere we went in Canada, and we've lived in many parts of Canada, and then I just really started paying attention to her recipes, and how she cooked, and then when we would go back to Sri Lanka. I would get more and more interested in the cooking methods and then in the Central Province, Kandy, and then going to the markets, talking with the farmers where we bought our produce. Then I would come back home, and it just started to melt together for me, and it was my escape, but the really big part of it was how I understood my identity. So, that's kind of how it started, but it was also because I wanted to preserve my Mom's recipes and that part of our identity. It's how I connected with my Mom to just being in the kitchen with her and all the stories that she would share. It always happened over food and cooking.

Kaylee

That's so lovely. Like so many layers being brought to this book. It sounds like not only just the food itself, but the memories and the relationships with your mother and bringing all of those things together.

Ruwan

Definitely.

Kaylee

So, you were just talking about the food, and I was really fortunate when I was living in Sri Lanka. I actually lived in the Hill Country. So, I was living in Peradeniya, I loved it. It was absolutely beautiful. I wonder for folks who haven't been there, can you set the scene a little bit for us? What is it like there? What's the vibe?

Ruwan

I think I had two experiences of it. One is lived, and one is storytelling. So, the Kandy in the Hill Country that my Mom talked to me about, and in her narratives as I was growing up, that was one capsule of Kandy, because part of it was pre-war. It was kind of a golden era of Sri Lanka, we didn't see climate change, as we see it now. It was just this very idyllic place to live, and the environment and the lushness of it. It was a very cool place to live, it really was the simple life in the hills, you had the tea estates, and the lush vegetation. There was that part of it, which I could vividly imagine, in my mind, and then there was the Kandy that I went to as a young girl to, you know, adolescence, and, you know, as an adult. I did see the progression of global warming as well. I mean, when we first went when I was younger, it really was a cool climate, but it was beautiful, because we would travel by car from Colombo, which is kind of the opposite, and travel all the way into the Hill Country. It was a quieter place. It was boring for me when I was younger, because it wasn't where the action was, but then I began to appreciate what it meant to be there, and the tranquility of it, the sense you feel, you feel more connected to nature. You feel more of the community there. It's a different sense of community in the hills. Part of the book for me is not just about the recipes, that's a big part of it, but this journey that I had taken, both like a literal journey, getting off a plane going to Colombo, that whole journey, but a journey of my identity. I would love to sit in the back seat of the car and just look, like a camera, and capture all of these scenes that were so starkly different to my reality in Canada. When you're younger, it's really apparent, it was very, very different. I think we think of food a certain way, but it's just so layered. The recipes are so layered in terms of the influences that come into it.



Michael

Well, let's get into the food Ruwan. So, the book is titled Milk, Spice, and Curry Leaves. Could you maybe talk about some of the foods that are in that for someone like me that doesn't eat a lot of Sri Lankan food, didn't get to go for a year? Maybe talk a little bit about the recipes, and why you chose some of those for the book?

Ruwan

I think a big part of it was I remember trying to come up with the title for the book. Then finally, we just came up with that, because, I mean, these are what I call the pillars of Sri Lankan cooking. The coconut milk is fundamental, the curry leaves are fundamental, and then the spices. That's the rich foundation for most of the recipes. It's your base, it's your aromatic base, and all of the textures that come into play. Interestingly, not a lot of people would think of beet roots, or they wouldn't think of carrots, or they wouldn't think of plantains as a curry, because I think we have a concept of what curry might be. So, what I really liked was sharing that you could have a beet root curry, and it's a contrast of flavors. It's easy to make, it's not as hard to make now that we have a lot of these things available, like coconut milk at a time was tough to get. It's available now, curry leaves same thing, there was a time where my Mom really had to source the ingredients, spices the same thing, now you can just source wherever you like online or in the store. I wanted to really break it down for people so they understood curry in terms of what does that mean, and not just an idea, and what is coconut milk, and what is coconut and speaking to that, and really breaking down the spices, the kinds of spices we use. The question I would get from many people was like, "Isn't Sri Lankan food the same as Indian food isn't it the same thing?" It's not because we use a different formula for the spices, so we get a different outcome, and the way we prepare it with the spices and so yeah, I think that's what I want to do with the beginning part of the book.

Michael

Maybe for someone like me, that's also very new to this world. You know, I have an idea of what curry is but from a very limited perspective. I've lived in Vancouver my whole life; I've only found the restaurants in my vicinity. So, from your perspective, what is curry?

Ruwan

Curry is just a preparation of a dish, because curry leaves have a very unique taste. Like when we use the word curry, it's not the taste of a curry leaf. Curry to me is a preparation. It's the inclusion of certain ingredients to come up with this dish, but to me it's the way you add the ingredients, how the method that is used to create this dish, and some curries have a thicker gravy, some curries have a thinner gravy, they have all different colors. That's something I talked about in the book that there is a, I'll translate it in English, a black curry, a red curry, and then a white curry. When we say that in Sinhalese, we all understand what that means, how those spices are roasted or used in the curry. So, it's really a preparation, and I think what's happened in the common use of it is it's just connected to a region of the world, and spice and the smell of a spice, but it's not really explained. So, I tried to break that down a bit in talking about the pillars, and to help people understand that it is a dish, but it's a preparation of a dish that includes certain ingredients.

Kaylee

I love that about a process instead the outcome.



Ruwan

It's funny because when we were translating the book, you'll find we might say tomato curry in English, but the translation below it will say takkāli maluwa. So, you know, in Sinhalese, we say maluwa, we don't say curry. So, it wasn't necessarily a Sinhalese word. When you're from Sri Lanka, you think of it in a different way. Maybe if you're raised in Sri Lanka, you may think of it as preparation, as a way to prepare a dish.

Michael

I'm curious about the amount of research that you did when you were going and creating this book. How much of what's inside the book is from your past, what you knew of Sri Lankan cuisine? How much of it did you discover when you did some research? Did you find any surprises along the way? Talk a little bit about that process?

Ruwan

When I was in my teens, when I was used to go to Sri Lanka, I used to go to the bookstores, and I would scour the bookstores for not just recipe books, but all of these very old books. I have one on Ayurveda, and these books would really date back to the methods of cooking, and how the environment and how plants were traditionally used, and how people would transport food within the villages. Why you would have a rice bundle, and it just connected all these dots for me, and how food was presented. It's very contrary to the way in Western societies, how we have food, all the food is brought at once and there's one main grain, and then there's an abundance of all these other dishes. I really read up about those things, and I really read up on the translations, because the translations have changed. What you would translate now would have been different, you know, 20 years ago, and then 50 years ago. So, I really spent time with those old books. I really needed into my mother and father's knowledge, because my father's father had many plantations. You know, his story began with one coconut tree, one coconut plant, and then he had so many plantations by the end of his life. I mean, they couldn't account for it. So, I mean, he has such an in-depth knowledge on farming and growing, then preparation of food, and how that intertwined with community, it was always about the community because you have to sustain the community. So, it was a very noble thing to be a farmer, and especially in rice and paddy cultivation, it was a very noble thing, and how that resonated into your community. I really started to get a sense of real true respect for that occupation, and it kind of got kind lost, I think, in Sri Lanka during the Civil War and whatnot. I think there's a resurgence sort of happening now, and part of the book is to tell that story of slowing down with our lives and knowing the food that we're eating, and taking time to cook it, because one curry I mentioned is the jackfruit curry that would sit in a pot over an open flame overnight. Like who would do that? (laughs) We're looking for microwave dinners now. I try to do that even as busy as I am with a daughter and we're all busy. I still try to do that, because it forces you even spiritually, and mentally to slow down, to slow down so that you're processing life, and you're processing what you're eating and appreciating what you're eating.

Kaylee

I love in the book it talks about the young jackfruit and the older jackfruit, and how you can use them for different things. That was something that was really shocking to me when I was living in Sri Lanka, because I'd only ever had the sweet jackfruit, and the first time I had young jackfruit in a curry was exceptional. I absolutely loved it, and it was this totally new thing for me, it might as well have been a totally different entity other than jackfruit.



Ruwan

My Dad talks about jackfruit like it's four different beings, and when he describes these, it's four different jackfruits, it's the same fruit. I always only ate the young jackfruit, and I was vegetarian for many years, like 15 years, and this was my staple, because there's so much substance to it. It's very interesting. I just find the plant life in Sri Lanka so interesting. They're so unusual looking, I remember seeing the first time I saw a jackfruit hanging on a tree, and I was again in the backseat of his car, and I'm looking at it going, "that is so bizarre", because it's so huge. So yeah, I mean, God's blessings. I just think it's so amazing, and we just take it for granted.

Kaylee

So, you were just talking about these incredible fruits, and the variety across Sri Lanka, and the book is really based on place, right? We're in the Hill Country, and we're exploring recipes in the Hill Country. What about these recipes are unique to the Hill Country? How would this differ, say if the book was in the east in Trincomalee, or in the south in Hikkaduwa?

Ruwan

I think in the Southern Provinces and Coastal, there would be more incorporation of the fish, because in the Central Province, it was a kind of a treat, or even meat was kind of a treat. So, the vegetables that grew and were common were the potato, the root vegetables, the night shade, ash plantain, gourds, those were things you wouldn't normally think. These are the types of vegetables that would be incorporated, but then the way the rice would be used. So putturu, which is something I talk about are the string hoppers. Those are very central. Now, those weren't really included in the book, because you need certain things to make those things. It's very large vegetarian diet, my grandmother's Buddhist, so it was largely vegetarian diet for her. Pol sambol, things like that, where it was grated coconut, the roti is very unique. The coconut roti is very unique to Kandy. So, what I tried to express in the book is break the conception that it was mostly meat or something, that's so not the case. If you just learn the basics of how to make some of these dishes, it's so easy to adapt to so many vegetables and fruits.

Michael

Ruwan in the book, you talk about traditional cooking methods, and you've talked about them here. You also describe some of the key ingredients like the jackfruit, as well. But why was it important for you to share these extra pieces of information beyond just sharing the recipes themselves? Is there something that you're doing here with the preservation of these methods?

Ruwan

Yeah, it's a big thing, actually, when I met my husband, and he came from Sri Lanka, and he was dropped in Philadelphia, essentially, to go to university he didn't know how to cook. There's many of that generation who left Sri Lanka, maybe around the time of the war or after the war, or, like myself, second generation, Americans or Canadians, who maybe our parents cook for us, but we didn't necessarily know how to make those very favoured recipes. There is a method to it, and there is a way to cook, and our parents didn't necessarily measure anything. They're such intuitive cooks. So, I really wanted something for that second and third generation, who I knew would want these recipes, but wouldn't really have the means to do it. When I was young, and scouring the bookstores in Canada, I really didn't find any Sri Lankan cookbooks. It kind of bothered me because I would go over the years and increasingly see the diversity section, the ethnic section increase, but I didn't see Sri Lankan cookbooks. I thought that was such a



missing thing, a bit of a gap, and I knew there was a need for it. So, I wanted to offer that not only for me, but for my daughter or for other generations who wanted a source.

Kaylee

So maybe thinking about that there was sort of a gap, and you've written this book, and what is the reception been like?

Ruwan

Yeah, the reception was great. I think the first review I read was from Epicurious, and that was kind of stunning and then from there, it was the Seattle Times, LA Times, the [National Post](#), Globe and Mail. In Sri Lanka, there was the Sunday Times, most recently, Forbes. So, it's gotten a lot of attention, which has been great, and I just hope it opens the door for these kinds of books to become more mainstream and not to be on the periphery, but for people to relate to the journey. I think that's why I wanted to write the book a certain way, so they could relate to a journey.

Kaylee

I mean it is a beautiful book, beautiful recipes, and there's also a really beautiful story throughout. But speaking of recipes, here's the question I'm sure that everybody asks because it's really basic. But do you have a favorite recipe in this book, like one that really draws you that you're really, really excited about or encourage folks to try first?

Ruwan

Yeah, I think the one that was really popular right from the get go was a cashew nut. I think people have become familiar with maybe cashew nut milk. That particular recipe got a lot of interest, and I love that recipe because the first time I actually ate cashew nut curry in Sri Lanka, oh my gosh, it was just unreal. It does taste like milk, like it just melts in your mouth. But I love pineapple curry, and it's one of those either you love it or you don't because you don't associate fruit with curry, but I love pineapple curry. I love the beetroot curry too. I should mention the roasted curry powder, which is in the beginning of the book, which is the single thing that distinguishes Sri Lankan cooking from maybe other Indian cooking is a deep roast of curry powder. So, the seeds are roasted to a coffee brown, and that's really signature to some of those recipes. I sell that, so if folks want to go and buy that they can go to my website, [Savouring Serendipity](#), and we just released that. So it's hard to make, I will say, the recipes right there, those are the exact ingredients, so I wanted to make that available to people. So please check it out on [Savouring Serendipity](#).

Kaylee

That was a goal of mine was to try to make that curry because I had a little curry left from Sri Lanka still, I mean, it's been in the cupboard while still tastes great. I thought I'm going to try to make it but I think you just got yourself a customer.

Michael

So Ruwan, so this is your first book, right?

Ruwan

Correct. Yeah.



Michael

So, have you been thinking about a sequel? Are there some recipes that you didn't get to that you would like to get into? Perhaps another type of book that you'd like to follow up with?

Ruwan

Absolutely, I'm looking at desserts. I would also love to see more of the country, you know, because when I was young the war was on, and then when I was able to travel, I had my daughter so we didn't. So, I would love to go to Jaffna. I would love to go to the parts of the country that I couldn't visit, and just get to know some of those regions a bit more.

Michael

What kind of desserts are we talking about here?

Ruwan

In Sri Lanka, they have something called jaggery, which is sugar from the palm tree. So, it has a very, very unique taste. There's all sorts of puddings and custards, and a lot of desserts came from the Dutch influences. So, love cake, they call it love cakes or Christmas cakes or certain types of cookies or sweet meats. They call it sweet meats, but these are desserts, and the types of nuts they use are cashew nuts and cinnamon. I think that's where you see certain spices shine in a different way. I think in North America, when we think spice, we think of Christmas time cooking. So, I'd like to show the other side, and sort of show the dessert side of it.

Kaylee

Well, that was sweet. Should we do something else that's sweet Michael?

Michael

Yes, let's get the nerd herd in here. If you want to get in on the nerd herd questions, we post them on our socials @NerdNiteYVR, Instagram, [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#). We only have one question for you Ruwan, but it's a good one from Pramodh. Is there much known about Sri Lankan cuisine prior to colonization?

Ruwan

I mean, colonization was, you know, 16th 17th 18th century. I'm not too sure prior to that, I would still think the influences in cooking would have been plants and spices. I don't know too much prior to that, what kind of types of cooking there would have been.

Kaylee

Yeah, I've wondered about which vegetables and things might have been introduced, and what has been in places before and then after.

Ruwan

Well, you know, the potatoes and things like carrots, they were introduced, I think, by the British. So, I think the types of food that would have been there pre-colony, and even in the Portuguese, the type types of chilies. So, I think pre-colonization, you can be sure that there was still coconut and plantains, and the jackfruits, and there's something called breadfruit. You might have tasted that when you were in Sri Lanka. I think all of those and then Ayurveda is such an old tradition, and that's really the incorporation of spice for preventative and curative health. So, I'm sure all of that was there. My great great grandparents were Ayurvedic



practitioners, so I'm sure plants and spices and whatever type of game there was, would have been the types of foods that they were eating.

Michael

There's something called breadfruit?

Kaylee

Like my two favorite things together.

Ruwan

It's kind of like bread. It's for everybody, because if you can't afford to eat something, like breadfruit can sustain you and fill you up. My mum loves bread fruit.

Michael

I should not have waited to eat dinner until after recording this podcast.

Kaylee

Now everything you'll be thinking about is breadfruit.

Michael

Should we nerd out?

Kaylee

Yes! I would love to nerd out.

Michael

All right, if you want to get down on the nerd outs you can post on our social media @NerdNiteYVR, Instagram, Twitter or Facebook. You can also email us Vancouver@nerdnite.com. Or you can also call in, we've got our first call in nerd out! So, we are connecting with Sophia Lacroix from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Hey, Sophia, how are you doing?

Sophia

Pretty good.

Michael

So, what are you nerding about?

Sophia

Right now, I am nerding out about plastic. It seems like every day I am just learning so many new interesting facts about plastic, and how it's impacting our planet. And just the revolutionary ways that people are, you know, reusing and recycling the abundance of plastic waste that we have as a global community.

Kaylee

That is super cool. I am going to guess that the recycling is different than something I just learned about rats, which is that they'll sometimes bring plastic into their nests, which is sort of recycling? What kind of cool stuff is going on with the recycling initiative?



Sophia

Well, I am part of an organization that's called SK Eco Solutions, which was founded by myself and my partner, Kai Chen. We are two 11th grade students from Bishop James Mahoney High School from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. And our recycling initiative is to turn household plastic waste, like PET type one plastic bottles into 3d recyclable filament.

Michael

Oh, cool.

Kaylee

What can I do with 3d recyclable filament?

Sophia

I mean, the filament that we produce is pretty much the exact same as any type of normal ABS or PLA 3d printing filament. You can make anything that your printer has the capacity to print.

Kaylee

So, if rats had this potential, they could build themselves a whole mess with 3d printers.

Sophia

I mean, they could build an entire rat king throne if they really wanted to.

Michael

Sophia another last quick question for you, you started this project this past year. Have you found that there's been an issue with plastics at home? I can imagine more people are at home more people are buying foods at home, which means more plastic bottles, more plastic, everything. You know, what have you found over this past year with plastic usage?

Sophia

Well, people have gravitated a lot more towards using plastic in a household way. Because lots of ecofriendly options aren't necessarily viewed as "sanitary". So, people have been buying lots more plastic bottles, plastic wrapped things as a safety precaution in a way. So, over the course of the past year, obviously, there's been a huge influx of things like plastic gloves, non-biodegradable, non-recyclable wipes that have been used, and, of course, tons of disposable masks. And the issue that I've had with this, personally, is that there aren't new ways to recycle these household items. You know, they're everywhere. Everybody can find so many things in their house that they just kind of kept because they can't really recycle it, and it's trash at this point, but then they feel bad throwing it out. The most frustrating thing is that we don't have solutions to recycle every type of plastic yet, and we're still kind of at Ground Zero trying to figure out new ways to do it.

Michael

Absolutely. Well, Sophia, thank you so much for calling in. Where can people learn about this initiative that you put together?

Sophia

For all things SK Eco, they can contact us at our email, which is skecoyxe@gmail.com. Or they can give us a follow-on [Instagram](#) or Facebook, which is also the same handle @skecoyxe or <https://skecosolutions.wixsite.com/home>



Michael

Awesome thanks Sophia.

Sophia

Of course, thank you so much.

Michael

Alright, shout out to Pramodh for creating our new Nerd Herd call in audio track. Okay, Ruwan, what have you been nerding out about recently?

Ruwan

Well, right now, I am nerding about diversity, equity and inclusion. It is a course I'm nerding out about through Yale University. It's a subject that I've always been interested in, it's been intertwined with my own experiences as a Sri Lankan Canadian. It's intertwined with even the cookbook in terms of understanding identity, and how we understand ourselves, how we understand other people, whenever I would travel to Sri Lanka, we would always have stops along the way, whether it was Japan or Singapore, Germany. I would come back with this bird's eye view, I really felt like I saw culture from that height. It was harder for me to relate to people because of it, because I didn't see self or identity as this thing. I understood it as so much broader. It's a good thing, but it was harder to relate to people, but now we're in an era where we're really trying to understand that so we can better get along, we can coexist better, and we can relate to people better for the benefit of everything for everyone. So, it's something that I've felt very strongly about. So that's what I'm learning right now.

Michael

We're all learning.

Kaylee

It's an incredible thing to be nerding out about. Did you say you were taking a course through Yale?

Ruwan

Yeah. So, it's called fostering inclusion and diversity it's not what you would normally think about, they're really talking about how do you take somebody's perspective? How do you take somebody's perspective and their trajectory and include it in your work, and your work life?

Kaylee

That's great. That's something I have tried to really bring, especially to the centre, when I've been teaching, is really thinking about, like, how everybody's unique experiences make everybody so different. And how do you incorporate all of those things, to bring folks together to learn about something, and to have discussions and to learn from each other? And I think that getting to know identity is really special.

Ruwan

It is. It's funny, because you look to nature, you look to science, or you look to the natural world, and we see diversity all around us coexisting quite beautifully, quite harmoniously, and yet we struggle with it, and we struggle with that piece. So, there's quite a deep psychological piece to that that I'm quite interested in.



Kaylee

Very cool. What about you, Michael? Are you grappling with any psychological pieces right now, what are you nerding about?

Michael

I'm grappling with some rather large things. So, on June 16, which is a little after we release this episode, I'm putting together another online Cosmic Night on dinosaurs. Now, Ruwan I know your daughter is into space. So, do you know if I say dinosaurs, do you know what wiped out the dinosaurs?

Ruwan

I'm just going to take a guess. But was it an asteroid?

Michael

It was an asteroid. That is the name of the event that I put together. It is called Dinosaurs and the Asteroid. But the special guest that I'm bringing in for this event, Amir Siraj from Harvard, just released a brand-new paper that revealed a new model of what wiped out the dinosaurs and spoiler wasn't an asteroid...

Kaylee

Excuse me what? (laughs)

Michael

It was comet. So, a quick primer on the difference between an asteroid and comet. Asteroids, primarily rock metal based, leftover fragments of the early solar system, kind of linger around in between Mars and Jupiter and sometimes come close to us. Comets however, they come from way out, and the far reaches of the solar system. They're primarily made of ice and gas. But their model states that a potential impact from a comet, it may not have been that big, but if it was coming in at that trajectory would come in really, really fast. So, they're thinking that it might have been a smaller object, but one that had a much greater force. Now Kaylee, Ruwan, you're probably asking, "Does it really matter if we know if it was a comet or an asteroid that wiped out the dinosaurs?" Like, both are pretty bad, you know? And you're right. But remember, when it comes to extinction level events, there's a lot out there that we're not prepared for. And I mean, we were barely prepared for this pandemic.

Kaylee

Shockingly, underprepared. (laughs)

Michael

You know, comets really haven't been studied that much, because they're so far away. When they come by, they just zip by our planet, in a matter of days, I mean, like we saw one, up in the skies here last year. Amir and his team at Harvard, have really started to put together a little bit more of a focus on comets. It was put together with one of his colleagues, kind of a controversial guy named Avi Loeb, who some of our listeners may know, he released a paper recently that stated there was an object called Oumuamua that came into our solar system that was actually aliens. Yeah, there's lots of objects out there that come by really quickly. But if we know where they're coming from, we can be prepared for that, and we can study them, and that's really the main point of this. So, you know, comets super cool, maybe wiped out the Dinos, come online, June 16, with Amir Suraj, at the [Space Centre](#).



Kaylee

Get ready to forget everything you thought you knew about the mass extinction event of the dinosaurs, and then just change it a little bit, and put it back in your brain.

Michael

Exactly. That's what that's what I love doing is kind of like, you know, set people's expectations for something completely different. But then it ends up being close to what they thought it was just you know, different and fun. Speaking of expectations Kaylee, what have you got for us for your nerd out?

Kaylee

Oh, wow, that was a great segue. Our segues are sometimes fine. So that was pretty good. So, if you listen to the podcast, which obviously you do, because you're currently listening, or if you used to attend live events, you'll know that I've spent a lot of time studying rats, I studied rats for my PhD. I still study them now in my role in my postdoc, but recently, I've also started doing some planning for some bat research here in BC. So, our flying friends that are not closely related to rats. So, if you thought they were just flying rats, take that out of your brain, change it and then put it back in. So, no they're not. So, I've been starting to do some work with bats, and because I'm doing that work, I've also been meeting now a whole new group of bat researchers and community organizers who love bats so much. I'm going say the bat community is a lot more enthusiastic than the rat community. I will say that. So, getting to know this community, I've also become aware of some really cool local initiatives, and I want to tell you about one of them. So, there's a new initiative here in the Lower Mainland to get you and your kiddos if you have them, out there listening to your local bats. So, the Fraser Valley Regional Library has just launched a new program called Bat Packs. I know clever, I'm jealous, I didn't come up with it. So, you can loan these Bat Packs out for a period of about three weeks through the [Fraser Valley Regional Library](#), and each Bat Pack includes an eco-meter bat detector that can be attached to your cell phone and can be used to listen to bats and see where they are. So, you can go out there and you can you can find where the bats are, you can listen to them. There's also a copy of a BC Bat Friendly Communities Guide for bat species identification and a copy of a booklet called Bat Citizens: Defending the Ninjas of the Night.

Ruwan

Wow. I wish this was happening in Washington.

Kaylee

You should look to see if they have something similar. But yeah, it's a cool initiative. I'm sure some different cities do it. The bat packs are designed to raise awareness and appreciation for bats, because bats are amazing and we often are scared of them and should be really appreciative of them because they help control insect in the environment, they also help cycle nutrients through wetlands and forests. And half of the bat species in BC are considered species at risk. Get out there, listen to your bat neighbors and learn to love them so we can all conserve them together. So that's what I'm nerding out about,

Michael

You know, the bats, they've got their own superhero. I mean, you really need to get on the rat superhero, so that we can really get more people's attention on rats. Right?



Kaylee

Well, Splinter was kind of a superhero.

Michael

Yes. But I mean, I guess what I'm trying to say is like, we need to get Splinter his own thing, because it's the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, so the turtles are the focus.

Kaylee

Yeah, Splinter is an add on. I hear you, you're right. I'll work on that immediately. I'll start sending out proposals.

Michael

Ruwan. Thank you so much for joining us on Nerdin' About, where can people get this amazing cookbook, I think that we're going to be giving one away on our Instagram. So, if you're listening to this, get onto our Instagram, we are going to give away a copy of the book but where can people find the book and also learn more about you?

Ruwan

Yeah, I mean, essentially the book can be bought anywhere books are sold in Canada, Chapters, Indigo, internationally, Amazon, and you can learn more about me and my book on savouringserendipity.com that's my website. And yeah, hope you can check me out there.

Kaylee

Thank you so much. This was so fun. I am going to immediately after this, go buy some curry powder. For everybody listening, thank you so much for tuning in, and joining us as well. If you want to hear more from us, you can hear us on our socials @NerdNiteYVR on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. We'll be back in a couple of weeks, but until we meet again, take some time for a curry and enjoy the process of cooking.

Transcribed in part by Otter.ai