



Teen is cooking online - West Windsor girl starts kitchen-based website for young people

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Lauren Gurry



nikitaskitchen.com

Nikita Gupta

WEST WINDSOR — A kitchen-remodeling project isn't usually a job that gets a teenager excited. If anything, it only makes it more difficult to pop a quick lunch into the microwave.

Nikita Gupta, a 14-year-old from West Windsor, is an exception. Nikita is passionate about cooking and anxious to start making dishes in her family's remodeled kitchen.

"I've been cooking since I was a very young girl," says Nikita, who credits her interest to helping her mother and grandmother cook traditional Indian meals. Nikita's mom, Vaishali, says Nikita has always been interested in cooking. "When she was very little she would sit in the sink, (help make bread) and wash dishes," recalls Vaishali. "She spent a lot of time with my mother, who cooks a lot, and of course, I cook a lot."

The Gupta family enjoys traveling and visits relatives in India often, something that gives Nikita an opportunity to diversify her cooking repertoire. "I get to know different foods around the world, along with different cultures," Nikita says.

Even at home, Nikita loves exploring different cultures. She recently asked a friend's mom, Xia Lee, to help her learn to cook traditional Chinese dishes. "When I brought her to the Chinese grocery store, she asked so many questions," says Lee, who was impressed when Nikita introduced herself in Chinese before asking for cooking guidance.

"I taught her how to make Mandarin food and how to cook with fish," Lee says.

Nikita began cooking independently several years ago, and after continuously explaining recipes to her friends, she came up with an idea last summer that would make cooking easier for her peers: designing a website dedicated to the food she makes.

Nikita's website has another purpose as well. "I want to inspire teenagers to eat healthy," she said.



She hopes her website will encourage teenagers to get into the kitchen and start to love cooking.

Nikita approached her tech-savvy dad, Anupam, to help her get started with www.nikitaskitchen.com.

"Basically I did the framework, which facilitated her to upload the recipes and video," Anupam says.

Nikita is able now to manage her website independently. She edits her cooking videos, reformats the content and uploads it to the site.

Nikita and her dad track the weekly visitors and, according to Nikita, there have been between 15,000 to 20,000 visitors in the past two weeks alone.

"People are getting aware. They're starting to know me," Nikita says. "I go to local stores, and people are like, "Oh look! It's Nikita.""

Nikita hopes to expand her website this summer, creating a blog and adding new recipes and videos each day. Nikita has high hopes for the future, hoping to build her website into a business and maybe hosting her own show on the Food Network.

"There's a lot of teenagers and young people around the world I can inspire," Nikita says.

Lauren Gurry / Special to The Times

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