

# epicure

## CELEBRATING FOOD & WINE

**M**Y grandfather was the cousin of King Zahir Shah. My father was the chief accountant at a university and our family was well educated. I passed my exams and was going to study chemistry, but then Russia invaded and the war started.

Before that, life had been peaceful. We had a temple and a mosque in our city. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh — it never mattered. We went to each other's houses. It felt like we were all family, and people were happy with their lives.

But suddenly, there was all this killing and bloodshed. All these things that my eyes saw, they were

terrible. I got married one year before I left for Pakistan. My father and my wife's father were cousins; that was very common over there.

I was working with Afghan refugees in Pakistan for the International Rescue Committee. Every day, we were hearing about people who had been killed and injured. As a human being, when you see a family left without their father or mother because they have been killed by a bomb, it makes your heart so sad. The situation was getting worse. We had no choice but to leave.

The happiest memory in my life is when I came to Australia in 1991.



**AFGHANISTAN**  
**Rahimi Bargalal**

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We were in Perth, but it was very quiet — it's for people who have retired. My friend said Melbourne was more multicultural, so we went there at the end of 1992.

Cooking was my hobby, I've loved cooking since I was a child. And I'm a very outgoing person; I like being with people and hearing their stories. So after working with refugees for several years it came to my mind to open a business. When I found this place in 2001, it was like a graveyard. The ceiling, the lights — I did everything myself. It took me one year.

Our chefs Najimi and Faz are from Afghanistan, too, and our food

is 100 per cent traditional. It's not hot; it's very simple, healthy and fat-free. I use the most expensive meat. When we make the chicken curry, we don't use cooking oil. The dumplings are my customers' favourite, especially the Aussies. It's got lamb, onion and herbs and it's steamed. They love it more than anything.

I have five children and I'm so proud of them. They are very polite, academic and happy. I always taught them to respect this country. We are Australian, and to keep our country good and happy, we have to follow every single law and be respectful to all our neighbours.

My wife is very special. Everything

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I do, I discuss with her, and whatever I earn, it goes to her. She's a very smart girl. To me, she is a queen.

**Customers' favourite:** Maantu dumplings, \$14. It's a rare customer who doesn't go for the dumplings, Mr Bargalal says. Lean mince lamb seasoned with mint, onion and coriander, encased in steamed pastry and topped with chicken gravy and yoghurt. Served with salad, bread and dips.

**Rahimi's choice:** Skewers, \$14. Simple chicken and lamb skewers marinated in onions and garlic and cooked over a charcoal grill.