

Cheetie Kumar

Chef/Owner

Garland . Neptunes Parlour . Kings

As a child in India, I could often be found in the kitchen with my mother and grandmother watching, and learning as they prepared daily meals. Our family held strongly to their culinary heritage, thoughtfully passing on generations old technique and authentic preparation. At the age of 8 we settled in the Bronx, NY where I found her Immersed in a world of various ethnicities and new cultures. As a child struggling to forge an identity in a new country, food and cooking was the language that was the bridge between family and new friends.

After graduating high school, I attended University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I graduated with a BA in Psychology, minors in History and Comparative literature but got a solid education in music production, show and band management and promotion while working at the radio station and school concert board. This background prompted me to start a career in the music industry and move to Raleigh, NC in pursuit of that goal. Here I found a community that was filled with creative musicians and artists who pursued their goals outside corporate structures. I also discovered a culture rich in agriculture, racially diverse food sources and a culinary history that is as complicated as it is delicious.

Cheetie is a self-taught cook who studied recipes while pursuing a career as a guitarist in The Cherry Valence and more recently Birds of Avalon, alongside her husband and business partner, Paul Siler. Time on tour and as the owner of the music venue Kings and adjoining cocktail bar, Neptunes Parlour, taught her the value of the independent, artistic spirit that is the backbone of the downtown Raleigh community which she considers home.

Upon moving to North Carolina, she embraced the area's culture of readily available renowned agriculture, and incorporated these seasonally evolving foods to fit her multi-cultural menus at Garland. Cheetie's cooking is created in a refined and thoughtful way, filled with imagination and rebellion. It is unassumingly delicious. Her food may seem "foreign" but is rather an interpretation of local ingredients made through the eyes of someone who grew up in India, New York City and the South.

She was profiled in the New York Times in October, 2018 and Southern Living in September, 2019, the Wall Street Journal in 2020 among other national publications. She has been nominated semifinalist for James Beard Award's "Best Chef: Southeast" consecutively from 2017-2020 and is a finalist in 2020.