



# SHORT EATS

quick tidbits of life and culture in Sri Lanka

**WE WERE TOLD** that food in Sri Lanka would be spicy. Many of the dishes give you watery eyes, a warm stomach, and occasionally, even a throbbing head. In trying to cook Sri Lankan food for the family, however, I have found that dishes are spicy in the sense that they are saturated with spices. There is a lengthy list of spices in most Sri Lankan and



Indian recipes. Here, spices are stored in large containers, complete with their own scoops. They commonly include cumin, fenugreek, fennel, curry, garam marsala, cardamom, mustard seeds, turmeric, coriander, and of course, chili powder. Cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, and curry leaves are also frequently added to rice and curries for a lovely aroma and taste.

## ORANGE COCONUTS?

There are two kinds of coconuts in Sri Lanka. The first is the brown hairy coconut with the white meat inside that



we are used to in the States. This coconut is used primarily for cooking. You crack it open and scrape out the meat inside. You can put the desiccated coconut in oatmeal or salads though here it is quite often soaked and strained into curries as coconut milk. However, there's another



kind of coconut that was new to us: the bright orange "king" coconut. On the tree, bunches of these coconuts look kind of alien. They are harvested and sold as drinks, usually at fruit stands or other outdoor spots. One king coconut costs the equivalent of about 30 cents. The vendor will chop a hole in it for you and serve it with a straw. Nothing like some refreshing coconut water to beat the Colombo heat!

**WHAT'S THE WORD?** Larson likes to talk. What are some of his favorite words to say?

food

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tamil "unavu"

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sinhala "kaema"

**English:** "Honnen" (Hollen)  
"hopsicopter" (helicopter)  
"Sit here!"  
(followed by "mommy"  
"daddy" or "Honnen")

**Sinhalese:** nangi  
(nuhn-gee) *little sister*  
isa (ee-suh) *head*



**Tamil:** sari appa  
(suh-ree uhp-puh)  
*Okay Dad*  
min (meen) *fish*  
utkar (oot-kuhr)  
*sit down*