



From left: the chicken tikka;
Shachi Mehra

Spice Notes

Shachi Mehra hails from the country's top Indian restaurants, including Palo Alto's Junnoon and New York's Tabla, and now she'll be serving as executive chef at **Tamarind of London**, the U.S. debut and sister spot to the Michelin-starred U.K. eatery Tamarind. The Indian-born chef gives us a taste of the Newport Beach restaurant, which bows this month.

What inspired the menu at Tamarind of London? There is such a rich and varied food culture in India, and it's important to me to be able to make it more accessible for our guests. You'll find some dishes with certain Northern Mughlai influences, some with South Indian, Goan and Portuguese influences, and beyond. **Any regional ingredients you enjoy cooking with the most?** Lately I've been cooking

with South Indian spices, so curry, in particular, I've been using a lot. But I don't limit myself. It's really about what I'm in the mood for. **Do you have any favorites on the menu?** From the London menu, the scallops and the mussels. They are direct imports. I'm really excited about the menu items from the tandoors. We are getting three custom Wood Stone tandoors, which will be part of the display kitchen. We'll have a variety of breads, including garlic naan. In terms of proteins: the black pepper steak, tandoori shrimp and tandoori mushrooms. And the desserts—it's as simple as a molten chocolate cake, but the one we have has seven different spices. **Clarify some common misconceptions about Indian food.** It's not too spicy, and it's not too heavy. It's very, very flavorful. And just because there's spice in something doesn't necessarily make it spicy. I think it's important for us to make it approachable. 7862 E. Pacific Coast Highway, Newport Beach, 949.415.8865, tamarindoflondon.com —Alia Batniji