



bina & raj  
**SHARMA**  
of Bombay Mahal

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As youth, Raj and Bina Sharma never imagined that the state of Maine would become their future home. Now, half a world away from their birthplaces, the couple has established long reaching roots in the Maine community. "Twenty years have passed and our three boys are grown and all American university educated" said the couple with a very proud smile. Like many other immigrants to the United States, both Raj and Bina bring with them a story, a story of sacrifice and hope.

Raj grew up in a farming village in the northwestern Indian state of Punjab. Punjab is most famous for its hospitality and hard working people Raj says. Upon concluding his studies in culinary cuisine and hospitality, Raj was very eager to leave his native India and explore the world. So, once he was able to master the techniques of Indian cuisine (with a focus upon north Indian fare), Raj found work in Europe. His curiosity for global cuisine brought him all over Europe, from working in Rome's Ancona Italian kitchen with Chef Hltorri and Mr. Angelo to Amsterdam, and Munich, Germany where he worked with the same organization creating traditional German and Dutch plates.

Bina spent her childhood growing up in the East African city of Mombasa, Kenya. She explained her ancestors left India due to the English occupation of India and settled in Tanzania where her mother was born and later relocated to Kenya. Providing better opportunities and an already large Indian diaspora, the family moved once more to the United Kingdom. Bina's family relocated just west of London to Slough where she explained that a large Indian ex-pat community already resided at the time.

In 1983 Bina and Raj had a traditional arranged Indian marriage in London, England. Shortly thereafter the newlyweds moved to Cologne, Germany where they lived for several years. At this point they had two sons, both of which were born in West London. Around this time a relative had moved to Portsmouth, NH and the Sharma family found themselves visiting New England where they fell in love with the beauty of Acadia National Park and Portland, ME.

In 1990 the couple opened their first Indian restaurant, Taste of India, in Bangor, ME which was soon followed by Bombay Mahal in Brunswick, ME and Tandoor in Portland, ME. Since then they have sold the other two establishments and focused upon Bombay Mahal on Main St in Brunswick. The couple said that Brunswick and Maine's citizens have responded extremely well to Indian cuisine as the market has been continuing to expand since they first arrived in Maine. More people understand and enjoy international fare and it is a great feeling when we get to showcase our native culture to a western audience. The couple has resided in Portland, ME since the inception of Bombay Mahal and commute to Brunswick daily. Raj stated that they will retire in India one day, but will always have a dear and loving place in their hearts for all that Maine has given and taught him and his family.

This past year brought tremendous joys to the couple as they were able to witness their three sons all graduate from school. Vikash, the eldest received his doctorate degree from The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Vanit, completed his undergraduate studies from Boston's Northeastern University and will be returning there to complete a Masters degree in International Relations. While the youngest, Sumit, graduated from Portland High School and is pursuing a pre-dental degree at Boston University starting this fall 2011. Both Raj and Bina are proud and thankful for the warmth and kindness that their guests at Bombay Mahal have provided them over the decades. They both state that "no matter where life brings you, life is not what you search for and can't find; life is what you make of it together in good and bad times, in sickness and in health".

*Bombay Mahal has won an Americas Best Business Award, Been voted Best Indian Restaurant Maine by Market Surveys of America, & been awarded four stars by the Portland Press Herald. It has been featured in the Times Record, The Maine Times, Sunday Sun Journal, The Coastal Journal, Maine Sunday Telegram, and numerous other publications throughout New England. Today it is the longest running Indian restaurant in Maine.*

*Open 7 days a week for lunch & dinner with a buffet on weekends.*

