



## COOKING THE BOOKS : January 2024

**Think inside the box!**

### **Rosemary Garlic Dinner Rolls**



Dear

2024 has begun and we're almost to the end of January. Where I am, there's been a lot of snow, freezing rain, and ice. All within a couple of days. I grew up in Mumbai and the only snow and ice I saw was in my freezer, especially when the door warped and was in desperate need of defrosting.

So, of course, I was a little worried when we immigrated to Canada and I realized I'd be *living* in the freezer section for a good 4-5

months in a year. Luckily, I've learned to live with the cold. I use winter to get most of my writing done (new manuscripts, ideas, revisions etc) so that I can be outdoors a lot more in the summer. Works out most of the time.

Soup and bread are winter buddies and so, when I decided to make my fave mushroom soup, I had to make some bread rolls. Found this great recipe online for [Rosemary Garlic Dinner Rolls](#) which remind me of the laadi pav I used to eat in Mumbai. They're the same as dinner rolls and I could devour at least three of four of them, smothered in butter and dipped in sweet tea, at one sitting. It was carb heaven at a time when I didn't know, or care, what a carb was.

For those who like savoury buns, I would reduce the amount of honey in this recipe from 2 tbsps to 1 tbsp or even half (just enough for the yeast to feed on). This lot came out sweeter than I would have liked.

Enjoy!

## You'd love what's inside this box, or tiffin!



I came across this interesting article about the [Dabbawala Kitchen and the tiffin service now going online](#). It was another walk down memory lane when I went to India to take footage of the legendary dabbawallas who deliver over 6 million tiffins a month with almost 99.9% accuracy.

My story, [The Tiffin](#), is about that 0.1% chance of a lost tiffin whereby a boy loses his family and lives a miserable life in a foster home. 12 years later, using that same tiffin service, he finds his family!



Here are some pictures from 2011 when I visited Mumbai, VT station, and my school.

Some fun facts about the Dabbawallas and the Tiffin service:

1. Dabbawalla literally means "one who carries a box." The English translation is a tiffin box delivery man.
2. When the service first began, there was no computerization of the delivery system. It was all manual and the boxes were colour coded with an alpha-numeric system for pick-up and delivery locations.
3. Their organization has a six-sigma rating which means 1 error in six million.
4. They made it into the [Guinness World Records](#) when a dabbawalla, Prakash Baly Bachche, carried 3 tiffin crates on his head. Each was 6-7 feet long!
5. Per the Harvard Business Review, the [Dabbawallas of Mumbai are legendary](#), and many famous dignitaries, including King (then Prince) Charles, have visited Mumbai to meet with them.

## GIVEAWAY!



When I finished writing a fantasy adventure (The Tara Trilogy) I was missing Mumbai. Writing The Tiffin was my way of walking the streets of my childhood and remembering what it was that made this city and this service, unique.

After reading about these cool facts about Mumbai and the dabbawallas, I'm sure you want to immerse yourself into this world! I *know* you do! So go ahead and get a copy or listen to the audiobook.

### The Tiffin: Synopsis:

The dabbawallas of Mumbai deliver box lunches — called tiffins — to whitecollar workers all over the vast city. They are legendary for their near-perfect service: for every six million lunches sent, only one will fail to reach its intended destination. *The Tiffin* is about that one time in millions when a box goes astray, changing lives forever.

When a note placed in a tiffin is lost, a newborn — Kunal — is separated from his mother. Twelve years later, Kunal lives as a virtual slave under the thumb of his foster father, Seth. With danger and oppression making it impossible to stay where he is, Kunal asks his friend Vinayak, an aging dabbawalla, to help him find his birth mother. Vinayak introduces Kunal to the tiffin carriers, and a plan is hatched. Along the way, Kunal learns what it means to be part of a family.

- **Shortlisted, 2013 SYRCA Snow Willow Award**
- **Shortlisted, 2013 OLA Red Maple Fiction Award**
- **Shortlisted, 2012 CLA Book of the Year for Children**
- **Shortlisted, 2013 Manitoba Young Readers Choice Award**
- **Commended, 2011 Resource Links Year's Best**
- **Commended, 2011 Quill and Quire Books of the Year (Books for Young People)**

### Reviews

"[*The Tiffin*] is a great book about social consciousness ... because it can show you that just because someone lives halfway around the world doesn't mean they're not dealing with the same issues you're dealing with."

— *National Post*

"Melding the fantastically factual with fiction, Narsimhan sheds light on a relatively unknown part of Mumbai life while simultaneously creating a compelling quest that reads like a classic folk tale. Forgive the groan-inducing wordplay, but a novel this original is one in six million." Starred Review

— *Quill & Quire*

"Narsimhan recounts a marvellous, well-told story about what it means to belong ... When all is lost (or even just one tiffin!), Narsimhan demonstrates how hope can survive!" Recommended.

— *CM Magazine*

"I really enjoyed travelling to Mumbai in this story, and experiencing the sights, smells, and sounds of this populous city ... this is a unique survival story that will captivate junior and intermediate students."

— Maria Martella, Tinlids

The Tiffin is also available in an [audiobook](#) and I have TEN FREE codes to give away to any Teacher/Librarian or Parent who would like to share this with your students. Please email me back requesting the code. It's on a first come, first serve basis!

Download a [WORD SEARCH](#) and [ANSWER KEY](#) based on The Tiffin here!

## If you liked The Tiffin, try these!

- The Grand Plan to Fix Everything by Uma Krishnaswami
- Rickshaw Girl by Mitali Perkins
- The Bridge Home by Padma Venkatraman
- Stories from India by Chitra Sounder
- The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis

## Some final words...

Looking for chilling fantasy novels in an exotic settings within Asia, with a sprinkling of mythology and a side order of mystery?

Check out both these series by yours truly:

[EERIE TALES FROM THE EAST](#) (Goosebumps meets Asian mythology)

[THE TARA TRILOGY](#) (A quest, a mystery, and a fairy tale, all in one)

I'm on [BOOKBUB](#) and would love to connect with you there!

Please remember to [whitelist my email address](#).

Wish you all a fantastic 2024!

Mahtab

### Stardust Stories

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