LGBTQ+ Owned Business Brings Snack for Mindful Snacking to Meijer

Nalini Mehta grew up practicing Ayurveda, the ancient Indian health and wellness system, which caters cooking to individual personalities. With her partner, Anita Balakrishnan, Mehta co-launched a product made from popped Asian water lily seeds. YOGA POPS® is a healthy, shelf-stable and sustainable snack, that is plant-based and gluten-free and prioritizes wellness with its minimal ingredients and processing.

This super seed snack tastes like popcorn but is better for the body and environment. Unlike corn, which uses gallons of water and depletes the soil, the seeds are sustainable at their core. From marathon runners to figures in Hollywood, this snack is loved by many because it's high in protein, rich in minerals, and has nearly no fat, making people feel satiated and energized.

Mehta started Route to India leading group tours through India and developed a passion for sharing the Indian culture through its authentic flavors. She transitioned to teaching for cooking programs in New York City and then developed YOGA POPS®.

Originally only available at farmers' markets, YOGA POPS® expanded into a new retail market about three years ago when a World Buyer at Meijer invited the LGBTQ+ certified, South Asian women-owned small business to partner with the Meijer Supplier Inclusion team. With Mehta's background in retail sourcing and Balakrishnan's expertise in talent management and leadership, working with Meijer to expand their brand was a great next step for their business.

"For emerging brands, support from a big store like Meijer is hugely important," Mehta said. "I give full credit to Meijer for supporting us during the long period when the supply chain was broken."

While YOGA POPS® are sold nationwide to retailers, specialty stores and spa and yoga studios, Meijer is one of the major retailers presently offering the snack in three flavors – ranging from savory to umami to spicy: tandoori masala, truffle tantra, and curry. Based on Ayurvedic principles, each flavor is designed to complement different personalities.

Route to India is committed to socially conscious and environmentally sustainable business practices by honoring and thanking every member of the supply chain, ensuring that farmers in India, who source the Asian water lilies, receive fair wages, and fostering a positive kitchen culture for chefs.

Mehta and Balakrishnan are working to grow their product line while maintaining the promotion of wellness. We're proud to support their mission of promoting mindful munching and sharing the Indian culture through authentic flavors with our customers across the Midwest.

Additional assets available online: Photos (2)

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