

Auntyji Ko Pucho

By: Auntyji

This was another month that Auntyji got swamped with questions from her CityMasala readers. It was difficult to choose which ones to reply to, since she did not want to be flippant and give short caustic responses to her readers' concerns. So here is some general advice that she is going to put out ... this is your life ... you are ultimately responsible for your own actions. Do not blame others for what goes wrong in YOUR life. Count your blessings and if you want to change things, YOU have to make that change. Do not do things for others expecting something in return, do it because you want to. Be happy and be content and don't make mountains out of mole hills. This is not a rehearsal. This is your REAL life !

Q: Dear Auntyji – I am very frustrated, confused and angry about this issue. I moved into a new place a couple of months ago and wanted to host a Diwali party. Most of my friends are non-desis. My friend, Jeff, said that it would not make sense to invite people to such a party as they would not know what it is about. They would also not care for the Indian food I was thinking of serving at the party. He suggested that I host a Christmas party instead and have only American food as that is what people would enjoy. I agreed to it but I do not feel right about it. I feel I was forced into make this decision. What should I do?

Reluctant Party Giver in Naples.

A: You got yourself into this situation because you did not have enough confidence and conviction in what you were doing. No one was forcing you or had a gun to your head. You ended up making a choice based upon someone else's opinion without thinking it through for yourself. This was your party, and you could have had any theme that you wanted.

A Diwali party is a very appropriate way to introduce your friends and family to your new home. That is the meaning behind Diwali – a celebration of joy with people whom you care for. If most of your friends are not Indian, this would be an opportunity for them to learn a bit about your culture. People like theme parties, and would have probably loved to try Indian food. You could have served foods that are easier to eat and put description cards before each dish. You could even have chosen to serve a combination of *desi* and non-*desi* foods.

Auntyji remembers the time when she had her Diwali party. The horrific events of 9/11 had just taken place and people were very shaken up. There was a sense of distrust amongst Americans towards foreigners, especially Muslims. Auntyji wanted to open her home and her heart up to show people around her that there was still love, faith and hope out there. So she decided to throw a FABULOUS party and invite everyone she knew to it. And what a glorious affair it was. The place was lit up with candles. Jasmine and roses not



only lent their beauty, but the wonderful fragrance wafted gently through the rooms. The feast of *samosas*, *butter chicken*, *malai kofta*, *kababs*, *gulab jamun*, and *barfi* was sumptuous. Everyone had a wonderful time and mixed with one another with ease. The non-Indians were eager to find out about Diwali and a lot of them had made the effort to read about the meaning of this wonderful festival. Some had even bought gifts of candles or sweets. Everyone left that night having experienced a great evening that they would not forget in a while.

Coming back to your party ... if you want to have one, throw the best one you can. Auntyji would suggest calling it a Holiday party and keeping the theme festive. By all means, add some *samosas* or chicken *tikka* to your menu. People will love it even if Jeff does not. The next time you want to have a party adopt an Indian theme. People will enjoy and appreciate it. With the numerous festivals that we have, you do not even have to wait until next year for Diwali to come around again.

Q: Dear Auntyji– Indians are so nosy. I am tired of being constantly asked if I have a girl friend or when I will get married. Some people are always trying to fix me up with some girl or another. How do I let people know that this is my private life? I am not ready to get married and do not know if I ever will be. How do I get them to stop?
Tired of Questions in Orlando.

A: People in general are nosy, not just our lovable *desis*. It is human nature. It is possible that our Indian culture perpetuates that quality a little more in our community than in others. Auntyji believes that these people can be put into the following categories:

1. Those that care and are genuinely concerned.
2. Those that are just making idle conversation.
3. Those who are being nosy and like to gossip.
4. Those who have another motive like trying to fix you up with someone they know.

The first category might include your parents, some relatives and concerned friends. These people care about you, want you to be happy, and feel you cannot be happy if you are alone. You have to respect their efforts, but at the same time, let them know as nicely as possible that this is your private life - that you do not like to talk about it, and when you are ready for what they have in mind, you will let them know.

For the people in the second category, who are usually casual friends, some co-workers, distant relatives, and acquaintances, the best strategy is to change the topic. Ask them how they are doing and how their life is going. They are just trying to make conversation, and their intention is probably not to pry into your personal affairs. They would probably be quite happy to talk about other things.

The next group of people are the obnoxious ones whom you want to avoid. Try not to let them bother you. Make an excuse and leave or change the subject.

For the last category, politely say NO. This is your life. Tell them you will take their help if you feel the need.

On this note, Auntyji bids her readers alvida and waits to hear from you at auntyji@citymasala.com.

Don't forget, life is short - live it to the fullest with attitude!