


**HINTS  
FROM  
HELOISE**

## Wash and wash again?

**Dear Heloise:** I would like to know how safe it is to eat spinach from the bag. We get organic baby spinach that is TRIPLE-WASHED. My daughter says it is already washed, so we do not have to wash it. I disagree. Please clear this up. — Sheela M. in Texas

Oh, I don't want to get between a mother and daughter over spinach! However, most food-safety experts agree that if the bag says "triple washed, ready to eat, and no need for washing," then you should be safe, all things considered.

Triple "washed" means it also goes through a chlorine-and-water rinse, too. This rinse kills somewhere between 90-99 percent of bacteria, which probably is a higher kill rate than you would get at home. Don't most of us just "rinse" under water? How long? Probably not long enough to really get rid of many germs.

That said, as they say, if you want to "rinse," then do so if it makes you feel better. — Heloise  
P.S.: I don't.

### Salt free-seasoning

**Dear Heloise:** I've used a salt-free steak seasoning that is no longer available locally. I can get it from the manufacturer if I buy four bottles at a price higher than the grocery store's and pay shipping and handling. Do you have a recipe I could make at home? — Pat S., Fort Wayne, Ind.

Sure do! HELOISE'S SALT SUBSTITUTE recipe is just what you are looking for. Here it is:

5 teaspoons onion powder  
1 tablespoon garlic powder  
1 tablespoon paprika  
1 tablespoon dry mustard  
1 teaspoon thyme  
1/2 teaspoon white pepper (black, if preferred)  
1/2 teaspoon celery seeds

Mix all the ingredients thoroughly, then store in an old spice jar, labeled, with all your other spices. For more seasoning recipes (and sauces), order one of my Heloise's Seasonings, Sauces and Substitutes pamphlets. Go online to [www.Heloise.com](http://www.Heloise.com), or send \$3 and a long, self-addressed, stamped (70 cents) envelope to: Heloise/Seasonings, P.O. Box 795001, San Antonio, TX 78279-5001. This original Heloise recipe is one of the most asked for, so please keep a copy of this column. — Heloise

### Remove tomato stem

**Dear Heloise:** I read your column daily in the Orange County (Calif.) Register. I use a strawberry huller to remove the stems from strawberries. It also removes the stem from tomatoes without having to cut off the end piece. This also removes some of the bitter white part of the tomato. — Mnelson, via email.

# Where do Minot vegetarians eat?

By **JOHN BECHTEL**  
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Where do vegetarians eat? That is the question I posed to Braina Patel Shah, who with her husband Rahil owns and operates City Laundry at 2505 N. Broadway in Minot. You may have met them, because to the best of my knowledge City Laundry is the only laundry and dry cleaning service in town.

Braina and Rahil are first generation immigrants, something most of us can only say about our grandparents or great grandparents at best. The Shahs are from Gujarat, one of India's 29 states (and seven territories). As a frame of reference, the U.S. has 50 states and sixteen territories. India as a country is still evolving, and its most recent state was formed just last year. Our last state to be added was Hawaii, in 1959. Just one year later, Gujarat was subdivided from a much larger Indian state, Maharashtra, in 1960 to achieve Indian statehood. Maharashtra probably doesn't mean much to you unless you realize its capital is Mumbai, formerly named Bombay. India as a whole has a population of 1.2 billion. To make that number more meaningful, at least one out of every six people on this planet is from India. So it makes sense to know a little about it. By comparison, the U.S. has a population of about 320 million.

Gujarat is the fifth most urbanized of all the Indian states, with a population of more than 60 million people. The population density of Gujarat is more than 800 people per square mile, compared to about 84 people per square mile in the U.S. By U.S. standards, that's pretty crowded, and by North Dakota standards, which has a population density of 10.5 per square mile, that's the equivalent of culture shock. Gujarat is one of the richest places on earth and their GDP (gross domestic product) per capita is one of the highest in the world. They are at the heart of one of the earliest known centers of civilization, the Indus River Valley. It is a part of the world known for its traders and entrepreneurs, and India's greatest industrialists and merchants have come from this region.

If you travel at all in the U.S. you have undoubtedly experienced the Gujarati legacy, even unconsciously, as almost 60 percent of all motels and 37 percent of the entire hotel/motel industry in the U.S. are owned by Gujarati Indians. And of those owners, 70 percent go by the surname Patel, giving rise to the sobriquet "Patel motel." Since Braina's maiden name is Patel, I asked her about this. She says Patel in India is like the name Smith in America. It has its roots in farming and managing land use, and was once used to designate community leaders in small farming villages who handled disputes. Like the American name Smith, Patel at one time was more about what you did, your function in an agrarian society. The Patels distinguished themselves, and today many of those "farms" more resemble estates than small plots of land.

During the heyday of the British empire, large numbers of Gujaratis were transplanted by the British to their colonial outposts in East Africa, where they continued to distinguish themselves in trade and business. During the 1960s and 1970s, when many of these former British colonies succumbed to tribal dictatorships and racial and political tensions mounted, the Gujarati were forced out, and emigrated either back to England, or to other former parts of the British Commonwealth, including the U.S. Today, the name Patel is the third most common surname in the greater London area, and even in the U.S. it ranks as 174th of the top 500 most common last names. Braina says there are about 150 Indians in the Minot area, and about half of that number are Gujarati.

Why the concentration of Gujarati Patels in the hospitality industry? There are a number of factors, but among the most important is the matter of timing. The first major wave of Indian immigration to the U.S. was during this time period and many well-educated professionals, doctors and engineers, arrived. Near the end of that wave, with evolving immigration policy many others, non-professionals and less affluent arrived. Motels in the U.S. were largely a post-WWII phenomenon, and both the owners and the structures themselves were aging. There was a major energy crisis in



**ABOVE:** Typical Gujarati vegetarian cuisine

**LEFT:** Dhokla is a Gujarati vegetarian snack made from rice and chickpeas

Photo courtesy of Rahil Shah

the late 70s that flattened domestic travel, and hundreds, if not thousands of these motels were up for sale. These purchases were appealing to Gujarati because they were easy to run, did not require fluent English, provided good cash flow and they came with a house. Many a young Gujarati from that time period literally grew up in a motel. And finally, and certainly not least, they were able to rely on an extensive network of family and friends back home to help with the down payment.

Virtually all ethnic immigrations reflect this clustering of family in certain geographic areas and industries, and this is no surprise, since newcomers to any area will connect with those of a similar heritage, language, culture and religion. That is why there are so many Lutheran Swedes and Norwegians in the Midwest, Irish Catholics in the South Shore section of Boston and Jews in Brooklyn, Cleveland and Beverly Hills. The greatest concentration of Gujaratis outside of their native state in India is in New York City and Jersey City.

Now more to the point of our story, the Gujarati are mostly vegetarians. Not vegans, but vegetarians. This is largely due to the Jain influence among the mostly Hindu population of India. The Jains are among the strictest of Hindu sects, and while only a tiny minority of the population, they have left an outsized impact on the culture of India. Braina tells me that for the more secular Gujarati, the vegetarianism is more a function of culture today than of religion. It is derived from a profound respect for living things. As with any other aspect of culture, it is practiced with varying degrees of strictness, and even vegetarianism, practiced in Gujarat for more than two thousand years, is reportedly yielding somewhat to westernization.

Braina Patel, who came to Minot from Jacksonville, Fla., where she was studying computer engineering, emigrated to America five years ago. She met her future husband Rahil Shah, an electronic and automation engineer, on the internet. He was still in Gujarat. As luck would have it, they were both from the same city, Vadodara. She found City Laundry for sale on the internet and bought it 3 1/2 years ago. Braina and Rahil are vegetarians. I asked them if that meant they always cooked at home. They said no, they eat out a lot, and the following is a partial list of restaurants Braina graciously supplied that they frequent and some of what a vegetarian can find on the respective menus to suit them:

**Olive Garden:** Salad; Soup-mine-strone; Lasagna frittata; Artichoke fritti; Bruschetta capreso;

Mediterranean flatbread; Eggplant parmigiana; Five cheese ziti al forno; Cheese ravioli; Ravioli di Portobello; Fettuccine alfredo

**Ruby Tuesday's:** Garden bar and bowl of soup; Spinach artichoke dip; Queso & chips; Cheese fries; 6-Cheese and tomato sauce flatbread; Veggie trio combo; Baked ravioli

**Mexican restaurants:** You can eat anything by substituting beans for meat. Paradiso's has a huge menu where you can substitute meatless, soy-based chicken or beef for the meat dishes.

**Starving Rooster:** Garlic bread; Cheese bread; Bruschetta; Fire baked artichoke dip; Salads; Roasted Portabella sandwich; Caprese prosciutto panini; Roasted veggie panini; Grilled cheese panini; Fire roasted garlic pizza; Fire roasted veggie pizza; Fire roasted tomato; Old Trusty, Yellow Fellow, Margherita, The Cyclone

**Ebenezer's:** Breaded mushrooms; Mozzarella sticks; Black and tan o'ring; Breaded dill pickle spears; Mac and cheese bites; House salad; Veggie wrap; Loaded veggie grilled cheese sandwich; Grilled cheese sandwich; Irish fries.

**Any breakfast places:** Vegetable soups, salads, pancakes, hash browns

All pizza places offer vegetarian pizza.

**Panera Bread:** Mediterranean veggie sandwich; Classic grilled cheese; Tomato mozzarella flatbread; Pesto sacchettini; Pasta primavera; Tortellini alfredo; Mac and cheese; Broccoli cheddar soup; Baked potato soup; Vegetarian creamy tomato soup; Low-fat vegetarian black bean soup; Low-fat vegetarian garden vegetable soup with pesto

**Burger places:** Vegetarian burger options: Burger King, Fuddruckers, Denny's, Five Guys, Buffalo Wings and Rings.

**Blue Elephant Thai/Baan Rao Thai:** Vegetable spring rolls; Red, green, yellow, panang, massaman, or any kind of curry without meat; Any kind of Thai fried rice or Thai stir-fried noodles is available without meat.

**ND Asia:** On hibachi you can request them to make fried rice and vegetables without meat.

**Pitapit/Subway:** Hummus pita, Falafel pita, Black bean pita, Vegetarian Subway.

Like all travelers everywhere, it's always nice to have a taste of home. So Braina and Rahil like to cook at home, and shown with this article are some of their favorite dishes with a brief description below. I have noticed occasional variations in the spelling of some items. Even though many of these items are part of everyday Gujarati cuisine, if you

Google them individually you will discover, not surprisingly, that there is a bit of an art to their creation.

**Gujarati Thali:** The photo that looks like a sampler plate. This is typical Gujarati cuisine. Starting at bottom and moving up and left (clockwise):

**Roti:** Indian flat bread, similar to pita, made from stone ground whole meal flour, and traditionally known as 'atta flour' (durum wheat flour here).

**Vedhmi:** (Also called Puran-Poli) Whole wheat bread filled with sweet Moong Daal for special occasions.

**Tindora-Ghiloda:** Various referred to as tindora, tindora nu shaak (curry), and ghiloda nu shaak (curry). An Ivy Gourd recipe.

**Gawar nu Shaak:** Cluster bean curry

**Potato-Tomato Curry:** No explanation needed

**Vaal Curry:** Also referred to as Vaal nu Shaak. Made from Lima beans cooked with tomatoes and onions with Gujarati spices.

**Kadhi:** Very popular dish made from buttermilk/yogurt and chickpea flour (Also known as gram flour, chickpea flour, besan, and pulse flour). An essential part of Gujarati cuisine. Considered spicy and light.

**Daal:** Also frequently spelled dal, dhal, and dahl. Made from pulses, another word for the family of chickpeas, peas, and lentils. Adding the right spices to pulses is a culinary Cinderella story. The lowly pea comes roaring to life and turns heads.

**Moong Halva:** Also Moong Dal Halva. A rich, creamy pudding-like dessert. Often reserved for special events. Takes a long time to prepare.

**Papad:** Dry flatbread made from black gram flour, black peppers, and lentils.

**Dhokla:** Gujarati snack made with fermented batter derived from rice and split chickpeas. (See enlarged photo)

**Dahi-Wada:** (In center of plate) Fried dumplings soaked with yogurt and topped with salt, cumin and cayenne pepper

Braina and Rahil say they can get the very basic things to cook with here, but they go to Fargo or Minnesota for Gujarati ingredients.

I asked the Shahs if most of the Gujarati population were skinny because of being vegetarians, and Braina said no, there are lots of bellies. Go figure. Well, you couldn't tell from looking at Braina and Rahil. They are a beautiful and very personable couple who could pass for poster children of the vegetarian life.

Readers are encouraged to share thoughts and opinions. I respond to all emails.