

Cook's tour of Kerala

Nimmy Paul takes
**STEPHEN
SCOURFIELD** on a
culinary journey

Fven after 20 years as a professional cookery instructor, when Nimmy Paul cooks in her home in Kerala, she thinks of her mother.

"My mother used to cook beautifully," Nimmy says. "She could taste food and then cook it for you. One stir of her spoon was like a magic wand."

Nimmy's mother, Rosamma Mathew, died a year ago, aged 86. "My mother wanted to know everything. She never cut herself away from worldly things until the last."

One of Nimmy's favorite dishes is inji kari, the sweet-and-sour ginger sauce which was a favourite of her father, Mathew. Her mother made it for him every day for more than 10 years.

"I am 54 years old, 28 years married and I started this going in 1997," Nimmy suddenly announces. "It started slowly.



Nimmy cooks fish masala.

The first year, two people; the second year, two people. But I put my heart and soul into my work. I did it with so much passion that it grew." Now there's a steady stream of visitors, including those brought by WA-based bespoke small-group touring company Journeys of the Spirit on its Indian Spice Journeys.

Nimmy wants each visit to be very personal. "I treat people as part of the family and never treat them as 'tourists'," she explains.

"I am doing it for my living — what I am paid is what is going to help me pay-my bills. But I want every guest to feel they

have value for money. It's the most stressful thing for me. All over the world tourists are seen as something that is squeezed. I do not want to be someone who squeezes."

Nimmy always cooks a minimum of four dishes, which her guests then eat for lunch.

Today there is a fish masala, cooked in a clay pot. Nimmy begins with fenugreek seed, cumin and cloves before adding chilli paste and curry leaves. It will include turmeric powder, cinnamon, green chilli, wine vinegar and coconut oil. "Masala" means mix — and this is her particular mix. It is detailed in the recipe card that each guest leaves with, for each dish.

Next she cooks a Kerala curry, with powdered spices, red onion, ginger, garlic, green chilli and curry leaves.

At one stage, as she is stirring the curry paste, she turns to explain. "The fineness of your curry depends on this — cooking on a low heat." And after that she adds a "second extract coconut milk", and describes how to make it from tinned coconut milk, if it is



Nimmy Paul loves sharing her cooking skills.