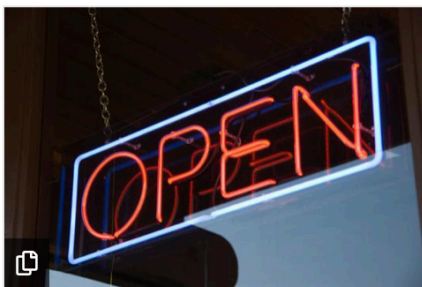




Puja Mehta started Indian Meal Kit with help from her husband, Pavak, in November 2016. Mehta offers kits containing ingredients needed to prepare nine varieties of Indian entrees at home.

Peter Thomson photos, La Crosse Tribune



LOCAL

From Tribune files: Openings and closings of La Crosse area businesses

Mar 19, 2019

Each week, Tribune business columnist Steve Cahalan reports on the latest openings and closings in the La Crosse area.



Puja Mehta, a native of India, loves cooking.

And students in her Indian cooking classes, as well as people at events she cooked for, had asked where they could buy ingredients to make their own Indian meals.

“That gave me the idea to make meal kits,” Mehta said in an interview at the Coulee Region Business Center at 1100 Kane St. in La Crosse.

She prepares and assembles the ingredients for her vegetarian Indian Meal Kits in the commercial kitchen at the center, which also is known as the small business incubator.

## INDIAN MEAL KIT

**WHAT:** A business owned by India native Puja Mehta, who prepares and assembles ingredients for kits that customers use to cook their own vegetarian Indian meal.

**WHERE:** Mehta creates the kits in the commercial kitchen at the [Coulee Region Business Center](#). They can be purchased at the [People's Food Co-op](#) stores in La Crosse and Rochester, Minn.; at [Woodman's Food Market](#) in Onalaska; at the [Cameron Park Farmers Market](#) on Fridays and on the [Indian Meal Kit website](#).

So far, the kits are available at three food stores, a local farmers market and online.

Indian Meal Kits have been available at the People's Food Co-op in La Crosse since last November, at Woodman's Food Market in Onalaska since March and at the People's Food Co-op in Rochester, Minn., since last week.

Since early June, Mehta and her family also have been selling the kits as well as prepared Indian food and beverages on Fridays at the Cameron Park Farmers Market.

Mehta, who hopes to get her several varieties of meal kits in additional grocery stores, also sells them to area residents through her [www.indianmealkit.com](http://www.indianmealkit.com) website.

### RELATED TO THIS TOPIC

- From Tribune files: Openings and closings of La Crosse area businesses



Qualified walk-in tub installations

Delivery of the refrigerated kits is available within the greater La Crosse area, and customers also have the option of picking up their online order at the Coulee Region Business Center. For details about picking up online orders there, visit Indian Meal Kit's website or [Facebook page](#).

The meal kits are for people who enjoy Indian food and are interested in vegetarian cooking at home, Mehta said. Each kit contains the ingredients to make a healthy and delicious vegetarian meal for two to four people, she said.

Most of the vegetables are washed and already cut up, spices are pre-measured, and the meals will be ready to eat in 30 to 40 minutes.

Two of Mehta's most popular meal kits are Pav-Bhaji, which includes buns and spiced vegetables; and Chana-Masala, which is chickpea curry with rice and Indian bread.

"I try to promote healthy food," Mehta said of her meal kits. For example, she uses organic brown sugar when possible, and tries to use yogurt instead of cream. And she tries to buy fresh, locally grown produce as often as possible.

"People have been very kind to me," Mehta said of her business. "It's been going very well."

Mehta continues to teach Indian cooking classes at the People's Food Co-op in La Crosse.

While she owns the Indian Meal Kit business, Mehta said her husband, Pavak Mehta, "has been a very big help." He works at Trane in La Crosse.

The Mehtas live in La Crescent, Minn., with their daughters, Arya and Adiya.

Pavak Mehta came to the United States from India in 2000 and received his master's degree in mechanical engineering from Ohio State University in 2002. He has lived in the La Crosse area since 2003, when he began working at Trane.

Puja Mehta came to the United States in 2001. She graduated in 2004 from The Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago, where she studied web design and multimedia. She was a web designer in Chicago when she married Pavak, also in 2004.

"Pavak's mom and my mom were childhood friends," Puja said. "My mom told me about him" and Pavak's mother told him about Puja, after both were already living in America. That prompted Pavak to call her one day.

