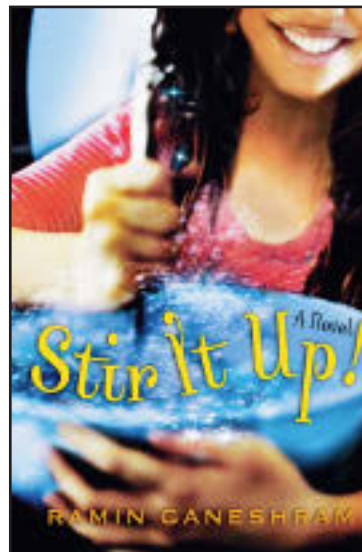


Book Fair Author Spotlight On...



Ramin Ganeshram



Q What inspires you to write?

A My daughter Sophia! My own father was a storyteller but not a writer and I carry the tales he told with me even today — many years after his death. They are very special, unique memories of him. The idea that I can do that for my own child is very compelling. From a more mechanical point of view, I find that the stories of real people — now or in the past — are the most inspiring. Often I'll hear a little fact or a bit of someone's story that sounds interesting and I'll file it away for the future.

Q What advice do you have for young writers?

A The first thing I'd say is KEEP WRITING! Don't worry if it's perfect, or even if anyone else likes it. Always remember that others' opinions are just that — opinions — they can be good, bad or indifferent. You must keep writing for YOU.

Q What was your favourite book when you were growing up?

A That is EASY! *Harriet the Spy* by Louise M. Fitzhugh. It's STILL one of my favourites!

Q What do you like to do when you're not writing?

A I like to cook! (Big surprise!) And I love to swim, especially with my daughter. Reading still remains my greatest hobby and I love to read historical mysteries.

Q What has been the biggest achievement of your career so far?

A I'd really have to say the biggest achievement is *Stir It Up!* I am amazed how much it appeals to kids and adults alike, and am touched by all the people whom it has inspired. It's a great blessing — and a great responsibility. I hope I (and the book) can continue to live up to it.

Q In *Stir It Up*, you share amazing Trinidadian recipes that your character, Anjali, prepares on her quest to become a celebrity chef. You also include a few "recipes for living" that she discovers along the way. Was there one in particular that resonated strongly with you as an author and a chef?

A I think that the recipe for Redemption is the one that resonates the most for me. It basically says that we all deserve understanding and a second chance when we think we have "failed" so we can pick ourselves up and start again. As a writer, this is a very important lesson because not everyone will like your work, and I've had that happen, too. I learned that I could be demoralized or keep on trucking because everyone deserves a second chance. As a chef, redemption — or the chance to fail and try again — is CRITICAL! Some of the best recipes come from failed attempts at other things. You can't be afraid to fail, because a second chance is around the corner, as long as you allow yourself to have it!

See next page for coconut bread recipe!

Here is Anjali's (My) Recipe for Coconut Bread

by Ramin Ganeshram



Coconut bread is a quick bread that is just like banana bread or zucchini bread, but the main ingredient is grated coconut. Just sweet enough, and deliciously moist, coconut bread is good with milk for a snack or breakfast bread, or with a dollop of vanilla ice cream for dessert. Sometimes I like to make it even more “dessert-like” by adding about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of chopped dark chocolate. E. Guittard's Chucuri is a good choice because it is made from Trinidadian Trinitario beans. Make it healthier by using half all-purpose and half wholewheat flour. If you decide to do this, up the amount of baking powder to 2 tablespoons.

3 cups all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon salt

2 cups finely grated fresh coconut

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup raisins (optional)

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, melted and cooled

1 large egg, lightly beaten

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup evaporated milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh coconut water

1 teaspoon mixed essence or vanilla extract

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon coconut extract

granulated sugar for dusting

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F, and grease and flour two 9" x 5" loaf pans.
2. Sift together the flour, baking powder, sugar and salt, and stir in the coconut and raisins, if using.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the butter, egg, evaporated milk, coconut water, mixed essence and coconut extract. Add the liquid ingredients to the flour mixture, mixing gently but thoroughly so all the ingredients are well combined.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared pans, filling them two-thirds full. Sprinkle the top of each loaf with sugar and bake for about 55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean.

