

Farah's Daawat for UpperCrust

The mischievous 'girl' best known for her blockbuster films and her most recent *Farah ki Daawat* TV show invited *UpperCrust* in for some delicious fare and a sneak peek into the life of Farah Khan. It is a rendezvous to recount, with an entertainer, quite apart from the rest

Text & Photographs: **Farzana Contractor**

Farah's passion would, from all assessments, seem to helm on three subjects; making movies, making babies and making food. Were I to have told her of this conclusion of mine, face to face, she would have shot off, "There are other things I like to make, but never mind!" She is that kind of a girl, woman, if you insist. But I think the way she is she will always be a girl, even though she has just turned 50. She is mischievous, fun, open, honest, half mad, enjoying life to the hilt, completely in your face.

But then she is also contemplative, hardworking, a driven mom, a great friend to her friends. Either ways, she can't sit still. She has her fingers in so many pies and for now she keeps licking them off, one by one, the way she does, without apology, in *Farah ki Daawat*, the entertaining cookery show, being telecast every Sunday on *Colors*, primetime, no less.

But more about that later.

Keeping tabs on Farah Khan would seem an impossible task. One has to learn time management from her. Consider all that she has done and continues to do. She directs movies, produces movies, she acts, choreographs, anchors chat shows, she has judged multiple reality shows, including

Indian Idols, she is on TV regularly giving her views as well as interviews!

She keeps a good home, is a wife, and a mom who looks after her three kids, she travels on work and she makes time for important social engagements, insisting she definitely does not care much to party, except with close friends and at home, hers or theirs. Phew!

One weekday, I was at Farah's home at Lokhandwala, a duplex penthouse apartment with a wrap-around balcony up 28 floors, which offers a 360° view of that part of Bombay. Farah, clearly the mistress of the house first fired her maids for not placing sheets under the legs of the studio lights my assistant had set up for our shoot and then settled down for a chat with me. "I don't want to spoil my parquet flooring, they don't understand, I have told them to do that every time we have a shoot!" she grumbled. That's Farah, shooting straight off the hip.

"You've choreographed for Indian films, Bollywood, as it is known, since when?" I ask, because that is where she started in the film industry. "Oh, so long ago, I have forgotten. In fact now after choreographing over a 100 dance routines I am slowing down activity in that area, there is so much else I want to do."



Time for Chicken Roast



Hmmm, never mind, if she does slow down there, dance numbers like Malaika Arora's *Mummi Badnam Hui* and *Anarkali Disco Chali*, Katrina Kaif's *Sheila ki Jawani*, Deepika Padukone's *Main Lovely Ho Gayi Yaar*, Kareena's *Fevicol Se* have gone down in cinematic history, and Farah's claim to that fame will remain entrenched. Besides, internationally, too, Farah has had her trysts. She trained Colombian pop star Shakira for a Bollywood version of her song *Hips Don't Lie* for *MTV Video Music Awards*. And also choreographed Kylie Minogue for the song *Chiggy Wiggy* for a movie called *Blue*.

All this with no formal training in dance. Just inspiration from Michael Jackson, whose video, *Thriller*, is what got her going. Farah was studying at *St. Xavier's College*, when *Thriller* was

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telecast. And although she hadn't danced before that, she got moving. She learned to dance all on her own, and even set up a dance group. It was destiny doing its bit, when the famous choreographer Saroj Khan walked out of the film *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar*, and Farah got an opportunity to take over. From then on, there was no turning back. Farah's talent is showcased in about 80 films! It isn't surprising she won *Filmfare Best Choreography Award* five times!

"Ya, they were great days, when I started. I had never thought my passion would become my vocation. That was also when I had met Shahrukh (Khan), on the sets of *Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa*

and we became good friends," she says nostalgically. And I added, "And you went on to direct your first film *Main Hoon Na* starring your great friend, a movie produced by his company, Red Chillies Entertainment." I had to show off my limited knowledge.

All this was intermittent chatting during our photoshoot. Easy, breezy kind of talking. I knew just what shots I wanted, Farah knew which are her best angles and I am a pretty quick photographer, so before long we were done. Besides, the aroma which was wafting through the kitchen was distracting me.

Soon, we were seated at the dining table which was coming alive with stuff that Farah is a wiz at. *Chicken Roast, Hot Baby Potatoes, Sindhi Kadi...*

This was a surprise. A *daawat* in Farah's house, a meal cooked by her. Unlike her show, where she makes everyone else slog! "So you can cook?" I quip. "What do you mean, I can cook, I do cook and have been for a long, long, time!" And how long is a long, long time? "Since I was in college. may be when I was 17 or 18, when my granny got too old to cook, I took over. I would cook and go to college or my dance classes." And what would she cook? "Oh, normal, down-to-earth and rustic things like *kichdi, dal, Sindhi Kadi*, but more like *sambhar*, not with *besan*."

But her first memory of cooking goes back even beyond, when she was 10 years old. She would play 'house, house' pretend to cook *tamatar bhaji* on her *mithi ki sigdi* and when she would announce food was ready, her brother Sajid would come and throw water on it!!

Well, brothers will be brothers, when kids, but Farah does have a great relationship with Sajid, who is a filmmaker, talk show host and actor, too, and who quite dotes on her.

Now that Farah's family is pretty much complete, with film editor/producer and director husband Shirish Kunder and her three kids, cooking is all important in the house. "Oh yes, we eat in, a lot. Thank God, my husband and kids love



I can cook, and do cook. And often!

Hmmm, calories be damned, it's mango season after all



Main Hoon Na has gone Maa Hoon Na



my cooking. My specialities are this *Roast Chicken*," she says, pointing to the very appetising whole chicken sitting in front of us, waiting to be carved," and *Takmi Pulao* and fried Bombay Duck, better than what you get, even at *Gajalee*!" she states, emphatically.

And no, she does not care for molecular kind of cuisine, "Can't handle that! My food has to be real and solid, even on my show it is like that! I don't like dainty food. As children, Sajid and I were constantly hungry and we wanted real, solid food. We ate well and cleaned off everything, there was never any wasting."

Farah, Shirish, Czar, Diva and Anya do go eating out, but its not that often. "The kids like to eat at *Tauatcha*, so we go there, sometimes we also go for pizzas." But what Farah likes to do, is eat in bed. Watching TV, watching a movie. "That's so relaxing," she concludes, adding, "the dining table is used only when we have friends over."

And friends are over pretty often. Her living room seems to be designed for bohemian, fun times. Low seating on mattress sofas, where they have game nights, when they play *Articulate*, *Taboo*, etc. And then enjoy Farah's cookin'! And who are these friends? "Malaika, Chunky, Bhavna, Tanya and Arvind Dubash, Rahul Khanna, Kajal Anand, among others..."

"And how did *Farah Ki Daawat* come about?"

"Look, I have always been a big foodie who liked cooking for friends. I have done loads of TV but always wanted to do something with food. So I thought of this food show, shot a pilot and went to *Colors* with it. They liked it, added the celebrity and filmstar angle to it and we



A family outing with Czar, Diva & Anya and husband Shirish

Farah ki Daawat is Farah ka asar. If you want to know what I mean, follow her on *Twitter*. She makes you laugh, she makes you think, she makes you realise it's so nice to be yourself.



got rolling...simple."

It's not a serious, serious, kind of a food show, but a mix of food and entertainment. And when you have the star power that Farah is capable of attracting, it was bound to be a huge success from the word 'go'!

The show started only in February this year and has already become a big hit. Stars, friends of Farah, such as Abhishek Bachchan, Sania Mirza, Shilpa Shetty, and

more, have contributed to the success of the show in no small measure, and each episode seems to be a riot! "Viewers like to see stars cook, they like to know what they like to eat, what they dislike, little nuances which they would otherwise never get to know, so it is fun."

Yes, it is. Especially since current heartthrobs like Alia Bhatt, Arjun Kapoor, Sonakshi Sinha, Ritesh & Genelia who have come on the show, have been so entertaining and endearing, not starry, but like real people, who they may really be. That's Farah's effect on people. She is so candid and straightforward, she gets normal reactions from guests on her show.

Farah ki Daawat is Farah ka asar. If you want to know what I mean, follow her on *Twitter*. She makes you laugh, she makes you think, she makes you realise it's so nice to be yourself, be honest, be easy. Obviously her life pretty much centers around her kids.

Here are some recent tweets of hers for you to gauge, and admire this multi-faceted dynamo;

"Important day today 4 me. My son learnt to finally tie his shoe laces!! Hallelujah!"

"My poor trainer is unwell today... such good news early in the morning!"

"Wish I could stay longer at the beautiful Falaknuma Palace, *lekin* kids have a dentist appointment... Ma hoon na!"

"In Dubai. But thoughts and prayers are still in Mumbai with @BeingSalmanKhan and his family."

"All tweets of complaint about 'the tweet' pls forward to @FarahKhanAli... we are NOT the same person!! Thank you! On my way to Dubai. Again!! This week iv gone to Dubai more often than iv gone to Bandra!! Or the gym."

"*Saari duniya ke* events *Ek taraf*. And my daughter's ballet recital *Ek taraf*... puts life in perspective."

"The worst part of a night is the thought of removing ur mascara when u get home!!"

I guess you get the drift. Farah entertains and can be just as entertaining as well.



Watch my show, is the only advice I can give you for now

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Farah Khan
A killer on the sets