



## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Parul Haribhai  
Interviewer: Meredith E. Abarca  
Project: El Paso Food Voices  
Location: 719 Kerbey St. El Paso, Texas 79902  
Date of Interview: March 30, 2019  
Terms of Use: Unrestricted  
Transcript No.: 1679  
Transcriber / Summary: **(Private Kitchen)**

Parul Haribhai was born in Rochester, New York. But from the time she was five to her early twenties, she lived in India, in a village about 250 miles XXX of Mumbai. She has lived in El Paso, Texas for over 20 years (at the time of the recording) with her husband, and their two children. Reflecting on her transformation from “a self-proclaimed foodie” to having grown up being a “very picky eater who didn’t much care for food,” she wonders if we might have genetic traits that show up at different stages of our lives. If we do, she believes she inherited her cooking “genes” from her aunts and uncles who are “excellent cooks.” In her twenties, living on her own back in the United States and craving familiar Indian flavors is what introduced her to cooking. At that point in her life, cooking became a “survival mechanism” to appease her “addiction” for Indian spices. Cookbooks and frequent calls to her aunts were her culinary instructors. Her confidence in cooking everything has freed her from

following recipes, and living in El Paso she has introduced Mexican food, particularly chilies to make salsas, to her cooking. Since embarking on a culinary path, Parul now experiences cooking as a therapeutic and meditative practice—as “getting in her zone.” She understands food as embodying history and culture and teaches these lessons to her children by showing them how to lead a healthy life based on being mindful as to where food comes from. For Parul, “we should live to eat good food. We shouldn’t eat mindlessly just because we need to live.”

Length of interview: 28:95 minutes

Length of Transcript\_\_\_\_\_