



*Super Singer* fame Shhravan and grandmother Shantha Ragavan are getting popular on YouTube for their simple yet slick culinary pursuits

watching the videos, who may have similar questions.”

#### Camera savvy

Shantha finishes her shot in one take, without any script. She says she owes it to her acting experience, as the heroine’s grandmother in Tamil film *Thirumanam Ennum Nikkah*.

In every video, she insists on one important aspect – zero wastage. When making *arisi vadai*, buttermilk invariably remains as a leftover. She urges her viewers to soak chopped banana stem in that buttermilk, to retain their colour, instead of throwing it away. She also narrates a life experience with every dish. Many comments read, “Watching *paati* gives us immense pleasure, like seeing our own.”

Says Shhravan, “Festivals are classified based on gender, like Navratri being a women-centred one. To break that stereotype, I am cooking in this series.”

Shantha is proud of her grandson’s finesse in cooking: “Shhravan learns the recipes just by observation.

The house is filled with the aroma of the *rasam* he makes.”

Shhravan adds, “Before learning music, I used to play with cooking vessels as a toddler, and peek at my grandmother’s cooking in the kitchen.”

Shhravan and his *paati* are now chalking out a Deepavali series, where they will be making sweets and savouries. Before that, they plan to post a video on *puliyodarai*, which is repeatedly requested by viewers.

The project takes effort, but Shantha is clearly enjoying the process. She says, “When I saw the first video of my recipe, I became so excited that I felt my age reverse to 18 from 81.”

# Masterchef *paati*

:: PADMAJA JAYARAMAN

In 1955, a young Shantha Ragavan from Thanjavur visited her grandmother in Madras and learnt to cook.

Her grandmother oversaw her roasting a small pumpkin on the stove, which was then immersed in water to remove the skin. On an *ammi* (a traditional stone slab used for grinding) she ground sautéed dried red chillis, a ball of tamarind and salt. She added the peeled pumpkin and ground again, thus making her first-ever dish – pumpkin *thogayal*. Her father-in-law dotingly named her *vaathiyar* (master) for her cooking prowess with dishes like *kondakadalai kozhambu* (chickpeas), *arisi vadai* (rice *vadas*) and *pongol*.

Sixty-five years later, Shantha has made her YouTube debut with her grandson, 24-year-old singer RP Shhravan, to document the recipes she learnt in her early life. Their channel is called Shantha Paati Samayal, and Shhravan curates, shoots and edits on his smartphone.

An ardent singer, first runner-up in *Super Singer Season 2* and among the top seven in *Indian Idol Season 9*, he sings popular devotional songs for his grandmother’s videos, amalgamating the music with her recipes.

From 2,000 subscribers in 2019,



**Fire up the *chatti*** (Clockwise from top) Shantha and Shhravan; her *kunukku* and *medu vada*

▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



the channel has 88,000 subscribers now, drawn in by 34 videos that detail out not only recipes but also other kitchen tasks. The most watched video, with over 7.6 lakh views, is on How To Cut Cabbage.

Shantha uses lucid and conversational Tamil while explaining the recipes (there are subtitles for those who do not understand), and Shhravan clears doubts from the background.

He says, “I try to figure out possible doubts and spontaneously ask *paati*, for the benefit of newbies