



Recipes and Cuisine of Maharashtra, India October 2013

Cuisine

The people of Maharashtra consider their food as *Anna he poornabrahma*, which means that they consider *anna*, or food, equal to *Brahma*, or the creator of the universe. Food is God and should be worshipped. Apart from this, the people of this state also believe in offering their food first to the Lord as a thanksgiving for all that He has given. Especially, on festive occasions, some specific *mithais* (sweets) are offered such as *Ukadiche Modak* (during the festival of *Ganesh Chaturthi*) and *Satyanarayan Puja Sheera* (during the Hindu ritual of *Satyanarayan Puja*).

Even inside the state itself, one can find distinguishing flavors and food styles that make eating an interesting activity. Maharashtrian cuisine is divided into two - *Konkani* and *Varadi*. Though quite different, both use a lot of seafood and coconut. Grated coconuts spice up many kinds of dishes, but coconut oil is not very widely used as a cooking medium. Peanuts and cashew nuts are widely used in vegetables and peanut oil is the main cooking medium. Another feature is the use of *kokum*, a deep purple berry that has a pleasing sweet and sour taste. *Kokum* is most commonly used in an appetizer called the *sol kadhi*, which is served chilled.

All non-vegetarian and vegetarian dishes are eaten with boiled rice or with *bhakris*, which are soft *rotis* made of rice flour. Special rice *puris* called *vada* and *amboli*, which is a pancake made of fermented rice, *urad dal*, and semolina, are also eaten as a part of the main meal.

In the vegetarian fare, the most popular vegetable is eggplant. A popular style of cooking eggplant is *bharlivangi* or baby eggplant stuffed with coconut. Maharashtrian fare is incomplete without *papads*, which are eaten roasted or fried. The most popular desserts of Maharashtra are the *puran poli*, which is *roti* stuffed with a sweet mixture of jaggery (a natural sweetener made from sugarcane juice) and gram flour, and *shreekhand*, which is sweetened curd flavored with cardamom and saffron.

Staple Foods

As in most of the other states of India, rice is the staple food grain in Maharashtra. Like the other coastal states, there are an enormous variety of vegetables in the regular diet and lots of fish and coconuts are used.

Methods of Cooking

Maharashtrian meals are scientifically planned and cooked - the golden rule being that the cooking medium (oil or liquid) must not be seen. The vegetables are more or less steamed and lightly seasoned so as to retain their nutritional value. There is almost no deep frying or roasting. Coconut is used in cooking and as an embellishment. Jaggery and tamarind are used in most vegetables or lentils so that the food has a sweet and sour flavor while the *kala masala* (special blend of spices) is added to make the food piquant. As opposed to the coastal cuisine, where fresh coconut is added to the dishes, in the Vidarbha region, powdered coconut is used for cooking.



Specialties

Among seafood, the most popular fish is *bombil* or the Bombay duck, which is normally served batter-fried and crisp. *Bangda* or mackerel is another popular fish in coastal Maharashtra. It is curried with red chilis, ginger and *triphal*. Pomfret is another popular fish eaten barbecued, stuffed, fried or curried. *Pamphlet triphal ambat* is a traditional dish in which fish is cooked in creamy coconut gravy that greatly enhances its taste.

Besides fish, crabs, prawns, shellfish and lobsters are also relished by the coastal Maharashtrians. A popular prawn dish is the *sungtachiinga kodi*, which consists of prawns in coconut gravy, blended with spices and asafoetida.

In vegetarian food, a typical dish is the *Pachadi*, which is tender *brinjals* cooked with green mangoes and flavored with coconut and jaggery. Besides, common vegetables are greatly relished by the Maharashtrians. A typical dish is the *patal bhaji*, which is a sweet and sour dish flavored with peanuts.

Distinguishing features of the *Varadi* cuisine are the dishes made of besan (gram flour) like *zunka bhakar* and *pathawadi* and the *vada-bhat*. Non-vegetarian food is also very popular in this region. As seafood is not easily available here, chicken and mutton are commonly cooked.

Ubuki is made from fermented honey and has an alcohol content of about 12 percent.

References

<http://indianfood.indianetzone.com/>
<http://www.tarladalal.com/>
<http://www.maharashtratourism.net/>

Recipes

Maharashtrian Chicken Curry

Ingredients:

2-2 ½ pounds chicken pieces of your choice, skin removed
2 tablespoons vinegar
2 large onions cut into quarters
3 tablespoons coconut powder/ or fresh grated coconut
1 tablespoon garlic paste or finely chopped garlic
1 tablespoons ginger paste or finely chopped ginger
2 tsps coriander powder
1 teaspoon cumin powder
1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
1 teaspoon garam masala
3 tablespoons vegetable/ canola/ sunflower cooking oil
1 cup coconut milk
2 large tomatoes finely chopped
2 green chillies slit lengthwise (optional)
2 large potatoes, peeled and cut into 2" cubes
Salt to taste
Chopped fresh coriander to garnish



Preparation:

Wash the pieces of chicken and put into a large plastic bowl. Pour the vinegar over the pieces and mix well to ensure all the pieces are well coated with vinegar. Keep aside for 10 minutes. Wash well under running water. This gets rid of any excessive poultry smell and taste! Keep pieces aside for later.

Put the chopped onion, coconut powder, ginger, garlic, and powdered spices into a food processor and grind to a smooth paste using as little water as possible.

Heat the oil in a deep pan on a medium flame. Add the above paste to the hot oil and fry till the oil begins to separate from the masala. Stir frequently to prevent the masala from burning. Now add the chicken and fry till pieces turn opaque (whitish). Add coconut milk, green chillies and potatoes. Season with salt to taste. Stir well.

Cook until the chicken and potatoes are done. This dish should have a medium-thick gravy so if it is less add warm water and cook for a few minutes. If gravy is too thin, boil some off. Now add chopped tomatoes and cook for 2-3 minutes.

Turn heat off and gently spoon curry into serving dish. Garnish with chopped fresh coriander leaves and serve with rice and a green salad or a simple vegetarian side dish.

Read more: <http://indianfood.about.com/od/chickendishes/r/mahachkncurry.htm>

Puran Poli

Ingredients:

2 cups Maida (all purpose flour)
2 cups Lentil (gram dal)
1 teaspoon Cardamom powder
1 teaspoon Ghee (clarified butter)
1 cup Jaggery (1)
2 tablespoons Oil
Salt to taste



Procedure/Directions:

Wash and boil the lentil with water and 1/2 tsp salt till it becomes soft. Cool slightly and strain the dal (lentils) using a strainer. Add cardamom powder and jaggery(1) and grind to make fine paste. This is puran.

Knead the maida (flour) with water and 1/2 tsp salt. Do not make it hard. Add oil and knead the maida (flour) again till oil gets absorbed. Prepare equal number of balls from maida (flour) and puran (lentil paste). Flatten one ball with the heel of your hand and roll it out with a lightly floured rolling pin to 5- to 6-inch diameter and about as thick as a tortilla. Repeat with remaining balls. It is called poli. Heat a griddle and cook each poli. Apply ghee on both sides when done. Serve hot.

(1) If you cannot find jaggery in Indian market, please substitute dark brown sugar

Read More: http://zeenews.india.com/entertainment/gourmet/recipe/recipe-puran-poli_2225.htm

Aloo Baingan -Eggplant Potato Curry

Ingredients:

2 medium potatoes, cubed
1 medium large eggplant , cubed
1 medium onion, chopped (optional)
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1-2 green chillies (or as per taste. You can also use chili powder)
1/2 inch ginger, peeled and grated
2 teaspoon cumin-coriander powder
1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1/2 teaspoon garam masala (optional)
Pinch of asafoetida
Curry leaves and cilantro to garnish
Lemon juice to taste (or use 1/2 teaspoon mango powder (amchoor)
Salt to taste

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Directions:

After cubing eggplant, drop into a bowl of cool water to prevent discoloration. Set aside.

Meanwhile in a skillet, add 1 teaspoon of oil. When hot add the cumin seeds, then chillies, curry leaves, ginger, asafoetida and onions.

When onions get soft, add the potatoes along with salt and turmeric powder. Toss to coat. Sprinkle some water. Close the lid and let it cook for 2-3 minutes. Then add the eggplant along with cumin-coriander powder and let it cook for another 8-10 minutes or until the eggplant is cooked.

Towards the end add the garam masala and mango powder (or lemon juice). Toss well and garnish with cilantro.

Read More: <http://chefinyou.com/2010/08/aloo-baingan/>

Badam Payasam

Ingredients:

1 cup almonds, blanched and peeled
4 cups full cream milk (use light cream or half and half)
3 tablespoons soaked rice
½ teaspoon cardamom powder
1 teaspoon saffron
½ cup Sugar
2 tablespoons almond slivers for garnishing



Directions:

Soak rice in enough water to cover for 30 minutes. Heat milk in a deep non stick pan. Grind rice and almonds coarsely and add to the milk. Cook on medium heat, stirring often.

Add green cardamom powder and mix well. Add saffron and mix. Cook till rice is completely cooked and the mixture thickened. Add sugar and stir till it dissolves. Serve hot garnished with almond slivers.

Read More: <http://www.sanjeevkapoor.com/Badam-Payasam-FoodFood.aspx>