

India February 2016



Chickpeas in Star Anise and Date Masala **Serves 10-12**

Ingredients

- 3 15-ounce cans chickpeas (or 1½ cups dried chickpeas, soaked overnight and cooked)
- ⅓ cup neutral cooking oil, like canola, or ghee
- 1 ½ cups chopped onion
- ½ jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced thinly
- 3 tbsp. tomato paste
- 9 dried Medjool dates, pitted and chopped
- 1 tbsp. ground cumin
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
- 2 whole star anise, or 1/3 tsp. ground

Directions

Since the chickpeas play a starring role in this dish, I urge you to cook your own chickpeas. It will be well worth your time. Soak the chickpeas overnight and drain the next day. Fill the pot with fresh water to cover the chickpeas by 2 inches, bring to a boil, then simmer until they become soft when pierced with the tip of a knife. This could take anywhere from ½ hour to an hour, depending on how fresh the chickpeas are, so pay attention to them or they will turn to mush. Drain and set aside when finished cooking.

If using canned chickpeas, alternatively drain and rinse the chickpeas and set aside.

In a medium pot set over medium-high heat, heat the oil or ghee until it begins to shimmer. Add the onions and sauté for 5 minutes, until they have softened and started to brown. Stir in the jalapeno and sliced garlic, sauté for a minute or so. Reduce heat to medium and stir in the tomato paste. Add the dates and the spices and sauté for 2 or 3 minutes.

Add the chickpeas and 1 cup or more of water, enough to make everything come together nicely. Heat the mixture, stirring occasionally to incorporate the flavors, and keep warm until serving. Try to find the star anise and remove.

Note: If not serving right away, add more water to make the mixture a little extra soupy and the chickpeas will continue to absorb water as they sit.

Recipe lightly adapted from “Vij’s Elegant and Inspired Indian Cuisine,” by Vikram Vij and Meeru Dhalwala

Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Suvir Saran’s Spinach and Potato Patties (Palak Ki Tiki)
Makes 10 to 14 servings

Ingredients

2 pounds red boiling potatoes, peeled and quartered
5 oz. bag of baby spinach
1 fresh, hot green chili, seeds removed, finely minced
3 green onions, minced, white and green parts
1 tsp. fresh minced ginger
1 tsp. garam masala
½ tsp. ground black pepper
1 ½ tsp. kosher salt
1 cup panko or breadcrumbs
oil for frying

Directions

If you plan to serve the finished patties all at once, heat oven to 200 degrees and hold them there. If you’re not cooking and serving all at once, then there is no need heat the oven.

Place potatoes in a pot of cold water, bring to a boil, and then simmer until done, about 20 minutes. Drain the potatoes and put into a large bowl and lightly mash with a potato masher. Leave them just a little bit lumpy.

While the potatoes are cooking, slice the spinach into ribbons, about ¼ inch wide. A good way to do this is to grab a handful of spinach leaves and try your best to contain them in one hand and roll into a log shape, then thinly slice the rolled leaves

Add the seasonings to the mashed potatoes while they are still hot. This will help temper the chile and ginger just a bit, and take the bite out of them. Taste and correct seasoning if need be. Then stir in the shredded spinach. Mix with your hands so you can easily break up any remaining large lumps of potato.

Let the potato mixture chill in the refrigerator for an hour until it firms up a bit, making it easier to handle.

To begin forming patties (called “tikis”), scoop out about ½ cup of the mixture with a measuring cup, ice cream scoop, or your hands. Squeeze together to form a ball and lightly flatten in your hands. Place the patty on a baking sheet coated with a thin layer of panko or breadcrumbs, press into the crumbs, and then sprinkle more on top.

Do ahead tip: When all patties have been formed you can store them on the baking sheet for a day or two before cooking, or proceed directly to cooking.

Heat a medium skillet, big enough to cook just half the patties, over medium heat for a few minutes, and add a couple tablespoons of oil. Add the patties and cook for about 5 minutes, until nice and brown on the bottom. Take care to monitor the heat so they don’t burn. Drizzle in some additional oil around and over the top of the patties and flip them. Cook until heated through and brown on the bottom, about 5 more minutes. Put the cooked patties into the warm oven and proceed with cooking the rest. I recommend doing this in two batches because you’ll get a better result with all the patties browning evenly.

Serving tip: You can serve this patty as part of a Thali platter, or as pictured above as a fun little slider, garnished with coriander chutney. See following recipe for chutney.

Recipe adapted from “Masala Farm,” by Suvir Saran
Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Coriander Chutney

Makes about 2/3 cup

- 2 cups packed cilantro leaves
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp. mint leaves (optional)
- 3 tbsp. chopped shallots
- 2 tbsp. minced green chile, or to taste
- 1 tsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 to 2 tsp. oil

Place all ingredients in the food processor and process for about 15 seconds, until almost pureed.

Recipe adapted from “Mangoes and Curry Leaves,” by Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid

Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Beets with Yogurt and Indian Spices

Makes 4-6 servings

Ingredients

1 pound medium size beets, 3 to 4 beets
½ tsp. black mustard seeds
½ tsp. cumin seeds
½ tsp. coriander seeds
½ cup plain, whole milk, Greek yogurt
1 large garlic clove, mashed into a paste
½ tsp. (about ¼) jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
½ tsp. grated fresh ginger
1 tbsp. orange juice
½ tsp. salt
2 tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro
Pomegranate seeds for garnish, optional

Directions

Peel the beets and cut into quarters, and then cut the quarters in half. Place into a steamer basket and steam until crisp-tender, 20 minutes or so.

Toast the mustard seeds, cumin, and coriander in a small skillet over medium heat for a few minutes, until you can smell the fragrance. Then, using a mortar and pestle or a spice grinder, crush the seeds and set aside.

Place the yogurt in a bowl and whisk in garlic paste, toasted spices, jalapeño, ginger, orange juice, and ½ teaspoon salt. Add the beets to the yogurt dressing and mix gently. Garnish with cilantro and pomegranate seeds.

Recipe adapted from Melissa Clark, via the New York Times
Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Meera Sodhu's Naan
Makes 12 pieces

Ingredients

4 cups all-purpose flour
2 tbsp. neutral oil, like canola
4 tbsp. whole-milk yogurt
1 packet of active dry yeast, or 7 grams
2 tsp. sugar
2 tsp. kosher salt
1 level tsp. baking powder
1 cup whole milk, warmed

Directions

Put the flour into a large mixing bowl. Make a well in the middle, and add two tablespoons of oil to it, along with the yogurt, yeast, sugar, salt, and baking powder. Use your fingers to combine the ingredients until they resemble crumbs, and then add the warm milk in splashes, mixing until it comes together into a dough.

Put the dough on a clean, well-floured cutting board. It will be very sticky. Flour your hands and knead the dough for five minutes or so, then scrape off your hands and knead it again, making it into a round ball. Rub a teaspoon of oil over the exterior of the dough and place in a clean mixing bowl. Cover with a dish towel and place in a warm spot to rise for 60 – 90 minutes or until it has doubled in size.

Using a knife, divide the dough into 12 pieces. Roll each piece into a ball and flatten it between your palms. Dust each ball lightly with flour and roll it into an oval about 5 by 8 inches.

Place a large skillet over medium-high heat and allow it to get hot. When it is hot, cook one naan in it for 30 – 45 seconds on one side, or until it begins to bubble and is speckled

brown on the bottom side, then use a spatula to flip it over to cook the other side for about the same amount of time, checking regularly to make sure that it does not burn. Flip the naan one more time, and press on it lightly with your spatula for 10 – 15 seconds, then remove to a warm plate. Repeat with the rest of the dough. Keep the finished naan in a low oven, or wrap in foil until ready to serve.

Recipe reprinted with permission from Meera Sodhu
Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Fragrant Cauliflower Stew (Ghobi Masala)
Serves 6 to 8

Ingredients

- 1 head cauliflower, about 2 lbs.
- 3 tbsp. ghee or vegetable oil
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped, about ½ cup
- 1 tbsp. grated and peeled fresh ginger
- 2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 2 tomatoes, finely chopped, about one heaping cup
- ½ to 1 cup coconut milk
- ½ cup water
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 boiling potato, peeled and cut into 1” pieces, about 8 oz.
- 1 tsp. garam masala
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro (about ½ a large bunch)

Directions

Separate the cauliflower florets and slice them from top to bottom into ¼” thick slices

and set aside.

In a large skillet over medium heat add the ghee or oil. When it's warmed, add the cinnamon and cumin and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant. Next add the chopped onions and sauté over medium heat for about 5 minutes, until lightly browned. Stir in the rest of the ingredients through the tomato paste. Bring to a simmer and add the cauliflower and the potatoes, bring back to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, and cover with a lid. (This doesn't sound like much liquid for this amount of vegetables to cook properly, but with the lid on, the cauliflower will steam and you shouldn't have any worries about this). Cook for 10-15 minutes, checking after about 10 minutes to see how well it's done, and to give it a stir.

If the cauliflower seems dry when it is finished cooking, drizzle in more coconut milk until desired consistency. Then stir in the garam masala and half the cilantro. Turn out into a serving bowl and sprinkle with the remaining cilantro, and drizzle with a touch of coconut milk. I've kept the dish on the dry side as it will work better as part of a thali platter if not too runny. But if serving as a stand-alone dish you might want to make it a bit soupier.

Recipe adapted from Madhya Pradesh
Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Brussels Sprouts with Black Mustard Seed
Serves 6 to 8

Ingredients

1 lb. Brussels sprouts
2 tbsp. ghee, or oil
1 to 2 tsp. black mustard seeds
salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Cut the Brussels sprouts in half vertically, then slice the halves (vertically again) into ¼”

slices.

Heat a couple tablespoons of ghee in a large skillet and throw in mustard seeds. As soon as the seeds start to sizzle and pop add the sprouts. Stir-fry until done, about 5 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy



How to Make Ghee

This is your bonus for getting to the end! Many Indian cooks rely on ghee as their cooking oil of choice. Basically all you need to do is melt a pound of butter, and it costs much less than what you would pay in a store. It's so darn easy, but don't take my word for it.

Watch this charming 2-minute video and you should have all the confidence you need to try your hand at making your own ghee! Never run out of ghee again.

Ingredients

1 pound of butter

Directions

[Titli's Busy Kitchen](#)

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Cuisine

Food of India is characterized by strong aroma and bold tastes where spices are of the utmost importance. The spices determine the flavor, appearance and taste of every meal. However, in India measurements are not used while cooking. A cook relies on his or her senses while sprinkling the spices on preparations because it is believed that it is the love of the cook that brings taste to the food rather than the spices themselves.

Maharashtrian cuisine is the cuisine of the Marathi people from the state of Maharashtra in Western India. The cuisine can range from mild to very spicy dishes. Wheat, rice, vegetables, lentils and fruit form staples of the Maharashtrian diet. Peanuts and cashews are often served with vegetables. Due to economic and cultural preferences meat has traditionally been used quite sparsely, or only by the well off until recently. The metropolitan cities of Mumbai and Pune have influenced the food culture, bringing more sophisticated dishes and ingredients into the mix, along with Chinese dishes as well. Nevertheless, distinctly Maharashtrian dishes, such as ukdiche modak (rice flour dumpling with sweet jiggery, coconut, and nut filling) and aluchi patal bhaji (Colocasia leaf curry) served at festive occasions remain popular. For more recipes and information on dishes specific to Maharashtra see the link below.

<http://www.tarladalal.com/recipes-for-maharashtrian-52?pageindex=3>

Customs

Dining etiquette in India is quite different to Western countries. There it is considered proper Indian etiquette to eat with your hands; this is how the majority of the Indian people eat. It is tradition and part of the Indian culture; it is also an accepted part of Indian etiquette.

Indian etiquette and good manners vary from region to region. For instance, in North India it is impolite to dirty more than the first two segments of your fingers. Since North

Indians eat mostly rotis and drier curries, this isn't too difficult. Whereas in the South, where they eat lots more rice, and enjoy very wet curries, it is permitted to use your whole hand, so if you are not sure what to do, just observe or ask.

Part of the traditional Indian etiquette and culture is to share food. Especially on long train journeys, Indian families will be carrying heaps of food and will invite you to have some. Even when only two people are dining in a restaurant it is customary to order two different dishes and in keeping with Indian etiquette, share the dishes between you.

While sharing is an important part of Indian etiquette, it is poor and offensive etiquette to share a fork or spoon or to drink from someone's glass. This also applies to taking a bite of someone else's sandwich, ice cream or chocolate too. Also, never, ever 'double dip'!

It is not difficult to eat with your fingers, but there are a few rules of Indian etiquette that have to be observed:

1. The left hand is not used for eating (even if you are left-handed), this is considered offensive and unclean.
2. Wait to be served. Remember you are eating with your hands and your right hand will be messy, therefore you will leave the serving spoon all sticky and messy too.
3. The hygiene of jootha: While sharing is good Indian etiquette and manners, sharing a glass, spoon, drinking bottle etc., coming into contact with another's spit is called jootha and is considered offensive in many parts of India.
4. In Indian etiquette never offer anyone food from your thali, even if it is in one of the little bowls and you haven't touched it. All the food that is placed on your thali becomes jootha. There is no precise English equivalent of jootha. 'Contaminated' comes closest in meaning. Mostly Indian etiquette has the same basic rules as Western etiquette, for example: Wash your hands before and after a meal.

Source materials:

Cuisine: Wikipedia

Customs: <http://www.a-to-z-of-manners-and-etiquette.com/indian-etiquette.html>

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