

Chicken Curry

The classic flavors of India come to the table in this simple chicken curry, which is served with an array of condiments. Accompany with steamed rice, which will absorb the delicious sauce. For a meatless dish, use a variety of vegetables in place of the chicken.

Spread the flour on a plate, then lightly coat both sides of each chicken piece with the flour, shaking off the excess.

In a Dutch oven or other large pot over high heat, warm the oil. Working in batches, add the chicken pieces and cook, turning once, until browned, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.

Reduce the heat to medium, add the onions to the pot and sauté until softened, about 2 minutes. Stir in the garlic and curry powder and sauté, stirring, for 1 minute more. Increase the heat to high, stir in the stock and deglaze the pot, stirring with a wooden spoon to scrape up the browned bits.

Return the chicken to the pot and bring to a boil. Add the coconut milk, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer until the chicken is opaque throughout, about 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Transfer the chicken and sauce to a warmed serving bowl. Serve the condiments in small bowls or ramekins for diners to add as desired. Serves 6 to 8.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Lifestyles Series, *Chicken for Dinner*, by Heidi Haughey Cusick (Time-Life Books, 1998).

Kheer

Kheer is the primary dessert of India. Home cooks generally prepare a simple rice-and-milk version; more elaborate renditions, with nuts, fruits, flower essences and spice embellishments, are served in restaurants and at wedding feasts. Scented rice, such as Gobinda Bhog or basmati, is preferred, since it is the main flavor in the pudding. Indians like a rather runny consistency and for the rice grains to be invisible, but the consistency and texture of this recipe have been adapted for the Western palate.

In a large, shallow pan over high heat, bring the milk and cream to a boil, stirring frequently to prevent scorching. Add the rice, reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is reduced to the consistency of custard and the rice is soft and creamy, about 50 minutes. Add the jaggery and stir well.

Meanwhile, pry open the cardamom pods, remove the seeds and grind them to a powder. (This is best done using a mortar and pestle; you can also wrap the seeds in plastic wrap and crush them with a mallet or rolling pin.) Discard the cardamom skins. Add the cardamom, saffron, raisins and almonds to the cooked rice mixture and stir well. Transfer to a bowl and let cool, then cover and refrigerate until chilled.

Spoon the pudding into small dessert bowls. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Savoring Series, *Savoring India*, by Julie Sahni (Time-Life Books, 2001).

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Ingredients for Chicken Curry

6 to 8 Tbs. all-purpose flour

4 skinless chicken breast halves

4 skinless chicken thighs

4 skinless chicken drumsticks

1 lb. chicken wings

2 Tbs. canola or safflower oil

2 yellow onions, chopped

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

2 to 4 Tbs. curry powder

1½ cups chicken stock

1½ cups coconut milk

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

For the condiments:

1 cup mango chutney

¾ cup diced tomato

½ cup chopped green onions

1 banana, peeled and thinly sliced

½ cup chopped peanuts or cashews

½ cup unsweetened grated coconut

Ingredients for Kheer

4 cups milk

4 cups light cream

½ cup basmati rice, preferably small-grain Gobinda Bhog or brown basmati rice, thoroughly rinsed

¾ cup light-colored jaggery (dehydrated sugarcane juice) or light brown sugar

4 green cardamom pods

½ tsp. saffron threads, crushed

½ cup raisins

¼ cup sliced almonds

Fun Indian Cuisine Facts

- Tea is the national drink.

- Meals are often served on *thalis*, which are large, flat plates made from banana leaves or metal. The leaf or plate is covered with either small mounds of food or metal bowls called *katoris*.

- Food is traditionally eaten with the fingertips of your right hand and replenished as you eat.

- *Paan* is a collection of spices and aromatics served at the end of the meal to freshen the breath and act as a digestive.

- In India, *roti* is the general name for bread or bread-like accompaniments. A great variety is available, and they are baked, grilled, broiled, roasted or fried. There is no rule regarding which type goes with which dish.

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Technique Class: Indian Cooking

India is a very complex country culturally and geographically, as well as from a culinary point of view. Cooking styles vary not only from state to state and town to town but also from suburb to suburb. Historically, Indian cuisine has had many influences, one of the biggest being vegetarianism, brought about by religious beliefs. Today it is practiced by many people, particularly in the south.

Regional Differences

The Food of the North

The cuisines in the north of India cover a wide range of food styles, the main influences coming from the cooking of the Moghuls and Punjabs, as well as from the land, which produces a diverse range of grains. Basmati, the king of rices, comes from Dera Dun, part of north India, and is prized throughout the country.

Dairy products such as malai (cream), paneer and yogurt appear at almost every meal in some guise or other. Butter appears in the form of ghee or makhan (white butter). Dishes are thickened and enriched with cream and in the Punjab, butter is used both as a condiment and as a flavoring. Rajasthani cuisine includes many dishes cooked in buttermilk, milk or butter. This style evolved because water was scarce and its use as a cooking medium had to be avoided. Northern dishes are often cooked in sealed pots with very little liquid, a method known as “dum.”

Meat is a feature of northern cuisine. This is a reflection of Moghul influences as well as those of outer communities, such as the Parsis and Sikhs. Lentils and legumes (pulses) are commonly eaten and a dal of some sort, often well spiced, will accompany every meal.

The Food of the Center

Central India’s eclectic mix of foods can be roughly divided into east, west and central styles. Fish feature heavily on both coasts, while the central cuisine has Moghul overtones with a diet rich in meat. Rice is a staple in central India.

The Food of the South

The food of southern India has a lighter, fresher flavor than that of the north. It is often more pungent because of its use of chilies and souring agents, such as lime juice, kokum and tamarind. Freshly grated coconut is used in abundance, and coconut milk is a common cooking liquid.

Along the west coast in Goa, Karnataka and Kerala, there are culinary influences from the Portuguese who lived in the area for 500 years, as well as the Syrian Christians and the Jews of Kochi (Cochin). The spice center of India is Kochi in

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Kerala, where the Indian Spices Board has its headquarters. Cardamom, turmeric, vanilla, pepper and ginger grow in abundance in the Cardamom Hills, and are sold locally and internationally via the spice market in Kochi.

Rice is the main staple, along with pulses and legumes, and dishes are flavored with wet (fresh) spice and herb mixtures and coconut. Many dishes are tempered with a final seasoning (tarka), usually a combination of mustard seeds, dried chilies and curry leaves heated in oil and stirred into the dish. The southern part of India is a land abundant in fruit and vegetables.

 Adapted from *The Food of India*, by Priya Wickramasinghe & Carol Selva Rajah (Whitecap Books, 2005).

Chapati

Chapati is an unleavened pancake-like bread from India. Often diners tear off pieces and use them to scoop up food. Serve these chapati alongside our Chicken Curry.

In a bowl, stir together the 1½ cups flour and the salt. In a small bowl, stir together the 1 Tbs. ghee and the milk. Add to the flour mixture and stir well. Add the ½ cup water and stir well, gathering and pressing until the flour adheres together. If the dough looks dry, add 1 to 2 Tbs. more water, but do not add too much or the dough will become too sticky.

Transfer the dough to a lightly floured work surface and knead for 5 minutes. If necessary, add more flour or water to achieve a workable, elastic consistency. Cover the dough with plastic wrap or a damp cloth and let rest at room temperature for 15 minutes. Divide the dough into 8 equal pieces. Shape each into a 1½- to 2-inch ball and roll out into a 6-inch round, about ⅛ inch thick.

Heat an Indian *tava* griddle or cast-iron fry pan over medium-high heat. Brush the tava lightly with ghee. Place 1 dough round on the tava and cook until covered with light brown specks, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Using tongs, turn the chapati over and cook for 30 seconds more. Transfer to a plate. Cook with remaining dough rounds.

Meanwhile, heat a stovetop roaster over high heat. Place a browned chapati on the roaster and cook until it puffs up, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Brush the chapati with ghee and place in a shallow bowl lined with a kitchen towel or paper towels. Repeat with the remaining chapati. Serve warm. Makes 8.

 Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Savoring Series, *Savoring India*, by Julie Sahni (Time-Life Books, 2001).

Cilantro-Mint Chutney

Serve this easy-to-prepare chutney with our Potato Samosas.

In a food processor, combine the cilantro, mint, onion, garlic, cumin, chili, sugar, salt, lemon juice and yogurt. Puree until smooth, 2 to 3 minutes.

Transfer the chutney to a bowl, cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. The chutney keeps for up to 3 days refrigerated. Makes about 1½ cups.

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Ingredients for Chapati

1½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

½ tsp. salt

1 Tbs. ghee or unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus more for brushing

1 Tbs. milk

½ cup water, plus more as needed

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Ingredients for Potato Samosas

1½ lb. russet potatoes, peeled and quartered

½ cup water

2 Tbs. canola oil

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1 small yellow onion, diced

1 garlic clove, minced

1 tsp. garam masala

⅛ to ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

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¾ tsp. ground coriander

¾ tsp. ground ginger

1¼ tsp. kosher salt

1 cup frozen peas, thawed

3 Tbs. minced fresh cilantro

1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

For the filling:

¼ cup canola oil, plus more for frying

⅔ cup water

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2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

1 tsp. kosher salt

½ tsp. baking powder

¼ cup cornstarch dissolved in ½ cup water

Cilantro-mint chutney for serving (recipe included in brochure)

Potato Samosas

Flaky fried pastries with savory fillings, samosas vary in shape by location and by cook. Indian samosas such as these are traditionally triangular or conical. The most popular filling is a mixture of potatoes and peas, seasoned with fragrant spices.

To make the filling, put the potatoes and water in a pressure cooker. Cover and cook on high according to the manufacturer’s instructions until the potatoes are just tender. Let the potatoes cool, then mash.

In a large fry pan over medium heat, warm the oil. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Stir in the garam masala, cayenne, coriander, ginger, salt and potatoes. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is fairly dry and the spices are toasted, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and add the peas, cilantro and lemon juice. Let cool completely.

Meanwhile, prepare the samosa dough: In a small bowl, whisk together the ¼ cup oil and the water. In a separate bowl, whisk together the 2 cups flour, the salt and baking powder. Stir in two-thirds of the oil-water mixture, then add more of the mixture, 1 Tbs. at a time, until the dough is just moistened and comes together in a ball.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 1 minute. Form the dough into a ball and wrap in plastic wrap. Let rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.

On a floured surface, roll the dough into a rope about 18 inches long and cut into 8 equal pieces. Form each piece into a ball and flatten into a disk. Roll out each into a 6-inch round, dusting often with flour. Cut each round into quarters.

Preheat a nonstick fry pan over medium-low heat. Working in batches, heat the dough until slightly crusty, about 30 seconds per side; do not brown.

For each samosa, brush half of the rounded edge with the cornstarch mixture. Bring the corners together and pinch the straight sides to form a seam. Spoon about 3 tsp. of the filling into the cone. Brush the top edges with the cornstarch mixture, then pinch together to enclose the filling.

Preheat an oven to 200°F. Line a baking sheet with paper towels.

In a deep fryer, heat oil to 350°F according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Fry the samosas a few at a time, turning often, until golden, 3 to 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the samosas to the prepared baking sheet and keep warm in the oven until ready to serve. Serve with cilantro-mint chutney. Makes 32.

 Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Savoring Series, *Savoring India*, by Julie Sahni (Time-Life Books, 2001).

Ingredients for Potato Samosas

For the filling:

1½ lb. russet potatoes, peeled and quartered

½ cup water

2 Tbs. canola oil

1 small yellow onion, diced

1 garlic clove, minced

1 tsp. garam masala

⅛ to ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

¾ tsp. ground coriander

¾ tsp. ground ginger

1¼ tsp. kosher salt

1 cup frozen peas, thawed

3 Tbs. minced fresh cilantro

1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

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For the samosa dough:

¼ cup canola oil, plus more for frying

⅔ cup water

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

1 tsp. kosher salt

½ tsp. baking powder

¼ cup cornstarch dissolved in ½ cup water

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Cilantro-mint chutney for serving (recipe included in brochure)