

Potato and Bean Curry

When our children were younger, we lived in Fiji for many years. Learning about the variety of cuisines that make up “Fijian food” was a revelation. Along with traditional Fijian food, there is wonderful Chinese-Fijian cuisine, adaptations of European cuisine using local ingredients, new “Pacific cuisine” and of course Indian inspired dishes.

The Indo-Fijian cuisine is absolutely amazing (make sure you visit a local curry house if you are in Fiji!), and it is something we came to make at home regularly, as we continue to do here in Christchurch. This curry is a great way to take advantage of summer produce such as new season potatoes and beans. It is also very adaptable – it can be made with just potatoes or you can substitute cauliflower for the potatoes. You could also swap in a leafy greens (such as shredded silver beet, spinach or kale) for the beans - whatever strikes your fancy, or in my case whatever is in season and I have in the fridge on the day.

I know it sounds like a lot of butter or oil in the dish, but don't scrimp. The oil is an important carrier of the flavours, and you will also need that amount to properly temper the spices. The amount of water you add will vary depending on how much liquid the potatoes absorb, the size of your pan and how well the lid fits. So start with the recommended amount and add more as appropriate. This is a “dry” curry, so you want enough to steam the veggies, but not so much that it is soupy.

½ cup ghee (or alternatively, a little bit of vegetable oil and 125 gm butter or coconut oil)

1 large onion, finely sliced vertically (it holds its shape better that way)

1 tsp cumin seeds

1 tsp black mustard seeds

1 tsp fenugreek seeds

6 cloves of garlic, minced

1 TBS of grated ginger

10 curry leaves (optional)

1 TBS turmeric

1 green chili, finely sliced

1 tsp salt (or to taste)

600 gm potatoes, scrubbed but not peeled, cut into bite sized chunks

250 gm green beans, topped, tailed and cut in half

Juice of half a lemon

a handful of chopped coriander

Heat the ghee in a large, deep frying pan. Add the onion and cook over low heat until the onion is soft and is starting to brown. Turn the heat up to medium high and add the cumin, mustard and fenugreek seeds. Cook until the mustard pops.

Add the garlic, ginger, curry leaves, turmeric, chili and salt. Fry stirring constantly until fragrant. Add the potatoes and stir until coated by the spices. Add a bit of water (about 1/3 – 1/2 cup, depending on the size of your pan) and stir everything around for about 5 minutes. Pop a lid on the pan, turn the heat down to low, and cook 15-20 minutes, or until the potatoes are cooked through.

Add the beans. Turn up the heat until it comes to a simmer, then turn off the heat and cover with the lid again. The ambient heat should cook the beans in about 10 minutes. They should be crisp tender and heated through. Just before serving, stir through the lemon juice and the handful of chopped coriander.

Beetroot Raita

This is worth making for the colour alone. But I find that the earthy sweetness of the beetroot complements the curries beautifully. And it's a great way of using up all those beetroots from your Garden City 2.0 organics bag!

250 ml plain yoghurt (for vegan or dairy-free coconut yoghurt works very well)
2 medium sized beetroots (about 180 gm in total), peeled and finely grated
1 heaped tsp cumin seeds, lightly toasted
1 tsp brown sugar
1 green chili, finely sliced
3 tsp mint leaves, finely chopped
1 small handful coriander, finely chopped
salt to taste

Put the yoghurt in a strainer and let some of the whey drip out for a couple hours. If you don't have time to do this, it's okay. It just makes for a thicker raita.

Mix everything together and let it sit for a couple hours for the flavours to develop.

The meal is great served with basmati rice and/or roti and a dollop of your favourite chutney or Indian pickle. It can be served hot or room temperature so is a great make-ahead meal.

Leftovers make for tasty roti wraps the next day. In fact, the curry and raita taste even better the next day, so it is a super make ahead meal. It also doubles or triples (or quadruples) well, so it's also great for entertaining.

