

of spices," he wrote in his memoirs, the *Babermama*, "I would have conquered the whole world."

The magic of spicing is in the *masala*, the blend. The cook who knows how to blend spices and herbs can transform everyday foods into an unlimited variety of succulent dishes, each with its own taste. Even the humble potato will reveal a surprising variety of flavors, brought out by the *masalas* with which it is cooked.

### How to make masalas

The technique of browning spices in hot *ghee* or oil to release their flavors and aromas is unique to Indian cooking. In making a *masala* sometimes you use whole spices, sometimes powdered spices, but most often a combination of both. First assemble the spices near the stove. Then heat just enough *ghee* or vegetable oil to keep the spices and other ingredients from sticking to the pan (generally 1 or 2 tablespoons). Make it extremely hot but not burning. Then drop the spices into the *ghee*. They immediately begin to swell, pop, brown, or change in some other way. Then just at the precise moment, when the spices are browned and ready, pour them over the dish you're cooking, or put what you're cooking into the seasonings to sauté or simmer.

Since different spices take different times to brown, yet must finish all at once, a sense of timing is of paramount importance. For example, a recipe may call for cumin seeds, fenugreek seeds, grated fresh ginger, ground coriander, and powdered asafetida. Since the cumin and fenugreek seeds both take about 30 seconds to brown, add them together to the hot *ghee* or oil first. Then ten seconds later, add the grated ginger, which takes about 20 seconds. The ground coriander takes about 5 seconds to brown, so toss it in 15 seconds later, and finally, add the asafetida. And there you've got it!

When you add a dish you're cooking to a *masala*, stir it at first to coat the ingredients with the spices and to prevent the spices from overcooking on the bottom of the pan. In recipes that call for ground spices only, the *ghee* or vegetable oil should be only moderately hot, so that the spices will brown without burning. And aside from the *masala*, herbs and seasonings generally go in during the cooking, or at the end.

With just a little experience in preparing *masalas*, you'll become familiar with the flavor and aroma of each spice. With strong spices such as cloves, cayenne pepper, and asafetida you'll use very small quantities. For mild spices, such as cumin seeds and ground coriander, you'll use more.

Some *masala* blends, such as *panch masala* and *garam masala*, can be prepared in advance. You can make enough to last several weeks or even months. *Panch masala*, a mixture of five whole spices, is used mostly in cooking vegetables. *Garam masala*, literally "hot spices" (to warm the body), is actually a mixture of ground sweet spices. It's added to a dish at the end of cooking, sometimes just before serving.

Here is one recipe for *panch masala* and one for *garam masala*:

#### *Panch masala:*

2 tbs cumin seeds	2 tbs black mustard seeds
2 tbs black cumin seeds or kalinji seeds	2 tbs anise or fennel seeds
	1 tbs fenugreek seeds

Mix all the spices and store them in an airtight jar in a cool, dry, dark place. Shake the jar before each use to make sure the spices are evenly distributed.

#### *Garam masala:*

4 tbs coriander seeds	2 tsp cardamom seeds
2 tbs cumin seeds	1 tsp whole cloves
2 tbs black pepper corns	2 cinnamon sticks, 2 inches (5 cm) long

Dry-roast each of the spices separately in a heavy cast-iron frying pan. After putting each spice into the pan, shake the pan until the spice turns a shade or two darker and gives off a freshly-roasted aroma. When all the spices have been roasted, grind them together to a fine powder in an electric coffee grinder. Put the ground *masala* into a glass jar with a tight lid, and keep it in a cool place. Made with good-quality spices and kept in an airtight container, *garam masala* will keep its taste and aroma for several months.

For another *garam masala* mixture, dry-roast and grind the same amounts of cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon as in the previous recipe, then add half a nutmeg kernel, finely grated.

- Before using whole spices, especially those you buy in large quantity, pick through them to eliminate any small stems or stones.
- Keep all your spices in tightly sealed jars or cans in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. To avoid spoilage from constantly dipping into the big jars, keep spices for daily use in small bottles. Be sure to label all jars and containers.
- Many recipes call for ground spices. Rather than purchase powdered spices, which soon lose their flavor, it's always better to buy whole spices and grind them yourself as you need them. In India it's done on a grinding stone, but an electric coffee grinder is excellent for this work. The aroma and taste of freshly ground spices is incomparable.
- Avoid commercially made curry powder or gourmet powders. Often made with inferior spices, these flavorless curry blends lend a wearisome uniformity to your cooking. In India they're practically unknown. It is far better to make fresh spice blends of your own.
- Sometimes a recipe requires a *masala* paste. You can make this by grinding together the specified spices and a few drops of water with a mortar and pestle. Then fry the paste in *ghee* or oil for a minute or so to bring out its flavor before adding the other ingredients.
- Before beginning to cook, read the recipe carefully. Gather the spices you need near the stove. There may be no time later to stop and hunt for a spice. Something on the stove may burn if you do.
- Sometimes you can use one spice as a substitute for another you don't have. Often you can even leave out the unavailable spice and the dish will still turn out fine. The recipes indicate some possible substitutes and deletions. Experience will also help you.
- Even though dried herbs are often twice as pungent as fresh ones, use fresh herbs whenever possible. Instructions for growing and storing your own coriander and fenugreek are given on page 81.

Since it's the spices and seasonings, judiciously blended, that give Indian food its distinctive character, it's worth while to examine them one by one and become acquainted with their qualities and uses.

**ASAFETIDA (*hing*):** This aromatic resin, from the root of *Ferula asafoetida*, is used in small pinches for its distinctive taste and medicinal properties. Asafetida is so effective in preventing flatulence that it can cure horses of indigestion. It's available as a resin or as a fine powder. The resin form is the purer of the two, but you have to grate it when you need it. Powdered asafetida is mixed with white flour, but it's more convenient to use. Add a pinch or a fraction of a teaspoon to hot *ghee* or vegetable oil for a second or two before adding the other ingredients. If you can't find asafetida or don't want to use it, your recipes will be all right without it.

**CARDAMOM (*elaichi*):** The pale green seed pods of this member of the ginger family, *Elettaria cardamomum*, are used to flavor sweets, or are chewed as a breath sweetener and digestive. White cardamom pods, which are nothing other than bleached green ones, are more easily available, but have less flavor. When cooking with whole pods, remove them before serving, or push them to the side of the plate. They're not meant to be eaten whole. When a recipe calls only for the black, pungent seeds, remove them from the pods and pulverize them with a mortar and pestle or with a rolling pin. Ground cardamom seeds are used in *garam masala*.

**CAYENNE PEPPER (*pesa hui lal mirch*):** Cayenne powder, made from dried red chillies, is often called red chilli powder. This is the spice that makes Indian food hot. Use it according to your taste.

**CHILLIES, fresh (*hari mirch*):** These bright red or green seed pods of *Capsicum annuum* are found in both Asian groceries and in supermarkets. The flat, round, white seeds on the inside give hotness to food. If you want flavor without hotness, make a slit in the pod and remove the seeds with the tip of a small knife. Wash your hands

carefully with soap and warm water after handling chillies, because their volatile oils irritate the skin. Store them unwashed, wrapped in newspaper, in the refrigerator. Discard any that go bad.

**CHILLIES**, whole, dried (*sabut lal mirch*): Dried red chilli pods are used extensively in Indian cooking, for hotness and flavor. When crushed chillies are called for, grind them with a mortar and pestle or break them into tiny bits with your fingers. Remember to wash your hands after touching them. If you don't like chillies you can use fewer than called for or eliminate them entirely from the recipe.

**CINNAMON** (*dalchini*): True cinnamon comes from the inner bark of an evergreen tree, *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*, native to Sri Lanka and the West Indies. Look for the thin sun-dried bark sheaths sold packed one inside the other. When using whole cinnamon sticks in chutneys or rice dishes, remove the sticks before serving the meal. Rather than buy ground cinnamon, buy whole sticks to dry-roast and grind as needed. The strong-flavored, slightly bitter cinnamon commonly sold in the market, *Cinnamomum cassia*, comes in single thick pieces or in powdered form. It is a poor substitute for the other, which has a delicate, sweet taste.

**CLOVES** (*laung*): This dried flower bud of the tropical tree *Myrtus caryophyllus* has always been the basis of the spice trade. The word *clove* comes from the Latin *clavus* meaning "nail", which describes its shape. Clove oil is antiseptic and strongly aromatic. It is said that the custom of "chewing the clove" when addressing the emperor started in China. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, it was the custom of courtiers to chew cloves in the Queen's presence. Cloves can be used as a blood purifier, a digestive aid, and a local analgesic for toothache. Dry-roasted and ground, they are an essential ingredient in *garam masala*. Buy cloves that are well formed and plump, not shrivelled and dusty.

**CORIANDER**, fresh (*hara dhania*): The fresh leaves of *Coriandrum sativum* are as widely used in India as parsley is in the West—not merely as a garnish though, but as an essential flavoring. Sometimes called cilantro or Chinese parsley, fresh coriander is

worth looking for. Its delicate taste is unique. You can substitute parsley if coriander isn't available, but the flavor won't be the same. Fresh coriander is generally sold in bunches. To store it, put its roots or cut stalks into a small vase of water, insert the vase into a plastic bag, and keep it in the refrigerator. They will keep for more than a week. Wash it just before using it. Use the leaves and the upper portions of the stalks, chopped.

If you have difficulty buying fresh coriander (or fresh fenugreek), you can easily grow it yourself. Scatter some coriander seeds in a small patch of the garden, cover them with a thin layer of soil, and water them every day. They will germinate in 18 to 20 days and grow rapidly. Pick the stalks when they are about 6 inches (15 cm) high and before the plants go to seed.

**CORIANDER SEEDS**, whole and ground (*dhania, sabut* and *pesa*): Coriander seeds are round, beige, and highly aromatic. A most important spice in Indian cooking, they are becoming increasingly popular in the West. In 1983, the United States and England each imported over three million tons of coriander seeds. The oils in coriander seeds help assimilate starchy foods and root vegetables. Generally ground before use, coriander seeds impart a fresh, springtime aroma to foods. To get the most flavor, buy the seeds whole and grind them in small quantities with an electric grinder.

**CUMIN SEEDS**, whole and ground (*safed jeera, sabut* and *pesa*): The seeds of white cumin, *Cuminum cyminum*, are an essential ingredient in preparing vegetable curries, rices, savories, and *dal*. Although ground cumin is available in all supermarkets, it's better to grind your own. When a recipe calls for roasted cumin, fry the amount of seeds you want in a pre-heated frying pan. Shake the pan until the seeds darken a little and become fragrant. If you need roasted and ground cumin seeds, put the roasted seeds into an electric coffee grinder and grind them fine. If you don't have a coffee grinder, use a mortar and pestle, or simply crush the seeds with the back of a spoon.

*Kala jeera*, or black cumin seeds (*Cuminum nigrum*), smaller and darker than the white ones, have a more bitter taste and a sharper smell.

**CURRY LEAVES (*kari patti*):** The fresh leaves from the Kari tree of Southwest Asia, *Murraya koenigri*, are used mainly as an aromatic and flavoring for curries and soups. Dried leaves are more easily available but less aromatic than fresh ones. When starting a curry or *masala*, put the fresh or dried leaves into the oil to fry until crisp.

**FENNEL (*sauf*):** Sometimes known as "sweet cumin," the long pale-green seeds of *Foeniculum vulgare* look like cumin but taste like anise seed or liquorice. Fennel seeds are sometimes used in curries. Dry-roasted, they're an effective breath sweetener. If you can't find them, substitute an equal amount of anise seeds.

**FENUGREEK (*methi*):** The leaves and tender stalks of *Trigonella foenumgraecum* are a popular vegetable in India. Its squarish, rather flat, brownish-beige seeds are essential in many vegetable curries and savories. In India, women eat fenugreek seeds with *jaggery* (unrefined palm sugar) after childbirth, to strengthen the back, increase bodily force, and stimulate the flow of breast milk. Fenugreek seeds have a slightly bitter flavor so don't exceed the recommended quantities, and avoid burning them, which makes them more bitter. Fenugreek, like coriander, is easy to grow (see page 81).

**GINGER, fresh (*adrak*):** This light-brown knobby rhizome of *Zingiber officinalis* is used extensively in all forms of Indian cooking. Choose fresh ginger that is plump and not shrivelled, that has firm flesh, and that is only slightly fibrous. Before you chop, grate, slice, or grind ginger into a paste, scrape off its potato-like skin with a sharp knife. To grate ginger, use the fine holes of a metal grater. Powdered ginger can't be substituted for fresh, because the flavor is different. Dried ginger (*sonth*), more pungent than fresh ginger, must be soaked before use. (One teaspoon of dried ginger equals one tablespoon of chopped fresh ginger.) Ginger is used medicinally for colic and dyspepsia. Eaten in small quantities it cures stomach-ache, and ginger tea is an excellent remedy for colds.

**KALINJI SEEDS (*kalinji*):** These are the black, teardrop-shaped seeds of the onion plant *Nigella indica*. They impart a faint onion

flavor and are used in vegetable dishes and *pakora* batter. Although often confused with black cumin seeds, the two have nothing in common. If they're unavailable, simply leave them out of the recipe.

**MANGO POWDER (*amchur*):** The raw fruits of the mango tree, *Mangifera indica*, are cut into strips, then dried, ground, and used as a souring and flavoring agent in vegetable curries. Mango powder is used as freely in North Indian cooking as lemon is in Western cooking to give food a tangy and sour taste. It burns easily, so use it with care.

**MINT LEAVES (*pudina ki patti*):** The two most common mints are spearmint (*Mentha spicata*) and peppermint (*Mentha piperita*). Aside from adding color as a garnish, mint leaves lend a refreshing taste to beverages. They can also be used to make mint chutney. Mint stimulates the digestive tract and will allay nausea and vomiting. You can easily grow the plants at home in practically any soil, either in sun or in partial shade. Dried mint loses its color but keeps its flavor fairly well.

**MUSTARD SEEDS, black (*rai*):** Indian cooking wouldn't be the same without the seeds of *Brassica juncea*. Black mustard seeds are round, tiny (smaller than the yellow variety), and not really black but a dark reddish brown. They are pungent, nut-flavored, and nutritious, and they add texture and eye appeal to a dish. The frying of mustard seeds is one of the highlights of preparing *masalas*. You scatter seeds into a small amount of smoking hot *ghee* or oil, and a few seconds later they crackle and pop—and jump out of the pan unless you cover it quickly.

**NUTMEG (*jaiphal*):** Nutmeg is the kernel of the seed of the tropical tree *Myristica fragrans*. Buy whole kernels that are round, compact, oily-looking, and heavy. They may be dark, or white from the lime used to repel insects. Grated nutmeg is used in small amounts (sometimes with other spices) to flavor puddings, sweets, and vegetable dishes. It's best to grate nutmeg straight into the dish; once grated it rapidly loses its flavor. Store whole or powdered nutmeg in a tightly closed container.

**ROSE-WATER** (*gulab-jal*): Rose-water is the diluted essence of rose petals extracted by steam distillation. It's a widely used flavoring in Indian sweets and rice dishes. You can use a measuring spoon for rose-water, but if you cook with rose essence or concentrate be careful not to use too much. Count the drops.

**SAFFRON** (*kesar*): Saffron is known as "the king of spices." It's the dried stigma of the saffron crocus, *Crocus sativus*, which is cultivated in Kashmir, Spain, and Portugal. Each crocus flower has only three saffron threads, so one pound of saffron takes the hand-plucked threads of about seventy thousand flowers. Saffron is expensive, but a little goes a long way. Beware of cheap saffron or "bastard saffron." It looks similar and gives a saffron color, but it has none of the authentic fragrance.

Saffron has a pleasant delicate flavor and imparts a rich yellow color to whatever it's mixed with. It's used for flavoring and coloring sweets, rice dishes, and beverages. To extract the flavor and bright orange color from the saffron threads, dry-roast them slightly and then crumble them and steep them in a tablespoon or so of warm milk. Then pour the milk into the dish to be flavored. Saffron is also available in powdered form, which is twice as strong as the threads.

**TAMARIND** (*imli*): This sour, acid-tasting seasoning comes from the large broad bean pod of a tropical tree, *Tamarindus indica*. The brown flesh (sometimes with the dark shiny seeds) is scraped from the pods, dried, and sold in packets.

To use, remove the seeds and tear or chop the pulp into small pieces. Boil the pieces in a small amount of water for about 10 minutes, or until the pieces of pulp soften and fall apart. (Use about one cup [250 ml] of water to 8 oz [225 g] of tamarind.) Then force as much of the pulp as possible through a strainer. Keep the liquid and discard the fibrous residue left in the strainer. If tamarind is unavailable, you can simulate its flavor somewhat by a mixture of lemon juice and brown sugar.

**TURMERIC** (*haldi*): A member of the ginger family (*Curcuma longa*), turmeric is a rhizome that varies in color from dark orange to reddish-brown, but when dried and ground into powder it is

always bright yellow. It is used in small amounts to give a warm, pungent flavor to vegetables, soups, and savories, or simply to add color to rice dishes. Ground turmeric keeps its coloring properties for a long time but loses its aroma quickly. One ounce is enough to keep at home unless you live on spicy rice and curries. Turmeric stains, so be careful with your clothes. It also burns easily, so cook it with care. Turmeric is used in *Ayur-vedic* medicine as a diuretic, blood purifier, and intestinal stimulant.

## Nimbu chawal

Lemon rice

This dish is the ideal rice for a summer picnic. One of the most striking sights at our annual Ratha-yatra festival in Los Angeles is the "mountain" of lemon rice. Nimbu chawal is flavored mainly by the lemon so be careful not to exceed the recommended quantities of spices.

2 cups (350 g) basmati or other good-quality long-grained rice  
1 tbs ghee or vegetable oil  
1/2 tsp cumin seeds  
1 1/2 tsp black mustard seeds  
5 curry leaves (if available)  
1 cinnamon stick, 2 inches (5 cm) long

1 green chilli, chopped  
3 1/2 cups (825 ml) water  
2 tsp salt  
1/2 tsp turmeric (optional)  
1/2 cup (125 ml) lemon juice  
2 tbs butter  
1 lemon, cut into 8 wedges  
5 or 6 sprigs of parsley

Wash the rice in cold water and soak it for 15 to 20 minutes. Then leave it in a colander or sieve to drain. Meanwhile, heat the *ghee* or vegetable oil in a saucepan over medium heat and toss in the cumin seeds, black mustard seeds, curry leaves, and cinnamon. When the cumin seeds change color, put in the chopped chilli and then the drained rice.

Stir-fry the rice for 2 or 3 minutes. When the grains begin to turn translucent pour the salted water into the rice and bring it to a boil for a minute. (If you want yellow rice, add the turmeric powder with the water.) Cover the pan, turn the heat down, and cook (without stirring) for about 18 minutes or until all the water is absorbed.

Lift the lid and remove the pieces of cinnamon stick. Sprinkle the lemon juice over the rice and dot with the butter.

Continue to cook, uncovered, for 2 or 3 minutes more. Finally, fluff the rice gently with a fork and garnish each serving with a lemon wedge and a sprig of parsley.

Soaking time: 15 to 20 min

Preparation and cooking time: 30 min

## Palak chawal

Rice with spinach

Srila Prabhupada's program of chanting, dancing, philosophy, and feasting has had wide success in Kenya. The Kenyans, like the Bengalis, eat plenty of vegetable greens and large amounts of rice, so whenever the Kenyan devotees combine greens and rice in palak chawal, the feast is a great success.

2 cups (350 g) basmati or other good-quality long-grained rice  
1 1/2 tsp salt  
3 1/2 cups (825 ml) water  
1/2 lb (225 g) fresh spinach

1 tbs ghee  
1 tsp ground coriander  
2 bay leaves  
3/4 cup (100 g) unsalted peanuts, lightly fried (optional)  
1 pinch ground black pepper

Wash the rice thoroughly, soak it for 15 minutes, and let it drain. Put the water and the salt in a pot over high heat. Remove the tough stalks from the spinach, wash the leaves in several changes of water, and drain. Then wilt the leaves by plunging them into boiling water. Put them in a colander and rinse under cold water. Drain and chop them into small pieces.

In a medium-sized saucepan, heat the *ghee* and fry the ground coriander and bay leaves. Add the rice and stir-fry until the grains are coated with *ghee* and become translucent. Add the chopped spinach, stir for a minute, then pour the salted water into the saucepan and bring to a boil.

Cover the pan and cook gently on low heat for 20 minutes. If you use peanuts, put them in without stirring, 5 minutes before the end of cooking. When the rice is completely cooked, add the pepper. Mix the ingredients with a fork before serving.

Preparation and cooking time: 30 to 40 min

## Narial chawal

Coconut rice

On Bali, the Indonesian paradise once ruled by Vedic princes, several of the island's best traditional dancers have become devotees of Krishna. When the temple puts on a theatrical presentation of the Ramayan, a Gamelan orchestra (forty to fifty native musicians with traditional instruments) is customarily hired to provide the background music. But the musicians have become so fond of prasada, especially fancy rice dishes like narial chawal, that instead of money they simply ask for their travel expenses and as much prasada as they can eat.

2 cups (350 g) basmati or other good-quality medium- or long-grained rice  
3½ cups (825 ml) water  
1 cup (200 g) sugar  
½ tsp finely ground cardamom seeds

2¼ cups (150 g) grated coconut, lightly toasted  
½ cup (50 g) pistachio or cashew nuts, toasted  
⅓ cup (50 g) raisins  
1 tbs butter

Soak the rice for 1 hour and let it drain. In a medium-sized saucepan, bring the water, sugar, and cardamom powder to a boil. Now drop the rice in the boiling water and bring to a second boil. Simmer for 2 or 3 minutes, then turn the heat very low. Cover the pot tightly, cook for 10 minutes, then lift the cover and quickly put in the remaining ingredients. Replace the cover and cook 10 minutes longer or until done. Then remove the cover and allow the rice to cook on the same low heat for 2 or 3 more minutes to allow the steam to evaporate.

Finally, mix the rice gently and serve on a platter with *masala dosas* or *atta dosas* for breakfast or lunch.

Soaking time: 1 hr

Preparation and cooking time: 30 min

## Masala bhat

Spicy rice

2 cups (350 g) basmati or other good-quality long-grained white rice  
3½ cups (825 ml) water  
1 tsp salt  
2 tbs ghee or vegetable oil  
1 tsp cumin seeds  
2 fresh red or green chillies, seeded and sliced  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp grated fresh ginger  
½ tsp ground nutmeg  
3 cardamom pods, bruised  
2 tbs chopped fresh coriander or parsley leaves  
2 tbs butter

Wash the rice well, soak it for 15 minutes; then let it drain for 15 minutes. Put the water and salt in a pot over high heat.

Heat the ghee or vegetable oil in a medium-sized saucepan and fry the cumin seeds and chillies. After a few seconds, when the cumin seeds begin to darken, add the cinnamon, ginger, and cardamom, and nutmeg. Stir once, add the rice, and continue stirring. In a minute or two the rice should be lightly toasted. Pour the boiling water into the rice, cover, and turn the heat very low. Without lifting the cover or stirring, cook for 15 to 18 minutes or until the rice has absorbed all the water.

Uncover the pot and allow the steam to escape for a few minutes. Discard the cardamom pods and gently mix the butter and the chopped fresh coriander or parsley leaves into the rice with a fork. Serve with any vegetable dish or combination of dishes.

Soaking and draining time: 30 min

Preparation and cooking time: 25 min

## *Sabji pulao*

Mixed vegetable rice

2 cups (350 g) basmati rice	½ tsp turmeric
¾ cup (100 g) fresh peas	4 cups (950 ml) water
1 cup (100 g) green beans	2½ tsp salt
1 cup (100 g) cauliflower buds	3 firm ripe tomatoes, washed and chopped
1 cup (100 g) diced carrots	2 bay leaves
2 tbs ghee or butter	2 lemons or limes, cut into wedges
1 fresh chilli, seeded and minced	
½ tsp grated fresh ginger	

Begin by wrapping the following spices in a small piece of muslin like a tea-bag:

6 whole cloves	½ tsp ground cardamom seeds
2 cinnamon sticks, crushed	
1 tsp cumin seeds	¼ tsp asafetida

Wash the vegetables and trim them. Wash the rice, soak it for 15 minutes, and let it drain for 15 minutes. Heat the *ghee* or butter in a medium-sized saucepan and fry the chilli, grated ginger, and turmeric.

Now add the vegetables (except the tomatoes) and fry for 4 or 5 minutes more. Add the rice and stir for a moment. Then add the salted water, tomatoes, and bay leaves. Stir again and bring to a boil. Suspend the little bag of spices in the rice, cover the pot, and cook over very low heat until the rice has absorbed all the water.

Remove the spice bag and squeeze it over the rice. Turn the rice onto a pre-heated serving dish and garnish with wedges of lemon or lime before serving, either as part of a meal or as a meal in itself.

**Soaking and draining time:** 30 min

**Preparation and cooking time:** 35 to 45 min

## *Seb pulao*

Apple rice

*This sweet pulao can be served at the end of a meal or as a light meal in itself. It's delicious with whipped cream. You can also use pears or mangos with the apples or in place of them.*

1½ cups (275 g) good-quality long-grained white rice	1 cinnamon stick, 2 inches (5 cm) long
3 medium-sized apples	8 cloves
2 cups (350 g) brown sugar	8 cardamom pods
¼ tsp powdered saffron or ½ tsp saffron strands	3 bay leaves
1¾ cups (425 ml) water (for the syrup)	3½ cups (825 ml) water (for the rice)
3 tbs ghee or butter	⅓ cup (50 g) sliced almonds
	⅓ cup (50 g) raisins

Wash the rice and drain it. Peel, core, and cut the apples into small chunks. Make a syrup by putting the sugar, a pinch of saffron, and the water in a saucepan and cooking it for 30 minutes over medium heat until it reduces to about one-third of its original volume.

Heat the *ghee* or butter in a saucepan and toss in the cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, and bay leaves. Stir-fry for a moment or two, then add the rice. Stir-fry for 2 or 3 minutes. Add the water and bring to a boil. Toss the rest of the saffron into the water, cover the pan, and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Then take the saucepan off the heat.

Make a hole in the center of the rice and place the pieces of apple and a little of the syrup in it. Add the raisins and the sliced almonds. Cover the hole with rice and pour the rest of the syrup over the top. Cover the pan again and cook over low heat for 15 more minutes, until the rice is completely cooked. Remove the whole spices, mix gently, and serve hot.

**Preparation and cooking time:** 40 min

## Biriyani

Baked vegetable rice

2 cups (350 g) basmati or other good-quality long-grained rice	1½ cups (200 g) fresh peas, boiled
4 cups (950 ml) water	4 tomatoes, blanched and mashed
3 tsp salt	3 tbs minced fresh coriander or parsley leaves
¼ tsp powdered saffron	¾ cup (175 ml) yogurt
3 tbs ghee or vegetable oil	2 tsp rose-water
2 tsp garam masala	¼ cup (35 g) chopped hazelnuts or walnuts
2 tsp ground coriander	
1 tsp turmeric	
3 potatoes, peeled and diced	

Wash the rice and let it drain. Put the water and 2 teaspoons of the salt in a medium-sized saucepan and bring to a boil. Then add the rice to the water and bring it to a second boil. Cover it and cook it over low heat for about 15 minutes.

While the rice cooks, steep the saffron in a small amount of warm milk. Then heat the *ghee* or vegetable oil in another saucepan and stir-fry the powdered spices. After a few seconds, add the diced potatoes and stir-fry them gently for 5 minutes or until they are lightly browned. Now put in the peas, the tomatoes, half of the fresh coriander leaves, and the remaining salt. Cook with the pan covered until the vegetables are tender. Stir every few minutes. If necessary, add a little water to prevent scorching.

By now the rice should be cooked. Add the yogurt, rose-water, and saffron milk to the rice, mix gently with a fork, and let stand undisturbed for 5 minutes. Grease a cakepan or casserole and cover the bottom with half the rice. Pat the rice down. Spread the vegetables evenly over the rice and cover them with the remaining rice. Pat it down and cover the pan tightly with a piece of aluminum foil. Heat the oven to 275° F (140° C) and bake the rice for 15 to 20 minutes. To serve, cut into portions and remove from the pan with a spatula. Garnish each portion with chopped nuts and coriander leaves. Serve hot.

Preparation and cooking time: 45 min

## Pushpanna

Flower rice

With its many garnishes and seasonings, pushpanna is one of the most opulent of rice dishes, and, as its name implies, it's as colorful as a bouquet of flowers. Some cooks add pieces of chopped dried fruits to heighten the effect.

8 oz (225 g) pressed paneer	1 tsp ground cinnamon
¾ cup (100 g) cashews or blanched almonds	½ tsp cayenne pepper
1½ cups (100 g) grated coconut	½ tsp ground black pepper
6 tbs ghee or butter	¼ tsp asafetida
1 tsp fennel seeds	¼ tsp ground cloves
1 tsp cumin seeds	2 cups (350 g) basmati or other good-quality long-grained white rice
2 bay leaves	¾ cup (100 g) raisins
6 cardamom pods, bruised	3½ cups (825 ml) whey
2 tsp ground coriander	½ cup (100 g) sugar
1 tsp turmeric	1 tbs salt
1 tsp grated nutmeg	

Cube the *paneer*, or knead it into a dough to be rolled into ½-inch (2.5 cm) balls. Deep-fry the cubes or balls and drain in a colander. Deep-fry the nuts and drain them with the cheese. Toast the grated coconut in 2 tablespoons of the *ghee* and set the coconut aside.

Heat the remaining *ghee* in a large saucepan. When it begins to smoke, toss in the fennel, cumin, bay leaves, and cardamom. After 30 seconds, add all the powdered spices. Stir-fry for a few seconds, then add the rice. Stir until the grains are translucent and lightly browned. Add the fried cheese, raisins, sugar, and salt. Add the whey. (This can be the whey from your *paneer*. If you don't have enough whey, add water.) Mix gently. Bring to a boil, then adjust to the lowest heat and cover the pan tightly. Cook for 20 minutes until the rice is tender. Then add the fried nuts and coconut and mix gently before serving.

Preparation and cooking time: 40 min

## Gujarati urad dal

Urad dal with spiced yogurt

Urad dal is so rich in protein that the Ayur-veda recommends eating it not more than four times a week, otherwise the body becomes overloaded with protein. The addition of seasoned yogurt gives this soup a creamy consistency. It goes well with a simple steamed rice dish and an Indian bread.

1½ cups (375 ml) plain yogurt	2½ tsp salt
1 tbs brown sugar	1 tbs ghee or vegetable oil
7 cups (1.6 l) water	1 tsp black mustard seeds
1 cup (200 g) urad dal	2 dried chillies, crushed
½ tsp turmeric	1 tsp fennel seeds
2 bay leaves	1 tsp grated fresh ginger

Mix the yogurt and the brown sugar in 1 cup (250 ml) of water. Set aside. Clean, wash, and drain the *dal*. In a heavy saucepan bring the remaining water to a boil. To this water, add the *urad dal*, bring to a boil again and cook uncovered for 10 minutes. Remove any froth that accumulates on the surface. Add the turmeric, bay leaves, and salt, stir once, cover the pot, and cook for 20 minutes over medium-low heat until the *dal* grains can be mashed between two fingers. Now, remove the bay leaves, and mix the *dal* in a blender until it is smooth. Then let simmer.

Put the *ghee* or vegetable oil in a small saucepan over medium heat and fry the black mustard seeds. Cover the pan for a moment to prevent the mustard seeds from jumping out. When the mustard seeds have finished popping, toss in the crushed chillies, the fennel seeds, and the grated ginger. Stir-fry for a moment. Finally, put this *masala* into the yogurt and pour the yogurt into the *dal*. Stir to blend well. Continue cooking for 5 minutes before serving.

Preparation and cooking time: 1 hr

## Tamatar toor dal

Tomato and toor dal soup

In the Indian province of Gujarat, toor dal is so widely used that the word *dal* means only toor dal. All other dals are known by their specific names. In Barcelona toor dal is also becoming well known to the hundreds of people who come to our restaurant for lunch. This dish is a favorite there, and many people ask the devotees how to cook it.

1 cup (200 g) toor dal	1 tsp ground coriander
8 cups (1.9 l) water	½ tsp asafetida
3 tsp salt	3 medium-sized tomatoes, washed and chopped
½ tsp turmeric	1 tbs chopped fresh coriander leaves
1 tbs ghee or vegetable oil	1 lemon, sliced
1 tsp cumin seeds	
1 tsp grated fresh ginger	

Pick through the *dal* and wash it under warm running water until the grains appear free from their oily coating. Then drain them.

Bring the water with the salt and turmeric added to a boil. Pour the *dal* into the water, cover, and cook over medium heat for 30 minutes, stirring every now and then. When the *dal* is tender, heat the *ghee* or oil in a small saucepan and fry the cumin seeds. Let them sizzle for a few seconds. Put in the grated ginger, ground coriander and asafetida, then stir in the tomatoes. Stir-fry for 2 or 3 minutes. Finally, pour the fried tomatoes and seasonings into the *dal* and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the grains are soft and fully cooked.

Garnish each serving with fresh chopped coriander or parsley leaves and a slice of lemon.

Preparation and cooking time: 1 hr



## Jagannatha Puri channe ki dal

### Sweet dal

Anyone who has ever had the good fortune to see the form of Krishna traditionally worshiped in the Indian city of Jagannatha Puri, will never forget it. This form of Krishna, called Jagannatha, "the Lord of the universe," is very merciful and attractive. His eyes are large and brilliant, and His broad smile extends from ear to ear.

Jagannatha Puri channe ki dal is a favorite dish of Lord Jagannatha, and in many of our temples the devotees regularly offer it to Him. After tasting this soup for the first time, a guest once remarked that he now understood why Lord Jagannatha is always smiling.

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 cup (200 g) channa dal    | ½ tsp cumin seeds                          |
| 8 cups (1.9 l) water        | 1 tsp grated fresh ginger                  |
| 3 tsp salt                  | ½ tsp powdered asafetida                   |
| 2 bay leaves                | 3 tbs grated fresh or<br>4 tbs dry coconut |
| 5 medium-sized tomatoes     | 2 tbs brown sugar                          |
| 1 tbs butter                | 2 tsp molasses                             |
| 2 tbs ghee or vegetable oil |  |

Soak the *dal* overnight and leave in a strainer to drain. Bring the water with the salt to a boil in a heavy saucepan or pot, then add the *dal* and bay leaves. Cook partially covered over high heat for 30 to 40 minutes. (Remove any froth that collects on the surface.) Then lift the cover, stir the *dal* several times, and lower to a simmer.

Wash the tomatoes, cut each one into 8 wedges, and add to the *dal* with the butter. Replace the cover and let the *dal* simmer while you prepare the seasonings.

Heat the *ghee* or oil in a small saucepan and fry the cumin seeds. Let them fry for a few seconds, then add the grated ginger, asafetida, and grated coconut. Fry this mixture for 1 or 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Now pour the *ghee* and spices into the cooked *dal* along with the sugar and the molasses. Stir well and simmer for 5 more minutes before serving.

Preparation and cooking time: 1 hr

Opposite page: Jagannatha Puri  
channe ki dal

## *Swadisht dal*

Mixed dal

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup (75 g) each: toor dal,  
mung dal, and urad dal  
5 tbs ghee or vegetable oil  
1 tbs grated fresh ginger  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp turmeric  
8 cups (1.9 l) water  
1 tsp black mustard seeds  
1 tsp cumin seeds  
2 green chillies, seeded  
and minced

4 curry leaves or  
2 bay leaves  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp asafetida  
1 small eggplant, cubed  
3 medium-sized tomatoes,  
chopped  
1 tsp sugar  
 $2\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp garam masala  
2 heaping tbs chopped fresh  
coriander leaves

Wash the *dals* and soak them for one hour; then let them drain. Heat 2 tablespoons of the *ghee* or vegetable oil and fry the ginger. Add the turmeric and the *dals*. Stir-fry for a minute, add  $1\frac{1}{4}$  pints (725 ml) water, and cook over medium heat (skimming off the foam as it accumulates) until the *dal* becomes soft. Remove the saucepan. Mix the *dal* in a blender or mash it into a paste. Set aside.

Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of *ghee* or vegetable oil in a saucepan. Fry the mustard seeds, cumin seeds, chillies, curry leaves, and asafetida. Add the cubed eggplant. Stir-fry for 10 minutes until they are butter-soft. Now add the tomatoes, sugar, salt, *garam masala*, *dal* paste, and the remaining water. Stir well to mix the ingredients, cover and cook until the vegetables are tender. Garnish with the coriander leaves and serve hot with plain rice.

Preparation and cooking time: 45 min

## *Sambar*

Vegetable and dal stew

Sambar is thicker than ordinary *dal* and is especially easy to digest. It is traditionally served with masala or *atta dosa*, or with white rice and one of the breads described in the next chapter.

6 cups (1.4 l) water	2 oz (50 g) tamarind
3 tsp salt	3 tbs ghee or vegetable oil
$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups (250 g) mung dal, toor dal, green split-peas, or whole lentils	1 tsp black mustard seeds
$1\frac{1}{2}$ lb (675 g) assorted vege- tables such as eggplant, carrots, tomatoes, green beans, or squash	$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cumin
	2 tsp ground coriander
	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne pepper or 2 fresh chillies, minced
	1 tsp turmeric
	4 tbs grated coconut

Start by putting the water, with the salt added, over heat to boil. Sort, wash, and drain the *dal*. Add the *dal* to the boiling water. Cook uncovered for 10 minutes. Remove any froth and *dal* skins that collect on the surface, then cover and cook over medium heat for 15 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. The *dal* should become softer but not mushy.

While the *dal* is cooking, wash and cut the vegetables into small cubes. Break up the lump of tamarind, boil it in a small amount of water, and extract the juice (see page 84).

Heat the *ghee* or vegetable oil in a saucepan and fry the mustard seeds. After they finish popping, add the powdered spices, fry for a few seconds, then add the vegetables. (If you use eggplant, cook it first until it is butter-soft.) Stir-fry for 10 to 15 minutes, until all the vegetables are browned. Add the grated coconut and fry for 2 more minutes.

By this time the *dal* should be ready. Empty the vegetables and the tamarind juice into the *dal* and mix well. Lower the heat and cook uncovered until the *dal* is fully cooked and thick and the vegetables are soft.

Preparation and cooking time: 45 min

## Mithi ghani dal

Sprouted mung beans in yogurt sauce

1½ cups (300 g) whole mung beans	1 tsp turmeric
1 cup (250 ml) yogurt or buttermilk	2 tsp salt
2 tbs chick-pea flour	3 fresh chillies, seeded and minced
1 tsp cumin seeds	1½ tsp sugar
1 tbs grated fresh ginger	4 tbs chopped fresh coriander leaves
¼ tsp asafetida	2½ cups (600 ml) water
5 curry leaves (if available)	3 tbs ghee or vegetable oil

Wash the *mung* beans and soak them overnight. The next morning, tie them in a moist cloth and hang them for at least 24 hours before cooking, so they can begin to sprout. Check from time to time to make sure the cloth does not dry out.

Mix the chick-pea flour with the yogurt or buttermilk and set aside. Heat the *ghee* or vegetable oil and fry the cumin, ginger, chillies, and asafetida. When the cumin seeds darken, add the curry leaves, turmeric, salt, and sprouted *mung* beans. Pour the water into the pan and cook over medium heat for 30 to 40 minutes, adding a little more water if necessary. When the beans are soft, add the yogurt or buttermilk; then add the sugar and cook for 5 more minutes. Garnish with the chopped coriander leaves. Serve with plain white rice or an Indian bread.

Soaking time: overnight

Sprouting time: at least 24 hrs

Preparation and cooking time: 1 hr

## Khitchri

Boiled rice, dal, and vegetables

This inexpensive dish is so satisfying that Srila Prabhupada once said, "A bowl of khitchri and a small portion of yogurt is a poor man's feast fit for a king."

This recipe is for "dry" khitchri, which has the consistency of rice that is slightly overcooked, soft, and a little moist.

1 cup (200 g) mung dal, split-peas, or whole mung beans	2 tsp grated fresh ginger
1½ cups (250 g) medium- or long-grained rice	1 tsp ground cumin
½ cauliflower, washed and separated into small flowerets	½ tsp asafetida
3 tbs ghee or vegetable oil	7 cups (1.6 l) water
2 tsp cumin seeds	2 tsp salt
4 medium-sized tomatoes, washed and quartered	2 tsp turmeric
2 fresh chillies, seeded and minced	4 medium-sized potatoes, washed, peeled, and cubed
	3 tbs lemon juice
	2 tbs butter
	½ tsp ground black pepper

Pick through the *dal* and wash it and the rice together. Let drain.

Meanwhile, wash, trim, and cut the vegetables. Heat the *ghee* or vegetable oil and fry the cumin seeds, chillies and ginger. After they sizzle for a minute, toss in the ground cumin and the asafetida. After a few seconds, put in the diced potatoes and the flowerets of cauliflower. Turn the vegetables with a spoon for 4 to 5 minutes until they become flecked with brown spots. Now add the drained *dal* and rice and stir-fry for one minute. Pour in the water. Add the salt, turmeric, and tomatoes, and bring to a full boil over high heat. Reduce to low heat and cook with the pot partially covered for 30 to 40 minutes (if you use *mung* beans, cook a little more; split peas a little less) until the *dal* is soft and fully cooked. Stir once or twice in the beginning to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pot.

Finally, squeeze the lemon juice over the *khitchri*, put the butter