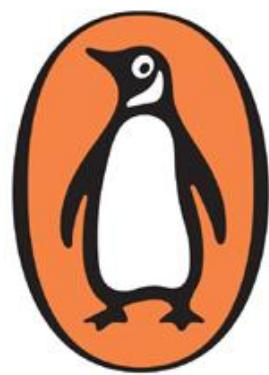


'Vikas Khanna's
food encompasses a
range of influences'
VIR SANGHVI

My Great India Cookbook

Vikas Khanna



Penguin

VIKAS KHANNA

My Great India Cookbook

PENGUIN
VIKING

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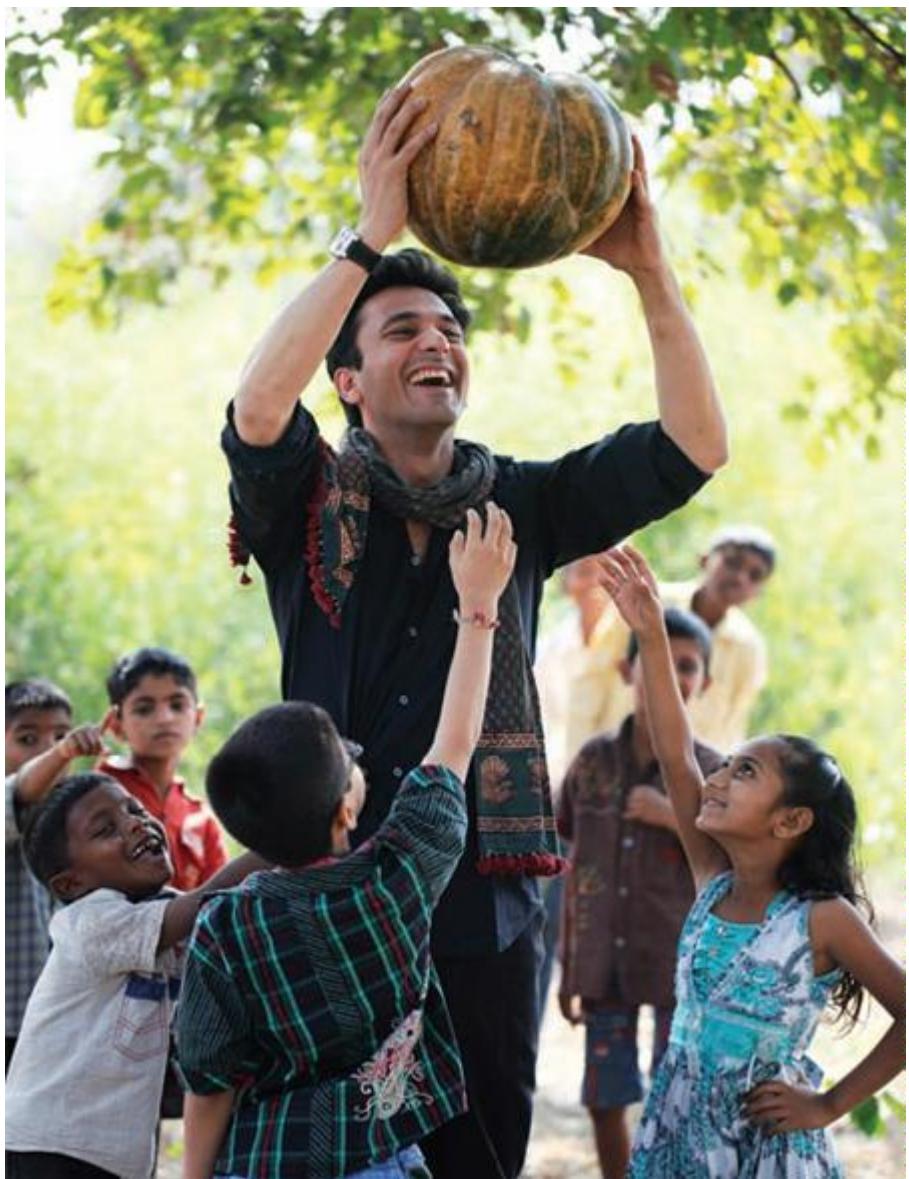
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Introduction

जननी जन्मभूमिश्च
स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी

*Mother and motherland
are superior to heaven*

Vande Mataram, ‘I bow to thee, Mother’, is the famous line composed by the Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay over a century ago. It is true that India’s is a civilization built on the ideology of the motherland and her unconditional love.

My Mother India—my country, my soul, my inspiration for this book. It’s a land of myriad cultural complexities, mythologies, traditions. A place where the past happily coexists with the present and a resolute vision for a promising future. There is an invisible thread of celebration that binds the fabrics of spirituality, tolerance and hospitality together. Every time a foreign dynasty came to rule over the subcontinent or in search of a new home, India welcomed them like a mother and embraced them with love. The Kushans, Mughals, Zoroastrians, Greeks, Tibetans and so many others found shelter under her wing and soon became an inseparable part of her magnificent persona, as did their culture and cuisines.

IT’S A LAND OF MYRIAD CULTURAL COMPLEXITIES, MYTHOLOGIES, TRADITIONS. A PLACE WHERE THE PAST HAPPILY COEXISTS WITH THE PRESENT AND A RESOLUTE VISION FOR A PROMISING FUTURE

The country I left a decade ago has never really let go of me. It has never ceased to inspire me and has been integral to my pursuit of rediscovering its wonderful cuisines. Every city I went to taught me something new; every house I entered welcomed me with open arms and warm smiles; every kitchen I stepped into fed me its most revered delicacies with affection.

As I looked around me, I witnessed this amazing modernizing society against the backdrop of the oldest beliefs. Beliefs so ancient that the origins are lost, and so new that they are still germinating, steadily growing and providing new direction to the world. I saw the variety of food which has been part of its cuisine for so long, it has almost become a culture. That’s when I felt I was truly home and I had the responsibility to share this diversity with you.

In my travels from the freezing, snow-clad Himalayas to the harsh heat of the Thar Desert, from the temples of sacred foods to the fishing nets of Kerala, I put together the fragments of my thoughts to revisit my land as I gathered its recipes. I lived every moment admiring the little wonders, from the timeless inspirations to the mix of myth and reality that we call India. All strengthening my belief that every grain and every dish has a memory of comfort, togetherness and celebration. In this book I have focused on traditional and unique recipes that recall that

comfort and bring back those festive moments, and which have given me a broader view of the food here.

Indian cuisine is a general term for the wide variety of cooking styles in the country. In reality, India hosts a greater number of distinct regional cuisines than most continents. Indian food is almost always prepared with fresh ingredients along with delicate mixtures of fresh and dried spices, and the exact recipes often vary greatly from one household to the next. The use of fresh or dried mixes is the foundation of this cuisine, which is impossible to generalize. It is even more difficult to place all the foods made in India into separate compact compartments. In fact, the term ‘Indian cuisine’ is a misnomer, since even traditional Indian dishes vary tremendously from region to region.

Wandering through the streets of India, I came across innumerable kitchens. Some were like symbols of the twenty-first century with modern amenities and sparkling platforms; some were traditional with not-so-sparkling ‘cuddapah’ platforms and just enough space for a person to stand upright; and there were others that had no cooking platforms at all. The backyard was the kitchen, the soil the platform—a kitchen with no walls and no boundaries, from where the aromatic fumes rose straight into the sky.

Walking through these kitchens was a treat for the senses. In the kitchens of Bengal, my eyes followed the alta-coloured hands of a mother who made bright, squiggly jalebis at the speed of lightning. My ears perked up at the sizzle of the butter on the hot pavbhaji griddle in Maharashtra. My nose followed the hypnotic aroma of whole spices being roasted in a Punjabi kitchen. And every time I roll my tongue, I can taste the tamarind-infused rasam of south India. The touch of that soft, spongy dhokla of Gujarat still lingers on my fingers. And my heart ... I guess I left it somewhere behind in those kitchens ...

I learnt some of the greatest concepts of cooking and culture when I was hungry. As a student, I would often jump on to a train, without reservation, and land up in a new world of flavours. I was still young and bold and wasn’t scared of anything; all I wanted to do was live my dream. Once I ended up in Siliguri and excitedly called up my brother Nishant from a PCO (public call office) saying that I was somewhere near Darjeeling and was absolutely loving the place. Knowing very well what I was up to, he simply said, ‘Hope you enjoy the food, but make sure you save enough money for the return ticket!’

I LEARNT SOME OF THE GREATEST CONCEPTS OF COOKING AND CULTURE WHEN I WAS HUNGRY

Another time, my friend Parminder Pal and I went on a bicycle ride from Mangalore to Goa. That was the first time I realized how diversified and deep-rooted the foundations of our cuisines really were. We ate and ate till we couldn’t find anything new to eat and, of course, could afford nothing else except our return tickets. Sleeping in temples, riding on the roofs of buses, munching on every new flavour the street-side vendors had to offer—we did it all. And even though I could

not speak most of the regional languages, I was welcomed everywhere I went. The local people showed me their favourite food spots; they welcomed me into their homes so that I could learn their grandmothers' signature dishes. They even trusted me with their secret heirloom recipes.

**SLEEPING IN TEMPLES, RIDING ON THE ROOFS OF BUSES, MUNCHING
ON EVERY NEW FLAVOUR THE STREET-SIDE VENDORS HAD TO
OFFER—WE DID IT ALL**

As I travelled through the length and breadth of India writing this book I had a paradoxical experience. The more I travelled, the less I felt I knew about this country. I was on a journey, discovering new foods with old heritage and roots. Sometimes it was difficult for me to trace the roots and I realized that several dishes had their origins beyond borders. I awakened to the fact that the one thing that transcends all geographical, economic, cultural and linguistic boundaries is food. A country with so many dialects, cultures and religions is totally connected by food.

**THE ONE THING THAT TRANSCENDS ALL GEOGRAPHICAL,
ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BOUNDARIES IS FOOD. A
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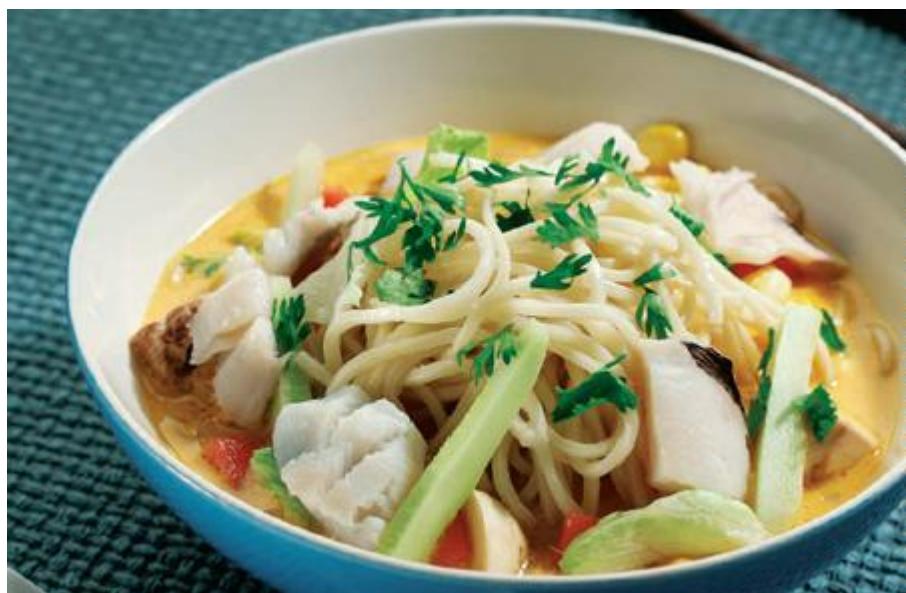
Ultimately, I discovered myself ... well, just a part of myself; every time I envisioned the title of the book in my mind's eye, my heart missed a beat and I was conquered by love—love for My Great India.

So, the reason I wrote this book was to share the joys I experienced. If you are genuinely glad to be in the place you are visiting, it will show in your smile, and all the doors and kitchens will open for you. Language is of no consequence if you cannot appreciate and communicate with love. You will be surprised to see how instantly Indians respond to a warm namaste or aadaab. So, lose yourself in the magic of India and its cuisine, but always remember what my brother told me—make sure you save enough money for the return ticket!

TABLE OF MEASURES

1 cup = 250 ml
1 tbsp = 3 tsp
1 tsp = 5 ml

SOUPS



Makai Ka Soweta

Corn Soup

SERVES 4–6

Corn chowder is one of the staples of American cuisine and so is corn soup in every culture. Almost every Indian state has its own version of this soup and Rajasthan is no different. Makai ka soweta, a dish from Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, is similar to corn soup.

Rajasthan is a region full of contrasts. The most brightly coloured clothes, bangles and puppets stand out sharply against the brown, arid sand dunes; the dry, harsh weather is completely unlike the friendly, compassionate people there. The ruthless climate makes it necessary for the people to create dishes that help them survive in the desert. Makai ka soweta is one such dish. It has two versions: one for summer and one for winter. Both versions are delicious and wholesome enough to make a light evening meal.

INGREDIENTS

Soup

- 3 tbsp clarified butter
- 2 (large) onions, finely chopped
- 6 tbsp plain yogurt, whisked
- 2½ cups white corn kernels
- 2" piece ginger, minced
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ cups whole milk
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 4 dried red chillies, seeded

For winter

- 3 tbsp cashew nut paste
- 3 tbsp almond paste ([p. 156](#))
- 1½ tbsp clarified butter
- 1½ tsp garam masala powder

Cashew nut paste (for 1 cup)

- 1 cup milk or water
- 1 cup cashew nuts, unsalted

METHOD

Soup Melt clarified butter in a heavy pan over low heat. Add onions and sauté till translucent. Pour in 1½ cups of hot water gradually and whisk in yogurt. Simmer for 1 minute. Add corn, ginger and garlic and cook for 1 minute. Gently pour in milk, stirring continuously. (If preparing in winter, mix in cashew nut paste and almond paste at this stage.) Continue cooking, stirring continuously, till butter floats to the surface. This signifies that the dish is almost ready. When the mixture begins to thicken, mix in salt. Sauté till thick and every corn kernel is swollen with milk. Add red chillies and 2 cups of hot water and gently stir. Cover

and cook for 4–5 minutes. (If preparing in winter, melt clarified butter in a small frying pan, add garam masala powder and immediately pour over the dish at this stage.) Serve hot.

Cashew nut paste Heat the milk or water till warm. Add cashew nuts and set aside for at least 30 minutes to allow them to soak in the liquid and soften. Using a blender or food processor, grind cashew nuts with very little of the soaking liquid, to make a smooth, thick paste. The remaining liquid can be mixed in depending on the required consistency of the paste. Alternatively, boil the cashew nuts in milk for 10 minutes. Cool to room temperature and continue as given.

Amla Soup

Indian Gooseberry Soup

SERVES 4–6

This soup reminds me of the rasam I enjoyed during my stay at Amma's ashram. Mata Amritanandamayi, or the Hugging Saint, as the world knows her, is a spiritual guru from Kerala. I had the great privilege of living in her ashram and enjoying the food cooked by her devotees every day. Sometimes the meal would have rasam, which is a typical south Indian soup served before the meal to enhance the appetite.

One day I had to make a soup and I used amla for sourness and created this version. You can add a spoonful of honey to it, just to balance out the flavours.

In Assam, a similar version of amla soup, served before the meal, is known as amlokhi aakhon.

INGREDIENTS

Tamarind pulp (for $\frac{1}{4}$ cup)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup tamarind, seedless

Soup

10 amlas (Indian gooseberries)

4 green chillies, slit lengthwise

2 tbsp tamarind pulp

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

1 tbsp oil

2 sprigs fresh curry leaves

4 dried red chillies, torn to pieces

A pinch of turmeric powder

METHOD

Tamarind pulp Heat $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of water till warm and combine with tamarind in a small bowl. Set aside for 10–15 minutes; then mash the tamarind well. Rub the mixture through a strainer to get a smooth pulp. (You can also dilute ready-made tamarind paste, available commercially. To get a perfect pulp, combine 2 parts tamarind paste with 1 part water.)

Soup Cut the amla; remove and discard the seeds. Put amla flesh in a blender with 4 cups of water. Blend till the liquid is frothy and milky. Strain through a clean muslin cloth and squeeze cloth to extract maximum juice from the fibres. In a pan, combine the freshly extracted amla juice with green chillies, 2 tbsp tamarind pulp and salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer for about 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Heat the oil for the tempering in a small pan. Add curry leaves and red chillies. When the spices crackle, add turmeric powder and immediately pour the tempering over the amla soup. Ladle into bowls and serve hot.

Kokum Rasam

Kokum Soup

SERVES 4–6

Traditionally, rasam is cooked with tamarind as the souring agent. Every home in south India, and even coastal India, has its own family recipes for rasam, which vary from home to home. While I was in Manipal, doing my hotel management course, I helped a cook in Palghat so that I could make some extra money over the weekends. I noticed that the rasam he made had a much deeper colour and a completely different flavour. Curious, I asked the cook and he told me he used kokum instead of tamarind and that it was called punarpuli saaru. That was the first time I had seen kokum; I've been using it in a number of dishes ever since. So the next time you visit the grocery store, be sure to pick up a packet of kokum; you'll love its taste and will be happy to have introduced a new ingredient into your pantry.

INGREDIENTS

Soup

- 16 moist kokums
- ½ tsp salt or to taste
- 2 tsp jaggery, grated

Tempering

- 1 tsp clarified butter
- A pinch of asafoetida powder
- ¾ tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds 1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves
- 4 dried red chillies

METHOD

In a pan, combine kokum with 4 cups of water and boil over medium heat for 7–8 minutes. Strain and reserve the liquid. In the same pan, combine the strained liquid with 1 cup of water, salt and jaggery. Bring to a boil. Boil till jaggery dissolves. Taste the broth. If it's too tangy, add more jaggery. Melt clarified butter in a small pan over medium heat. Add asafoetida powder, mustard seeds and cumin seeds. When the spices crackle, add curry leaves and red chillies. Sauté for 1 minute and pour the tempering over rasam. Serve hot, on its own or with steamed rice.



Kaireeche Saar

Green Mango Soup

SERVES 4–6

We Indians can never get enough of mangoes. It is one of our guilty pleasures. During the summer months the mango trees are laden with fruit and the many dust storms make the raw green mangoes fall off the trees. As a child, I remember picking these up, wrapping them neatly in a dirty cotton cloth and taking them home to my mother, who would then make us some of the most mouth-watering treats.

Since mangoes change their taste and texture at every stage of their ripening, a lot of love and attention goes into dishes made with mangoes. In this coastal Maharashtrian soup, it's all about keeping the somewhat raw, fresh and zingy flavour of the mangoes intact.

INGREDIENTS

Coconut milk (for 1½ cups)

1 cup fresh coconut, grated

Soup

3 (large) green mangoes

½ cup coconut milk

2 green chillies, roughly chopped

½ tbsp peanuts, roasted and powdered

4 tbsp jaggery, grated

¾ tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

3 tsp oil

½ tsp fenugreek seeds

1 sprig fresh curry leaves

2 dried red chillies, torn to pieces

Garnish

2 tbsp coconut cream ([p. 44](#)) or fresh cream (optional)

A few sprigs fresh curry leaves

A few sprigs coriander leaves

METHOD

Coconut milk In a mixing bowl, combine grated coconut with 1½ cups of warm water and set aside for 10 minutes. Using a blender, blend the mixture till smooth and milky and strain through a muslin cloth. Alternatively, dilute coconut cream with ¾ cup of water. (Coconut milk is also readily available. If using the canned version, please ensure you use only unsweetened coconut milk.)

Soup Wash mangoes and boil in just enough water to cover, till soft. Drain and squeeze out the pulp. Strain pulp into a mixing bowl and whisk in 2 cups of water. In a blender, combine

coconut milk with green chillies and blend till smooth. Strain into a bowl and set aside. In a blender, combine powdered peanuts with 2 tbsp water and blend till the mixture is frothy. Put oil for the tempering in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, add mango pulp and cook for 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low and stir in coconut milk and jaggery. Bring to a boil, stirring continuously. Stir in peanut mixture and salt and simmer for 3–4 minutes. Serve hot, garnished with a swirl of coconut cream or fresh cream (if using), curry leaves and coriander sprigs.



Bylakuppe Thukpa

Bylakuppe Noodle Soup

SERVES 4

Located in the state of Karnataka, Bylakuppe is one of the two main Tibetan settlements in India, the other being Dharamshala. The thukpa, a Tibetan noodle soup, comes from this Buddhist land of peace and tranquillity. It is usually served with meat. The main ingredient of this soup is a typical Tibetan masala called the kopan masala.

A very hearty, warming, nourishing dish. Good to keep yourself warm and comfortable on a cool night.

INGREDIENTS

Spice powder

- 2 tbsp coriander seeds
- 2 tbsp cumin seeds
- 10 pods green cardamom, peeled
- 10 cloves
- 1" stick cinnamon
- ½ tsp black peppercorns
- 1/8 tsp nutmeg, grated

Soup

- 3 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp ginger, finely grated
- 1 tbsp garlic, finely chopped
- ½ cup shallots, diced
- 2 tsp prepared spice powder
- 1 tsp red chilli flakes
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 (large) potato, finely diced
- 2 (medium) tomatoes, finely diced
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 1 cup fresh flat noodles, cut into 2" pieces
- ½ cup spinach, shredded
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- Black pepper powder, freshly ground, to taste

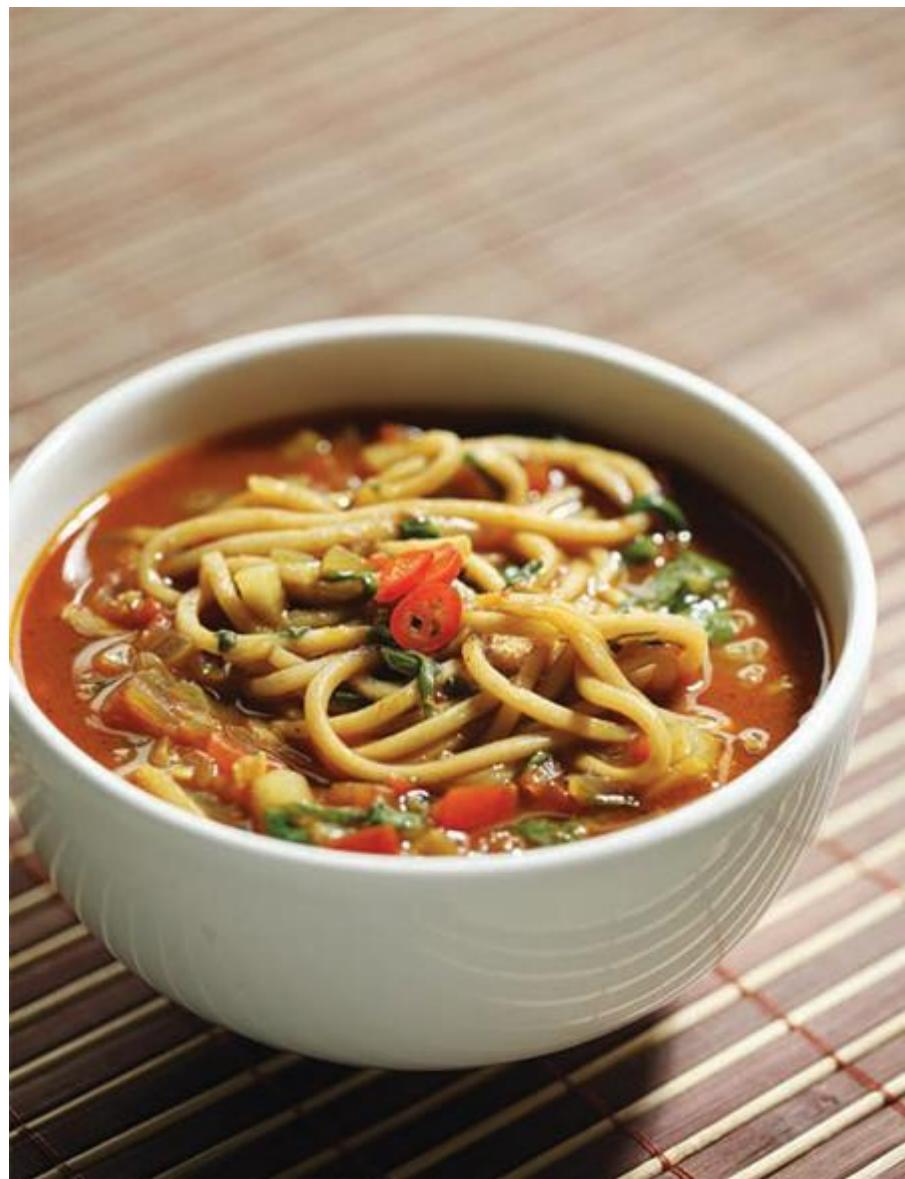
METHOD

Spice powder In a frying pan, combine all the spice powder ingredients, except the nutmeg. Roast over low heat, turning continuously, till a strong aroma fills the air. Remove from heat and mix in nutmeg. Cool the roasted spices to room temperature. Grind to make a fine powder. Set aside.

Soup Melt butter in a large pan over medium heat. Add ginger, garlic and shallots and sauté till shallots are translucent. Mix in 2 tsp of the prepared spice powder, chilli flakes and

turmeric powder and cook for 1 minute. Add potato and tomatoes and sauté for 2 minutes. Pour in stock, bring to a boil and cook till potatoes are tender. Add noodles and cook till tender. Mix in spinach, soy sauce, salt and pepper and cook only till spinach wilts. Remove from heat and serve hot.

NOTE: The excess spice powder can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 months. You could also add more of it to the thukpa, if you wish.



Pulisheri

Spiced Yogurt Soup

SERVES 4–6

During the making of this book, Ganesh Shedge, a member of the Food Team on *MasterChef India*, helped me with the food trials. We would try out as many dishes as we could each day and write and rewrite the recipes accordingly. One day, Ganesh was in a dilemma. He had completed his share of work for the day and was waiting for the others to pack up. The rest of the team was in no mood to wrap up that soon and so, poor Ganesh sat in a corner, feeling bored. It was already quite late and we were yet to have dinner.

Finally, Ganesh decided to cook something special for everyone. ‘But what do I make?’ he asked. I looked around the kitchen to see what ingredients we had left. I saw some yogurt and a little coconut. It was as if someone had suddenly switched a light on in my head. ‘Ganesh!’ I said. ‘Why don’t you make some pulisheri? It’s a typical Kerala dish. I’m sure everyone will love it!’ I gave Ganesh the recipe and, in no time, we had a panful of the most appetizing pulisheri ever.

The rest of the team loved it too, and, after a quick discussion, it was collectively decided that this soup deserved a place in the book. So here it is. A little sour, a little sweet and a little spicy, I present to you, pulisheri!

INGREDIENTS

Soup

- 2 (large) cucumbers, diced
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 4 cups fresh lassi (diluted yogurt), sour
- 2 green chillies, roughly chopped
- 2" piece ginger, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1¼ tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp fenugreek seeds
- 4 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
- 2 (large) sprigs fresh curry leaves

METHOD

In a mixing bowl combine diced cucumber with turmeric powder, mix well and set aside for about 5 minutes. Bring 3 cups of water to a boil in a pan. When the water is boiling rapidly, blanch the marinated cucumber in it for 30 seconds. Drain and set aside. Dilute 2½ cups yogurt with 1½ cups water to make lassi. In a blender, combine lassi, green chilli, ginger and cumin seeds. Blend till the yogurt becomes frothy and the other ingredients are crushed. Strain yogurt through a clean muslin cloth into a pan. Add blanched cucumber to the

flavoured yogurt and bring to a simmer over low heat, stirring continuously. Take care not to boil the yogurt as it may curdle. When the soup starts to simmer, mix in salt and remove from heat. Put the coconut oil for the tempering in a small pan over low heat. Add mustard seeds and fenugreek seeds. When the spices crackle, add dried chillies and curry leaves. Pour the tempering over the soup and mix well. Ladle into soup plates and serve hot.



Kanji with Fried Fish

Rice Water with Fried Fish

SERVES 4–6

This is essentially a fisherman's food. I first ate this dish in Goa and was bowled over by its simplicity and flavours. Kanjivellam or kanji is the Malayalam word for water drained from boiled rice. Traditionally, before the fisherman leaves for work, his wife cooks a potful of rice and collects the white, starchy water in which it is cooked. It is generally best made with broken, parboiled rice. The leftover fish from the previous night is added to the kanji along with a few spices for flavour, and voila! We have a fantastically simple and simply fantastic dish on our table.

INGREDIENTS

Curry powder (for about 1 cup)

- ½ cup coriander seeds
- ⅓ cup cumin seeds
- 2 tbsp turmeric powder
- 2 tbsp green cardamom pods
- 1 tbsp cayenne pepper (lal mirch)
- 1 tbsp cloves
- ¼ tsp black peppercorns
- 1 tbsp dried fenugreek leaves (kasoori methi)

Kanji

- 1 cup rice, preferably parboiled
- 500 g fish (any fish), sliced
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- 3 tbsp oil
- 1½ tbsp butter
- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 10–12 fresh button mushrooms, sliced
- ½ tsp white pepper powder
- ¼ tsp curry powder
- ¼ tsp mustard powder
- ½ tsp paprika
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 4 cups vegetable stock

Garnish

- A few sprigs fresh coriander leaves

METHOD

Curry powder In a bowl, combine all the spices and mix well. Grind the mixed spices in small batches, to a fine powder. Fill into a clean, dry, airtight glass jar and store in a cool, dry place.

Kanji Wash rice and soak in water. Wash fish and pat dry. In a mixing bowl, combine turmeric powder with chilli powder. Rub it into the fish and set aside to marinate for 10 minutes. Put oil in a frying pan over low heat. When hot, add marinated fish and shallow-fry till golden on both sides. Remove, drain on absorbent paper and set aside. Meanwhile, drain rice and put it in a pan with 1½ cups of water. Boil till tender. Drain and reserve both the rice and the starchy water. Melt butter in a large pan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté till translucent. Stir in rice, mushrooms, remaining spice powders and salt. Sauté for 1 minute till mushrooms soften. Pour in stock. Raise heat to high and boil till rice is completely mushy and soup is thick. Add fried fish and simmer for 2 minutes to heat through. Serve hot, garnished with fresh coriander sprigs.



Mizoram Laksa Soup

Noodles & Corn Soup with Fish

SERVES 4–6

The Seven Sister States, also called ‘Paradise Unexplored’, is the name given to the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura in north-eastern India. It is mainly because of their geographical features and volatile political conditions that these states have remained largely inaccessible.

Just like the culture of these states, their cuisine and food habits have also remained more or less unknown. My journey through this part of the country brought me into contact with India’s estranged brothers and sisters. I connected with them through the languages I know best—love and food. As always, I came home enriched. This soup from the state of Mizoram is an example of that unexplored yet exceptional cuisine.

INGREDIENTS

Spice paste

- 2 (large) onions, sliced
- 6 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 piece ginger, roughly chopped
- 3 dried red chillies

Soup

- 1 tbsp oil
- 2 stalks lemon grass, crushed
- 1 tbsp curry powder ([p. 22](#))
- 1 tsp fresh turmeric, crushed
- 200 ml coconut milk ([p. 16](#))
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- ½ cup fresh button mushrooms, quartered
- 1 cup noodles, boiled
- ½ cup American corn
- ½ cup cucumbers, cut into batons
- ½ cup spring onions, finely chopped
- ½ cup carrots, cut into juliennes
- ½ cup sole fish, steamed and flaked (optional)

METHOD

Soup In a blender, combine spice paste ingredients with about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water and grind to make a smooth paste. Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add lemon grass and ground spice paste and sauté for 1 minute. Mix in curry powder and turmeric and continue frying till aromatic. Reduce heat to low and stir in coconut milk with 200 ml of water and bring to a boil, stirring continuously. Mix in remaining ingredients and simmer for about 5 minutes. Serve hot.

Pandhra Rassa & Tambda Rassa

White Soup & Red Curry

SERVES 4–6

Anyone who wants to explore true Maharashtrian cuisine and its diversity should visit Kolhapur. Famous for Kolhapuri chappals, the city is known as a food lover's paradise. Even after being a chef for so many years, I still feel there is something more to learn when it comes to Kolhapuri cuisine.

Any Kolhapuri restaurant will proudly serve you pandhra and tambda rassa. Pandhra means white and tambda means red. Completely different in colour, texture and flavour, these two dishes will definitely make a place for themselves on your weekly menu.

PANDHRA RASSA INGREDIENTS

Spice paste

- ½ cup dried coconut, grated
- 1½ tbsp caraway seeds
- 1½ tbsp poppy seeds
- 1 tbsp cashew nuts
- 1½ tsp coriander seeds
- 1½ tsp dried red chillies, seeds only
- 3 pods green cardamom, seeds only
- 8 cloves

Soup

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1" stick cinnamon
- 2 cloves
- 3 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp raisins, seedless
- ½ cup plain yogurt, whisked
- 2 cups mutton stock
- 1 cup coconut milk ([p. 16](#))
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

In a grinder, combine spice paste ingredients with ½ cup of water and grind to make a smooth paste. Set aside. Put oil in a heavy pan over medium heat. When hot, add cinnamon, cloves and red chillies. When the spices crackle, add onion and sauté till translucent. Mix in raisins, ground spice paste and yogurt and cook for about 2 minutes, stirring continuously. Pour in stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and allow broth to simmer for 3–4 minutes. Gradually stir in coconut milk and simmer for 2 minutes. Mix in salt and remove from heat. Serve hot with tambda rassa, mutton and rice.

Tambda Rassa recipe is shown below.

TAMBDA RASSA INGREDIENTS

500 g mutton, boneless

Marinade

½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tbsp ginger–garlic paste
1 tsp salt or to taste

Spice paste

2 tbsp oil
4 cloves
5 black peppercorns
2" stick cinnamon
1 (large) onion, finely sliced
2 tbsp white sesame seeds
2 tbsp dried coconut, grated

Kolhapuri masala (for about 3 cups)

½ cup dried coconut, grated
1 cup dried red chillies, stalks removed
2 tbsp white sesame seeds
1 tbsp coriander seeds
1 tbsp cumin seeds
1 tbsp black peppercorns
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp fenugreek seeds
1 tsp cloves
2 (large) bay leaves
1 tsp oil
¼ tsp nutmeg powder
2 tbsp red Kashmiri chilli powder

Curry

2 tbsp oil
2 bay leaves
4 cloves
2" stick cinnamon
4 black peppercorns
2 pods black cardamom
1 tbsp poppy seeds
1 (large) onion, finely chopped
2 (medium) tomatoes, finely chopped
2 tbsp Kolhapuri masala
1 tbsp clarified butter

METHOD

Clean meat, wash well and cut into curry-sized pieces.

Marination In a mixing bowl, combine marinade ingredients and mix well. Add meat and mix till well coated. Set aside to marinate for 1 hour.

Spice paste Put oil in a frying pan over medium-low heat. When hot, add cloves, pepper and cinnamon. When the spices crackle, add onion, sesame seeds and dried coconut. Sauté till onion turns golden. Remove into a grinder, combine with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water and grind to make a fine paste.

Kolhapuri masala In a heavy kadhai (wok), combine the coconut, whole spices and bay leaves. Mix the spices well and drizzle over with oil. Mix very well. Place the kadhai over low heat and roast slowly, stirring and turning constantly to avoid burning the spices. When the room is filled with the aroma of spices and mustard seeds start crackling, remove from heat. Continue stirring to cool the spices. Transfer roasted spices to a large plate, spread them out and allow them to cool completely. Mix in nutmeg and chilli powder and grind to make a fine powder. Fill into a clean, dry, airtight glass jar and store in a cool dry, place. (This is a very spicy blend and is best used sparingly.)

Curry Put oil in a large, heavy pan over medium heat. When hot, add whole spices and chopped onion and sauté till onion turns golden. Mix in tomatoes and sauté for 2–3 minutes. Add marinated mutton and salt and mix well. Cover pan with a plate containing 1 cup of water. When water in the plate begins to boil, pour it into the pan with another cup of water. Cover and simmer till mutton is half cooked. Mix in ground spice paste and Kolhapuri masala and cook for about 2 minutes. Add clarified butter, cover and cook for another 15 minutes till mutton is tender. Remove from heat and allow to stand for 10 minutes. To serve, spoon the mutton pieces in one bowl and the gravy in another.



STARTERS



Baingan Kaachri

Crisp-Fried Aubergine Slices

SERVES 4–6

This is a wonderful dish made of velvety aubergine slices covered with a thin, crisp crust.

It brings back some cherished moments of my childhood. My grandmother made this quick dish during winters when she served it before dinner. We would sit on thick, soft razais (cotton quilts), blowing into our hands and rubbing them together to keep ourselves warm in the teeth-chattering cold of Amritsar. And my grandmother would appear at the kitchen door holding a plate of hot, steaming kaachris. All of us would run to her and grab as many as our little hands could hold and stuff them into our mouths, as she looked at us fondly.

A cup of hot tea in your hands and a plate of baingan kaachri at your side makes for an amazingly cosy evening with your loved ones.

INGREDIENTS

- ¾ cup wholewheat flour (atta)
- 1¼ tsp red chilli powder
- 1¼ tsp cumin powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- ½ tsp carom seeds, rubbed between your palms
- 5 tbsp oil
- 2 thin long aubergines (baingan), cut into ½" thick slices

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, combine flour, spice powders, salt and carom seeds. Mix well and add 1 tbsp of oil. Mix again till well blended. Place an aubergine slice in the spiced flour and sprinkle some over the slice. Using a fork, prick the flour into the aubergine. Repeat with the remaining slices. Put the remaining oil in a kadhai (wok) over low heat. Coat the sides of the kadhai with oil and arrange aubergines slices in it. Raise heat to medium, cover and cook till aubergines are just tender. Serve hot with tea.



Kararé Karelé

Crisp-Fried Bitter Gourd Rings

SERVES 4–6

My team and I just couldn't get over this dish during the food trials for this book. We repeated it three days in a row!

A traditional dish of the Syrian Christians of Kerala, this is a dish that makes you happy from within. The Syrian Christians were converted to Christianity by Saint Thomas and later intermarried with the Syrian immigrants.

The beauty of this dish lies in the remarkably crisp, crunchy texture of the bitter gourd rings. Do ensure you make lots of it, because your family just won't get enough!

INGREDIENTS

- 4 (large) bitter gourds (karelé)
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 2½ tbsp rice flour
- Oil for deep-frying
- ¾ tsp red chilli powder
- 2 (medium) sprigs fresh curry leaves
- 1 (large) onion, finely sliced
- 1½ tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated

METHOD

Wash gourds and pat dry. Slice very finely into discs and remove the seeds and pith from the centre. Spread gourd slices on a large plate and sprinkle with salt. Mix well and set aside for 5 minutes. Squeeze gourds well and pat dry with kitchen towels. Sprinkle with rice flour and toss well. Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium-high heat till it just starts to smoke. Add gourd slices in small batches and deep-fry till golden and crisp. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Sprinkle with chilli powder and toss well. Set aside. Put 2 tbsp of oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add curry leaves, onion and coconut. Sauté till curry leaves turn crisp and onion is light golden. Toss in the prepared gourd slices and mix well. Transfer to a plate and serve hot.



Surat Patra

Colocasia Leaf Rolls

SERVES 4–6

I consider the city of Surat to be an immensely inspiring centre of culinary excellence. The people of this city are fun-loving and vibrant and their zest for life is reflected in their cuisine.

The Surat patra is one of the city's most popular dishes. It was at a restaurant—run mostly by women—called Sasuma, which translates as mother-in-law, that I first tasted these. I happened to peep into the kitchen and saw the staff chanting a prayer before getting on with their day's work. I was touched by the respect they had for food.

These savoury steamed and fried colocasia rolls get their flavour from the tangy, sweet and spicy mixture of tamarind, jaggery and red chillies that goes into the filling.

INGREDIENTS

Patra

8 (large) colocasia leaves
1½ cups gram flour
½ cup tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
¼ tsp asafoetida powder
1½ tbsp jaggery, grated
½ tsp salt or to taste
1¼ tsp red chilli powder

Tempering

2 tbsp oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp white sesame seeds

Garnish (optional)

1 tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated
1 tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped

METHOD

Patra Wash colocasia leaves well and pat dry. With a sharp knife, scrape off the thick stems and veins, taking care not to cut the leaves. In a mixing bowl, combine gram flour with tamarind pulp, asafoetida powder, jaggery, salt and chilli powder. Mix to form a thick, smooth paste. Lay the colocasia leaves flat on the table, dull side up. Brush each leaf liberally with the prepared paste. Stack 4 leaves together to make 2 sets. Starting at the stem end, roll each set of leaves tightly and tie with a cotton string to secure them. Place in a hot steamer. Steam rolls for 30 minutes. Cool and cut into ½" thick slices. Heat the oil for the tempering in a small pan. Add mustard seeds and sesame seeds. When the mustard seeds crackle, pour

the tempering over the patra. Garnish with coconut and coriander leaves, if you wish. Serve immediately.

Kakharo Phullopitha

Pumpkin Flower Fritters

SERVES 4

Early one morning, I took a bus ride from Bhubaneshwar to Konark in Orissa. On the way, the bus stopped at a food mall, as it is called, though it was only a tiny stall selling a few snacks and tea. I got off the bus to stretch my legs and ended up buying a huge bagful of hot pumpkin flower fritters. Not only did they look delightful, they tasted wonderful in the slightly chilly morning breeze.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup rice
½ cup husked, split Bengal gram (chana dal)
1½ tsp cumin seeds
¼ tsp fenugreek seeds
1 tsp turmeric powder
4 dried red chillies
2 green chillies
1 tsp salt or to taste
10 pumpkin blossoms
Oil for deep-frying

METHOD

Wash rice and gram and soak in water for 2 hours. Drain rice and gram and combine in a grinder with the spices, chillies and salt. Grind to make a thick, smooth batter, gradually adding some water as required. Wash pumpkin blossoms and wipe dry. Remove and discard stems. Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat till it just begins to smoke. Dip pumpkin blossoms into batter, add to the hot oil and deep-fry till golden and crisp. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot with tomato khatta ([p. 232](#)).

Suran Shikampuri

Yam Patties with Hung Yogurt Filling

SERVES 4–6

Originally a lamb patty with a creamy filling of hung yogurt, designed to please the palate of an old Hyderabadi nizam, this is the vegetarian version made with yam. I have also made this dish with green bananas, with great results.

INGREDIENTS

Patties

- 750 g yam, diced
- 3 (medium) onions, finely sliced
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- 1" stick cinnamon
- 4–6 black peppercorns
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 2 green chillies, roughly chopped
- 1½ tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- 3 tsp ginger, finely chopped
- 2 tsp garlic, finely chopped
- ½ cup gram flour

Filling

- ¾ cup hung yogurt or ricotta cheese
- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
- ½ tsp salt or to taste
- ¼ tsp black pepper powder or to taste

To shallow-fry the patties

- Clarified butter

METHOD

In a pan, combine yam with the rest of the patty ingredients, except gram flour. Mix well. Add just enough water to cover the contents of the pan and cook over low heat, stirring regularly, till all the moisture dries up and the yam is mushy. Remove from heat, cool and grind lightly. Spread the ground mixture in a large plate and sprinkle gram flour. Mix thoroughly and divide mixture into large lemon-sized portions. In a mixing bowl, combine the filling ingredients. Mix very well. Shape the yam portions into round, flattish patties, stuffing each with 1 tbsp of the yogurt filling. Melt clarified butter on a griddle over medium heat. Shallow-fry the stuffed patties, turning them over, till golden. Serve hot with anardana aur mirch ki chutney ([p. 228](#)).



Dahi Ki Tikki

Yogurt Patties

SERVES 4

If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would never have believed that tikkis (patties) could be made with yogurt. The credit for introducing me to this unbelievable dish goes to Chef Jeewan Singh of the Indian restaurant Maya at the Hotel Trident, Mumbai. These tender, velvety, melt-in-your-mouth patties made from hung yogurt just transport you into a different world.

INGREDIENTS

Oil for shallow-frying
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 (small) sprig fresh curry leaves
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 (large) onion, finely chopped
1½ tsp ginger, minced
2 (large) green chillies, minced
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp red degi chilli powder
1 tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp salt or to taste
2 (medium) tomatoes, finely chopped
1 tbsp sugar
400 g hung yogurt
½ cup semolina
½ cup all-purpose flour (maida)

METHOD

Heat 1 tbsp of oil in a pan over medium heat. Add mustard seeds, curry leaves and cumin seeds. When the spices crackle, add onion and sauté till golden. Add ginger, green chillies, spice powders and salt and sauté for 2–3 minutes. Mix in tomatoes and cook till mushy. Add sugar and stir till it dissolves. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Add hung yogurt and mix gently but thoroughly. Divide mixture into 8–10 portions and shape into patties. In a plate, combine the semolina with flour and mix well. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, coat patties with the semolina–flour mix and shallow-fry till golden. Gently remove and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot with anardana aur mirch ki chutney (p. 228).

Kolkata Momos

Vegetable Dumplings

SERVES 4–6

Momos are probably the most popular Chinese snack on the streets of Kolkata. Developed by the small Chinese community living in Kolkata, these momos combine Chinese seasoning and cooking techniques with Indian flavours. Though they have little similarity to the authentic Chinese momos, the Kolkata momos have become a kind of staple dish in the metropolitan cities of India.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour (maida)
- A pinch of salt
- 1 tbsp oil

Filling

- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garlic, minced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ginger, minced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup carrots, minced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup spring onions, minced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup green capsicum, minced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cabbage, minced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp light soy sauce
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper powder, freshly ground, to taste

Dipping sauce

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup light soy sauce
- 1 tbsp chilli sauce
- 1 tsp garlic, minced
- 1 tsp sugar

METHOD

Dough Combine flour and salt in a mixing bowl. Gradually add water and knead to make a smooth, stiff dough. Knead in oil and work the dough gently for 5–6 minutes till smooth and pliable. Cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside for 30 minutes.

Filling Put the sesame oil over high heat in a kadhai (wok). When the oil begins to smoke, add garlic and ginger and stir-fry till garlic turns golden. Mix in carrots and stir-fry till soft. Add spring onions, capsicum and cabbage and stir-fry for 1 minute. Toss in soy sauce. Taste and add salt and pepper. Stir fry till mixture is dry. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature.

Momos Divide the dough into 8–10 marble-sized portions. Roll out a portion of dough into a small, flat 2" disc and spoon 1 tsp of filling into the centre. Wet the edges of the disc with water and fold over to conceal the filling. Press the edges together lightly. This will form a

half-moon-shaped momo. Beginning at one corner of the pressed edge, fold and press a tiny portion of the dough to form a wavy edge. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling. Heat water in a steamer and steam momos for 7–8 minutes or till cooked.

Dipping sauce In a mixing bowl, combine all the sauce ingredients. Stir till sugar dissolves.

To serve Serve hot momos with dipping sauce.

Kothimbir Vadi

Mixed Grain & Fresh Coriander Fritters

SERVES 4–6

Bhajani flour is an essential part of Maharashtrian cuisine. It is made with five to seven different pulses and every family has its own special recipe. Kothimbir vadi is a popular Maharashtrian starter made with bhajani mixed with coriander, gram flour and spices that are steamed, then shallow-fried. The addition of rice flour makes it crisp and shallow-frying keeps it healthy. It makes for a delicious teatime snack.

INGREDIENTS

Bhajani flour

- 1 cup pearl millet (bajra)
- ½ cup sorghum (jowar)
- ¼ cup husked, split black gram (urad dal)
- ¼ cup wheat grains
- 1 tbsp rice
- 1 tbsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds

Vadi

- 2 cups fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- 1 cup gram flour
- ½ cup rice flour
- ½ cup bhajani flour
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1" piece ginger, grated
- 2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 4 tsp plain yogurt, sour
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- Oil for shallow frying

METHOD

Bhajani flour Roast the ingredients separately and grind to make a flour of sandy texture. (It is also commercially available.)

Vadi In a mixing bowl, combine coriander leaves with gram flour, rice flour, ½ cup bhajani flour, turmeric powder, cumin powder, ginger and green chillies. Mix well. Stir in yogurt and mix. Gradually add water and mix to make a very soft, sticky dough. Add salt and 3 tbsp oil. Mix well. Put the dough into a greased tray, spread evenly and steam for 10–15 minutes or till a knife inserted in the centre comes out clean. Remove from steamer and cool to room temperature. Cut into triangular vadis, using a greased knife. Put oil on a griddle over medium heat. When hot, shallow-fry the vadis, turning over, till golden and crisp on both sides. Serve hot with coconut chutney ([p. 230](#)) and tea.



Kalimirch Khekda

Black Pepper Crabs

SERVES 4

There was a time when black peppercorns were as precious as gold. In fact, they were referred to as black gold and were a common and preferred commodity of exchange. Pepper was a something only the affluent could afford.

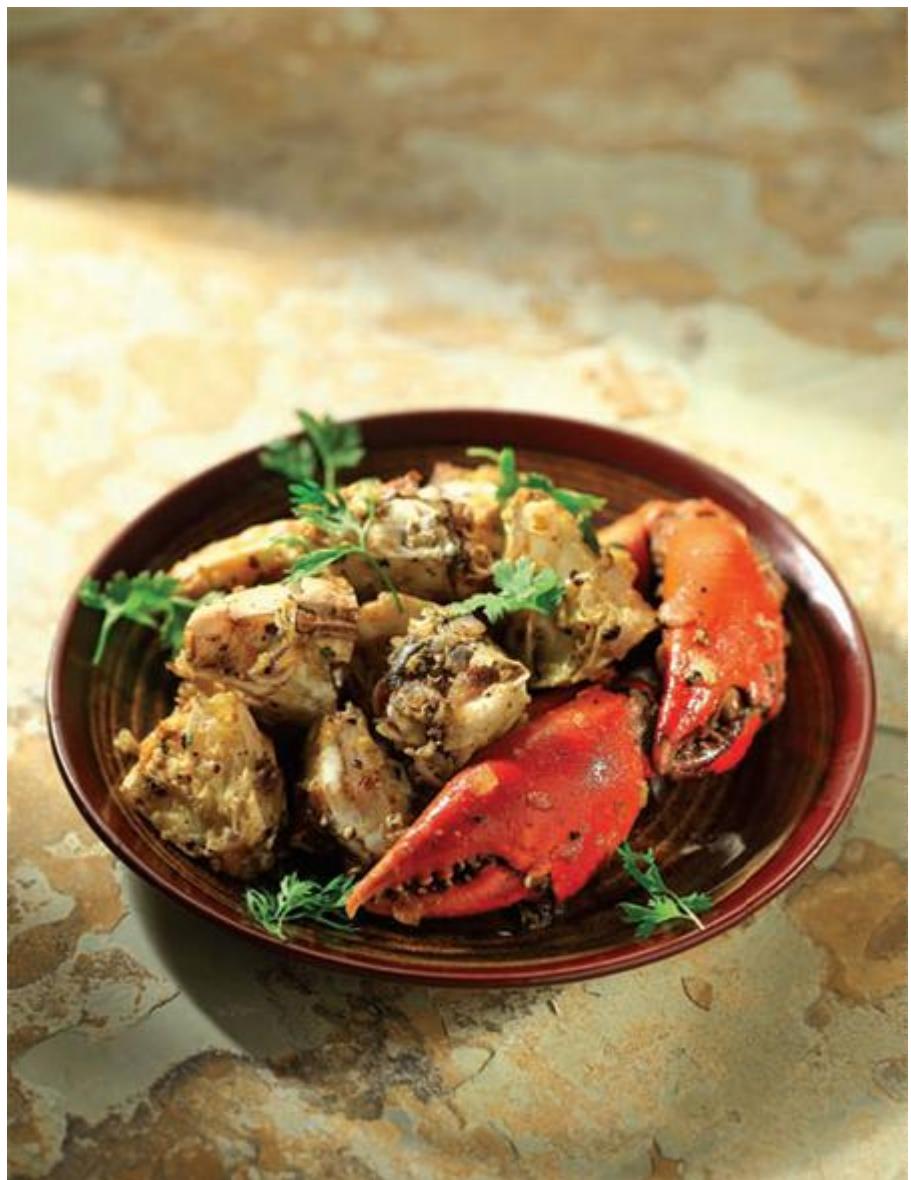
Strangely though, black pepper has been a common ingredient in Indian cooking since time immemorial. It was (and still is) one of India's major export commodities. Kalimirch khekda was a dish I once ate in Mumbai.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 (large) crabs
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 (large) onions, finely chopped
- 6 (large) cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp turmeric powder
- 2 (large) green chillies, slit lengthwise
- 1 tsp black peppercorns, freshly ground
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Clean crabs and wash thoroughly. Heat about 3 litres of water in a large pan and bring to a rapid boil. Add crabs and boil for 5 minutes. Drain and cool. Remove the top shells of the boiled crabs and reserve. Cut each crab into four pieces. Crack the claws but do not de-shell. Put a large frying pan over medium heat. Add butter and when it melts, add onions and garlic. Sauté till onions turn translucent. Add curry leaves, turmeric powder, green chillies, pepper and salt. Mix well and add crabs. Toss and cook till crabs are heated through, taking care not to overcook them. Transfer to a serving dish and serve hot.



Kasundi Jhinga

Mustard Prawns

SERVES 4–6

I cannot imagine Bengali cuisine without kasundi. Kasundi is a sharp, pungent mustard-based sauce, which can also have chillies, vinegar and dried ginger. Sometimes, even raw mangoes are added to it. Though traditionally eaten with rice, greens and fritters, it makes for an excellent marinade.

I once set up a contest on my website, asking people to send in dishes that had kasundi as the main ingredient. The response I got was overwhelming and it was difficult to select a winner. One of these recipes combined kasundi with jhinga or prawns and it turned out to be fantastic. It is the perfect dish to end a perfect day.

INGREDIENTS

12 prawns

Kasundi (for 1½ cups)

1 cup yellow mustard seeds
½ cup green mango, grated
4 green chillies, roughly chopped
6 cloves garlic
½ tsp coarse salt
⅓ cup mustard oil

Coconut cream (for ¾ cup)

1 cup fresh coconut, grated

Marinade

2½ tbsp kasundi
1½ tbsp mustard oil
3 green chillies, finely chopped
1 (medium) red onion, ground to a paste
¾ tsp turmeric powder
¾ tsp salt or to taste
⅓ cup coconut cream

METHOD

Shell prawns, clean and de-vein. Wash well and set aside in a colander to drain completely.

Kasundi Soak mustard seeds in hot water for 2 hours. Drain and combine with mango, green chillies, garlic and salt in a food processor. Grind to make a smooth paste. Gradually drizzle in mustard oil, as you would for mayonnaise, and continue grinding to form an emulsion. When oil is fully incorporated, transfer to a clean, dry, airtight glass jar and refrigerate or freeze to store for up to three days. The colour will change if refrigerated or frozen. (The flavour may not be very sharp but it matures over time.)

Coconut cream In a mixing bowl, combine grated coconut with ½ cup of warm water and set aside for 10 minutes. Using a blender, blend the mixture to make a thick, smooth paste and

strain through a muslin cloth. (Coconut cream is also commercially available. If using the canned version please ensure only unsweetened coconut cream is used.)

Marination Combine marinade ingredients in a mixing bowl. Add the prawns, mix thoroughly and set aside to marinate for 30 minutes.

To cook the prawns Thread marinated prawns on to skewers and grill over a barbecue, basting with marinade, till they just curl up. Serve hot.



Murgh Ké Phool

Chicken Flowers

SERVES 4–6

Murgh kéké phool or chicken flowers—I can't believe I had completely forgotten about this dish! I ate it in Hong Kong many years ago and loved it. But then I never tried making it and, sometime later, just forgot about it.

One day, I was in Sikkim doing research for my Himalayan cookbook. There, at a food festival, I suddenly encountered this delightful dish again—this time with Indian flavours. My friend Mugdha Savkar was with me and the two of us went crazy over them.

Those little meatballs with rice sticking on to them on all sides looked adorable—like tiny white porcupines. Thereafter, I made the dish several times and it always gives me a thrill to serve it at a party.

The appearance of these steamed porcupine meatballs will make your guests go crazy over them, just as Mugdha and I did when we first saw them.

INGREDIENTS

- 400 g fine chicken mince, triple-ground
- 2 tsp ginger, finely grated
- 2 tsp garlic, minced
- 1 stalk spring onion greens, finely chopped
- 1 tsp garam masala powder
- ½ tsp black pepper powder or to taste
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 cup basmati or long-grained rice

METHOD

Wash rice and soak in water for 30 minutes. Drain and set aside for 15 minutes. In a mixing bowl, combine the chicken mince with ginger, garlic, spring onion, garam masala powder, pepper and salt and mix very thoroughly. Divide mixture into lemon-sized portions and roll into balls. Heat water in a steamer over high heat. Spread the rice on a plate. Roll each meatball in the rice to cover it evenly. Place in the steamer and steam for 10–12 minutes till chicken and rice are just cooked. Serve hot with tomato chutney ([p. 231](#)).



Bharwan Murgh

Stuffed Chicken

SERVES 4

For the Koli people of coastal Maharashtra, work is worship. Originally a fishing community, these people held on to their roots and created a distinguished place for themselves in Indian society. They start their day early by offering prayers to their goddess Ekaveera. The men then weave their nets and venture out into the great seas to haul in fresh fish. The women subsequently go to the markets and sell the fish. After a long day out in the sun and sand, the entire family sits down to a peaceful, simple meal of fish curry and rice.

I was fortunate enough to attend a fish festival in Mumbai. I got the opportunity to study this colourful community closely at this event. The men and women, dressed in their traditional saris and surkhas (loincloths), danced merrily to their folk music. I interacted with them, tasting all the delicacies laid out on long tables on the beach. The delicious food, the vivacious environment was such that all my tiredness evaporated into thin air.

One of the dishes I absolutely loved was Koliwada bharwan murgh (stuffed chicken). The dish gets its name from the distinctive Koliwada masala, used to marinate the chicken.

I have tried to add a new dimension to the original recipe by stuffing the chicken with minced mutton. A perfect dish to munch on while sitting on the soft sand, gazing into the horizon.

INGREDIENTS

Raw papaya paste (for ½ cup)

½ cup raw papaya, grated with skin

Filling

1 tbsp oil

1 (medium) onion, finely sliced

100 g mutton, finely minced

3 tsp raw papaya paste

½ tsp garam masala powder

¼ tsp green cardamom powder

¼ tsp mace powder

½ tsp red chilli powder

1 tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped

2 tbsp roasted husked, split Bengal gram (bhuna chana dal)

A few strands saffron, dissolved in 1½ tbsp warm water

2 tbsp clarified butter, melted

To smoke the filling

2 pieces charcoal

1 tsp clarified butter

To shallow-fry the kebabs

Clarified butter

Chicken

4 chicken supremes (breast with wing bone)

2 tbsp oil

Marinade

1½ tsp red Kashmiri chilli powder

1 tsp ginger paste

1 tsp garlic paste

1 tsp garam masala powder

4 tbsp gram flour

½ tsp cumin powder

1 tsp dried mango powder

1 tsp carom seeds

1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Raw papaya paste Put papaya (without peeling since the peel has tenderizing qualities) into a blender or grinder and grind to make a smooth, fine paste. Water may be added in case a thin paste is required. The paste can be made in a larger batch and frozen but it is best to grind it fresh.

Filling Put oil over medium heat in a frying pan. When hot, add onion and sauté till light brown. Remove, cool to room temperature and grind to make a smooth paste. In a mixing bowl, combine the brown onion paste with the remaining filling ingredients, except the clarified butter. Stir in 2 tbsp of clarified butter. Mix thoroughly.

To smoke the filling Make a well in the centre of the filling and put a piece of foil inside. Heat the charcoal directly over a strong flame till red-hot. Using tongs, place the charcoal on the foil in the well. Spoon clarified butter on the charcoal and as soon as smoke emanates, cover bowl tightly and set aside for 5 minutes. Remove the lid and discard the charcoal and foil.

To shallow-fry the kebabs Divide the filling mixture into small portions and shape into slightly flattened balls. Heat clarified butter on a griddle and shallow-fry the kebabs till cooked through.

Chicken Wash chicken supremes and pat dry. Combine marinade ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Rub the marinade into the chicken and set aside to marinate for 15 minutes. Place the chicken on a chopping board and flatten it lightly by beating down with a rolling pin. Place a kebab on each piece and wrap the sides over to form a roll. Heat oil on a griddle and fry the chicken on moderate heat till cooked through. Serve hot with a salad.

Taash Kebabs

Playing Card Kebabs

SERVES 4–6

The name is quite unusual, isn't it? It was this name, written on a huge blackboard outside an eatery on the road from Patna to Bodh Gaya in Bihar, which caught my attention. I was out of the car and inside the eatery immediately! And, as always, my gourmet instincts proved right.

Originally from the region of Champaran in Bihar, taash kebabs get their name from the Urdu word taash which means a deck of playing cards. The kebabs are shaped in the form of the spade we find on playing cards, and hence the name. Curious though they may sound, these kebabs are remarkably earthy, aromatic and delicious.

INGREDIENTS

Raw onion paste (for about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)

1 cup onions, roughly diced

Boiled onion paste (for about $\frac{1}{3}$ cup)

1 cup onions, roughly sliced

3 black peppercorns

2 cloves

$\frac{1}{2}$ " stick cinnamon

1 (small) bay leaf

Kebabs

4 (large) dried red chillies

$1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste

2 (large) eggs, separated

1 tsp garam masala powder

2 tsp garlic paste

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted and crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup onion paste (raw or boiled)

Oil for shallow-frying

METHOD

Raw onion paste Using a processor or blender, blend the onion to get a smooth, thick paste. About 1 tbsp water may also be mixed in if required.

Boiled onion paste In a small pan, combine all ingredients with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water. Cook over medium heat, without covering, for 4–5 minutes or till onions turns soft. Drain water, remove and discard bay leaf and cool the onion mixture to room temperature. Using a blender or processor, blend to make a smooth, thick paste.

Kebabs Clean lamb, wash and cut into tiny pieces. In a pan, combine lamb with red chillies, salt and 5 cups of water and cook over low heat till all the water evaporates and the lamb is slightly mushy. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Grind the cooked lamb to a

fine mince in a grinder. In a clean, dry, steel pan, whisk egg white till soft peaks appear. Set aside. In a mixing bowl, combine lamb mince with garam masala powder, garlic paste, crushed cumin seeds, onion paste and egg yolk. Mix well. Fold in whisked egg white till well blended. Shape mince mixture into spade-shaped cutlets. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add cutlets and shallow-fry till evenly golden. Remove, drain on absorbent paper and serve hot with roti and any chutney of your choice.



Tundé Kebabs

Melt-in-the-Mouth Kebabs

SERVES 4

There is an interesting story associated with the creation of this dish. Tundé in Urdu means without an arm. The story goes that there once lived a nawab in Lucknow who loved kebabs. As the years passed, he lost all his teeth, thus making it difficult for him to eat his favourite dishes. The royal cooks experimented with various ingredients, trying to create a kebab good enough for the nawab to eat, but in vain.

One day, a one-armed masalchi (spice master) called Haji Murad Ali came along. He volunteered to make kebabs that could be eaten easily by the nawab. He proceeded to make kebabs so soft and tender that they practically melted in the nawab's mouth. The nawab was delighted and the dish was named tundé kebab after the one-armed Haji Murad Ali.

The original recipe is said to have 160 spices, but it's a well-guarded secret and only one family in all of Lucknow knows it. However, tundé kebabs, with slight variations in the recipe of course, are available everywhere in Lucknow. Here's the recipe of the ones I ate when I was in Lucknow.

INGREDIENTS

Kebabs

400 g lamb mince, triple-ground
3 tbsp plain yogurt
3 tsp garam masala powder
1 tsp ginger, crushed
1 tsp garlic, crushed
2 pods black cardamom, lightly roasted and powdered
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp green cardamom powder
A pinch of clove powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp black pepper powder
1 tsp dried mint leaves, powdered
1 tsp salt or to taste
Oil for shallow frying

Onion salad

2 (medium) onions, cut into fine rings
1 tbsp white vinegar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar
A pinch of salt

METHOD

In a food processor, combine all the kebab ingredients except the oil and blend to make a smooth, sticky paste. Cover and set aside for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl combine the salad ingredients. Mix well and set aside to allow the onions to soften. Put oil in a frying pan over medium-low heat. Wet your palms and scoop up a handful of the mince

paste. Shape it into a flat kebab and add to the frying pan. Shallow-fry till golden on both sides and cooked through. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot with onion salad.



Parda-Nashin Kebabs

Veiled Kebabs

SERVES 4

Here's another fine example of the tehzeeb (etiquette) and nazakat (delicacy) of Lucknow, its inhabitants and its cuisine. In India, and especially in Lucknow, a parda or veil is of great significance. While it is generally used to protect a woman's identity, it has other connotations as well. It is a mark of respect to those older than you and it is believed to enhance a woman's beauty rather than suppress it. A parda-nashin kebab is, as the name suggests, a veiled kebab. A mutton patty is fried in egg white, which forms a thin layer or veil all over it, thus making it look as though the kebab is wearing a pristine, white veil.

INGREDIENTS

Kebab mix

- 400 g lamb mince, ground 6 times till it is a smooth paste
- 4 tbsp raw papaya paste ([p. 49](#))
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 2 tsp red chilli powder
- 3 tbsp ginger–garlic paste
- 3 pods black cardamom, lightly roasted and powdered
- 2 tsp dried rose petals, powdered
- 2 flakes mace, lightly roasted and powdered
- 5 pods green cardamom powder
- 4 tbsp husked, split Bengal gram (chana dal), roasted and powdered
- 4 tbsp cashew nut paste ([p. 12](#))
- 4 tbsp brown onion paste ([p. 128–29](#))
- ½ tsp saffron, dissolved in 2 tbsp warm milk
- 1½ cups clarified butter
- 1/8 tsp meetha ittar (optional)
- 3 egg whites, lightly beaten

To smoke the kebab mix

- 1 piece charcoal
- 1 tsp clarified butter

METHOD

Kebab mix In a mixing bowl, combine the ground lamb mince with raw papaya paste, salt, chilli powder and ginger–garlic paste. Mix thoroughly, cover and set aside for 40 minutes. Add powdered black cardamom, rose petals, mace, green cardamom powder and powdered gram. Mix well. Knead in cashew nut paste, brown onion paste, saffron with milk and 1 cup of clarified butter.

To smoke the kebab mix Transfer the mixture to a plate; spread out evenly. Make a well in the centre of the mix and put a piece of foil inside. Heat the charcoal directly over a strong flame till red-hot. Using tongs, place the charcoal on the foil in the well. Spoon clarified

butter on the hot charcoal and as soon as smoke emanates, immediately cover the plate tightly with foil. Set aside for 30 minutes. Uncover the plate and discard the foil and charcoal.

To cook the kebabs Meetha ittar is an oil-based flavouring extract reminiscent of the fragrance of wet earth. It is used in Awadhi kebabs. Mix meetha ittar (if using) into the kebab mix and let it rest for 10 more minutes. Divide mix into 8–10 walnut-sized portions and shape into rounded patties. Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of clarified butter on a griddle over low heat and shallow-fry the patties in batches till golden. Remove and set aside. Brush a large ladle with clarified butter and put it over low heat till warm. Remove ladle from heat, add about 1 tbsp of lightly beaten egg white and immediately add a prepared patty so that the egg white coats it. Return to heat and cook only till egg white sets. Transfer to a serving plate. Serve hot with pudina chutney ([p. 231](#)).



VEGETABLES



Monk's Bak Choy

Lightly Flavoured Bak Choy

SERVES 4–6

On my way to Bodh Gaya from Varanasi, I stopped at a monastery near Sarnath. I had planned to cook a meal for the young monks there.

Once in the kitchen, I made a lightly flavoured bak choy (a type of Chinese cabbage). I then watched the young monks sit down to eat. Before they started, each one of them folded their hands and said a prayer. It was a humbling experience to see these young boys praying so sincerely. They ate everything and did not waste a single morsel. They seemed to like it and for me that was my greatest reward.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 clusters bak choy
- 2 tbsp sesame oil
- 10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tsp white sesame seeds
- ½ tsp salt or to taste
- ½ tsp black pepper powder or to taste

METHOD

Separate the leaves of the bak choy, wash and pat dry. Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat. When hot, add garlic and sauté till it softens. Sprinkle in sesame seeds and sauté till golden. Add bak choy, salt and pepper and toss till bak choy wilts slightly. Remove from heat and serve hot with balep korkun ([p. 204](#)).

Kancha Kadali Brarata

Spiced Green Banana Mash

SERVES 4

During my trip to Orissa, I was advised by a friend to spend a day at a place which is interestingly called Gopalpur-on-Sea. As is evident from the name, Gopalpur is a beach resort. It is a peaceful place where you can just sit on the beach and gaze at the great blue waves for ever.

I took the advice, got on to a bus to Gopalpur and thanked my friend all day long for suggesting this little detour. The sea, the sun, the sand, I loved it all. To top it, I had some superb food there. The very first dish was this green banana brarata, which simply blew me away. Brarata, or what is commonly called bharta, is generally made with aubergine in India. But Gopalpur gave a whole new dimension to my perception of bharta.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 raw green bananas
- 1 (large) potato
- 2 tsp mustard oil
- 1 (small) sprig fresh curry leaves
- 1 (medium) onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1 (medium) tomato, finely chopped
- 1 tsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tsp almond slivers, roasted

METHOD

Boil bananas and potato separately, without peeling, till tender. Peel and mash separately. Set aside. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add curry leaves. When they crackle, add onion, garlic and green chillies. Sauté till onion turns golden. Mix in tomato, tamarind pulp and salt and cook till tomato becomes mushy. Stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water with salt, almonds, mashed bananas and mashed potato. Simmer till the moisture dries up. Remove from heat and serve hot.

Koldil Bhaaji

Banana Blossom Stir-Fry

SERVES 4–6

‘No sane person sharpens his machete to cut a banana tree’ says an old proverb. I totally agree.

In India, the banana tree forms an important part of every child’s education. ‘Live your life like a banana tree,’ we are taught. ‘Every part of the tree makes itself useful to us. It is the epitome of self-sacrifice and hospitality. Always strive to make yourself just as useful and make the world a better place to live in.’

It’s true, isn’t it? Every single part of the banana tree can be used for different purposes. The fruit is, of course, much loved by all of us. But even the leaves, flowers and trunk are edible. Food is served on banana leaves; there are several Indian dishes that are wrapped in banana leaves for grilling or steaming; the tender core of the trunk is cooked as a vegetable in the eastern parts of India ... The list goes on.

This Assamese recipe uses the banana flower to create a wonderfully aromatic dish. It requires some effort to separate the blossoms, but, trust me, it is definitely worth it!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 banana blossoms
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- 1½ tbsp panch phoran of your choice ([p. 114, 134](#))
- 1 (large) bay leaf
- 4 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- ¾ tsp turmeric powder
- 2 (large) potatoes, diced

METHOD

Banana blossoms The whole blossom, which is a deep, purplish red colour should be taken apart leaf by leaf. Remove the stamens and the thin, translucent film within the blossoms. This is important as the stamens do not cook easily and sometimes impart a bitter flavour to a dish. Clean the blossoms with greased hands as the sap is very sticky and can permanently stain clothes.

Bhaaji Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add panch phoran, bay leaf and red chillies. When the spices crackle, add about ¾ cup of water with salt, turmeric powder and potatoes. Cover and cook till potatoes are tender and the moisture has almost dried up. Mix in banana blossoms, toss well and cook uncovered for 3–4 minutes till tender. Serve hot with roti or as an accompaniment to rice and dal.



Lilva Baingan Sabzi

Sheet Beans with Aubergine

SERVES 4

The Gujaratis are an extremely friendly lot, who staunchly live by the adage Atithi devo bhava—the guest is God. If you ever visit a Gujarati home, you'll be overwhelmed by their warmth and hospitality. You'll be given the most comfortable chair in the room; a steady flow of food will find its way to your plate, regardless of whether you want it or not; and you will be constantly pampered and fed, till your stomach is ready to burst! They are a naturally fun-loving people and celebrate everything with gusto.

During my last visit to Surat, I was treated to a classic Gujarati dish, lilva baingan sabzi, which is made with sheet beans and aubergine. The softness of the aubergine and the slightly firm lilva beans taste fabulous with hot rotis, straight off the tava (griddle).

INGREDIENTS

8 small aubergines

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sheet beans

Spice paste

1 tbsp dried coconut, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp peanuts, roasted

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds, roasted

Gravy

1 tsp oil

A pinch of asafoetida powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp mustard seeds

A pinch of carom seeds

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp turmeric powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red chilli powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garam masala powder

1 tsp jaggery, grated

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Cut the aubergines into quarters. Top, tail and trim the beans.

Spice paste In a blender, combine spice paste ingredients with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of water and grind to make a smooth paste.

Gravy Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add asafoetida powder, mustard seeds and carom seeds. When the spices crackle, add turmeric powder and immediately add aubergines and beans. Sauté for about 2 minutes. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water, chilli powder, garam masala powder, jaggery, salt and the ground spice paste. Mix well, cover and cook till vegetables are tender. Serve hot.



Kajuchi Usal

Fresh Cashew Nuts in Coconut

SERVES 4

Konkan is the coastal region on the western coast of India and includes the coastlines of Maharashtra, Goa and a small part of Karnataka. Konkani food is characterized by the accentuated use of coconut, cashew nut and kokum. It is also well known for producing the best mangoes and jackfruits.

Here's a dish that's a must in any Konkani platter—cashew nuts cooked in coconut with just a hint of sweetness and sourness. Lovely, smooth and succulent.

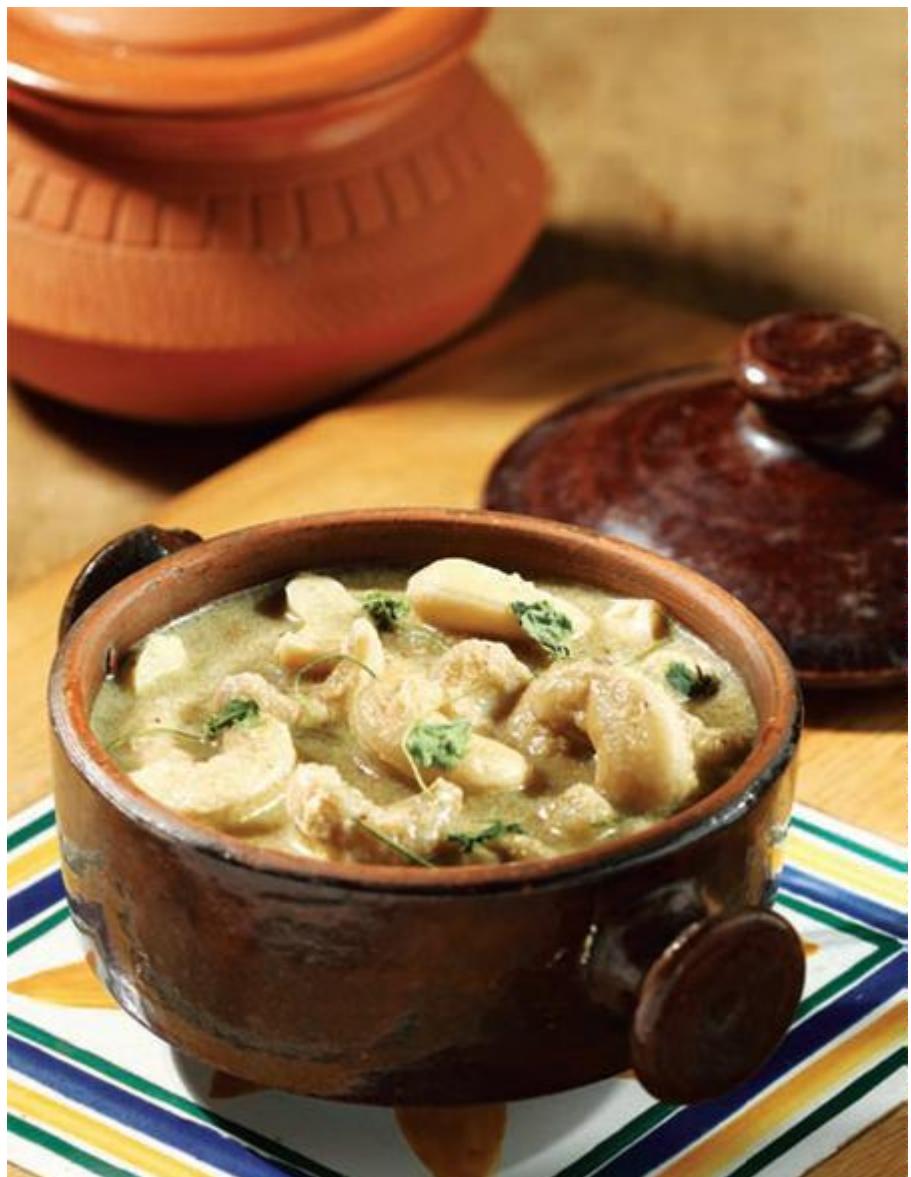
The fresh cashews used here are seasonal. They are plucked fresh off the fruit and used immediately. They have a sweet, slightly astringent flavour and have a very pale green colour.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup fresh cashew nuts
- 4 cloves garlic
- 3 green chillies
- 2 tbsp clarified butter
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 (medium) onion, finely chopped
- ¾ cup fresh coconut, finely grated
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tsp garam masala powder

METHOD

Soak cashew nuts in warm water for 2 hours. Drain and set aside. In a blender, combine garlic, green chillies and 2 tbsp of water and blend to make a smooth paste. Set aside. Melt clarified butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Add asafoetida powder and cumin seeds. When the spices crackle, add onion and garlic-chilli paste and sauté till onion turns translucent. Mix in coconut and sauté till golden. Remove into a grinder and grind to make a smooth paste. Return the ground paste to the same pan over medium heat. Mix in cashew nuts with salt and garam masala powder. Cook for 2–3 minutes. Stir in 1½ cups of water, cover and simmer till cashew nuts are cooked. Serve hot with roti.



Patra Nu Shaak

Colocasia Leaf Stew

SERVES 4

Patra nu shaak is one dish that holds special importance in Indian cuisine, because of its mythological origins. Yes, the birth of this recipe is described in a story.

Legend has it that several years ago, a great tragedy befell India in the form of a fierce and prolonged famine. Every grain, every drop of water, every source of food dried up, leaving the people helpless and hungry. They scoured the land but all they got was hot, dry sand. Finally, they sought the help of the gods and asked them to be sympathetic and give them food. Their prayers were answered. Goddess Shakambhari (which translates into Bearer of the Greens) was so moved by the plight of the people that she cried for nine days and nights. Her tears rolled down to form a river that finally ended the famine. Vegetables started to grow along the river, of which patra or colocasia leaves formed a major portion. The starving people used these leaves to make a sabzi (vegetable) to fill their stomachs. Thus, patra nu shaak was created.

This story always makes me think of how privileged I am to have everything I need. I am thankful for the food I eat, for being in a position where I can feed other people who need nourishment.

If you like the story, you're bound to love the dish too.

INGREDIENTS

Patra

2 colocasia leaves

Batter

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup gram flour

2 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))

1 tbsp jaggery, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garam masala powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp white sesame seeds, roasted and coarsely powdered

Tempering

1 tsp oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp asafoetida powder

1 tsp mustard seeds

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red chilli powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste

1 tbsp jaggery, grated

1 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))

1 tsp coriander-cumin powder

METHOD

Wash colocasia leaves and wipe dry. Using a small knife, remove the thick stem and veins. Set aside. In a small mixing bowl, combine batter ingredients. Gradually add water and mix to make a thick, spreadable batter. Spread batter evenly on the veined side of the leaf and roll into a tight roll. Repeat with the other leaf. Heat water in a steamer and steam the rolls for 10–15 minutes or till tender. Remove, set aside till cool and cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick slices. Put oil for the tempering in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add asafoetida powder and mustard seeds. When the spices crackle, add 2 cups of water and the remaining tempering ingredients. Raise heat to high and bring to a rapid boil. Add the prepared patra and cook till the gravy thickens. Serve hot with roti.



Shaak Kalonji

Leafy Greens with Nigella

SERVES 4–6

Here is a simple Bengali dish I have had several times in Kolkata and other places. Shaak kalonji is basically shaak (green leafy vegetables, in this case) and kalonji (nigella seeds) cooked together to make an irresistible dish.

INGREDIENTS

300 g spinach
300 g mustard greens
300 g radish leaves
2 tbsp mustard oil
2½ tsp nigella seeds (kalonji)
7 cloves garlic, finely sliced
4 green chillies, finely chopped
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp sugar
¾ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Pluck the leaves and tender stems of the greens and discard the tough stems. Wash well and pat dry. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add nigella seeds. When they crackle, add garlic and green chillies and sauté till garlic turns golden. Add turmeric powder and immediately mix in the greens. Toss well and cook till greens wilt and are just cooked. Stir in sugar and salt and cook only till sugar dissolves. Serve hot with roti or as an accompaniment to rice and dal.



Fanasachi Bhaaji

Jackfruit Curry

SERVES 4–6

While in Mumbai, I was invited to a number of dinners and food festivals. In my free time (though I hardly had any), I would wander around the city and visit as many restaurants and shops as I could.

One day I walked into a small restaurant with a big, fat menu card. I took one look at the menu and decided I wanted the ‘Konkani special meal’. My meal arrived on a massive plate with about eight little bowls placed neatly along the rim. There were four types of curries, two dals, three varieties of breads, rice, pappadams, pickles and sweets. I was rather taken aback. But then I took a deep breath and plunged into the food.

It was mind-blowing! The first thing I ate was the jackfruit dish called fansachi bhaaji. I had never eaten anything like it in my life. It was really juicy and ... wait, I won’t tell you. Try it out yourself and tell me how you like it.

INGREDIENTS

Spice paste

- 2 (medium) onions, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 4 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
- 1" piece ginger, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped

Curry

- 3 tbsp oil
- 500 g raw jackfruit, cut into cubes
- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 tsp garam masala powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 cup plain yogurt, whisked
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

Garnish

- 8–10 cashew nuts, roasted (optional)

METHOD

Spice paste In a blender, combine all spice paste ingredients and grind to make a smooth paste. Set aside.

Curry Using well-greased hands and a well-greased, sharp knife, cut the jackfruit in half and pull apart the halves. Cut each half lengthwise into quarters and cut away the centre or core. Slice away the skin and cut the fruit (shred-like part) into chunks. Discard the seeds. Put oil

in a large frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add jackfruit and fry till it is evenly coloured and slightly softened. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Add onion to the same pan and sauté till golden. Add the fried jackfruit, sauté for 1 minute and stir in the milk, garam masala powder, turmeric powder, ground spice paste and sugar. Cook, stirring occasionally, till nearly all the moisture evaporates. Remove pan from heat and stir in yogurt. Return pan to the heat, add salt and bring to a boil, stirring continuously. Remove and spoon into a serving dish. Sprinkle with cashew nuts (if using) and serve hot with roti or steamed rice.



Ker Sangri

Berries & Dried Bean Vegetable

SERVES 4

Rajasthan, as mentioned earlier, is a dry, arid region with little vegetation. So the Rajasthani people depend considerably on dried beans and berries for their food.

Ker is a green berry-like fruit of a thorny bush (*Capparis decidua*). It is sour and commonly available during April and May. Of course, dried ker is available all year round. Fresh ker is kept in salt for 15 days so that it loses its sourness. It can then be stored or used immediately. Ker is also used in Ayurvedic medicines.

Sangri are the bean-like fruits of the khejari tree (*Prosopis cineraria*). They can be made into a pickle, eaten as a vegetable or can be fried in oil and served with salt and red chillies.

Together, ker and sangri can be cooked to make a wonderful dish with a rustic, earthy flavour. It's one of my personal favourites and I totally recommend a trip to Rajasthan especially to taste it.

INGREDIENTS

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup ker

1 cup sangri

Soaking solution for sangri

1 litre water

1 tsp oil

1 tsp salt

1 tsp turmeric powder

Spices

4 tbsp mustard seeds

10 dried red chillies

10 dried mango pieces

1 tsp turmeric powder

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste

3 tsp red chilli powder

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried mango powder

Tempering

5 tbsp mustard oil

2 tsp cumin seeds

METHOD

Wash ker and soak overnight in 1 cup of water. Wash sangri. Combine ingredients for the soaking solution in a large bowl and soak sangri in it overnight. Soak mustard seeds, red chillies and dried mango pieces separately overnight. The next day, drain all soaked ingredients and set aside in separate bowls. Put ker and sangri in a large pan. Pour in just enough water to cover and boil over medium heat till tender. Drain and set aside. Grind

mustard seeds to a smooth paste. Set aside. In a large mixing bowl, combine the boiled ker and sangri with ground mustard paste, and the soaked and drained red chillies and dried mango pieces. Stir in turmeric powder and salt. In a small mixing bowl, combine chilli powder and mango powder with 1 cup of water and set aside. Put oil for the tempering in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat till it starts to smoke. Reduce heat to low and add cumin seeds. When cumin seeds crackle, carefully stir in the diluted chilli and mango powder mix. Add the ker sangri mixture and toss well. Cook for just 1 minute, remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Serve with roti.

NOTE: This dish tastes best the day after it is cooked, after it matures overnight.



Ganth Gobhi Aloo

Himachali Kohlrabi with Potatoes

SERVES 4

Sitting peacefully in the lap of the snow-clad Himalayas, the state of Himachal Pradesh appears as though it sprang straight out of a children's fairy tale. Tall, sleek pine trees, lush green landscapes, colours sprayed across the region in the form of flowering buds, trees laden with a variety of fruits, birds you never knew existed—it truly is an enchanting place.

And equally enchanting is the food you get there. Simple, traditional and delicious are the three words that sum up Himachali cuisine. Of all the different Himachali fruits and vegetables, the one I love using the most is kohlrabi.

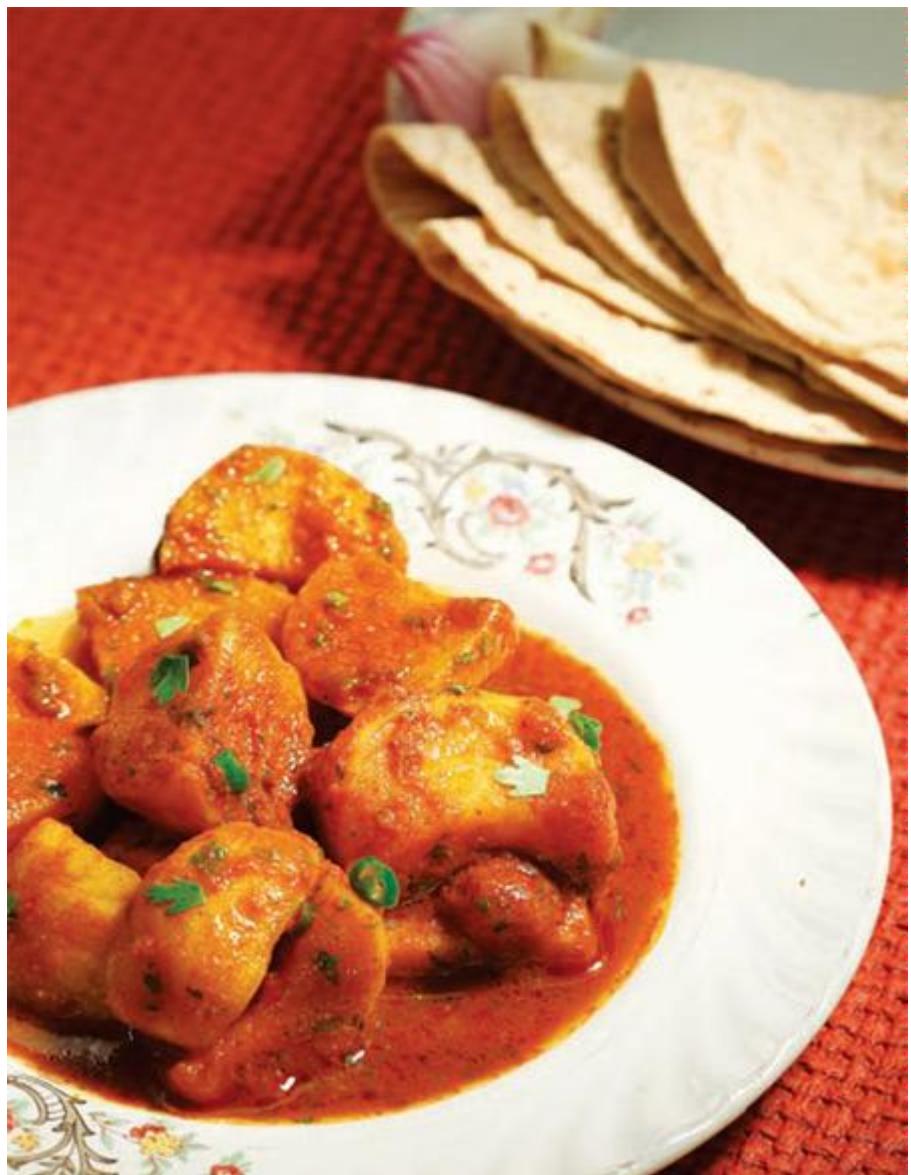
Kohlrabi or knol khol is a unique vegetable. It's a cross between kohl (cabbage) and rabi (turnip) and is a versatile ingredient. Its taste and texture are similar to those of cabbage, but not as sharp and a little sweeter. The best part about working with it is that it tastes splendid no matter how it is cooked (or not cooked).

INGREDIENTS

- 3 kohlrabis
- 1 (large) potato
- 3 tbsp clarified butter
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/8 tsp fenugreek seed powder
- 3 cloves, crushed
- 1 tsp garam masala powder
- ½ tsp dried ginger powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp coriander–cumin powder
- ½ tsp ginger paste
- ½ cup tomato purée
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- ½ tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped

METHOD

Cut kohlrabi into wedges and dice the potato. Melt clarified butter in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat. Add asafoetida powder, cumin seeds, fenugreek powder and crushed cloves. When the spices crackle, add kohlrabi and potato and sauté for 1 minute. Stir in ¼ cup of water, cover and cook till vegetables soften slightly. Mix in the remaining spice powders, ginger paste and tomato purée. Sauté for 3–4 minutes. Pour in 1 cup of water and cook till vegetables are tender. Mix in salt, sugar and coriander leaves and cook till sugar dissolves. Serve hot with roti or steamed rice.



Nadru Yakhni

Lotus Stem Broth

SERVES 4

I have been to Kashmir five times already, but I just can't get enough of the place and its food. On every visit I've eaten different dishes, seen different locations, each better than the last. And yet, I am not satisfied. That's the effect Kashmir has on you; you get addicted to its beauty.

One dish that I always look out for on all my trips is nadru yakhni. Nadru, kamal kakri or lotus stem, is round, and white to light green in colour. It contains hollow air channels that run through the length of the stem. It has a mild, slightly sweet flavour and can be consumed cooked or uncooked. Delicious as it is, it is also beneficial for our health, as nadru is a rich source of calcium, iron and fibre.

INGREDIENTS

500 g lotus stems
5 tbsp oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups plain yogurt, whisked
3 tbsp fennel powder
2 tbsp dried ginger powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp asafoetida powder
1 tsp garam masala powder
4 cloves
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp coriander seeds, roasted and crushed
1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Scrub lotus stems thoroughly and scrape them. Cut into 4" pieces. Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat. When hot, add lotus stems and fry till golden. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. To the same pan add cumin seeds. When they crackle, reduce heat to low and add yogurt. Cook stirring continuously for about 2 minutes. Pour in $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water and bring to a boil, stirring all the while. Mix in remaining ingredients along with fried lotus stems and continue cooking till the gravy is thick. Serve hot with naan ([p. 209](#)).



Papad Ki Sabzi

Pappadam Curry

SERVES 4

Gazing at the sand dunes in the Thar Desert of the Marwar region of Rajasthan, I always wonder what dreadful crime the earth must have committed that the lord of the winds had, in a fit of pure rage, scratched all the life and greenery off her and left marks on her soft, golden palms.

This region has no vegetation whatsoever. In spite of this, the cuisine of this region is one of the most colourful and distinctive. Owing to the harsh weather, there is a scarcity of fresh green vegetables, and so people are forced to use dehydrated stalks and beans of various kinds. Papad ki sabzi is a case in point. Made using the famous pappadams of northern India, this recipe transforms the usually crisp pappadams into a moist, spicy (and a little oily) curry. You will not even be able to tell that these are pappadams. Make it at home and keep everyone guessing!

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red chilli powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp coriander powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp garam masala powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder
- A pinch of asafoetida powder
- 1 tsp oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp mustard seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds
- 1 cup (commercial urad dal) papad, cut into 2" squares
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, combine yogurt with spice powders and whisk well. Put oil in a frying pan over medium-low heat. When hot, add mustard seeds and cumin seeds. When the spices crackle, remove pan from heat and set aside for 1 minute. Add spiced yogurt and return pan to heat. Reduce heat to low and keep stirring till the mixture starts to simmer. Add papad, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water and salt and cook till papad is soft and gravy thickens slightly. Serve hot with bajra roti ([p. 206](#)).

Pacha Pattani Thoran

Green Pea Stir-Fry

SERVES 4–6

Pacha pattani is what I call ‘Kerala on a plate’. It’s fresh, green, coconutty and brings a smile to your lips—just like the region it belongs to!

INGREDIENTS

500 g fresh green peas, shelled
1 (large) onion, finely sliced

Spice paste

1 cup fresh coconut, grated
2 green chillies, roughly chopped
5 shallots, roughly chopped
3 (small) sprigs fresh curry leaves
1½ tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp turmeric powder
6 cloves garlic
1 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

1½ tbsp coconut oil
½ tsp mustard seeds
3 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves

METHOD

Blanch green peas in boiling salted water for 30 seconds. Drain and set aside. In a blender, combine spice paste ingredients and grind to make a smooth paste. Mix with ¾ cup of water and set aside. Put coconut oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the tempering spices. When the spices crackle, add onion and sauté till golden. Mix in the ground spice paste and cook for 5 minutes till the gravy thickens. Add blanched green peas with ¼ cup of water and salt and cook till green peas are tender and well coated with spices. Serve hot with roti.

Menaskai

Pineapple Curry

SERVES 4

This is one of my favourite dishes. It is eaten like a dal in Karnataka. I was confused when I ate it for the first time at a friend's brother's wedding. When we had finished the communal meal and I was enjoying my first experience of a traditional south Indian wedding, everyone passing by kept asking me 'Oota aitha?' meaning, had I eaten. The other question was, 'Did you like the menaskai?' I did not know the names well at that time. Moreover, we had been served nearly 20 dishes. Later, I confessed to my friend that I did not know which dish menaskai was. He simply asked me which dish I liked the most. I told him the one with the sweet-sour pineapple; it was a most delectable dish and left an indelible imprint on my palate.

He told me, with a smile, that that was menaskai.

Menaskai is usually made on special occasions. It looks like a chutney with chunks of pineapple in it and is easy to make. You will remember the taste very well, even if you forget the name.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups fresh pineapple, diced
¾ tsp salt or to taste
3 tsp white sesame seeds
4 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
2 tbsp fresh coconut, grated
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
1½ tsp jaggery, grated

Tempering

1½ tsp oil
¾ tsp mustard seeds
1 (small) sprig fresh curry leaves
1/8 tsp asafoetida powder

METHOD

In a small pan, combine pineapple with 3 cups of water and salt and boil for 3–4 minutes over medium heat. Drain and set aside. Put a griddle over medium heat and separately roast sesame seeds and red chillies. Combine sesame seeds and red chillies in a grinder with paprika and 2–3 tbsp of water and grind to make a smooth paste. In a frying pan, combine the cooked pineapple with the ground paste, ½ cup of water, tamarind pulp and jaggery and cook over low heat for 2 minutes. Taste and add salt, if required. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add the remaining tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, add the tempering to the pineapple curry. Serve hot with steamed rice.

NOTE: Pineapple can be substituted with firm, ripe mangoes. Half-ripe mangoes taste best.



Ajethna Kaddu

Udupi Pumpkin Curry

SERVES 4

It was a moment of great honour and pride when my alma mater WGSVA felicitated me with an Award of Distinction at Manipal in Karnataka during ITC's centenary celebrations. It was a special moment when the principal, Parvadha Vardhini Gopalakrishnan, presented me the award amidst the thunderous applause of the young, new batch of chefs.

I was reminded of my days at WGSVA. The walls were the same, the tables were the same, the teachers were the same, even I was the same—and yet, something was different. I thought and thought and thought, and then it hit me. There was a time when I was one of those students, enthusiastically clapping for someone on the dais. Today, I was on the other side and people were cheering for me. It's a memory that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

After the ceremony, we sat down to a wonderful meal prepared by the students. One of the dishes served to us was a traditional udupi one made with pumpkin called ajethna kaddu. It's a brilliant dish as it is, but the love and effort put in by the students enhanced its flavours even more.

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ tbsp coconut oil
- 1½ tsp mustard seeds
- 5 dried red chillies, slit lengthwise
- 2 cups red pumpkin, diced
- ¾ tsp turmeric powder
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tsp garam masala powder

METHOD

Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add mustard seeds and red chillies. When the spices crackle, add pumpkin, turmeric powder, salt and 1 cup of water. Cover and cook for 6–8 minutes till pumpkin is tender. Sprinkle garam masala powder, toss well and immediately remove from heat. Serve hot with roti or steamed rice and dal.

Kolhapuri Misal

Mixed Sprout Curry

SERVES 4

When in Kolhapur, do as the Kolhapuris do—indulge in some authentic Kolhapuri misal. Eating misal makes you feel like a dragon. It is so spicy that you think you'll spew fire the moment you open your mouth! But it's a staple dish in Kolhapur and almost all of Maharashtra. You'll find restaurants selling Kolhapuri misal even in Mumbai. It's the dish to look for on a boring, sleepy afternoon—it'll wake you up at once!

INGREDIENTS

Spice paste

- 2 tsp oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- ½ cup dried coconut, finely grated
- 1 tsp Kolhapuri masala ([p. 26](#))

Curry

- 3 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 small sprig fresh curry leaves
- 1 (medium) onion, finely chopped
- ½ cup peanuts, roasted
- 1½ cups mixed sprouts
- 1 (large) potato, finely diced
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 2 tsp jaggery, grated

To serve

- 2 tbsp onion, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp tomato, finely chopped
- ½ tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- ¼ cup farsan mix/savoury snack (commercial)
- ½ cup plain yogurt

METHOD

Spice paste Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add onions and coconut and sauté till the mixture is golden. Add Kolhapuri masala and cook for 1 minute longer. Cool and grind to make a fine paste.

Curry Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add cumin seeds, mustard seeds and curry leaves. When the spices crackle, add onion and sauté till translucent. Mix in peanuts, sprouts, potato, turmeric powder, ground spice paste and salt and sauté for 2 minutes. Pour in

5 cups of water and stir. Cover and cook the curry till it boils rapidly and the sprouts and potato are tender. Mix in tamarind pulp and jaggery and simmer till jaggery dissolves.

To serve Spoon the curry into a soup plate. Put the onions, tomatoes, coriander leaves, farsan and yogurt separately into small bowls and arrange them around the curry. Any of these accompaniments can be eaten with the curry. Serve hot with pav or dinner rolls.

Puducherry Mustard Veg Curry

Mustard-Flavoured Vegetables

SERVES 4–5

French culture has deeply influenced the people of Pondicherry, now renamed Puducherry. Be it architecture, town planning, street names or food, there is an unmistakable trace of France, which makes it so singular. Mustard vegetable curry is proof of this wonderful blending.

INGREDIENTS

Fenugreek seed paste (for 2 tbsp)

2 tbsp fenugreek seeds

Mustard paste (for 4 tbsp)

4 tbsp yellow mustard seeds

¼ tsp salt

Curry

1 (large) potato

1½ cups cauliflower florets

1 tbsp sesame oil

3 cloves garlic, crushed

½ tsp cumin seeds

1 (medium) onion, finely chopped

2 (medium) tomatoes, finely chopped

1 tsp salt or to taste

1 tsp red chilli powder

½ tsp paprika flakes

1 (medium) carrot, diced

½ cup fresh green peas, shelled

2½ cups coconut milk ([p. 16](#))

2 tbsp mustard paste (commercial or home-made)

1 tsp fenugreek seed paste

1 tbsp coconut cream ([p. 44](#))

1 tbsp brown vinegar

METHOD

Fenugreek seed paste Soak fenugreek seeds in ½ cup of water overnight or for at least 5 hours. When seeds swell up and are soft enough to split when pressed between your thumb and finger, drain away the excess water. Using a grinder or food processor, grind the seeds to make a smooth paste.

Mustard paste Soak mustard seeds in warm water for 30 minutes. Drain and grind to a smooth paste with salt.

Curry Wash potato, peel and dice. Blanch potato and cauliflower florets in boiling salted water for 1 minute each. Drain and set aside. Put oil in a pan over medium heat. Add garlic and cumin seeds and sauté till garlic softens. Add onion and sauté till it turns translucent. Stir

in tomatoes, salt, chilli powder and paprika and cook till tomatoes are mushy. Mix in potato, cauliflower, carrot, green peas and coconut milk. Cover and cook till vegetables are tender. Stir in 2 tbsp mustard paste, 1 tsp fenugreek seed paste and coconut cream with about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water. Bring the curry to a boil. Mix in vinegar and immediately remove from heat. Serve hot.



DALS



Gujarati Khatti Dal

Tangy Pigeon Peas

SERVES 4

I can eat this dal at any time of the day. I don't need bread, I don't need rice, I don't need anything else with it.

And all the credit for introducing me to this fabulous dal goes to my friend Manish Khanna. I was working at the Leela Kempenski in Mumbai, as was Manish. One day, he opened his lunch box and the entire room was instantly filled with a most tempting aroma. It beckoned me and before I knew it I had finished all his dal. Manish just sat there, staring at me with a bemused expression.

This dal reinforces the fact that vegetarian food can be just as delicious as non-vegetarian food. Even a simple dal like this could make me go weak in the knees. Till date, nothing, not even the most expensive meats or desserts I've had, has had such an effect on me. Even today, there are times I crave for it.

INGREDIENTS

Dal

- 1 cup husked, split pigeon peas (arhar/toover dal)
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- A pinch of asafoetida powder
- 1 tsp oil
- 2 tbsp peanuts, boiled
- 2 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 2 tbsp jaggery, grated
- ½ cup yam, diced
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- 2 pinches of garam masala powder

Tempering

- 1 tbsp oil
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp fenugreek seeds
- 3 dried red chillies

METHOD

Wash dal and soak in water for 20 minutes. Drain and add to a pan with turmeric powder, asafoetida powder, oil and 2½ cups of water. Cover and cook over medium-high heat for 20–25 minutes or till dal is cooked and mushy. Whisk dal till it becomes a smooth purée. Add 1½ cups of water with the remaining dal ingredients. Boil over medium heat till it thickens. Reduce heat to low. Put oil for tempering in a small pan over medium heat. When hot, add remaining tempering ingredients. When spices splutter, add the tempering to the dal and

cover immediately. Switch off the heat and set aside for 5 minutes for flavours to blend. Stir well and serve with poori or rice.

Pappu Charu

Spicy Lentil Soup

SERVES 4

I had this dish while shooting for the Boot Camp of *MasterChef India* in Hyderabad. I call pappu charu (lentil soup) the ‘younger sister’ of the famous south Indian sambar. It is similar to sambar, except that it contains no sambar powder. It has its own spice blend that gives it a very different and refreshing flavour. The tamarind pulp too gives it a delicious tang.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup husked, split pigeon peas (arhar/toover dal)

2 tbsp oil

2 × 1" sticks cinnamon

4 cloves

1 tsp mustard seeds

¼ tsp fenugreek seeds

1 tsp cumin seeds

A pinch of asafoetida powder

½ tsp turmeric powder

½ cup onions, finely chopped

4 green chillies, finely chopped

2" piece ginger, crushed

3 cloves garlic, crushed

½ cup carrots, finely sliced

2 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))

1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves

¾ tsp red chilli powder

½ cup tomatoes, diced

1 tsp salt or to taste

Garnish

2 tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated

A few sprigs fresh coriander leaves

METHOD

Wash dal and soak in 2 cups of water for 20 minutes. Pressure-cook dal with its soaking water for 12–14 minutes over low heat after the cooker reaches full pressure. The dal must be mushy. When the pressure settles, whisk or churn dal to mash well. Put oil in a heavy pan over medium heat. When hot, add cinnamon and cloves. When the fragrance of cinnamon fills the air, add mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds and cumin seeds. When the spices crackle, add asafoetida powder and turmeric powder. Immediately add onions, green chillies, ginger and garlic and sauté till onions turn translucent. Mix in carrots and sauté till carrots soften. Add tamarind pulp, mix well and stir in 4 cups of water. Bring to a boil and add curry leaves, chilli powder and tomatoes. Continue to boil for 20–25 minutes. When the fragrance of curry leaves fills the air, mix in the mashed dal with salt. Reduce heat and simmer for 5–7 minutes.

Garnish with coconut and coriander leaves and serve hot with steamed rice drizzled over with clarified butter.

Sultani Dal

Royal Lentils

SERVES 4–6

This is as royal as a dal can get! I was served this dal in Lucknow and was besotted by its richness and taste.

The kitchens of the nawabs used to have gourmet cooks called rakabdars, who prepared exquisite dishes and meals in small quantities. There were many rakabdars in a household, each specializing in a particular dish and in the presentation of dishes. Originally created by a famous rakabdar named Pir Ali who worked for the Nawab of Awadh, this dal commands a place of supreme respect in any feast.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup husked, split pigeon peas (arhar/toover dal)
1 cup whole milk
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup heavy cream
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain yogurt
4 cloves
5 pods green cardamom
1 tsp salt or to taste
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp red chilli powder
 $\frac{1}{3}$ tsp saffron, dissolved in 2 tbsp hot milk

To smoke the dal

1 betel (paan) leaf
1 large piece charcoal
1 tsp clarified butter

Tempering

2 tbsp clarified butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp cumin seeds
5 cloves garlic, finely slivered

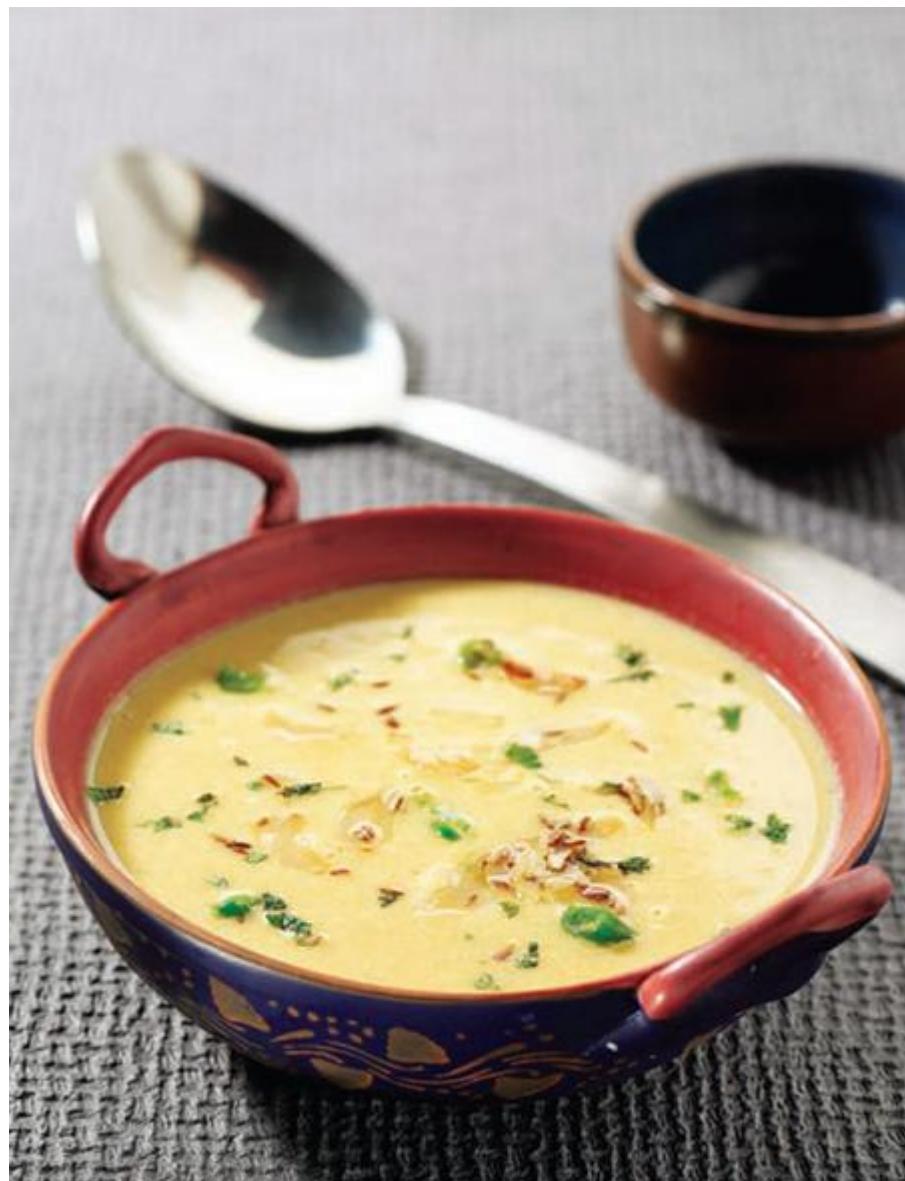
Garnish

2 green chillies, finely chopped
A few sprigs fresh mint leaves, finely chopped

METHOD

Wash dal and soak in water for 10 minutes. In a mixing bowl, whisk milk, cream and yogurt till well combined. Strain through a muslin cloth into a fresh bowl, cover and refrigerate. Combine cloves and cardamoms with 1 tbsp water and grind to make a smooth paste. Drain dal and put it into a large, heavy pan with salt, chilli powder and 3–4 cups of water. Cover and cook over medium-low heat till dal is cooked and most of the water is absorbed. Remove from heat, drain off any surplus water and whisk well to mash the dal completely. Place the betel leaf on the surface of the mashed dal. Heat the charcoal directly over a strong flame till red-hot. Using tongs, place the charcoal on the betel leaf. Spoon 1 tsp of clarified butter over

the charcoal and as it begins to smoke, immediately cover the pan with a tight lid. Set aside for 10 minutes. Open pan and remove and discard the charcoal and leaf. Stir in the chilled cream mixture, clove–cardamom paste and saffron with the milk. Place pan over low heat, cover and simmer for about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the clarified butter for the tempering in a ladle. Add cumin seeds and garlic. When garlic colours slightly, immerse the ladle into the dal and cover immediately. Stir lightly and garnish with green chillies and mint leaves. Serve hot with roti.



Thikri Ki Dal

Earthen-Flavoured Lentils

SERVES 4–6

The Rajasthanis never cease to amaze me. After using dried plants and shrubs for cooking, they came up with using an amazing ingredient for seasoning a simple dal. Thikri means earthen pot. Pieces of thikri are heated till they are red-hot and added to the dal. This gives it such a dreamlike aroma—the delicious fragrance of Mother Nature—that it cannot taste anything but divine!

INGREDIENTS

Dal

- 1½ cup husked, split Egyptian/red lentils (masoor dal)
- 1¼ tsp salt or to taste
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- 2 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 1½ tbsp jaggery, grated

Tempering

- 3 tbsp clarified butter
- ¼ tsp fenugreek seeds
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- ½ tsp caraway seeds, rubbed between the palms
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 dried red chillies
- 1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves
- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp ginger–garlic paste

To smoke the dal

- 1 small unglazed earthen bowl (thikri)

METHOD

First soak the thikri in water for 2 hours. Drain and leave in the sun to dry thoroughly. Wash dal and soak in water for 20 minutes. Drain dal and put into a pan with 2 cups of water, salt, turmeric powder and chilli powder. Cover and cook over medium-high heat till it is soft. Stir occasionally and add more water while cooking, if required. Reduce heat to low and continue simmering the dal. In a small frying pan, melt clarified butter over low heat. Add fenugreek seeds and cumin seeds. When the spices crackle, add caraway seeds, bay leaves, red chillies, curry leaves, onion and ginger–garlic paste and sauté till onion turns golden. Pour the tempering into the simmering dal, mix well, cover and simmer for 3–4 minutes longer. Mix in tamarind pulp and jaggery and simmer for another 5 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the earthen bowl directly over a strong flame, till red-hot. Using tongs, drop the bowl into the simmering dal and cover immediately with a tight lid. Switch off the heat under the dal and set aside for 5–7 minutes to allow the dal to absorb the earthy flavour of the bowl. Open pan and stir dal

well. Remove the earthen bowl. Drizzle 2 tbsp clarified butter over the dal. Serve hot with roti.

NOTE: Alternatively, the dal can be cooked and tempered in an unglazed earthen vessel. This brings out the earthy flavour even better and is also healthier as it aids the absorption of minerals.



Masoor Palak Dal

Black Lentils with Spinach

SERVES 4

It was a long, tiresome week and at last I got a day off. My team forced me to take a break and relax, much to my indignation. I don't like to take holidays. I always feel that if I don't work for even one day, I'll never be able to work again. I wasn't exactly abiding by the rules they set for me; I was still having meetings on the phone and working on my laptop. But it was a relaxed atmosphere and I did feel better.

I wasn't in the mood to cook for myself so I decided to order some masoor palak dal and rice. Whole masoor (black lentils) and palak (spinach) sounded like a different combination to me. The little lentil grains rolling over your tongue interspersed with smooth shreds of spinach give the dal a lovely texture and taste.

I have to admit, that dal made my (holi)day.

INGREDIENTS

Dal

- 1 cup whole black lentils (kali masoor dal)
- A pinch of asafoetida powder
- 2 green chillies, slit lengthwise
- 2" piece ginger, grated
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 cup spinach, finely shredded

Tempering

- 1½ tbsp clarified butter
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- 8 cloves garlic, finely chopped

METHOD

Wash dal and soak in water for 30 minutes. Drain dal and put into a pan with 3 cups of water, asafoetida powder, green chillies, ginger and salt. Cover and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, till dal is thoroughly cooked and slightly mushy. Add spinach with ½ cup of water and cook till dal thickens. Melt clarified butter over medium-low heat in a frying pan. Add asafoetida powder, cumin seeds and curry leaves. When the spices crackle, add garlic and sauté till it softens and colours slightly. Pour the tempering over the dal and cover immediately. Stir and serve hot with roti or steamed rice.



Dalma

Moong Dal with Vegetables

SERVES 4

In Manipal during my college days, I had a friend whose mother was a phenomenal cook. I would drop by his home periodically, and each time his mother would make a mind-blowing dish for me.

I still remember the day I ate this dal. I was head over heels in love with it and insisted that she teach me how to make it. My friend's mother very graciously told me that it was a traditional dal from Orissa called dalma and taught me the recipe.

Years later, I discovered that there is a restaurant called Dalma in Bhubaneshwar, Orissa. I couldn't try it out when I was there, but do eat a bowlful on my behalf if you ever get a chance to dine at Dalma.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup husked, split moong beans (moong dal)
1 (large) potato, diced
2 (small) aubergines, diced
4 colocasia roots (arbi), diced
2 green bananas, diced
1 tsp salt or to taste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder
1 (large) onion, finely chopped
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp ginger–garlic paste
1 (large) tomato, finely chopped
1 tsp cumin powder

Tempering

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp clarified butter
2 bay leaves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp fennel seeds
 $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp fenugreek seeds
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cumin seeds
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp mustard seeds
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp nigella seeds
3 dried red chillies

Garnish

1 tbsp fresh coconut, grated

METHOD

Wash dal and soak in water for 30 minutes. Drain dal, place in a pan with 2 cups of water and cook over medium heat till mushy. In another pan, combine potato, aubergine, colocasia and banana with salt, turmeric powder and 2 cups of water. Place over medium heat and boil till vegetables are tender. Drain and set aside. In a large frying pan, melt clarified butter over medium heat and add the tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, add onion and

sauté till translucent. Mix in ginger–garlic paste and tomato and cook till tomato turns mushy. Add the cooked dal and vegetables. Mix well and pour in 1 cup of water. Add cumin powder. Taste and add more salt, if required. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer till dal thickens. Serve hot, garnished with grated coconut.



Himachali Madra

Chickpeas in Yogurt Gravy

SERVES 4–6

Madra is a thick, yogurt-based gravy which is popular in Himachal Pradesh. Cooking madra requires a certain amount of skill and plenty of elbow grease and patience. That's because the madra contains yogurt which needs to be stirred continuously to prevent it from splitting.

INGREDIENTS

Rice paste

- ¼ cup rice
- 2 pods green cardamom

Gravy

- 1 tbsp mustard oil
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- 6 cloves
- 3" stick cinnamon
- 2 pods black cardamom
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1½ cups chickpeas, soaked overnight and boiled
- 2 cups plain yogurt, whisked thoroughly

Rice paste

- 3 tbsp clarified butter
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

Garnish

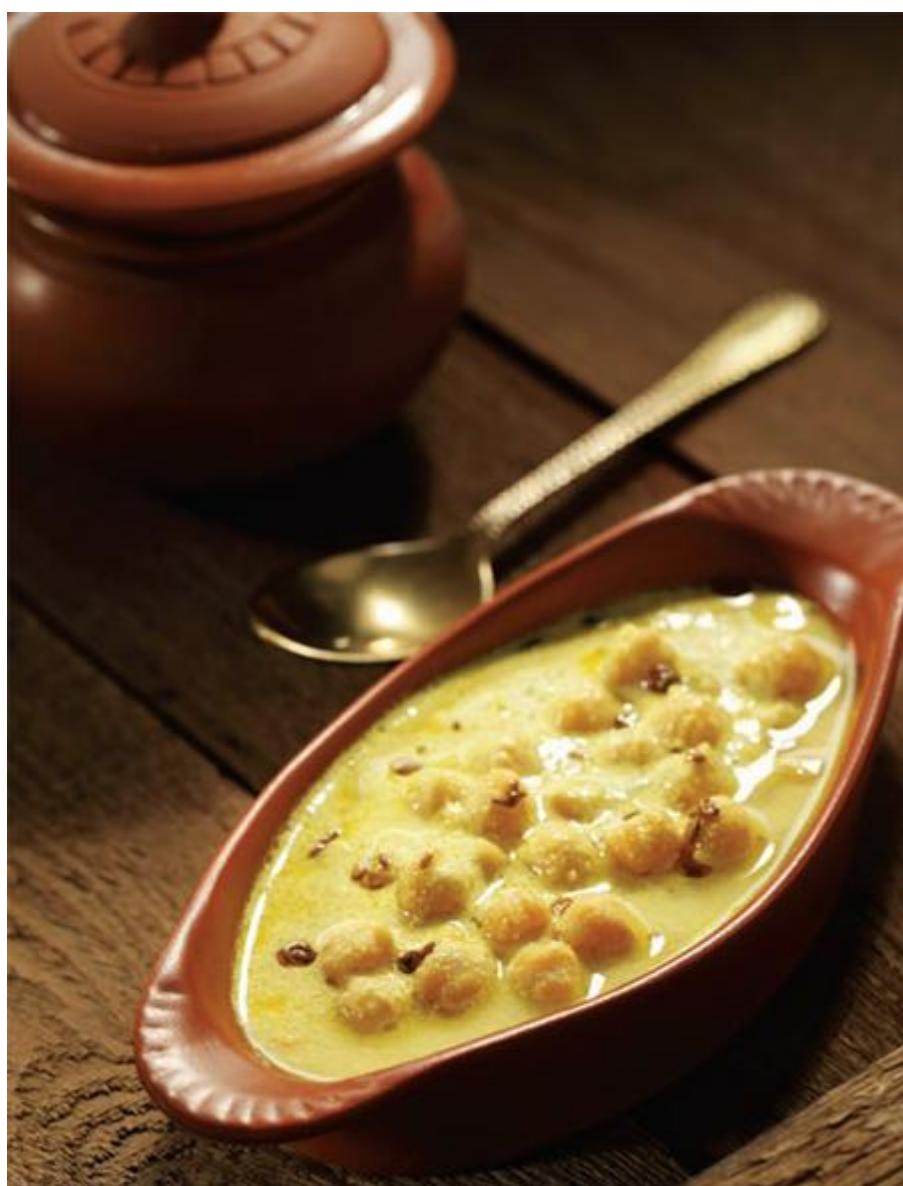
- 1 tbsp cashew nuts
- 1 tbsp raisins, seedless
- 1 tbsp almonds

METHOD

Rice paste Wash rice and soak in 1 cup of water for 20 minutes. In a blender, combine the soaked rice (with water) and green cardamoms and grind to make a fine paste. Remove into a bowl and set aside.

Gravy Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When oil begins to smoke, add asafoetida powder, cloves, cinnamon and black cardamoms. When the spices crackle, add cumin seeds. Sauté for a few seconds and add coriander powder and turmeric powder. Mix in chickpeas and stir well. Reduce heat to low and add yogurt, stirring continuously. Gradually increase the heat to medium and keep stirring non-stop till the curry starts boiling. Take care to ensure that the yogurt does not split. Mix in the rice paste and cook, stirring continuously for another 15–20 minutes. Add clarified butter, reduce heat to low and continue cooking for 15–20 minutes

longer or till mixture thickens. Stir in salt, cook for 2 minutes and remove from heat. Serve hot, garnished with cashew nuts, raisins and almonds.



Bishambar's Rajmah

Kashmiri Red Kidney Beans

SERVES 4

The best rajmah (red kidney beans) I've ever eaten was at Lawrence Gardens, Amritsar, made by dear old Bishambar.

Bishambar was introduced to me through my mother's friend Sheela Aunty from Kashmir. He worked for her and accompanied her family to Amritsar during the insurgency in Kashmir in 1989. He is a fantastic cook and makes the world's best rajmah. He's still in Amritsar and I meet him and eat his famous rajmah whenever I go there.

Here is my good friend Bishambar's recipe just for you.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup red kidney beans (rajmah)
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 3 tsp ginger–garlic paste
- 1 tbsp oil
- ½ cup onions, finely chopped
- ½ cup tomato purée
- 7–8 pods black cardamom
- 2" stick cinnamon
- 1½ tsp fennel powder
- 2 tsp dried ginger powder
- A pinch of asafoetida powder
- ½ tsp red chilli powder

METHOD

Wash beans and soak in water overnight. Drain and rinse thoroughly. In a pressure cooker, combine beans with 3 cups of water, salt and half the ginger–garlic paste. Pressure-cook for 7–9 minutes over low heat after the cooker reaches full pressure. Remove from heat and allow the pressure to settle. Meanwhile, put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add remaining ginger–garlic paste and sauté for a few seconds. Add onions and sauté till translucent. Mix in tomato purée and cook for 2–3 minutes. Spoon contents of pan into the pressure cooker containing the beans. Mix in the remaining ingredients and pressure-cook over low heat for 10–12 minutes. When the pressure settles, open cooker and serve the beans hot.



Bhojpuri Dal Pithaura

Mixed Lentils with Dumplings

SERVES 4–6

With balloons soaring higher and higher in the air and children running after them, the little merry-go-rounds with pink and blue plastic ponies, a man wearing a turban larger than his head performing simple rope tricks, numerous stalls selling bangles and toys—it certainly was a mela to remember.

I was in a town in Bihar called Ara, on the auspicious occasion of Shivratri. It is a festival celebrated throughout India and marks the day on which Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati were united in holy matrimony.

In Ara, a mela is organized every year on this day, and the entire town transforms into a montage of lights, flowers, song, dance and food. I was lucky to be there and experience the joy of eating Bhojpuri food with the local people. Bhojpuri cuisine is similar to Bihari cuisine, but is slightly spicier.

The charged atmosphere around me made me hungry. Amidst the lights and festivities, I gorged on Bhojpuri delicacies to my heart's content. The one I loved most was dal pithaura. It is made of a mixture of dals with little flower-shaped dumplings sitting prettily in it, soaking in all the flavours of the dal. It's so delicious that you can eat a bowlful of it even without rice.

INGREDIENTS

Sattu flour

- 2 parts pearl barley (bajra)
- 1 part husked, split Bengal gram (chana dal)

Pithaura

- 1 cup wholewheat flour (atta)
- 1½ tbsp sattu flour
- ½ tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tsp carom seeds
- 1 tsp black pepper powder
- 1 tbsp oil

Tempering

- 3 tbsp clarified butter
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 3 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
- 7–8 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 1 (large) tomato, finely chopped

Dal

- ¼ cup husked, split Bengal gram
- ¼ cup husked, split Egyptian/red lentils (masoor dal)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup husked, split moong beans (moong dal)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup husked, split pigeon peas (arhar/toover dal)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup husked, split black gram (urad dal)
1 tsp salt or to taste
1 tbsp turmeric powder
2 tsp garam masala powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
2 (large) bay leaves

METHOD

Sattu flour Wash the barley and gram and dry in shade. Roast them separately and grind to powders. You can also mix roasted cumin seeds for extra flavour when grinding.

Pithaura In a mixing bowl, combine all pithaura ingredients and mix well. Gradually add water and knead to make a smooth, stiff dough. Cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside.

Dal Wash all dals and soak in water for 15 minutes. Drain and put dals in a pressure cooker with 3 cups of water, salt and turmeric powder. Pressure-cook for 7–9 minutes over low heat after the cooker reaches full pressure. When the pressure settles, open cooker and mix in garam masala powder, chilli powder and bay leaves with 2 cups of water to make a watery dal. Put the cooker over medium heat and bring dal to a boil. Meanwhile, divide the prepared dough into marble-sized balls and roll each portion into a small disc. Pinch 4 opposite points on the disc together to form a ‘flower’. Repeat with the remaining dough. When dal begins to boil rapidly, add the prepared flowers one at a time and cook for 15–20 minutes, till the flowers begin to float on the surface, which means that the dough is cooked. Reduce heat and simmer for about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, melt the clarified butter for the tempering in a frying pan over medium heat. Add asafoetida powder, cumin seeds and red chillies. When the spices crackle, add garlic and onion and sauté till onion turns translucent. Mix in tomato and cook till mushy. Pour the tempering over the cooked dal and cover immediately. Simmer for about 1 minute and remove from heat. To serve, drizzle 2 tbsp clarified butter and serve hot with papad and any chutney of your choice.

FISH & SEAFOOD



Apa De Camamo

Prawn Cake

SERVES 4–6

This is one cake that, even without the icing and cherry on top, tempts me and makes me yearn for more and more. It's a typical savoury Goan dish. The combination of toddy, fresh coconut and spices give this cake an unexpected twist. A great dish to pass around at teatime.

INGREDIENTS

Batter

- 1¾ cups basmati rice
- 1¼ cups toddy
- ¾ fresh coconut, grated
- 6 egg yolks, beaten
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

Spice paste

- 6 cloves garlic
- 1" stick cinnamon
- 6 black peppercorns
- 3–4 cloves
- 8–10 dried red Kashmiri chillies
- White vinegar as required

Filling

- 500 g (medium) prawns
- 1 tbsp oil
- 6 shallots/Madras onions, finely sliced
- ½ tsp salt or to taste
- ½ cup coconut cream ([p. 44](#))
- 1½ tbsp sugar
- ½ tbsp vinegar

Garnish

- 1 tomato, cut into wedges
- 2 tbsp fresh green peas, cooked

METHOD

Batter Wash rice and soak in water overnight. Drain rice and rinse well. In a blender, combine drained rice with 1 cup of toddy and grind to make a fine paste, adding very little water if necessary. Remove into a bowl. In the same blender, combine the remaining toddy with coconut and grind to make a fine paste. Mix into the rice paste. Add egg yolks, sugar and salt and mix to form a thick batter (thicker than cake batter). Some more toddy may be added if required. Cover and set aside in a warm place for 4–6 hours to ferment.

Spice paste In a grinder, combine garlic, cinnamon, pepper, cloves and red chillies. Gradually add vinegar and grind to make a fine paste.

Filling Shell prawns, clean and devein. Wash well and set aside in a colander to drain. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add shallots and sauté till golden. Add ground spice paste and sauté for 1 minute. Mix in prawns and salt. Simmer till the prawns are half cooked. Stir in coconut cream and sugar and bring to a boil, stirring continuously. Add vinegar and cook till the mixture is very thick. Remove from heat and set aside.

To bake the cake When the batter ferments and becomes bubbly, preheat oven to 375°C. Grease a deep 9" square or round baking tin and dust with flour. Pour in half the batter and spread evenly. Spread prawn mixture in an even layer over batter and top with remaining batter. Place in the oven and bake for 30 minutes or till top is golden and a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Turn out, cut into wedges, garnish with tomato wedges and green peas and serve.



Jhinga Patio

Sour & Sweet Prawns

SERVES 4–6

I had promised the Food Team members of *MasterChef India* that I'd visit each of their homes. So one day I found myself at Delzad Avari's house, laughing and having a great time with his family and friends. Fun-loving, friendly, clever and very focused about his work—a chef to watch out for—Delzad was the baby of the team (despite being the tallest).

It happened to be Navroze, the first day of the Zoroastrian year that commences on 21 March. It is an auspicious day for the Parsis and Delzad had organized a little party at home to celebrate.

The Parsis first migrated to India sometime around the ninth to tenth century. There is a popular story about their arrival. It is said that when they asked the ruling king of Gujarat, Jadi Rana, for asylum, he showed them a bowl of milk filled to the brim. This was to indicate that his kingdom was already full and that he did not have any place for the immigrants. In response, a Parsi priest added a pinch of sugar to the milk, thus indicating that they would not cause the vessel to overflow; instead, they would make the land sweeter. And they kept their promise.

At Delzad's home, we dug into a variety of Parsi delicacies. The one I liked the most was the prawn patio, which is simple to make and tastes lovely with rice.

INGREDIENTS

Spice paste

- 9 cloves
- 4 dried red chillies
- 1½ tsp turmeric powder
- ¾ tsp cumin seeds

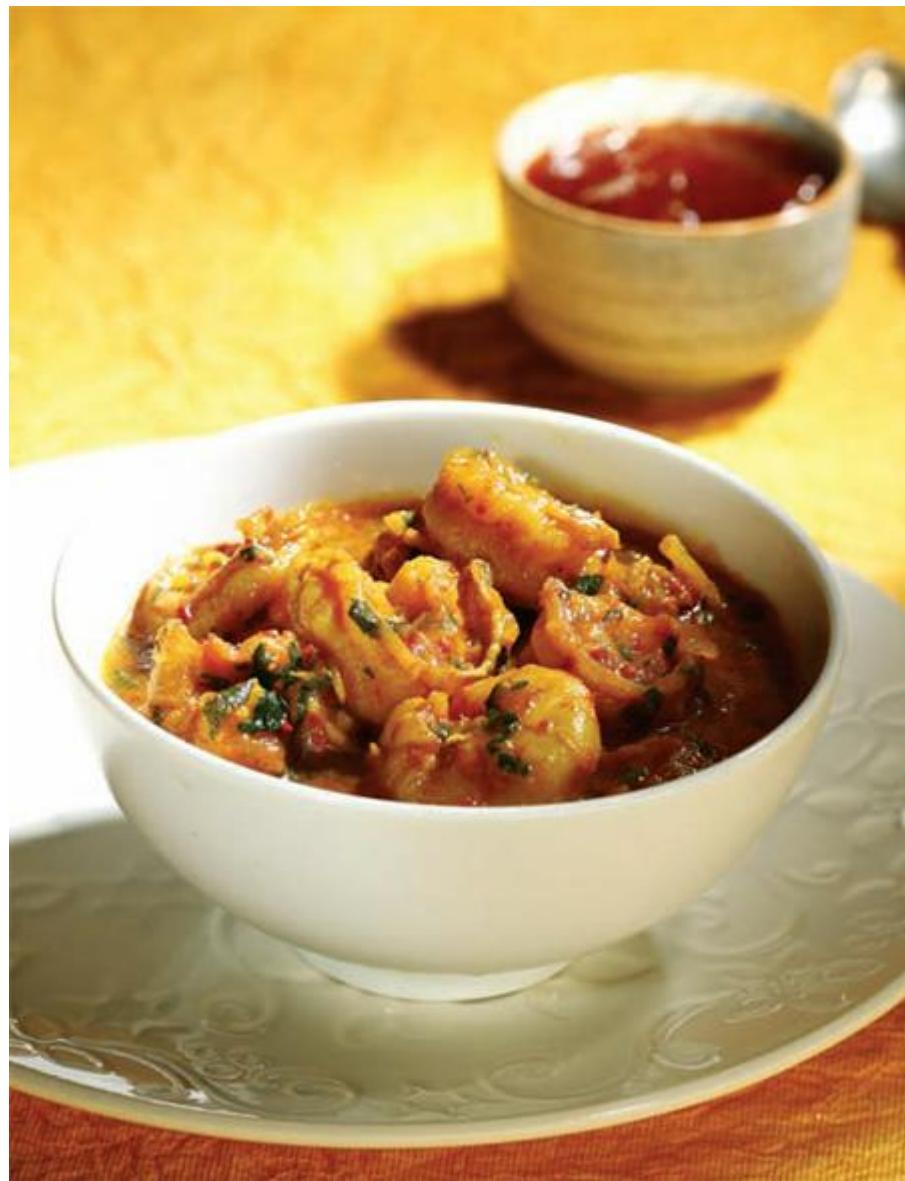
Patio

- 500 g (medium) prawns
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 (medium) onion, finely sliced
- 3 onions, finely chopped
- 1 cup fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- ¼ cup tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 1 tbsp jaggery, grated

METHOD

In a grinder, combine spice paste ingredients with 2 tbsp of water and grind to make a smooth paste. Set aside. Shell prawns, clean and devein. Wash well and set aside in a colander to drain. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add sliced onion and sauté till golden. Stir in ground spice paste with 2 tbsp of water and sauté for 2–3 minutes.

Add prawns and sauté till they are properly coated with the sauce. Mix in chopped onions, coriander leaves and salt with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water. Cover and simmer till the prawns are just cooked. Stir in tamarind pulp and jaggery and cook till the jaggery dissolves. Remove from heat and serve hot with rice or roti.



Lobster Chinchoni

East Indian Lobster Curry

SERVES 4

‘Why didn’t you ever tell me about this?’ I chided Michael. I was watching a video of Chef Michael Swamy cooking for a Marathi cookery show. I had known him for about six months by then and he never mentioned that he had been on TV. Michael just shrugged. I went back to watching the video.

Michael was making a very interesting East Indian dish called lobster chinchoni. The East Indians are a Roman Catholic community, based primarily in and around Mumbai. They were evangelized by the Portuguese around the fifteenth century, but retain much of their older traditions, including speaking in their native language, Marathi.

I could see that Michael was struggling with the language, but his cooking techniques were impeccable. I was actually watching the video to see how my friend Michael appeared on television; but, as the video continued, my focus shifted from Michael to the lobster and my interest was piqued. The lobster chinchoni looked so mouth-watering that I could’ve just put my hand in through the laptop screen, dipped my finger in the gravy and licked it. I knew right away that this dish would have to be in my book. So, here’s Chef Michael’s lovely lobster recipe.

INGREDIENTS

Spice paste

- 10–12 dried red Kashmiri chillies
- 200 g fresh coconut, grated
- 12–14 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp turmeric powder

Curry

- 2 (about 500 g each) lobsters, cleaned
- 3 tbsp oil
- 4 tsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 1½ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

In a bowl, soak red chillies in 1 cup of hot water for 15 minutes. In a blender, combine chillies with the soaking water and remaining spice paste ingredients. Grind to make a fine paste. Clean the lobsters and remove the flesh. Discard the shells. Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add ground spice paste and fry for 2–3 minutes. Mix in ½ cup of water with lobster flesh, tamarind pulp and salt. Cook till lobster is tender. Serve hot with sanna ([p. 218](#)).



Zafrani Teesroo

Oysters in Saffron Sauce

SERVES 4

While making the documentary film Karma to Nirvana, part of my Holy Kitchens series, I had the opportunity of visiting green and serene Kerala.

Missing out on a boat ride in the backwaters while in Kerala is a crime and I wasn't about to commit one. The first opportunity I got, I hired a boat and sailed through the still waters. The only thing I could hear was the soft rippling sound of the water sliding off the oars. It is an extremely calming sound, bringing to mind beautiful memories, making you feel, well, content. Content with your life, your joys, your sorrows, everything. In a way, it introduces you to yourself—the self that sometimes loses its true identity in the daily grind of responsibilities and commitments.

After almost two hours of soul-searching, I returned to my resort happy and at peace with the world.

As soon as I entered, my spirits were further uplifted. A most welcoming aroma met me at the door; I followed it to the kitchen, where I spent quite some time exchanging notes with the cooks. My eyes witnessed an amazing sight—a huge kadhai (wok) full to the brim with oysters in a lovely saffron sauce. I will not even go into the details of how heavenly it tasted. All I will say is, it just made my day!

You can make this dish with mussels as well.

INGREDIENTS

500 g oysters, washed
1 tbsp oil
10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
4 spring onion bulbs, finely chopped
2 dried red chillies, finely chopped
1 cup coconut cream ([p. 44](#))
1 cup fish stock
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp white pepper powder or to taste
A few strands saffron, dissolved in 2 tbsp warm milk
A pinch of turmeric powder
1 (large) piece star anise
2" stick cinnamon

METHOD

Heat 2 litres of water in a deep pan and bring to a rapid boil. Add washed oysters and switch off the heat. Set aside till they open up. Drain out the water and discard any oysters or mussels which have not opened up. Using a fork, pry out the flesh from the shells and set aside. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add garlic and spring onions and sauté till soft. Stir in red chillies, coconut cream and stock and bring to a boil, stirring

continuously. Reduce heat to low and allow the gravy to simmer for 1 minute. Mix in salt, pepper, saffron (with milk), turmeric powder, star anise and cinnamon. Add poached oysters and simmer for 3–4 minutes. Serve hot with bread rolls or steamed rice.



Panch-Phoran-Encrusted Hilsa

Hilsa Encrusted with Bengali Five-Spice Mix

SERVES 4–6

Panch phoran or five-spice mix is used extensively throughout eastern India, especially in Bengali and Oriya cuisine. There is no fixed recipe for this spice blend and you can change the ingredients according to your taste.

INGREDIENTS

Turmeric paste

- 3" piece fresh turmeric (or 3 tsp turmeric powder)
- A pinch of salt

Sauce

- 1 tsp turmeric paste, fresh or dried
- 1 tsp green chilli paste ([p. 156](#))
- 4 tbsp mustard paste (commercial or [p. 84](#))
- 6 tbsp mustard oil
- 1½ tsp mustard seeds
- 4 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 6 green chillies, slit lengthwise
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1¼ tsp salt or to taste

Panch phoran

- 2 tbsp nigella seeds, lightly roasted
- 2 tbsp fennel seeds, lightly roasted
- 1½ tbsp mustard seeds, lightly roasted
- 1¾ tbsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted
- 1 tsp carom seeds, lightly roasted

Marinade

- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 2 (medium) tomatoes, finely chopped
- 2 tsp lime juice
- 1 tbsp mustard paste (commercial or [p. 84](#))
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tsp black pepper powder or to taste

Fish

- 2 hilsa fish (about 1 kg each), filleted
- 2 tbsp butter

METHOD

Turmeric paste Grate fresh turmeric and combine with 1 tbsp of water in a grinder. Grind to make a smooth, thick paste. Mix in salt. (If using turmeric powder, combine turmeric powder with just enough water to make a smooth, thick paste and mix in salt.)

Sauce In a mixing bowl, combine turmeric paste, chilli paste and mustard paste with 2½ cups of water. Put mustard oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add mustard seeds. When they crackle, add the prepared thin paste to it. Cook for 2 minutes. Stir in tamarind pulp, green chillies and sugar and cook till sauce thickens. Mix in salt. Remove from heat and set aside.

Panch phoran The quantity of fenugreek seeds may be reduced if one finds them too bitter. Other spices that can be used to lend an interesting touch to panch phoran (as a substitute for any of the spices) are carom seeds, brown mustard seeds, caraway seeds and dill seeds. Combine panch phoran ingredients in a mortar pestle and crush coarsely. Set aside.

Marination In a grinder, combine onion with tomatoes, lime juice and mustard paste and grind to make a fine paste. Mix in salt and pepper. Wash fish and pat dry. Rub marinade into fish and set aside to marinate for 20 minutes.

To cook the fish Preheat oven to 150°C. Place marinated fish in the crushed panch phoran and encrust properly on one side only. Melt butter on a griddle over low heat. Sear fish on the side which is not encrusted. Transfer fish to a greased baking tray, seared side down, and bake in the oven for 7–8 minutes till fish is tender and the crust is crisp.

To serve Reheat sauce. Place fish on a serving platter and drizzle sauce over it. Serve hot.



Pomfret Chettinad

Chettinad-Style Fish

SERVES 4

In the region of Chettinad in Tamil Nadu, there thrives a community of bankers and businessmen. I wasn't sure what I was doing in a land of money and calculations, but I was in for a pleasant surprise. Chettinad cuisine is one of the spiciest in India and is famous for its mouth-watering non-vegetarian preparations. Here's the recipe for a culinary masterpiece with such an accurate balance of flavours, it could only come from a seasoned tradesman.

INGREDIENTS

Chettinad spice paste

- 1 tsp oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh coconut, grated
- 4 dried red chillies
- 1 tbsp coriander seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ " piece ginger
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1" stick cinnamon
- 1 pod black cardamom
- 1 tbsp cloves
- 1 flake lichen flower (dagad phool)
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 2 tbsp black peppercorns
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh curry leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder

Gravy

- 2 (about 500 g each) whole pomfrets
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- 1 (large) onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Chettinad spice paste Put oil in a frying pan over low heat. When hot, add the coconut and stir continuously till golden. Remove to a plate. In the same pan, roast the remaining spices, except turmeric powder, one by one, till each one's aroma fills the air and they change colour

very slightly. In a blender, combine roasted coconut and spices with turmeric powder and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water, and blend to make a fine, smooth paste.

Gravy Clean the fish and make a slit in the side. Wash thoroughly, inside and out, and pat dry. Rub 1 tbsp of the ground spice paste into the fish and set aside. Put oil in a large pan over medium heat. When hot, add fenugreek seeds and curry leaves. When the spices crackle, add onion and sauté till golden. Add the remaining ground spice paste and fry till oil floats to the surface. Stir in garlic and tomatoes and sauté till the tomatoes are mushy. Add tamarind pulp, chilli powder, coriander powder and 2 cups of water and cook for about 5 minutes. Gently lower the marinated pomfrets into the gravy and sprinkle salt. Cook till pomfrets are tender and the gravy thickens. Serve hot with bread.



Gaad Monj

Fish with Kohlrabi

SERVES 4

If God were a painter and this world his masterpiece, Kashmir would be his colour palette. And in this heaven of colours is a place called Pampore, known to produce some of the world's best saffron and is home to acres and acres of lavender flowers. While my eyes drank in the beauty of Pampore, my taste buds were satisfied by a sumptuous dish made of gaad (fish) and monj (knol khol). This recipe uses a spice blend in the form of a doughnut-shaped cake, veri, which is indigenous to Kashmiri cuisine. Typically Kashmiri, typically magnificent, typically mouth-watering.

INGREDIENTS

Veri masala (for about 25 cakes)

2 tbsp asafoetida powder
2 cups husked, split black gram (urad dal)
1 cup fenugreek seeds
1 cup coriander powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup red Kashmiri chilli powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fennel seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried ginger powder
2 tsp cloves
3 tsp caraway seeds
Mustard oil as required

Curry

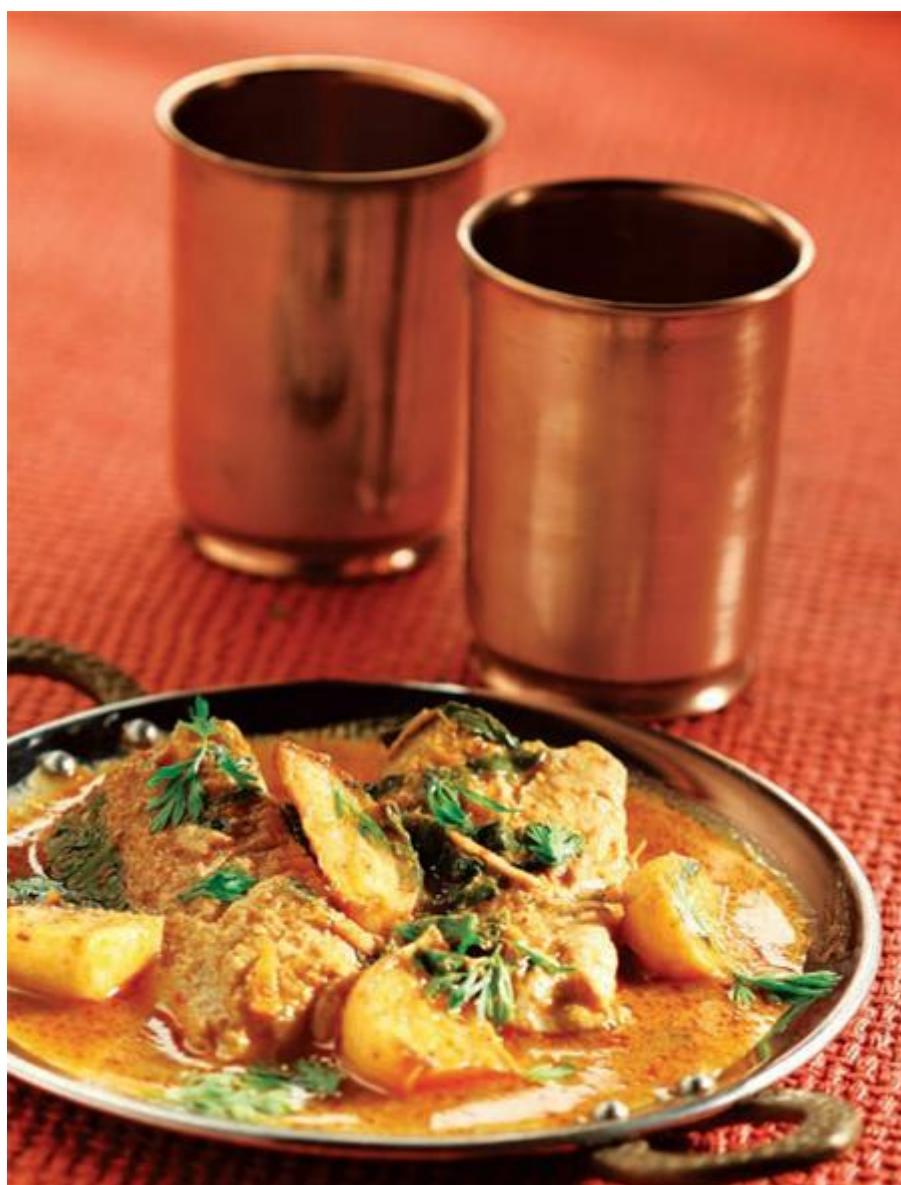
500 g rahu fillets, cut into long pieces
4 tbsp oil
250 g kohlrabi, cut into wedges, leaves reserved
1 tsp red chilli powder
4 tsp fennel powder
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried ginger powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp asafoetida powder
1" veri, powdered
4 cloves
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Veri masala Dissolve the asafoetida powder in 1 cup of water. Combine all ingredients except asafoetida water and mustard oil, and pound or grind till fine. Gradually mix in asafoetida water and mustard oil, alternating 1 tbsp at a time, till spice mixture becomes a smooth, pliable dough. Divide the dough into small lemon-sized portions and shape each portion into a round, flat patty. Place the patties on a wooden tray or board in the sun, till

thoroughly dry and hard. Turn the patties over at least once every day to ensure even drying. You may string these together and store in airtight containers. Whenever required, crumble a cake to use. (Veri masala is also available in select stores.)

Curry Wash fish and drain thoroughly. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add fish and shallow-fry till golden. Remove. Add kohlrabi wedges to the same oil and shallow-fry till golden. Remove. In the same pan add chilli powder, immediately followed by 2 cups of water. Mix in fennel powder, ginger powder, asafoetida powder, veri, cloves and turmeric powder and bring the thin curry to a rapid boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and add fried fish and kohlrabi with the reserved leaves. Simmer till leaves are tender. Mix in tamarind pulp and salt, and cook till the sauce coats the fish and vegetables. Serve hot.



Sindhi Raswali Machhli

Sindhi Fish Curry

SERVES 4–6

Vivek Kewalramani was easily the naughtiest of all the Food Team members of *MasterChef India*. His sense of humour and his passion for cooking were equally endearing. Completely at ease with life, always in control in the face of any crisis and never afraid to try out something new, he stood out from the rest.

One day, Vivek arrived and announced, ‘I’ve got some home-made food for us today! Sindhi raswali machhli!’

Needless to say, none of us wasted a single moment and descended on the curry like a group of starving kids. Vivek’s raswali machhli was a gift for us. We had been shooting non-stop for the last few months, and missed our home-cooked food. Within five minutes, the curry was gone and we stood there licking our fingers, pure joy on our faces.

Through this recipe, I’m reliving those golden moments of my *MasterChef* experience and sharing a dish which was not just lip-smacking but also close to my heart.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 (about 150 g each) sole fish fillets, cut into pieces
- 1½ tsp salt or to taste
- 6 (large) tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 1¼ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
- 6 green chillies, roughly chopped
- 4" piece ginger, grated
- 4 tbsp oil
- 2 (large) bay leaves
- 6 pods green cardamom
- 2 pods black cardamom
- 6 cloves garlic, sliced
- 2 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 2½ tsp coriander powder
- 2½ tsp dried fenugreek leaves (kasoori methi), lightly roasted

METHOD

Wash fish and pat dry. Sprinkle salt over fish, mix well and set aside to marinate for 10 minutes. Rinse with cold water and set aside. In a blender, combine tomatoes, coriander leaves, green chillies and ginger, and blend to make a smooth purée. Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add bay leaves, cardamoms and garlic and sauté till garlic softens. Mix in puréed vegetables and cook till oil floats to the surface. Add spice powders and mix well. Crush the fenugreek leaves between your palms and add to the pan. Cook for about 2 minutes and pour in 1 cup of water. Add fish. Reduce heat to low and cook till fish is tender. Serve hot with roti or steamed rice.

Zamin Doz Machhli

Fish Baked in an Earthenware Pot

SERVES 4

I am a great fan of traditional Indian cooking techniques. At my restaurant, Junoon, I use all five elements: handi (pot cooking), sigri (open fire pit), patthar (stone), tava (griddle) and tandoor (clay oven). There is one more technique I came across during my journeys in India.

In Uttar Pradesh, I was served a dish called zamin doz machhli. This wonderful fish preparation is made using an ancient process in which a whole fish is stuffed with spices, sealed in an earthenware case and buried in the ground. The pit is covered with mud and lit cow dung cakes are placed on the ground above. This is a long process, taking up to 6–8 hours for the fish to cook. But once it's done, the taste is phenomenal. The fish retains its moisture and the faint aroma of the soil that provides it with just the right warmth.

Here, though, is a simpler version that you can make at home.

INGREDIENTS

Fish

- 1 kg sole fish
- A few strands saffron, dissolved in water 1 tsp oil

Marinade

- 2 tsp lime juice
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

Ginger–garlic paste

- 1½ tbsp ginger, roughly chopped
- 1½ tbsp garlic, roughly chopped

Almond paste

- 2 tbsp almonds, blanched and peeled
- 1½ tbsp poppy seeds, lightly roasted
- 2 tbsp calumpong nuts (chironjee)
- 3 tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated

Spice powder

- 2 blades mace
- 3 pods black cardamom
- 6 cloves
- 6 black peppercorns

Filling

- Ginger–garlic paste
- Almond paste
- Spice powder
- 1 tbsp pistachios, blanched and finely chopped
- 1½ cups plain yogurt

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup gram flour
1 tbsp fennel powder
1 tsp caraway seeds, roasted and powdered
1 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp salt or to taste

Sealing dough

1 cup all-purpose flour (maida)

METHOD

Fish Skin fish and clean it thoroughly. Cut a slit lengthwise along one side. Wash thoroughly, inside and out. Drain and pat dry.

Marination Place fish on a plate and sprinkle lime juice and salt. Rub the seasonings well into the slit and set aside to marinate for 15 minutes.

Ginger–garlic paste In a mortar, combine ginger and garlic and grind to make a coarse paste. Set aside.

Almond paste In a blender, combine almonds, poppy seeds, calumpong nuts and coconut with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water and grind to make a fine paste. Set aside.

Spice powder Put a griddle over very low heat. When hot, roast spice powder ingredients separately till the air is filled with their aroma. In a grinder, combine roasted spices and grind to make a fine powder. Set aside.

Filling In a mixing bowl, combine ginger–garlic paste, almond paste and ground spice powder with the remaining filling ingredients. Mix thoroughly and set aside for 10 minutes.

To cook the fish Preheat the oven to 130°C. Brush the entire fish with saffron water and set aside for 5 minutes. Stuff the filling into the fish through the the slit. Grease an earthenware dish or casserole with oil and place the stuffed fish in it. Cover with a lid. In a mixing bowl, put flour for the sealing dough. Gradually add water and knead into a smooth, soft dough. Roll dough into a long, snakelike roll and seal the lid on to the dish with it. Place the dish in the preheated oven and bake for 25–28 minutes. Remove and serve hot with roomali roti ([p. 208](#)).



Poricha Meen & Tomato Rougail

Fried Fish & Tomato Sauce

SERVES 4

This is a perfect example of the cuisine of Puducherry. Poricha meen literally means fried fish in Tamil, and tomato rougail is a classic French dish. A wonderful fusion of south Indian and French flavours, this dish captures the true essence of Puducherry's culture. It is like getting the best of two worlds.

INGREDIENTS

Poricha meen

- 500 g trout or sole, sliced across the bone
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 4 tbsp oil
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 cup coconut paste
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))

Tomato rougail

- 3 (large) tomatoes, diced
- 1 (small) onion, diced
- 4 green chillies, roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp oil 10 cloves garlic, crushed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste
- 3 tsp thyme, finely chopped

METHOD

Poricha meen Wash the fish slices properly and drain well. Sprinkle with salt and toss well to marinate evenly. Set aside for 10 minutes. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add garlic and sauté till it softens. Stir in coconut paste, tamarind pulp and salt and cook till sauce reaches a simmer. Add marinated fish and cook till tender. Remove from heat and keep warm.

Tomato rougail In a blender, combine tomatoes, onion and green chillies and blend to make a smooth purée. Set aside. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add garlic and sauté till it softens. Pour in the prepared purée with salt and thyme. Cover and cook for 10–15 minutes till the raw flavour of the tomatoes disappears.

To serve Place fish on a serving platter and spoon the rougail over it. Serve hot.



POULTRY



Murgh Chandi Kalia

Chicken in a Silver Gravy

SERVES 4–6

I was in Lucknow for a promotional event for *MasterChef India* when a journalist asked me what I thought of Awadhi cuisine. I answered, ‘If there were an association or commonwealth of world heritage cuisines, Lucknow would be its capital.’ And I meant it.

Awadhi cuisine is the cuisine of the nawabs and every dish reflects the opulence and richness of their culture. Dried fruit, cream and saffron are used unsparingly and every guest is treated like a king. This dish is inspired by the famous kundan kalia (golden gravy). The succulence of the chicken in the silky smooth, silvery gravy makes for a truly royal experience. Serve it with sheermal ([p. 210](#)) and dine like a nawab.

INGREDIENTS

Brown onion paste (for about ½ cup)

3 tbsp oil
2 cups onions, finely sliced

Brown chironjee paste (for ½ cup)

1 tbsp clarified butter
½ cup calumpong nuts (chironjee)
2 tbsp milk

Gravy

500 g chicken, boneless
2 tbsp oil
2 tbsp clarified butter
5 pods green cardamom
2" stick cinnamon
4–5 cloves
4 (large) onions, finely sliced
1½ tbsp ginger juice
1½ tbsp garlic juice
2 cups yogurt, whisked 2 tsp coriander powder
¾ cup brown onion paste
½ cup cashew nut paste ([p. 12](#))
½ cup brown chironjee paste
1½ cups vegetable stock
⅓ tsp mace powder
⅓ tsp green cardamom powder
A few drops vetiver (kewra essence)
¾ cup fresh cream
1 tsp salt or to taste

Garnish

1 leaf silver leaf (varq)

METHOD

Ginger juice To make 4 tbsp ginger juice, grate a 3" piece of ginger and combine with 4 tbsp of water in a blender or grinder. Grind to make a smooth, thin paste and pour into a muslin cloth placed over a bowl. Scrape the surface of the cloth with a spoon to allow the juice to strain through.

Garlic juice To make 4 tbsp garlic juice, roughly chop 10 cloves of garlic and combine with 4–5 tbsp of water. Using a blender or mixer, blend the mixture to get a thin paste and pour into a muslin cloth placed over a bowl. Scrape the surface of the cloth with a spoon to allow the juice to strain through.

Brown onion paste Put oil in a frying pan or kadhai (wok) over medium-high heat. When hot, add onions and sauté, stirring and tossing continuously, till light golden. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Using a food processor or mixer, grind the sautéed onions to a smooth, thick paste.

Brown chironjee paste Melt clarified butter in a frying pan or kadhai (wok) over low heat. Add chironjee and lightly fry it, stirring continuously to ensure even cooking. Since nuts tend to burn quickly, you may remove the pan from the heat every 2–3 minutes and keep stirring. After about 30 seconds, return the pan to heat and continue frying. Fry the chironjee till light brown, remove from heat and cool to room temperature. In a food processor, combine the fried chironjee with milk and grind to make a smooth, thick paste.

Gravy Wash chicken and cut into 1" cubes. Set aside. Put oil with clarified butter in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add whole spices. When they crackle, add onions and fry till golden. Stir in 1½ tbsp each of ginger and garlic juice and cook for 2–3 minutes. Add yogurt and sauté over low heat till the gravy is almost dry. (The yogurt may split; keep cooking till all the excess moisture has evaporated.) Mix in coriander powder, brown onion paste and cashew nut paste and fry till cashew nut paste is cooked. Add brown chironjee paste and fry for 3–4 minutes. Pour in stock and cook for 15–20 minutes till the gravy thickens. Mix in mace powder, cardamom powder and kewra essence. Add chicken and simmer till it absorbs the flavours of the gravy and is tender. Remove pan from heat. Mix in cream and salt. Return pan to very low heat and simmer for 2–3 minutes longer. Spoon into a serving bowl, garnish with silver leaf and serve hot.

NOTE: For ginger and garlic juice, one can also dilute ready-made ginger or garlic paste and strain through a muslin cloth as described above. To dilute, combine 1 part paste with 3 parts water.

Chandan Murgh

Sandalwood Chicken

SERVES 4–6

I once hosted a dinner for a spiritual event at the Rubin Museum of Arts in New York. Keeping the theme in mind, I decided to incorporate spirituality into my cooking. Sandalwood is integral to the rituals and ceremonies of several religions. It is also used extensively in the Himalayan arts to which the Rubin Museum is dedicated. So I thought of adding sandalwood to a typical Awadhi dish that was satisfying to the palate, while reiterating the relationship between food and spiritualism.

INGREDIENTS

600g chicken, boneless

Oil for basting

Marinade

1½ cups plain yogurt

2" piece ginger, crushed

½ tsp cumin powder

½ tsp coriander powder

½ tsp turmeric powder

½ tsp garam masala powder

½ tsp black pepper powder

1 tsp salt or to taste

To smoke the chicken

¼ tsp sandalwood oil or a few drops of sandalwood essence (see [note](#))

1 tsp refined oil

1 (large) piece charcoal

2" flake sandalwood shavings (optional)

Curry

2 tbsp oil

2 (small) bay leaves

1" stick cinnamon

4 pods green cardamom

2 pods black cardamom

5 cloves

½ cup onion paste

1 tsp green chilli paste ([p. 156](#))

¾ tsp salt or to taste

½ tsp black pepper powder or to taste

½ tsp saffron in ¼ cup warm milk

½ cup heavy cream

METHOD

Wash chicken and cut into 2" cubes.

Marination In a mixing bowl, combine all marinade ingredients. Mix well and add chicken. Stir thoroughly to coat chicken completely with the marinade. Set aside for 40 minutes.

To smoke the chicken Mix sandalwood oil or essence with refined oil in a small bowl. Make a well in the centre of the chicken. Place a piece of foil in the well. Heat the charcoal directly over a strong flame till red-hot. Using tongs, place the charcoal on the foil and put the sandalwood shavings (if using) on it. Spoon the oil mix over the charcoal and as it begins to smoke, immediately cover the plate tightly with foil. Set aside for 20 minutes.

To grill the chicken Thread chicken cubes on to skewers and grill over a barbecue for 10 minutes, turning regularly and basting with oil. Set aside.

Curry Put oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add bay leaves and whole spices. When the spices crackle, add onion paste, green chilli paste, salt and pepper and cook till oil floats to the surface. Mix in saffron with milk and cream. Add grilled chicken and simmer for 5–7 minutes. Serve hot with naan ([p. 209](#)).

NOTE: If sandalwood oil or essence is not available, use only refined oil for smoking the chicken, but the flavour will be much lighter.



Bhoot Jolokia Murgh

Chicken with Assamese Chilli

SERVES 4

Bhoot jolokia is one of the hottest peppers in the world. Earlier I thought the word bhoot stood for ghost. (The Hindi for ghost is bhoot.) Later, I realized that bhoot was actually a distortion of the word bhot, which means ‘of Bhotia’, a tribe in the Himalayan region.

I happened to be passing through Assam once during my journeys in India. The Bihu festival, which is a harvest festival, was being celebrated in all its splendour at the time. I also participated in the merrymaking and festivities, and was presented a japi, a traditional hat made of bamboo. Later in the evening, the local farmers served me this wonderful bhoot jolokia chicken with utmost love and adoration. A dish made with simple everyday spices turned out to be a splendid experience indeed.

INGREDIENTS

500 g chicken, boneless

2 tbsp clarified butter

Bhoot jolokia purée

2 tbsp clarified butter

2 onions, finely chopped

1" piece ginger, finely chopped

4 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 dried bhoot jolokia chilli, soaked in 2 tbsp hot water

Gravy

1 tbsp clarified butter

1 tsp turmeric powder

2 tsp cumin powder

1 tsp coriander powder

2 tsp garam masala powder

½ tsp red chilli powder

1 tbsp lime juice

1 tbsp tomato paste

1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Wash chicken and cut into large pieces. Set aside.

Bhoot jolokia purée Melt clarified butter in a pan over medium heat. Add onions, ginger and garlic and sauté for a few seconds. Add the soaked chilli with the water and cook till onions and ginger soften. Remove from heat, cool and blend to make a smooth purée.

Gravy Melt clarified butter in a pan over low heat. Remove pan from heat. Add all gravy ingredients, except salt. Mix well. Return the pan to medium heat and sauté for 4–5 seconds.

Pour in 1 cup of water. Stir and mix in the chilli purée. Simmer for a few seconds. Remove from heat. In another frying pan, melt 2 tbsp of clarified butter over medium heat. Add chicken and sear it evenly. Return the gravy to low heat and add the seared chicken. Cover and cook till chicken is tender and gravy is thick. Serve hot.

NOTE: If bhoot jolokia chillies are not available, use any other dried red chillies; Reshampatti or Madras chillies work best.



Dhoné Pata Murghi

Coriander Chicken

SERVES 4–6

One day, I found myself in Kolkata, the City of Joy, laden with bags. I had missed my flight for Bhutan and was lost and hungry. Luckily, one of my batch mates, Raja Roy, was in Kolkata and I went to his home for the night. I was greeted at the dining table by a heady fragrance of coriander and the lovely sight of a bowl of tender chicken. For once in my life, I was glad I'd missed a flight.

INGREDIENTS

600 g chicken, boneless

Marinade

1 tbsp gandharaj lemon juice (see [note](#))
½ tbsp ginger paste
1 tsp garlic paste
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp salt or to taste

Spice paste

3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
½ tbsp ginger, roughly chopped
3 green chillies, roughly chopped
½ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped

Panch phoran

½ tsp mustard seeds
½ tsp fenugreek seeds
½ tsp fennel seeds
½ tsp nigella seeds
½ tsp carom seeds

Curry

2 tbsp oil
2 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
1 cup onions, finely chopped
½ tsp sugar
1 (large) tomato, finely chopped
¾ tsp coriander powder
¾ tsp cumin powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
¼ tsp turmeric powder
1½ cups fresh coriander, finely chopped
1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Wash chicken and cut into 1" cubes. Pat dry.

Marination In a mixing bowl, combine marinade ingredients and mix well. Add chicken and stir till well coated. Set aside to marinate for 40 minutes.

Spice paste In a blender, combine spice paste ingredients and grind to make a coarse paste.

Panch phoran In a small mixing bowl, combine panch phoran ingredients and set aside.

Curry Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat. When hot, add panch phoran and red chillies. When the spices crackle, add onions and sugar and sauté till golden. Mix in the ground spice paste and sauté for 1 minute. Add tomato and cook till it is mushy. Stir in coriander powder, cumin powder, chilli powder and about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water. Simmer till oil floats to the surface. Add the marinated chicken with turmeric powder, coriander leaves, salt and 2 cups of water. Cook over low to medium heat till chicken is tender. Serve hot with steamed rice.

NOTE: Gandharaj lemon is used extensively in Bengali cuisine. The name 'gandharaj' means 'king of fragrance' and the lemon is called thus owing to its very strong floral fragrance. The flavour is not as sharp as that of a normal lemon; in fact it has a very slight sweetish aftertaste. The strong floral fragrance makes it a perfect choice for bakes and desserts such as cakes, cookies, mousses, ice cream or even meringues. It is now gaining popularity as an ingredient in lemon liqueur.



Khatta Anardana Murgh

Chicken with Pomegranate

SERVES 4

I have always associated anardana or pomegranate seeds with my childhood. Although it's used in very small quantities in Indian cooking, my grandmother's pantry was always stocked with it. So it was from her that I learnt how to make use of this terrific ingredient in a variety of dishes.

This is one of my favourite recipes from the Jammu region, which uses both fresh and dried pomegranate seeds. The tangy flavour of the dried seeds and the mild sweetness of the fresh ones complement the moist chicken wonderfully. It's a little khatta (sour), a little meetha (sweet) and just perfect.

INGREDIENTS

500 g chicken, boneless

Marinade

2 tbsp dried pomegranate seeds, lightly roasted and powdered
6 dried red chillies, lightly roasted and powdered
2 tsp coriander powder
1 tbsp ginger paste
1 tbsp garlic paste
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp nutmeg powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste
2 tsp oil

Curry

3 tbsp oil
1" stick cinnamon
6 black peppercorns
4 cloves
4 pods green cardamom
2 bay leaves
1 cup onion paste ([p. 50](#))
2 green chillies, slit lengthwise
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh pomegranate seeds, crushed
1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Wash chicken and cut it into large pieces.

Marination In a bowl, combine all marinade ingredients and mix well. Add chicken and mix till well coated. Set aside for 1 hour.

Curry Put oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add whole spices and bay leaves. When the spices crackle, add onion paste and green chillies and sauté for 2–3 minutes till the raw smell of onions disappears. Add marinated chicken with any liquid that may have

accumulated during marination and sauté for 2–3 minutes. Mix in 1 cup of water, cover and cook over low heat for 10–15 minutes till chicken is tender. Mix in coriander leaves, fresh pomegranate seeds and salt and simmer for 2 minutes longer for the flavours to blend. Remove from heat and serve hot with Varanasi poori ([p. 202](#)).



Chinta Chiguru Murgh

Chicken with Tamarind Leaves

SERVES 4

Chinta chiguru murgh is a very popular dish in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. Guntur is known for its chillies and so this dish is a little on the spicier side. The spiciness is balanced by the tender young tamarind leaves, which have a subtle flavour—not overly bitter or sour. They provide a delicious tangy, sour flavour to the dish and are also considered healthy and nutritious.

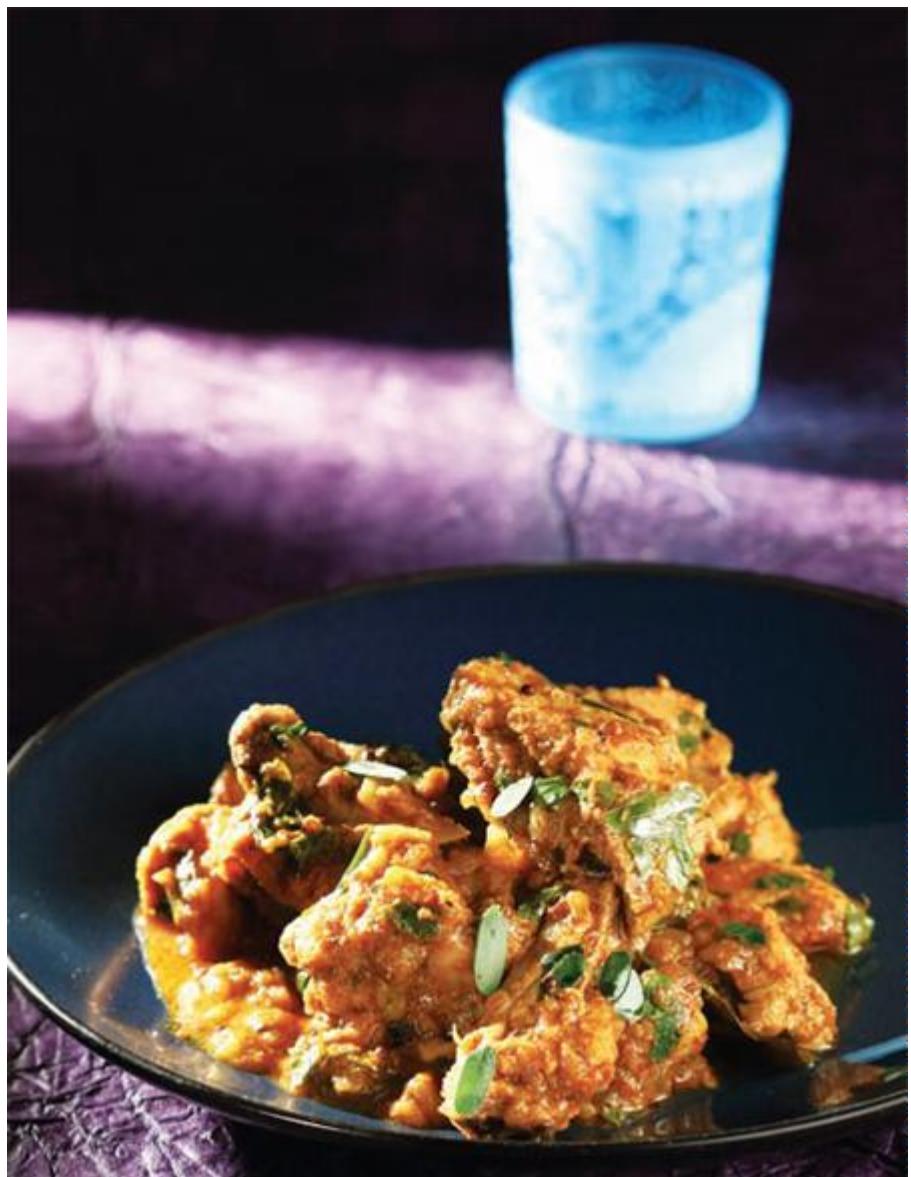
Tender young tamarind leaves are generally available in spring, but you can also buy them dried from some speciality stores online. They need to be soaked in water overnight and then drained before use.

INGREDIENTS

500 g chicken, boneless
1 tsp mustard seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds
1 bay leaf
3 cloves
3 black peppercorns
2 pods green cardamom
1" stick cinnamon
1 tbsp oil
1 (large) onion, finely chopped
A pinch of turmeric powder
1 tsp ginger–garlic paste
1 tbsp dried coconut powder
1 tsp salt or to taste
1 tsp coriander powder
2 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp cumin powder
200 g fresh, tender young tamarind leaves, washed

METHOD

Wash chicken and cut into 1" to 1½" cubes. In a small mixing bowl, combine all the whole spices. Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add whole spices. When the spices crackle, add onion and sauté till translucent. Mix in turmeric powder and ginger–garlic paste and cook for a few minutes till fragrant. Add coconut powder, chicken, salt and 2 cups of water. Cook for 5 minutes and add the remaining spice powders. Cover and cook till chicken is tender. Mix in tamarind leaves and simmer till leaves are soft and gravy is almost dry. Serve hot.



Kozhi Thiyal

Kerala Chicken Curry

SERVES 4–6

Thiyal, pronounced theeyal, is one of my favourite dishes from God's Own Country, Kerala. Amidst the tropical greenery, the calm and silent backwaters and the richly caparisoned elephants, I found the most striking cuisine. The prominent use of coconuts in all things spicy, sour and sweet is one of the main markers of Kerala cuisine. This particular recipe brings together two of my favourite elements, coconut and kozhi (Malayalam for chicken), in a most enticing manner. It's made using well-browned onions, toasted coconut, and tamarind for a dark, flavourful sauce.

INGREDIENTS

Spice powder

- 6 tsp coriander powder
- 2 tsp cumin powder
- 2 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder

Coconut-onion paste

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 cup fresh coconut, grated
- 1 cup onions, finely sliced

Curry

- 8 chicken legs (about 1 kg)
- 3 tbsp oil
- 1½ cups onions, finely sliced
- 3 green chillies, slit lengthwise
- 1½ tsp salt or to taste
- 4 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))

Tempering

- 1½ tbsp oil
- 1½ tsp mustard seeds
- 1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves
- 6 dried red chillies, torn to pieces

METHOD

Spice powder In a small bowl, combine all spice powder ingredients and mix well. Set aside.

Coconut-onion paste Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add coconut and onions and sauté till golden brown. Remove from heat, mix in 4 tbsp of water and grind to make a fine paste.

Curry Wash chicken and set aside in a colander to drain. Put oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, add onions and sauté till soft. Mix in 1½ cups of water with mixed spice powders,

green chillies and salt. Reduce heat to low, add chicken, cover and simmer till chicken is half cooked. Mix in the ground coconut–onion paste with tamarind pulp and simmer till chicken is tender and the gravy is slightly thick. Put oil for the tempering in a small pan over medium heat. When hot, add the tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, pour the tempering over the curry and serve hot.

Chicken Temperade

Spicy Coconut Chicken

SERVES 4–6

I was at Vasai Fort in Mumbai for a photo shoot for this book. The fort, built in the fifteenth century by the Portuguese, is located in the quiet East Indian village of Vasai. It is surrounded on all sides by tall, lush green mango trees, overhanging orchids and toddy trees. I noticed a little girl watching me from behind one of the mango trees for a while, but she was too shy to come forward and talk to me. Finally, I smiled at her and her face lit up. She came out of her hiding place and spoke to me. ‘Aren’t you MasterChef? My Nana [grandmother] is a big fan of your show. She hasn’t missed a single episode!’ she told me excitedly. ‘Will you come home and meet my Nana?’

I couldn’t refuse. I followed her home, the photographer in tow. While I was speaking to her Nana, the little girl ran into the kitchen and came out with glasses of water, a slice of bread and some curry on a plate. With the same bright face and eager eyes, she watched us as we gulped down the water and her Nana spoke passionately about the contestants, her favourites and how she loved all the tasks.

When I broke off a piece of the bread, dipped it in the curry and put it in my mouth, there was a burst of flavours on my tongue! I don’t know how to describe it—it was just wonderful! I thanked Nana with all my heart. I left their home with more than just a full stomach; I left with a fuller and happier heart. Well, here’s the recipe for that heavenly curry my little friend served me.

INGREDIENTS

Spice paste

- 4 tbsp coriander seeds
- 6 green chillies
- 8 cloves garlic
- 2" piece ginger
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 2 tsp cumin powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste

Curry

- 600 g chicken legs
- 6 tbsp clarified butter
- 2 (large) onions, finely sliced
- 6 tbsp fresh coconut, ground to a paste
- 1½ tsp or to taste salt

METHOD

Spice paste In a blender, combine all spice paste ingredients with 3 tbsp of water and grind to make a fine paste.

Curry Wash chicken and set aside in a colander to drain. Melt clarified butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Add onions and sauté till golden. Mix in ground spice paste and cook over low heat till butter floats to the surface. Add chicken with 2¼ cups of water, and coconut paste. Mix well. Cover and cook till chicken is tender and the curry thickens slightly. Add salt and serve hot with bread rolls or sanna ([p. 218](#)).

Tharavu Curry

Kerala Duck Curry

SERVES 4

Here's another recipe from the coastal state of Kerala. Though duck is not commonly consumed in India, I personally feel any cookbook on Indian cuisine is incomplete without a recipe like this. Serve it at a family gathering and you're sure to be asked for seconds. It's that good!

INGREDIENTS

Spice powder

3 pods green cardamom

3 cloves

1" stick cinnamon

Duck

1 kg duck, kept whole

1½ tbsp ginger, finely sliced

6 cloves garlic, peeled and kept whole

3 green chillies, kept whole

1 (medium) sprig fresh curry leaves

2 tbsp brown vinegar

1 tbsp black peppercorns, crushed

½ tsp salt or to taste

¼ cup oil

2 (large) onions, finely sliced

METHOD

Put a dry frying pan over low heat and roast spice powder ingredients separately till fragrant. Remove from heat and coarsely crush the spices in a mortar and pestle. Wash duck and cut into 4–6 pieces. In a large pan, combine duck with crushed spice powder, ginger, garlic, green chillies, curry leaves and 1½ litres of water and bring to a boil. Add vinegar, peppercorns and salt and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, till duck is tender and the gravy is reduced to a third of its original volume. Remove duck pieces from the pan into a bowl. Strain gravy into another bowl and set aside. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add onions and fry till golden. Remove onions from the oil and set aside. Add duck pieces to the oil and sear well. Remove and set aside. Add the reduced and strained gravy and fried onions to the pan with the oil, and cook till the sauce is very thick and glossy. Add duck and cook further till the sauce coats the duck. Serve hot with pav or dinner rolls.



Puducherry Tamarind Duck

Roast Duck in Tangy Sauce

SERVES 4

Another classic example of the Puducherry French–south Indian cuisine, this dish is sure to make you extend your holiday in Puducherry by a few days, just so that you can gorge on more of it. Succulent roast duck, marinated with brown vinegar and black pepper, topped with a tangy tamarind sauce—I’m sure you’re booking your ticket to Puducherry already!

INGREDIENTS

4 (large) duck supremes (breast with wing bone), with skin

Marinade

2 tbsp oil

1 tbsp brown vinegar

1 tsp black pepper powder

½ tsp cayenne pepper (lal mirch)

½ tsp coriander powder

½ tsp cumin powder

½ tsp turmeric powder

½ tsp salt or to taste

Spice paste

1½ tbsp coriander seeds

1 tbsp cumin seeds

1 tsp black peppercorns

½ tsp cloves

1" stick cinnamon

3 dried red chillies

½ cup fresh coconut, finely grated

Tamarind sauce

1 tsp oil

½ cup tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))

2 tsp palm sugar

2 stalks lemon grass, finely chopped

½ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Wash duck and pat dry.

Marination In a mixing bowl, combine marinade ingredients and mix well. Add duck and rub in the marinade thoroughly. Cover and set aside to marinate for 2 hours.

Spice paste Put a griddle over low heat and roast spice paste ingredients, except the coconut, one by one, till they change colour slightly and are aromatic. Cool them to room temperature. On the same griddle, roast coconut till golden. Remove from heat and cool to room

temperature. In a blender, combine roasted spices and coconut with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and blend to make a smooth paste.

Tamarind sauce Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add the ground spice paste and sauté for 1 minute. Mix in the remaining sauce ingredients with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat and strain sauce into a fresh pan.

Duck Preheat the oven to 180°C. Place the marinated duck on a greased baking tray, cover with foil and roast in the oven for 20–25 minutes. Remove foil and continue roasting till duck is tender.

To serve Arrange the duck on a serving platter. Reheat the sauce, drizzle over the roasted duck and serve hot.



Bater Shikar Masala

Quail in Special Spices

SERVES 4

India was the Land of the Maharajas. Hunting was a favourite pastime of the maharajas. Often, hunting expeditions would last for several days till the king was satisfied. It would be a grand affair, too. The game was brought to the camp and, after skinning it, it was marinated with this special shikar masala.

The word shikar means hunt. The royal cooks carried a special dry spice blend with them. On setting up camp, they plucked a few fresh herbs from the forest and, combined with the shikar masala, used them to season the food. Later, the game was mounted on a bamboo pole and slowly roasted over a campfire. Occasionally, the king rewarded the cooks for their outstanding culinary skills.

Gone are those days, and gone are those hunting parties. But the special shikar masala still exists. Use it with bater or farmed quail to make a feast worthy of the maharajas' praise.

INGREDIENTS

Shikar masala

- 3 dried red chillies
- ½ tbsp coriander seeds
- ½ tbsp cumin seeds
- ½ tbsp fennel seeds
- 1/8 tsp carom seeds

Quail

- 4 quails (about 150 g each), farmed
- 3 tbsp oil

Marinade

- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 tsp ginger–garlic paste
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- ¼ tsp clove powder
- 1 tsp red degi chilli powder

METHOD

Shikar masala Put a dry frying pan over medium heat and roast the spices separately till they release their aromas. Remove into a mortar and pestle and crush to make a coarse powder. Set aside.

Quail Wash quails thoroughly, inside and out. Drain and pat dry.

Marination In a mixing bowl, combine marinade ingredients with shikar masala. Mix well. Add quails and stir to coat thoroughly. Set aside to marinate for 30 minutes.

To cook the quails Preheat oven to 180°C. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, sear the marinated quails. Transfer to a greased baking tray and bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes or till quails are cooked through. Serve hot with roti or paratha.



MEATS



Saoji Mutton

Mutton Gravy

SERVES 4–6

Situated in the state of Maharashtra, Nagpur lies right in the centre of India, and hence, perhaps has the largest assemblage of flavours I've ever seen. From the sweet-sour tanginess of oranges to the tear-jerking spiciness of its curries, Nagpur has it all. During my visit, I went to one of the famous Saoji Bhojanalayas, which are a chain of traditional eateries, and this mutton dish was absolutely unforgettable. Those who don't eat spicy food can adjust the quantity of the chilli powder—but then again, it really is worth the risk.

INGREDIENTS

750 g mutton with bones

Marinade

2 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp oil

Spice paste

2 tbsp oil
2 (medium) onions, finely sliced
2 tsp black peppercorns
1 tsp cloves
4 pods black cardamom
3 × 1" sticks cinnamon
1 tsp poppy seeds
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried coconut, grated

Gravy

2 tbsp oil
2 (large) bay leaves
1 (large) onion, finely sliced
1 tbsp ginger–garlic paste
1 tbsp red chilli powder (optional)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp salt or to taste
1 tsp garam masala powder

METHOD

Clean meat and wash well. Cut into large pieces.

Marination In a large mixing bowl, combine marinade ingredients and mix well. Add meat and mix till well coated. Set aside to marinate for 1 hour.

Spice paste Put oil in a frying pan over low heat. When hot, add all spice paste ingredients, except coconut, and sauté till onions turn golden. Mix in coconut and continue to sauté till

coconut turns golden. Remove from heat, cool and grind to make a thick, fine paste with some water.

Gravy Put oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add bay leaves. When bay leaves crackle, add onion and sauté till translucent. Add ground spice paste and cook, stirring continuously, till oil floats to the surface. Stir in ginger–garlic paste, chilli powder (if using), turmeric powder, salt and the marinated meat. Mix well and cover pan with a large plate. Fill the plate with water, reduce heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, till all water in the plate evaporates and mutton is tender. Mix in garam masala powder, cook for 1 minute longer and remove from heat. Serve hot with roti and imli ka raita ([p. 236](#)).



Gongura Mamsam

Mutton Stew with Sorrel

SERVES 4

I love the hearty, incredibly balanced flavours and the natural sourness that you get with this Andhra dish. Gongura or fresh sorrel leaves, which are generally available during spring, are great to make sauces, salads or even pickles. I simmer the meat over low heat, as it brings the best flavours together. You can substitute the gongura leaves with fresh spinach and squeeze in the juice of a lemon, but it will not be comparable to the taste of these silky, sour leaves.

INGREDIENTS

500 g mutton with bones

½ tsp turmeric powder

1" piece ginger, kept whole

10 cloves garlic, kept whole

1 tsp salt or to taste

Curry

3 tbsp oil

5 cloves

4 pods green cardamom

2 (large) bay leaves

2" stick cinnamon

4 green chillies, slit lengthwise

2 (medium) onions, finely sliced

200 g fresh tender sorrel (gongura) leaves, plucked off the stems

1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves

½ tsp coriander powder

½ tsp cumin powder

1 tsp red chilli powder, coarse

½ tsp black pepper powder

Garnish

A few sprigs fresh coriander leaves

METHOD

Clean and wash the mutton and cut into 2" cubes. In a pressure cooker, combine mutton with turmeric powder, garlic, ginger, salt and 2 litres of water. Pressure-cook over low heat for 7–9 minutes after the cooker reaches full pressure. Open the cooker when pressure subsides.

Pour the contents of the cooker into a strainer placed over a bowl. Reserve the stock in the bowl. Fish out the garlic cloves and ginger and grind to make a smooth paste. Set aside. Put oil in a large pan over medium heat. When hot, add cloves, cardamoms, bay leaves and cinnamon. When the spices crackle, add the ground ginger–garlic paste, green chillies and onions and sauté till onions turn golden. Add sorrel leaves, curry leaves, spice powders and salt. Sauté till oil floats to the surface. Add the cooked meat and simmer till the spices coat

the meat properly. Pour in stock, reduce heat to low and cook till the curry thickens to the desired consistency. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with steamed rice.



Malvani Mutton

Coconut-Flavoured Mutton

SERVES 4

MasterChef India helped me reach out to the masses like never before. Once, I was invited to a cooking competition organized for Maharashtrian women by a popular Marathi newspaper called *Lokmat*. The women were dressed in traditional Maharashtrian garb and looked splendid in their colourful saris, known as vavvari (nine-yard) saris. I spent my evening talking to them, laughing with them and tasting the amazing food they had cooked.

One of the dishes I had there was Malvani mutton. Malvan, from where the mutton derives its name, is a town in coastal Maharashtra. It is well known for its robust, well-flavoured food, especially its fish preparations. This recipe is just a tiny part of that massive variety of foods which makes up Malvani cuisine.

INGREDIENTS

Malvani masala

½ cup dried coconut, grated
2 tbsp oil
10 dried red chillies
2 tsp coriander seeds
5–6 cloves
½ tsp black peppercorns
½ tsp cumin seeds
½ tsp caraway seeds
4 pods green cardamom
3 pods black cardamom
1 tsp poppy seeds

Mutton

500 g mutton
4 tbsp oil
3 (large) onions, finely chopped
1½ tbsp ginger–garlic paste
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Malvani masala Put a dry frying pan over low heat. Roast the dried coconut till light brown. Remove and set aside. In the same pan, heat oil and fry the masala spices separately till the colour changes slightly. Cool the spices to room temperature. In a grinder, combine the roasted coconut and spices and grind to make a coarse powder.

Mutton Clean the meat, wash and cut into curry-sized pieces. Put oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add onions and sauté till golden. Add ginger–garlic paste and sauté for a few seconds till its aroma fills the air. Add meat and cook for 2–3 minutes. Mix in

Malvani masala with turmeric powder and salt. Fry for 1 minute and stir in 2 cups of water. Cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, till meat is tender. Add more water as required, depending on the desired thickness of the curry. Remove from heat and serve hot with roti or steamed rice.



Patthar Ka Gosht

Stone-Cooked Meat

SERVES 4–6

One of my greatest inspirations for Junoon's menu for stone cooking came from Hyderabad. When there, I saw a man preparing his meat on a hot stone or patthar, giving it the very simple name of patthar ka gosht. This dish has a beautiful earthy flavour as it is slowly cooked on the hot stone. In case you do not have a stone at home, you can put the meat on a lightly greased grill pan and under a medium hot grill. Alternatively, use a heavy-bottomed cast-iron skillet.

INGREDIENTS

Green chilli paste (for 1 tbsp)

6 green chillies, stalks removed
A pinch of salt

Almond paste (for about 1 cup)

1 cup almonds, unsalted

Meat

750 g mutton, boneless
1 slab, 2' × 2' granite stone
2 tbsp oil
2 tbsp clarified butter
1 tsp caraway seeds
1" stick cinnamon
3 cloves
3 pods green cardamom
2 (small) bay leaves
2 tbsp ginger–garlic paste
2 tsp green chilli paste
2 tbsp almond paste
1 tsp garam masala powder
½ tsp black peppercorns, crushed
1 flake lichen flower (dagad phool)
1 tsp salt or to taste
¾ cup fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
¼ cup fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
1½ cups whole milk

METHOD

Green chilli paste Combine chillies and salt with 1 tbsp of water in a grinder or food processor and grind to make a smooth paste. (If you want to reduce the spiciness of your dish, remove the seeds before grinding the chillies.)

Almond paste Put almonds in a bowl with 1½ cups of water and soak for 30 minutes. Drain the water and peel and grind the almonds to make a smooth, thick paste. Alternatively, boil

the almonds for 6–8 minutes or till the skins loosen and the almonds soften. Remove from heat, drain the water and cool before grinding. In case the paste needs to be thinned down, water may be added, but it is best to use whole milk to keep the creamy flavour intact.

Meat Clean the meat; wash and cut into large cubes. Place the granite slab on the cooking range over high heat (all burners). Leave it there for 40–50 minutes till the stone is very hot. Spoon oil and clarified butter in the centre of the stone. Stir till hot and well mixed. Add caraway seeds, cinnamon, cloves, cardamoms and bay leaves. When the spices crackle, add ginger–garlic paste, green chilli paste and almond paste. Cook, stirring continuously, for 2–3 minutes. (Take care that nothing spills over the sides of the stone.) Sprinkle garam masala powder, crushed pepper, lichen flower and salt. Stir for 1 minute and add meat. Cook for 5–6 minutes, mixing well to coat meat with the spices. Mix in coriander and mint leaves and cook for a couple of minutes longer. Gradually spoon in the milk a little at a time, mixing in just enough to moisten the meat and make a light gravy. Cover and cook. Repeat, till all the milk is used up and meat is tender. Serve hot with sheermal ([p. 210](#)) or roti.



Gosht Vindaloo

Mutton Vindaloo

SERVES 4–6

Vindaloo is the first choice for any lover of spicy food in America. It's a Goan–Portuguese speciality that has found its way around the world because of its balance of spice and sourness.

Historically, this dish was cooked by the Portuguese using vin (wine) and alhoo (garlic). However, as the dish made its way to Indian homes, a major discrepancy crept in and changed the entire meaning of the term. The Indians took it to be ‘vin’ (short for vinegar) and ‘aloo’ (the Hindi word for potato). Vindaloo in India has been made with potatoes ever since, even though traditional vindaloo does not include the vegetable. In fact, in the US, if a vindaloo is brought to an Indian guest’s table without potatoes, it is sent right back to the kitchen.

This recipe is a cross between the two versions—the authentic Portuguese one and the adapted Indian one.

INGREDIENTS

600 g mutton, boneless

Marinade

½ tsp salt or to taste

1½ tsp ginger–garlic paste

1 tsp turmeric powder

Spice paste

3 tbsp oil

30 dried red chillies

40 cloves

5 × 1" sticks cinnamon

40 black peppercorns

1½ tsp cumin seeds

40 cloves garlic, finely chopped

6 tbsp white vinegar

Curry

4 tbsp oil

2 (large) onions, finely chopped

2 (large) tomatoes, finely chopped

3 cups mutton stock

1½ tbsp sugar

1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Clean meat and wash well. Cut into 1½" pieces.

Marination In a mixing bowl, combine marinade ingredients and mix well. Add mutton and mix till well coated. Set aside to marinate for 20 minutes.

Spice paste Meanwhile, put oil for spice paste in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, roast red chillies, cloves, cinnamon, peppercorns, cumin seeds and garlic separately till fragrant. In a grinder, combine roasted spices with vinegar and grind to make a fine paste. Add 1–2 tbsp of water, if required.

Curry Put oil in a pan over medium heat. Add onions and sauté till golden. Add tomatoes and cook till they soften. Mix in ground spice paste and marinated meat and sauté for 5 minutes. Pour in stock and cook, stirring periodically, till mutton is tender and the gravy thickens. Mix in sugar and salt and cook till sugar dissolves. Serve hot with pav or dinner rolls.

Kheema Shalgam

Minced Mutton with Turnips

SERVES 4

Winter was just setting in and the temperature was steadily dipping. Bundled up in warm, soft woollens, I resolved to brave the slowly intensifying Kashmiri cold winds just to see the famous Floating Market on Dal Lake. Anchored in the midst of millions of pink lotuses were hundreds of hand-painted Kashmiri shikaras, full of flowers and vegetables of every colour imaginable. I hopped from shikara to shikara, buying the choicest of ingredients and taking in the blissful aroma of saffron stacked in tiny boxes in some of them.

From the corner of my eye I noticed a little mauve mound on one of the shikaras. On closer inspection, I realized they were turnips (shalgam)! In winter in Kashmir, turnips the size of medium onions are one of the few vegetables available. These make for a fabulous dish when cooked with minced mutton. So the next time you're in Kashmir, don't forget to visit the Floating Market and gorge on some lovely kheema shalgam.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tbsp oil
- 2 (large) bay leaves
- 4 pods green cardamom
- 1" stick cinnamon
- 4 cloves
- 2 (medium) onions, finely sliced
- 2" piece ginger, finely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 500 g mutton mince
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1½ tsp red chilli powder
- ¾ tsp cumin powder
- ½ tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 (medium) turnip, diced and blanched for 1 minute
- 2 (medium) tomatoes, diced
- ½ tbsp clarified butter
- ¼ cup fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- ½ tsp garam masala powder

METHOD

Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium-high heat. When hot, add bay leaves, cardamoms, cinnamon and cloves. When the spices crackle, add onions, ginger and garlic and sauté till onions turn translucent. Add mince, mix well and cook for 2–3 minutes. Sprinkle in turmeric powder, chilli powder, cumin powder, coriander powder and salt with 2 tbsp water and cook for 5 minutes, till spices blend well into the mince. Add turnip and tomatoes and fry for 4–5

minutes. Pour in 1 cup of water. Cover and simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally, till mince and turnip are cooked. Add some more water, if required. Mix in clarified butter, coriander leaves and garam masala powder and cook uncovered for 2–3 minutes longer for the flavours to blend. Remove from heat and serve hot with roti.

Kashmiri Kabargah

Lamb Spare Ribs Slow-Cooked in Milk

SERVES 4–6

Kashmiri cuisine appears to be one of the most daunting of Indian cuisines. I always thought it was difficult to cook Kashmiri food, especially the wazwan (a lavish thirty-six-course speciality meal).

My first brush with the wazwan was at my cousin Deepak's wedding where the couple had called for professional wazas (Kashmiri chefs) to cook the feast. I decided to help with the preparations and it's an experience I'll never forget.

The most interesting part about making a wazwan is that the entire meal is prepared in just one night. As I worked with the head waza and his team of cooks, I began to understand the methods and techniques they use. I love the coordination with which they pound the fresh meat, patiently keep the firewood ignited for cooking and neatly handle the heavy cauldrons filled to the brim with food. There is a rhythm in the way a wazwan is cooked; for me, it was a play of techniques, intricacies and flavours.

This recipe comes straight from the kitchens of the wazas. Kashmiri kabargah is a delightful dish to make on a special day or to make any day special. I hope you will be inspired by this cooking style and enjoy the wazwan as I do—more like a Kashmiri melody than just food.

INGREDIENTS

750 g lamb spare ribs (pasli ki haddi)
3 cups whole milk
3 pods black cardamom
6 pods green cardamom
2 × 1" sticks cinnamon
6 cloves
2 (large) bay leaves
1 tbsp fennel powder
1 tsp garam masala powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp asafoetida powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp saffron strands
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste
1 cup clarified butter

Marinade

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt, whisked
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp red chilli powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Trim the lamb ribs and wash well. In a large pan, combine lamb with milk, whole spices, bay leaves, spice powders, saffron and salt. Place over medium heat and cook till all moisture

evaporates. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. In a mixing bowl, combine marinade ingredients. Mix thoroughly and marinate the cooked lamb for 30 minutes. Melt clarified butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Fry the marinated lamb till brown. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot.



Bharwan Raan

Stuffed Roast Leg of Lamb

SERVES 4–6

Peshawari cuisine, also known as North-West Frontier cuisine, is an important part of the culinary culture of the Indian subcontinent. Peshawar's strategic location on the crossroads of Central and South Asia has made it one of the most culturally and gastronomically vibrant regions in the subcontinent. The location, the semi-arid climate and the Indo-Iranian influences all come together, culminating in a cuisine that is truly spectacular.

INGREDIENTS

1 kg leg of lamb, kept whole
2 cups plain yogurt, whisked
4 tbsp brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, melted
1 tbsp saffron strands, dissolved in 2 tbsp warm water

Marinade

3 tbsp ginger, roughly chopped
3 tbsp garlic, roughly chopped
2 (large) limes, rind grated and juice extracted
2 tsp cumin seeds
6 pods green cardamom
1" stick cinnamon
6 cloves
1 tsp turmeric powder
1 tbsp garam masala powder
2 tsp cayenne pepper (lal mirch)
1½ tsp salt or to taste

Filling

2 cups hung yogurt
1 cup almonds, peeled, slivered and lightly roasted
Black pepper powder to taste

METHOD

Clean the leg of the lamb. Remove and discard all skin and fat. Wash well and pat dry. Slit the leg lengthwise along the bone to open it and flatten it slightly by beating down with the back of a wooden spoon. Do not separate the flesh from the bone completely. Set aside.

Marination In a grinder, combine marinade ingredients with very little water and grind to make a smooth paste. Rub the marinade all over the lamb, cover with cling film and refrigerate for 2 hours. Combine plain yogurt with 2 tbsp of brown sugar and stir till sugar dissolves. Coat the marinated lamb with the sweetened yogurt, cover with cling film and refrigerate for another 2 hours.

To cook the lamb

Preheat the oven to 200°C. In a mixing bowl, combine filling ingredients and mix thoroughly. Open the marinated lamb flat on a board and spoon the filling down the centre of the lamb. Roll the meat around the filling to conceal it. Seal the edges with toothpicks to secure. Place lamb on a large greased baking tray and evenly sprinkle the remaining brown sugar over it. Place the tray in the centre rack of the oven and bake uncovered for 30 minutes. Remove lamb from oven and lower the temperature to 180°C. Cover lamb with foil and return to the oven. Bake for 2 hours, basting occasionally with butter. Sprinkle saffron and its soaking water evenly over lamb, cover and bake for another 30 minutes or till meat is tender. Serve hot with roomali roti ([p. 208](#)).



Paya Ka Salan

Trotter Stew

SERVES 4

Hyderabad is a non-vegetarian's dream destination, and rightly so, thanks to the amazing variety of delectable meats you get there. Here's a dish that will set you trotting off to the city of the Charminar as soon as you read it.

INGREDIENTS

8 pieces lamb trotters

Spice bag

½ tsp cumin seeds

½ tsp coriander seeds

2 × 1" sticks cinnamon

6 cloves

5 pods green cardamom

2 (medium) bay leaves

2 flakes lichen flower (dagad phool)

1" stick sandalwood

6–8 rose petals

1 tsp peanuts

Salan

1 tsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted and crushed

2 tbsp coriander seeds

2 tbsp white sesame seeds

3 tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated

1 tbsp poppy seed paste

1 tsp red chilli powder

½ tsp black pepper powder

2 tbsp ginger–garlic paste

1 cup plain yogurt, whisked

¼ cup clarified butter

2 (medium) onions, finely sliced

4 green chillies, slit lengthwise

1 tsp salt or to taste

Garnish

A few sprigs fresh coriander leaves

A few sprigs fresh mint leaves

METHOD

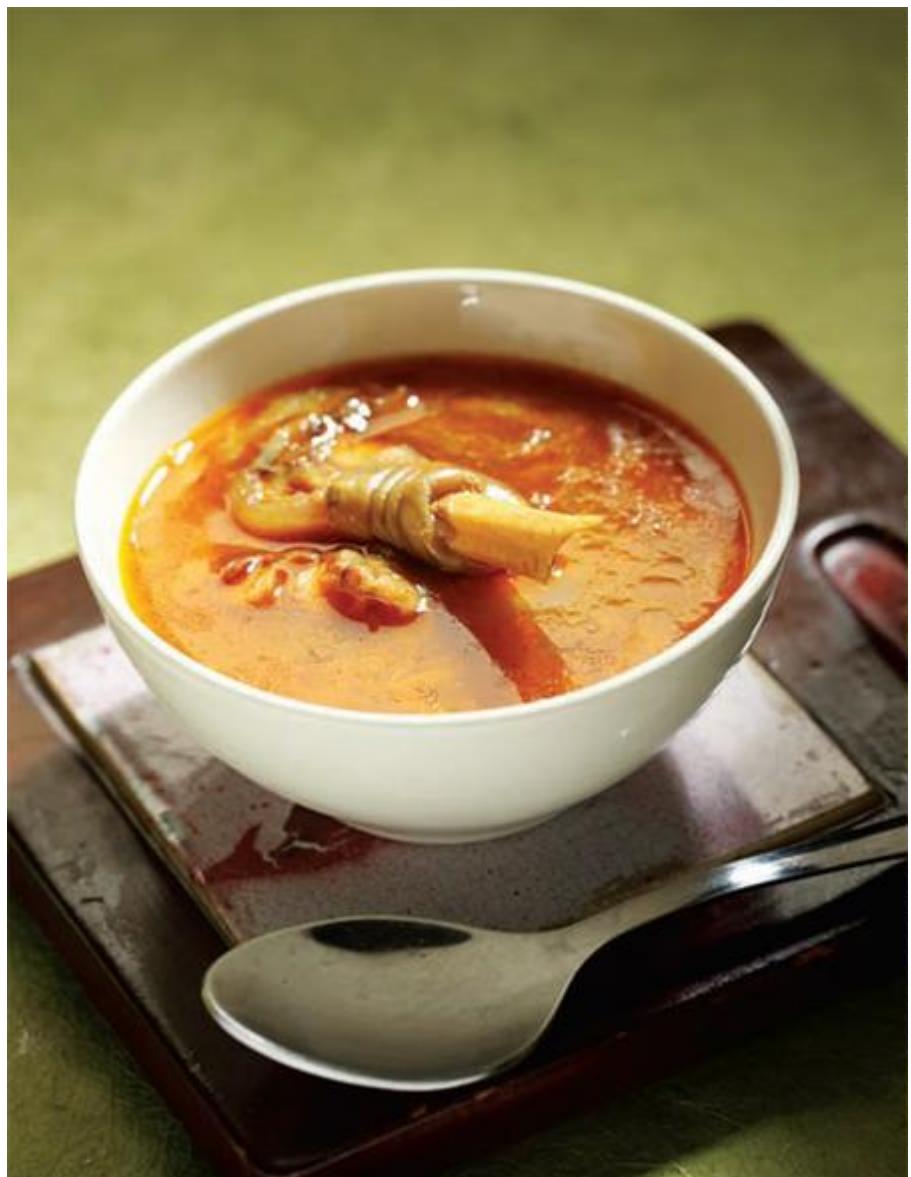
Rinse the trotters thoroughly under tap water. Singe any remaining hair by placing the trotters directly on a flame. Put trotters into a pan of rapidly boiling water for 2–3 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water. Cut each trotter into 3 pieces lengthwise. Set aside.

Spice bag Combine all spice bag ingredients and tie together in a muslin cloth to make a small bundle.

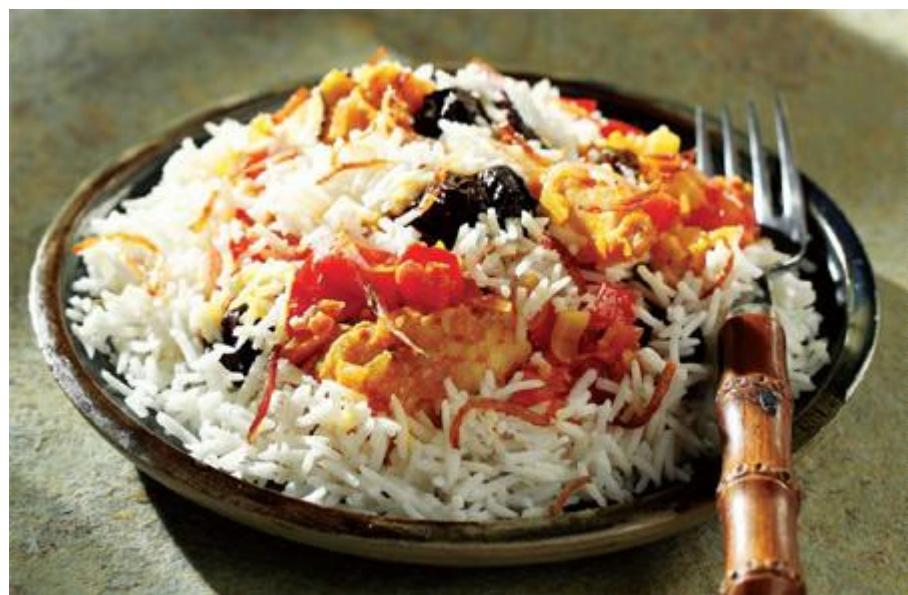
Salan In a large pan, combine 2 cups of water with the spice bag, crushed cumin seeds, coriander seeds, sesame seeds, coconut, poppy seed paste, chilli powder, pepper powder and ginger–garlic paste. Mix well, place over high heat and cook till the gravy reduces to almost a third of its original volume. Remove pan from heat. Fish out the spice bag and discard. Whisk in yogurt. Return to heat and cook, stirring continuously over medium heat till the gravy is thick. Add trotters, mix well and cook for 4–5 minutes. Stir in about 2 cups of water, cover and cook over low heat till meat is tender and the gravy begins to thicken. Melt clarified butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Add onions and fry till golden. Mix onions into the meat along with green chillies and salt and cook till the gravy thickens to the desired consistency. Remove from heat, garnish with coriander and mint leaves and serve hot with roti or steamed rice.

Poppy seed paste (1/2 cup)

Combine 1/2 cup poppy seeds with 1 cup of water in a small bowl and allow to soak for 20 minutes. Transfer to a small pan, place over medium heat and bring to a boil. Boil poppy seeds for 10 minutes, remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Drain most of the water, leaving just enough to grind the seeds to a paste. Using a blender or grinder, grind the poppy seeds to a smooth thick paste.



RICE



Tapeliya Dal Bhaat

Gujarati Rice

SERVES 4–6

When I visited the home of Mugdha, one of my food researchers, with Chef Michael and our friend Kush, the highlight of the menu was the Gujarati rice she had made. She told me it was called tapeliya dal bhaat and was extremely simple to make. I liked it so much that I had twice as much as I normally eat!

INGREDIENTS

Dal

- ½ cup husked, split pigeon peas (arhar/toover dal)
- A pinch of asafoetida powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp oil

Spice paste

- ½ cup fresh coconut, grated
- 1 (large) onion, roughly chopped
- 1" piece ginger
- 6 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp coriander seeds, lightly roasted
- ½ tsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted
- 1" stick cinnamon
- 4 cloves
- 5 black peppercorns
- 3 dried red chillies

Rice

- 1 cup basmati or long-grained rice
- 1 tbsp oil
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Dal Wash dal and soak in water for 20 minutes. Drain dal and put in a pressure cooker with asafoetida powder, turmeric powder, oil and 1½ cups of water. Pressure-cook over low heat for 12–14 minutes after the cooker reaches full pressure. The dal should be well-cooked and mushy. When the pressure settles, whisk dal till smooth and stir in 1 cup of water. Set aside.

Spice paste Combine all spice paste ingredients in a grinder and grind to make a smooth paste, adding very little water if required.

Rice Wash rice and drain in a colander. Put oil in a pressure pan over medium heat. When hot, add asafoetida powder, mustard seeds and curry leaves. When the spices crackle, add the ground paste and sauté for 1 minute. Stir in the prepared diluted dal and the drained rice and

simmer for 2–3 minutes. Mix in salt and pressure-cook over low heat for 12–14 minutes after the cooker reaches full pressure. Serve hot with chhaas (buttermilk) or plain yogurt.



Bisi Belé Bhaat

Spicy Rice Porridge

SERVES 4–6

I longed to visit Vidyashankara Temple at Sringeri ever since I saw a picture of its blue door on someone's desktop a few years ago. I finally got the chance to visit it when I went to Karnataka to attend an award ceremony. Built in stone in the fourteenth century, Vidyashankara Temple is a temple of knowledge and wisdom and houses some magnificent sculptures and inscriptions.

After visiting the temple with the blue door, I stopped by an eatery and ordered bisi belé bhaat, a famous rice preparation, which I hadn't had in a while. Having it that day brought back several fond memories of the time I'd spent in Karnataka as a student. It's a dish you'll fall in love with instantly.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup rice (short grain like sona masoori, or basmati)
½ cup husked, split pigeon peas (arhar/toover dal)
½ tsp turmeric powder
2 (medium) carrots, diced
2 (medium) potatoes, diced
50 g white pumpkin, diced
½ cup tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
1 tsp salt or to taste

Spice powder

½ tsp oil
1 tbsp coriander seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1" stick cinnamon
8 black peppercorns
1 tbsp husked, split Bengal gram (chana dal)
1 tbsp husked, split black gram (urad dal)
5 dried red chillies

Tempering

1 tbsp oil
¼ tsp asafoetida powder
½ tsp mustard seeds
1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves

METHOD

Wash rice and dal and soak in water for 20 minutes. Drain rice and dal and put in a pressure cooker with turmeric powder, carrots, potatoes, pumpkin and 4 cups of water. Pressure-cook over low heat for 12–14 minutes after the cooker reaches full pressure. Remove from heat and allow pressure to settle. Meanwhile, for the spice powder, pour oil on a griddle over low heat. Roast each spice separately till it changes colour slightly. Once the spices cool, grind to

make a fine powder. Add the spice powder, tamarind pulp and salt to the rice and dal in the cooker with 1 cup of water. Place cooker over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally till mixture has the consistency of porridge. Put oil for the tempering over medium heat. When hot, add the remaining ingredients. When the spices crackle, pour the tempering over the bisi belé bhaat and mix well. Remove from heat. To serve drizzle 2 tbsp clarified butter and serve hot with sandge ([p. 238](#)).



Chholiyawalé Chawal

Fresh Green Gram Pulao

SERVES 4

I look forward to winters for two reasons: one, you get a lovely variety of vegetables during this season; and two, you get chholiya (green gram).

Chholiya is one of my favourite ingredients. I love taking the tiny, green, silky pods between my fingers and breaking them open. They remind me of those bubble wraps used for packing—the ones we all love to burst. In Amritsar, chholiya was a much sought-after commodity. Vegetable vendors lured customers shouting, ‘*Jandi bar da chholiya!*’ which basically means, ‘Make sure you take some chholiya before it disappears!’ Once bought, peeling the chholiya would be a family affair. No one ever complained, because we knew that our efforts would be duly rewarded in the form of our favourite chholiyawalé chawal.

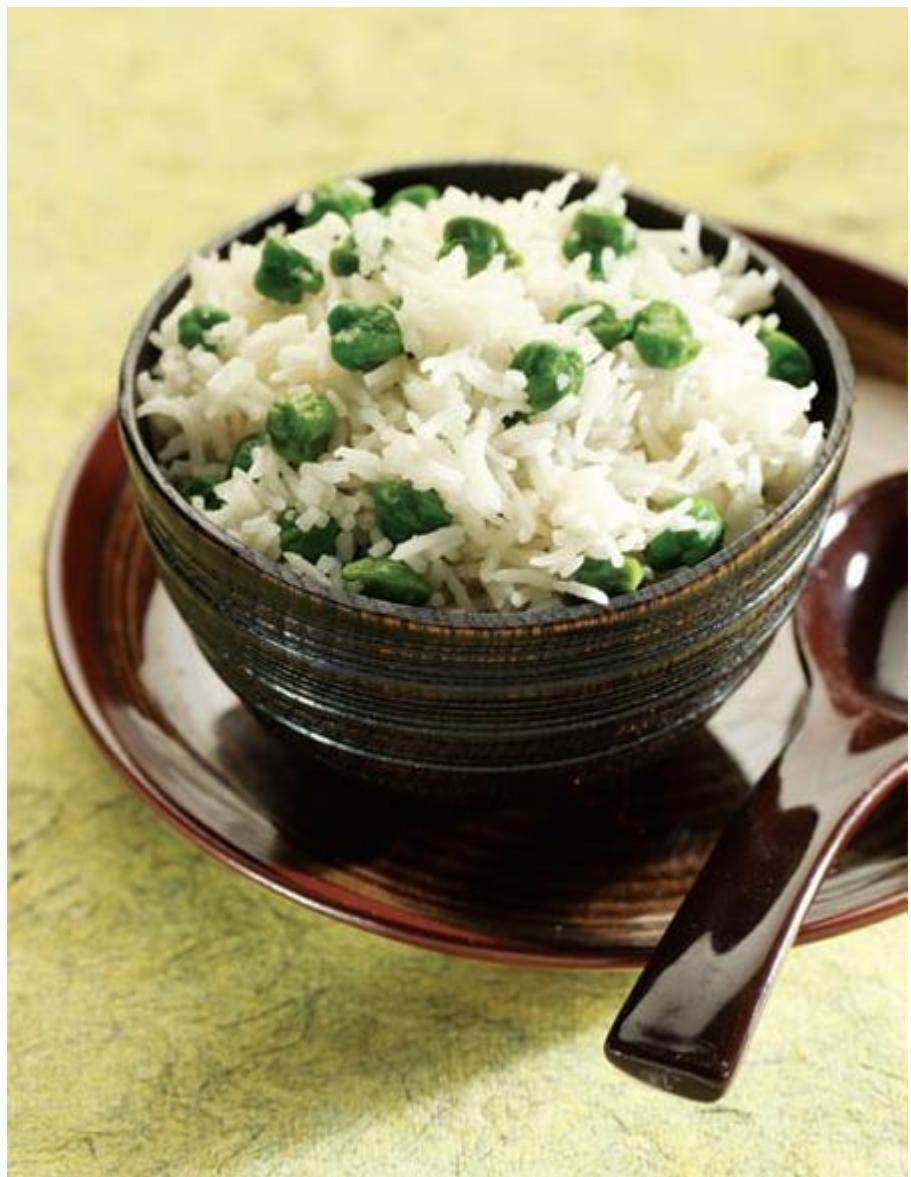
This recipe is very close to my heart and I’m sure you too will enjoy it. In case you can’t get chholiya, you can use green peas.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup basmati or long-grained rice
½ cup fresh green gram (chholiya)
¾ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Wash rice and soak in water for 1 hour. Drain rice and put into a pan with green gram, salt and 2½ cups of water. Cover and simmer over medium heat till rice and gram are cooked. Drain out any extra water and serve hot.



Raavan Bhaat

Chilli Green Gram Rice

SERVES 4

This Maharashtrian dish has, in reality, nothing to do with the mythological character Raavan. It is extremely hot and spicy and nearly impossible for anyone to have without gulping down buckets and buckets of water. So, the rice is said to be as hot and fiery as Raavan himself!

Spicy though it is, Raavan bhaat has a unique flavour. Even through the hot chillies, you can make out the taste of the raw mango and peanuts. It's definitely worth a try.

INGREDIENTS

Rice

1 cup basmati or long-grained rice
2 tsp oil
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp asafoetida powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp mustard seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp salt or to taste

Green gram

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup fresh green gram
1 tbsp oil

To complete the dish

1 tbsp oil
1 tsp husked, split black gram (urad dal)
8 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
1 (large) sprig fresh curry leaves
1 tbsp peanuts
2 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tbsp green mango, finely chopped

METHOD

Rice Wash rice, soak in water for 30 minutes and drain in a colander. Put oil in a large pan over medium heat. When hot, add asafoetida powder and mustard seeds. When the spices crackle, add rice and turmeric powder and sauté for 3–4 minutes. Stir in 2 cups of water with salt and cook over high heat till the water reaches the surface of the rice. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook till rice is just tender. Remove from heat and set aside.

Green gram Blanch the green gram in plenty of boiling salted water for 3 minutes. Drain. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add gram and sauté till tender. Remove and set aside.

To complete the dish Put oil in another frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add dal, red chillies, curry leaves and peanuts. When the spices crackle, stir in tamarind pulp, coriander

powder and mango with 2 tbsp of water. Cook till the mixture thickens. In a large mixing bowl, fluff the rice with a fork and mix in sautéed gram and tamarind mixture. Mix thoroughly and serve hot.



Goan Coconut Rice

Coconut-Flavoured Rice

SERVES 4

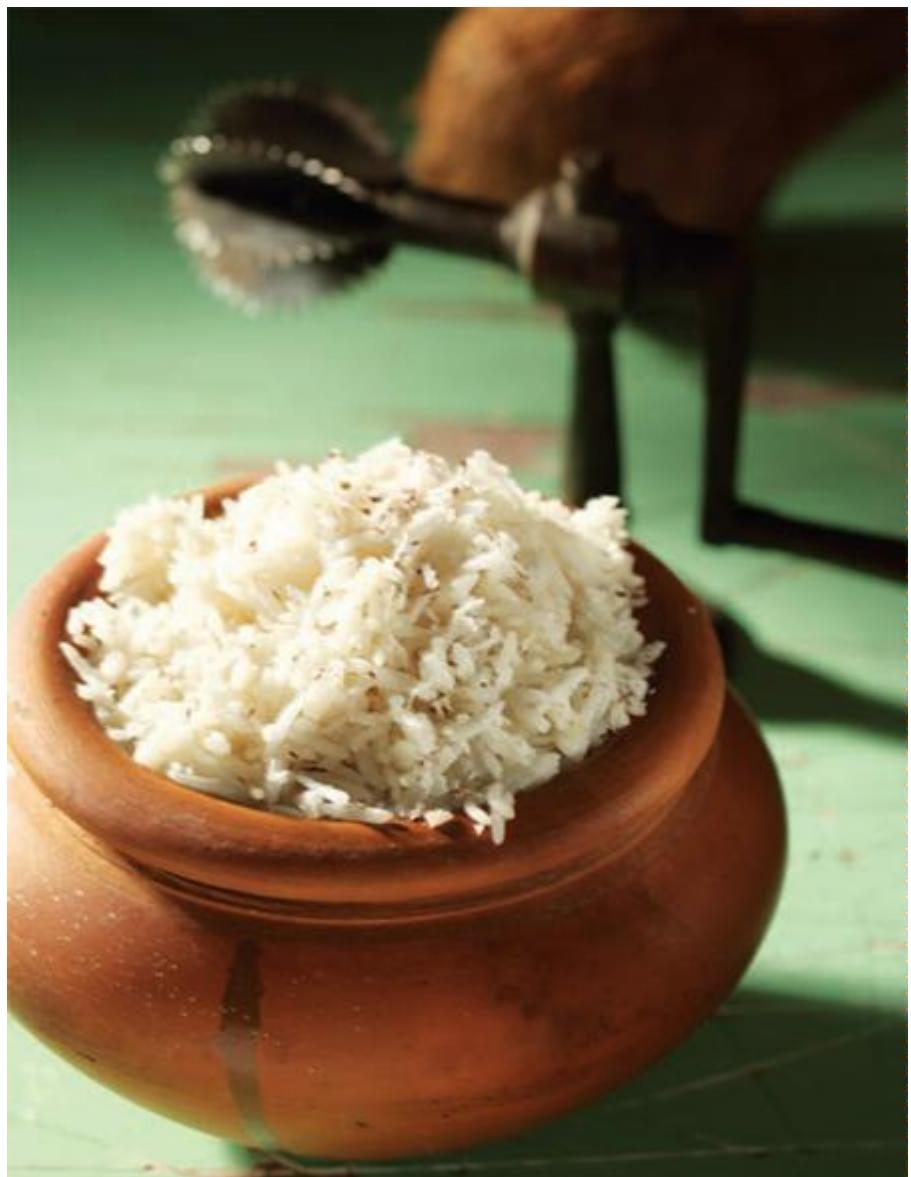
During my regular excursions to Goa, I often ended up in a beach shack in Panaji and ordered a plateful of coconut rice. Then, watching the sea, the sky and the people, I would take my own sweet time to enjoy that plate of yummy rice. Even without the beach, this dish is spectacular.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup basmati or long-grained rice
1 cup coconut milk ([p. 16](#))
2 tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated
5 black peppercorns, crushed
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Wash rice and drain. In a pan, combine rice with coconut milk, coconut, peppercorns, salt and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water. Place over high heat and cook, stirring occasionally till the liquid reaches the level of the rice. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook till rice is tender and fluffy. Sprinkle $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and cook for about 5 minutes longer. Serve hot with sandge ([p. 238](#)).



Kokum Rice

Tangy-Sweet Rice

SERVES 4

Kokum is found in abundance in the Konkan region along the Western Ghats. Both the peel and the fruit are used in cooking. The peel is dried in the sun and then used as a souring agent in Maharashtrian and Gujarati cuisines. Apart from a tangy taste, it has the loveliest deep red colour when fresh and is purplish black in its dried form.

Kokum is also used for medicinal purposes. It is good for digestion and keeps the body cool in the hot Indian summer.

This recipe is from the coastal belt of Maharashtra. The beautiful pink colour of the rice and the little shreds of kokum which, when bitten, secrete a faint sour-tangy flavour make for a magical dish.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup basmati or long-grained rice
8 moist kokums, cut into juliennes
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt or to taste
1 tsp jaggery, grated
1 cup coconut milk ([p. 16](#))

Tempering

1 tsp clarified butter
A pinch of asafoetida powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp mustard seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds
1 (small) sprig fresh curry leaves
2 green chillies, finely chopped

METHOD

Wash rice and set aside to drain in a colander. In a pan, combine kokum with salt, jaggery and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water. Bring to a boil and continue boiling till the broth is reduced to 1 cup. Remove broth from heat, stir in coconut milk and set aside. Melt clarified butter in a large pan over medium heat. Add the remaining tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, add rice and sauté for 2–3 minutes. Stir in the kokum–coconut broth and cook over high heat, stirring occasionally till the liquid reaches the level of the rice. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook till rice is tender and fluffy. Serve hot.



Kanika Bhog

Rice & Split Moong Beans

SERVES 4

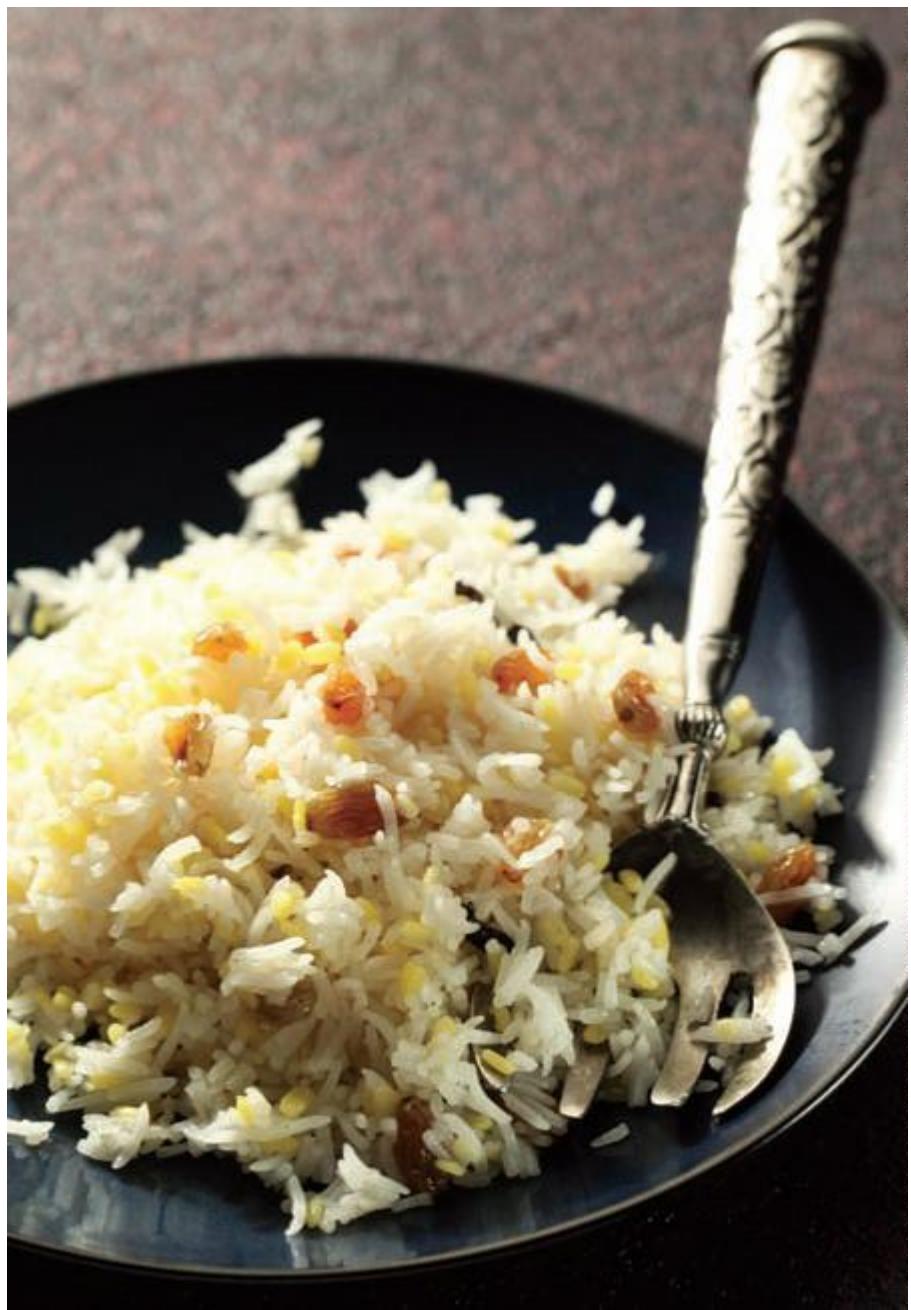
This is a dish made in Marwar as an offering to the gods. It is a kind of sweet khichdi made with moong beans. Serve it hot with a dollop of melted clarified butter and make the gods happy.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup basmati or long-grained rice
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup husked, split moong beans (moong dal)
- 3 tbsp clarified butter
- 2 pods black cardamom
- 4 cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tbsp raisins, seedless
- 1 tbsp sugar

METHOD

Wash rice and dal and soak in water for 1 hour. Drain in a colander. Melt 2 tbsp of clarified butter in a large pan over medium heat. Add cardamoms and cloves. When the spices crackle, add the drained rice and dal with salt and sauté for 3–4 minutes. Mix in raisins and sugar, and cook, stirring continuously till the sugar dissolves. Gradually stir in $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of hot water, a little at a time, mix well, cover and cook, stirring occasionally till rice and dal are tender and fluffy. Serve hot topped with remaining clarified butter.



Pakhala Bhaat

Fermented Rice with Yogurt

SERVES 4

I was curious to know what pakhala was as I had heard a lot about it but never tasted it. My wish was granted when I visited the Jagannath Puri Temple in Orissa and it was served in the temple meal. Pakhala is actually cooked rice that is fermented in water overnight. The rice is then mixed with yogurt and a tadka (tempering). It is not a fancy recipe, but it's comforting to eat and effective in preventing a heat stroke.

It tastes best when served with roasted vegetables or fried fish.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup parmal or basmati rice
2 cups plain yogurt, whisked
1 tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

1 tbsp oil
A pinch of asafoetida powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp fresh mango turmeric, cut into juliennes
2 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
1 sprig fresh curry leaves

METHOD

Wash rice and soak in water for 30 minutes. Drain and put into a pan with 2 cups of water. Cook over high heat till the water reaches the level of the rice. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook till rice is tender and fluffy. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Mix in 2 cups of water, cover and set aside in a warm place overnight. In the morning, drain rice and combine with whisked yogurt and salt. Mix well. Put oil in a small frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add the remaining tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, pour the tempering over the rice. Mix and serve immediately.



Darjeeling Chutneywalé Chawal

Darjeeling Toy Train Chutney Rice

SERVES 4–6

Darjeeling is one of the most picturesque places I've been to in India. Dense, evergreen forests, lush tea gardens, neat winding roads and a breathtaking view of the Himalayas.

The best thing in Darjeeling is the charming Toy Train. Listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, a ride on the little train is pure joy. It runs along the roads, through markets and shops. In fact, at one point I jumped out, bought a few fruits, jogged up to the train, which hadn't gone too far and jumped back in safely! I felt like a child again. My ride became more enjoyable as I was carrying a packet of the most delicious rice prepared by Joseph Rozario, a contestant on *MasterChef India*. Joseph is a focused young man and his ultimate goal is to fulfil his father's dream of opening a restaurant.

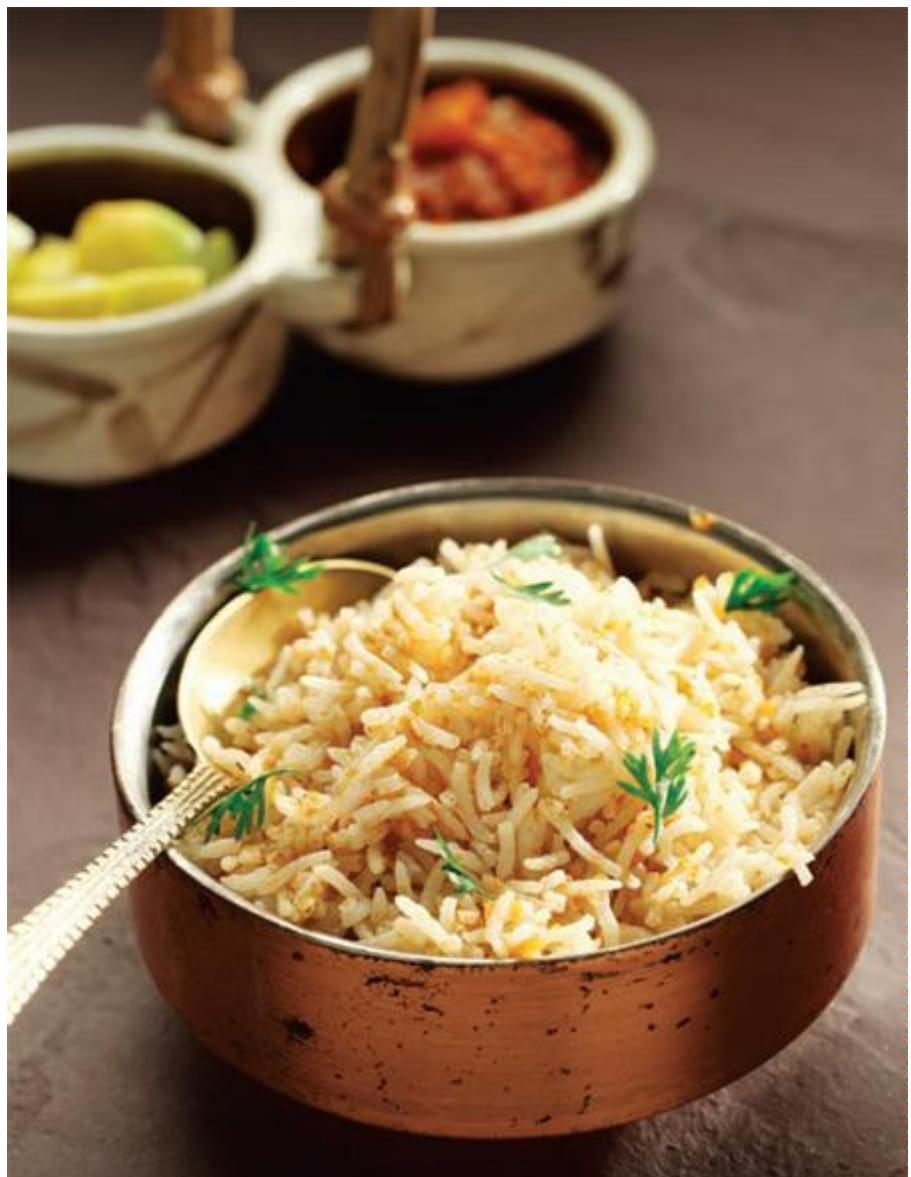
So here is Joseph's recipe ... I'm looking forward to seeing it on the menu of his restaurant the next time I'm in Darjeeling.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 (medium) tomatoes, kept whole
- 1 (small) green capsicum, kept whole
- 1 (small) onion, peeled and kept whole
- 4 tsp oil
- 3 dried red chillies
- 6 cloves garlic
- 5 black peppercorns
- 1 tbsp white vinegar
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1½ cups basmati or long-grained rice

METHOD

Brush tomatoes, capsicum and onion with 2 tsp of oil. Toast tomatoes, capsicum and onion individually, directly over a medium flame. Hold them with tongs and turn them periodically to ensure even roasting. Set aside to cool and remove the skin of the tomatoes and capsicum. In a blender, combine the roasted tomatoes, capsicum and onion with red chillies, garlic, peppercorns, vinegar, sugar and salt and grind to make a smooth paste or chutney. Wash rice and drain. Put the remaining 2 tsp oil in a pan over medium heat. Add the prepared chutney and sauté for 1 minute. Add drained rice and sauté for 3–4 minutes. Gradually mix in 3 cups of water and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally till rice is tender and fluffy. Serve hot with plain yogurt.



Machhli Alu Bukhara Biryani

Fish & Dried Plum Biryani

SERVES 4–6

When it comes to machhli alu bukhara biryani, seeing is believing. Three elements like fish, plums and rice, so different from each other in terms of texture and taste, converge to form something exquisite.

INGREDIENTS

Fish

½ cup dried plums
300 g pomfret fillets
3 tbsp clarified butter
2 (medium) onions, finely chopped
1 tbsp ginger–garlic paste
½ tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp coriander powder
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp salt or to taste
½ tsp black pepper powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
½ cup plain yogurt, whisked
2 (small) tomatoes, finely chopped
3 green chillies, slit lengthwise
2 tbsp fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
2 tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
1 tsp garam masala powder
A few drops vetiver (kewra essence; optional)

Rice

1½ cups basmati rice
1" stick cinnamon
4 cloves
4–5 black peppercorns
1 tsp salt or to taste

To assemble

4 tbsp clarified butter
A few strands saffron, dissolved in ¼ cup warm milk
1 (medium) onion, finely sliced and deep-fried till golden and crisp

METHOD

Soak plums in water for 1 hour. Drain and chop roughly. Wash fish and cut into large pieces. Melt clarified butter in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add onions and sauté till golden. Mix in ginger–garlic paste and cumin seeds and sauté for 1 minute. Add fish and cook for 2–3 minutes. Stir in coriander powder, turmeric powder, salt, pepper, chilli powder and yogurt. Mix well and cook for about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and green chillies with ½

cup of water. Cover and simmer till fish is just cooked. Mix in plums, mint leaves, coriander leaves, garam masala powder and vetiver. Cook for 2 minutes and remove from heat. Cover and set aside.

Rice Wash rice and soak in water for 3 hours. Drain rice and put into a large pan with 3 cups of water, cinnamon, cloves, peppercorns and salt. Place over medium-high heat and simmer, stirring occasionally till rice is just half cooked.

To assemble Grease the bottom of a large pan with clarified butter. Spread a third of the rice along the base and top with half the fish curry. Cover with another third of the rice and sprinkle half the saffron milk. Spread the remaining fish curry over the rice and top with remaining rice. Sprinkle the remaining saffron milk and the fried onions. Cover pan and place over low heat for 10–15 minutes till rice is tender and fluffy. Serve hot with plain yogurt.

Shirazi Pulao

Parsi Mutton Rice

SERVES 4–6

There is never a dull moment at a Parsi dining table. They can tell you the most hilarious stories and discuss serious, sensitive topics with the same fervour. And cooking, for them, is sacred. They love what they eat; and why shouldn't they, when their cuisine is ever so delightful? Here is one of those lip-smacking Parsi recipes.

INGREDIENTS

Garnish

- 15 dried apricots
- 2 tsp + 1 tsp sugar
- ¼ cup raisins, seedless
- 1 tsp white vinegar
- ¼ cup almond slivers, fried in clarified butter
- 3 eggs, hard-boiled and sliced
- 2 (medium) onions, cut into rings and deep-fried till golden and crisp

Spice paste

- 1" stick cinnamon
- 4 cloves
- 3 tbsp dried coconut, grated
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 1 tsp caraway seeds
- 4 flakes mace

Mutton

- 750 g mutton, boneless
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1½ tbsp ginger–garlic paste
- ½ cup clarified butter
- 3 (medium) onions, finely chopped
- 5 (large) tomatoes, finely chopped
- ½ tsp saffron, dissolved in 2 tbsp warm milk

Kebabs

- 250 g mutton, minced
- ⅓ tsp salt or to taste
- ½ tbsp ginger–garlic paste
- ½ cup fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- ¼ cup fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
- 3 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1 tsp fennel powder
- ¼ tsp star anise powder
- 8 slices bread, soaked in water, squeezed and crumbled
- 2 tbsp plain yogurt, whisked

3 (medium) eggs, well beaten

Oil for deep-frying

Saffron rice

1½ cups basmati or long-grained rice

½ tsp saffron, dissolved in 1 tbsp warm milk

¾ tsp salt or to taste

Spiced rice

1¼ cups basmati or long-grained rice

3 tbsp clarified butter

2 (small) onions, finely sliced

3 bay leaves

2" stick cinnamon

2 star anise

¾ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Garnish Soak apricots overnight in 2 cups of water with 2 tsp sugar. Drain and chop. Soak raisins overnight in 1 cup of water with 1 tsp sugar and 1 tsp vinegar. Drain.

Spice paste In a blender, combine spice paste ingredients with ¼ cup of water and blend to make a smooth paste.

Mutton Wash meat and cut into large pieces. Combine salt and ginger–garlic paste in a bowl and mix well. Add meat and mix till well coated with the marinade. Marinate for 30 minutes. Melt clarified butter in a pressure cooker over medium heat. Add onions and sauté till translucent. Mix in the ground spice paste and sauté for about 5 minutes. Stir in tomatoes and cook till mushy. Add mutton and saffron with the milk and sauté for 5–6 minutes. Pour in 3 cups of water and pressure-cook over low heat for 12–14 minutes after the cooker reaches full pressure. The mutton should be well cooked and there should be about a cupful of gravy.

Kebabs In a mixing bowl, combine mince with salt, ginger–garlic paste, coriander leaves, mint leaves, green chillies, fennel powder and star anise powder. Mix thoroughly. In a small bowl, combine the crumbled bread with yogurt and mix well. Add to the mince mixture with eggs and mix till well blended. Divide mixture into lemon-sized portions and shape each portion into a flattish ball. Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat. When hot, deep-fry the kebabs till golden brown and cooked through. Remove and drain on absorbent paper.

Saffron rice Wash rice and drain. Put rice in a pan over high heat with 2½ cups of water, saffron with milk and salt. Cook till the water reaches the level of the rice.

Reduce heat to low, cover and cook till rice is just tender. Remove to a large plate and fluff up with a fork.

Spiced rice Wash rice and drain. Melt clarified butter in a pan over medium heat. Add onions and sauté till translucent. Add rice, bay leaves, cinnamon and star anise and fry for 3–4 minutes. Pour in 2½ cups of water, and salt and cook over high heat till the water reaches the level of the rice. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook till rice is just tender. Remove to a large plate and fluff up with a fork.

To assemble Spread spiced rice in a large pan. Arrange the cooked meat over this and put half the kebabs on top. Cover with saffron rice and arrange remaining kebabs over it. Cover pan, put a weight on the lid and put the pan on a griddle over very low heat. Cook for another 30 minutes. Garnish with apricots, raisins, almond slivers, sliced eggs and crisp-fried onion rings. Serve hot.



Seviyan Gosht Biryani

Vermicelli & Mutton Biryani

SERVES 4

Seviyan, sevalu, semiya, shemai, sev—all these are different names for the same ingredient: vermicelli. I had never imagined that vermicelli could be used to make a biryani, and little wonder that it was invented in the royal kitchen of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Your guests will be unable to forget the moist, golden vermicelli and the juicy mutton with the faint scent of cinnamon.

INGREDIENTS

Spice powder

- 2" stick cinnamon
- 3 pods green cardamom
- 4 cloves
- ½ tsp black peppercorns
- ½ tsp caraway seeds

Vermicelli

- 1 tbsp clarified butter
- 250 g vermicelli

Mutton curry

- 500 g mutton with bones
- ½ cup oil
- ½ cup clarified butter
- 3 (medium) onions, finely sliced
- 1 tsp ginger paste
- 1 tsp garlic paste
- 4 green chillies, crushed
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- ½ cup fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- ½ cup fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
- ¾ cup plain yogurt, whisked
- 2 cups coconut milk ([p. 16](#))
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tbsp lime juice

METHOD

Spice powder Put a griddle over low heat and roast the spices separately till their fragrance fills the air. Let them cool, combine in a grinder and grind to make a fine powder.

Vermicelli Put the clarified butter in a large frying pan over low heat. Add vermicelli and fry very gently, taking care not to crush it till golden. Remove and set aside.

Mutton curry Wash the meat and cut into large pieces. Combine the oil and clarified butter in a heavy pan over medium heat. Add onions and sauté till golden. Mix in ginger paste, garlic

paste and green chillies and sauté for 1 minute. Add turmeric powder, chilli powder, half the coriander and mint leaves and the meat and cook for 3–4 minutes. Mix in yogurt and cook, stirring occasionally till all the moisture dries up. Stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water, cover and simmer till mutton is nearly cooked. Pour in coconut milk and bring mixture to a simmer, stirring continuously; do not boil. Mix in salt and cover meat with vermicelli. In a mixing bowl, combine the remaining coriander and mint leaves with the ground spices. Sprinkle over the vermicelli, cover and cook till a lot of steam forms in the pan and the vermicelli soften. Take care to ensure that the vermicelli do not become mushy. Serve hot, sprinkled with lime juice.



BREADS



Bepadiya Rotli

Double-Layered Flatbread

SERVES 4–6

Once I was having lunch at a friend's ancestral home in a small village called Chandod in Gujarat, right on the banks of the Narmada. As I broke off a piece of the rotli served to me, it opened up into two very fine, soft layers. The rotli, dipped in the naturally sweet aamras (mango pulp), is one of the yummiest things I've ever eaten.

INGREDIENTS (makes 8–12)

1¾ cups wholewheat flour (atta)
A pinch of salt
¼ cup oil
⅓ cup and extra rice flour
½ cup clarified butter

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, combine wheat flour with salt. Mix well. Gradually add water and knead to make a soft dough. Knead in all the oil to give the dough a soft, elastic consistency. Cover dough with a damp muslin cloth and set aside for 15 minutes. Divide dough into marble-sized portions. To shape the rotli, flatten two portions of dough into 1½" discs. Sprinkle a pinch of rice flour evenly over one disc, place the second disc on it and press together lightly. Place the disc on a lightly floured surface, sprinkle some more rice flour and, using a rolling pin, roll into a thin, 12" round rotli. Repeat for remaining portions of dough. Put a griddle over very low heat. When hot, place a rotli on it. Cook for about 5 seconds and turn rotli over. Turn the rotli every 5 seconds, pressing the edges lightly with a small wad of muslin cloth, till small brown spots appear on both sides and the rotli begins to puff up. Remove the rotli from the griddle and separate the two layers. (If the rotli is evenly rolled, the two layers will separate easily.) Brush the inside of each layer liberally with clarified butter and place the layers over each other, so that the buttered sides are on the inside. Serve hot.



Doli Ki Roti

Stuffed Multani Leavened Bread

SERVES 4

I remember my Nani (maternal grandmother) cooking this bread for me.

Originating in the Multan region of modern-day Pakistan, this is not a very well-known recipe. In the good old days, before we had modern kitchen equipment, the dough was kept to ferment in earthen pots called ‘dolis’. The recipe below is based on my memory of how Nani cooked it.

INGREDIENTS (makes 8–10)

Dough

- 1½ tbsp poppy seeds
- 4–6 cloves, crushed to a coarse powder
- 3 pods black cardamom, crushed to a coarse powder
- 2" stick cinnamon, crushed to a coarse powder
- A pinch of nutmeg powder
- ½ cup jaggery, grated
- 1 cup + extra wholewheat flour (atta)
- Oil for deep-frying

Filling

- 2 cups husked, split Bengal gram (chana dal)
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1½ tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp black pepper powder
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Dough Combine the spices and jaggery with 3 cups of water in a pan. Place over high heat and bring to a boil. Cover and boil for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and store in a warm place for 16 hours to ferment. When the spiced jaggery ferments, mix in flour, cover and set aside in a warm place for another 2–3 hours to ferment further.

Filling Wash the dal and boil it in 1½ cups of water till half cooked. Drain. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add dal, chilli powder, pepper powder and salt, and cook, stirring at regular intervals till mixture is dry. Cool to room temperature.

To make the roti When the dough ferments, knead again lightly and divide into large lemon-sized portions. Flatten a portion of dough with your fingertips and spoon about 1 tbsp of the filling in the centre. Bring the edges together to encase the filling and seal properly. Roll the dough into a ball and flatten it slightly between your palms. Place the flattened stuffed dough on a very lightly floured surface. Dust your hands lightly and pat the dough into a 5" flat disc, turning it around slowly to ensure an even, circular shape. Place the prepared roti on a clean, damp muslin cloth and repeat for the remaining dough and filling. Put oil for deep-frying in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat. When oil is hot but not smoking, slide in one roti and deep-

fry till golden. (If the roti has been flattened evenly, it will puff up while frying.) Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot or at room temperature.

NOTE: Doli ki roti can be stored in an airtight container, without refrigeration, for 3–4 days.

Ghadichi Poli

Layered Bread

SERVES 4

This is a typical Maharashtrian multi-layered bread that is extremely soft and fluffy. I remember putting a dollop of home-made clarified butter on a hot poli, rolling it and munching on it on my way to work. It is one of those breads which enhances the flavour of any curry you eat it with.

INGREDIENTS (makes 6–8)

2 cups + extra wholewheat flour (atta)
½ tsp salt or to taste
Oil as required

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, combine flour with salt and 1 tbsp of oil. Mix till it looks like breadcrumbs. Gradually add water and knead to make a soft, smooth, pliable dough. Cover and set aside for 15 minutes. Divide dough into lemon-sized portions. Subdivide each portion into half. To make a roti, roll out two small portions into flat 1" discs. Brush one with oil and place the second disc on top. Dust with flour and roll out into a 4" round roti. Brush with oil and fold into half to resemble a half-moon. Brush with oil again and fold it into half once more (the fold is called ghadi) to resemble a pie wedge. Dust with flour and roll out into a roti with a rolling pin. While rolling, keep shifting the roti around by ½" to get a round roti. Repeat for the remaining portions of dough. Put a griddle over medium-low heat. When hot, place a poli on it, reduce heat and cook till small bubbles appear on the surface. Turn poli over and cook the other side till done, pressing along the edges to ensure even cooking. Turn the poli over again and cook the first side till done. (If the poli has been rolled properly, it will puff up while cooking.) Brush with 4 tbsp clarified butter and serve hot with any curry.

Khoba Roti

Rajasthani Bread

SERVES 4

One of the episodes of *MasterChef India* was shot in a place called Suryagarh in Rajasthan. Though it was October, the place was still as hot as an oven. Everyone present was melting in the scorching heat. In spite of this, it turned out to be one of the best outdoor shoots ever. Reason? The amazing food of Rajasthan.

At lunch one day, we were served a Rajasthani thali—a platter of mouth-watering dishes. They served us this bread which was so beautiful to look at, I couldn't take my eyes off it. It appeared as though the dough was especially crocheted into the warm, golden bread. On inquiring I was told it was called khoba roti, which literally means an indented or pinched roti. It is the technique of pinching the bread before roasting it that gives it its name and appearance. All of us were so impressed that we included it in the show. Traditionally, khoba roti is made plain, but I like this spiced version as the leftover roti makes for a great teatime snack! This is about as artistic as a simple roti can get.

INGREDIENTS (makes 2)

- 2 cups wholewheat flour (atta), a slightly coarse variety
- ½ tsp red chilli flakes
- ½ tsp black peppercorns, lightly roasted and coarsely powdered
- 1/8 tsp fenugreek seeds, lightly roasted and finely powdered
- 1/8 tsp carom seeds
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- 6 tbsp clarified butter

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, combine all other ingredients with 2 tbsp of clarified butter. Mix well. Gradually add water and knead to make a soft, pliable dough. Cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside for about 30 minutes. Divide dough into half. Roll out each half into a thick 12"-14" round roti. Starting from the centre and moving outwards, pinch the surface of the roti all over, to make a design on it. Repeat for the second roti. Put a griddle over low heat. Place the roti, design side up, and cook over gentle heat. Drizzle 1 tbsp of clarified butter along the edges and brush the surface with another 1 tbsp. When one side is golden, carefully turn the roti over and cook the other side. Repeat for the other roti. Serve hot with ker sangri ([p. 72](#)). Also works well with tea.



Poee *Goan Bread*

SERVES 4

During my college days, Goa was my escape to freedom from Manipal. Since I was still a student, I would hunt for places that served great food at low prices. One of my favourite foods there was the poee bread. In Goa, it is called ‘the poor man’s bread’ (so, it suited me just fine!). Its texture is rough and grainy, not at all like the soft, cushiony ones you usually get. But in terms of taste, it is one of the most superb breads I’ve eaten.

INGREDIENTS (makes 6)

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dry active yeast
2 cups wholewheat flour (atta)
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup + extra bran
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour (maida)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste
2 tsp oil

METHOD

In a small mixing bowl, dissolve sugar in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of lukewarm water. Sprinkle yeast into the bowl, cover and set aside in a warm place for 10 minutes to froth up. In a large mixing bowl, combine wholewheat flour, bran and all-purpose flour. Mix thoroughly and make a well in the centre. Mix the yeast mixture with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water, pour into the well and gently mix it into the flour. When all the water is incorporated into the flour, turn the dough out on to a lightly floured surface and knead well for about 10 minutes, till the dough is soft, smooth and pliable. If it is too dry, knead with wet hands. If it is too sticky, dust it lightly with wholewheat flour. Cover dough with a damp muslin cloth and place inside an unheated oven for 1 hour or till it rises to double its volume. Remove from oven and preheat oven to 220°C. Line a baking tray with greaseproof paper. Knead the dough gently for about 5 minutes, then divide into 6 equal portions. Shape each portion into a round, flattish roll. Arrange rolls on the baking tray and brush very lightly with oil. Sprinkle with bran, cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside for 30 minutes longer. Bake for 10–15 minutes till brown. Remove and serve hot or cool.



Varanasi Poori

Fried Bread

SERVES 4

Varanasi or Banaras is the oldest surviving city in India and one of the oldest in the world. Situated on the banks of the holy river Ganga in Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi is considered by many to be India's holiest city.

Religious as they are, the people of Varanasi are equally (if not more) fond of good food. This recipe was given to me by a street vendor with whom I struck up a conversation. The Varanasi poori is a fried bread with the subtlest of flavours. It tastes excellent just by itself.

INGREDIENTS (makes 12–14)

Dough

2 cups wholewheat flour (atta)
½ tsp salt
Oil for deep-frying

Filling

3 tbsp clarified butter
1 tsp cumin seeds
2 pods green cardamom
1" stick cinnamon
¾ tsp coriander seeds
1/8 tsp asafoetida powder
⅓ cup husked, split black gram (urad dal)
A pinch of black salt
3 green chillies, crushed
½ tsp red chilli powder

METHOD

Dough In a mixing bowl, combine the flour with salt and 1 tbsp of oil and mix well. Gradually add water and knead to make a smooth, soft, pliable dough. Cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside.

Filling Wash dal and soak in water for 2 hours. Drain. Melt clarified butter in a frying pan over medium-low heat. Add cumin seeds, cardamoms, cinnamon, coriander seeds and asafoetida powder. When the spices crackle, add drained dal and sauté for 5 minutes. Mix in black salt, green chillies and chilli powder. Sauté for 2 minutes longer. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Grind the dal mixture to a coarse paste in a food processor.

To cook Divide dough into large lemon-sized portions. Divide filling into the same number of portions as the dough. Flatten a portion of dough into a flat disc, using your fingertips. Place a portion of filling in the centre of the disc and gather the edges around to seal in filling. Using a rolling pin, roll out a thickish, 4" round poori. Make all the pooris the same way. Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium-low heat. When oil is hot (but not smoking), carefully slide a rolled poori into it. Using a frying spoon, carefully drizzle the hot oil over

the poori in the kadhai. When the poori puffs up and turns golden, remove and drain on absorbent paper. Repeat for remaining pooris. Serve hot with any chutney or curry of your choice.



Balep Korkun

Monastery Bread

SERVES 4

Working in Bodh Gaya reminded me of working in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Two different kitchens in two different places, catering to different kinds of people; and yet, they were doing the same thing—feeding and nourishing people. Just like rotis are made in Amritsar, millions of warm breads called balep are made in Bodh Gaya and Dharmashala with a lot of love, compassion and a genuine feeling of sharing. The satisfaction and exhilaration I experienced while cooking in those kitchens, I can hardly put in words.

INGREDIENTS (makes 4)

2 cups extra all-purpose flour (maida) or wholewheat flour (atta)
1 tbsp baking powder
1 tbsp extra unsalted butter

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, sift flour with baking powder. Knead in about 1 cup of water to make a soft, smooth, pliable dough. Knead butter into the dough and work the dough on a very lightly floured surface till elastic. Divide dough into 4 parts, shape into flattish balls, cover and set aside in a warm place for 15–20 minutes. Using a rolling pin, roll each portion into a flat round disc about $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick. Brush a large frying pan with butter and put over high heat. When hot, reduce heat to medium-low, place a rolled bread on it, cover and cook for 15–20 minutes, turning over every 5 minutes, to ensure even cooking. Repeat for remaining dough. Serve hot, warm or cool.



Rajasthani Bajré Ki Roti

Hand-Pressed Millet Flatbread

SERVES 4

'Follow the truck drivers' was the policy I adopted when travelling throughout India. It is the truck drivers who, thanks to their extensive travelling, know the countryside inside out. One such truck driver led me to a village on the outskirts of the Thar Desert. There I saw a woman making hot, grey bajra rotis. I watched for some time. She was pressing and shaping the wet dough on the hot tava itself! Finally, I spoke to her, asked about the recipe and made a couple of rotis with her on the clay griddle. It was truly a one-of-a-kind experience.

INGREDIENTS (makes 7–8)

2 cups + extra pearl millet (bajra flour)

A pinch of salt

8 tbsp clarified butter

To cook

Clay griddle (optional)

METHOD

Sift flour with salt into a mixing bowl. Heat water till just warm. Gradually add water to the flour and knead to make a semi-soft dough. Divide dough into large lemon-sized portions and shape into flattish balls. To make a roti, put the clay griddle over low heat till warm. When the griddle is warm, remove from heat and place a portion of dough in the centre. Wet your palm and gently pat the dough flat, turning the griddle around slowly, to make a flat roti of about $\frac{1}{3}$ "– $\frac{1}{4}$ " thickness and 5"–6" diameter. While shaping the roti, keep pinching the edges together at regular intervals to stop the roti from breaking when cooked. (If using a normal griddle, dust a surface with flour, place the dough portion on it and proceed as described, lightly dusting the dough at regular intervals. Carefully lift the roti and place it on the warm griddle.) Cook till done on one side, gently pressing the edges with your fingertips to ensure even cooking. Carefully turn over and cook till done on the other side. When both sides are just cooked, remove roti from heat and place directly over a medium flame for 3–4 seconds. Remove and set aside. To make the remaining rotis, remove the griddle from heat and allow to cool slightly before proceeding. Brush with clarified butter and serve hot with bater shikar masala ([p. 146](#)) or any other curry of your choice.



Roomali Roti

Handkerchief Bread

SERVES 4

A traditional north Indian bread, the roomali roti is India's answer to the Italian thin-crust pizza. How can you ignore the art and skill that goes into making these translucent, handkerchief-thin rotis?

When tossed into the air, swirling and twirling, these rotis never fail to mesmerize onlookers, and you always hear a collective gasp of appreciation. Watching a roomali roti being made and then served neatly like a folded handkerchief is like watching a magic trick.

INGREDIENTS (makes 8)

1½ cups wholewheat flour (atta)
½ cup + extra all-purpose flour (maida)
¼ tsp salt or to taste
2 tbsp oil

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, combine the flours with salt and mix well. Mix in oil till thoroughly combined. Gradually add warm water and knead to make a smooth, soft, pliable dough. Cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside for 15 minutes. Knead dough again for about 5 minutes. Divide dough into lemon-sized portions. Invert a kadhai (wok) over low heat. Meanwhile, to shape a roomali roti, roll a portion of dough into a ball and flatten it between your palms. Place the flattened dough on a very lightly floured surface and, using a rolling pin, roll out into a flat 5" disc. While rolling out, ensure that the edges are thin and the centre is slightly thicker. Toss the disc in the air, in a circular motion (as for a pizza base) to stretch and enlarge the roti. (If you are not comfortable tossing the roti, it can be rolled out into a larger disc with the rolling pin.) Spread the roti on the hot, inverted kadhai and cook, pressing lightly with a wad of muslin cloth till roti is just cooked and small light brown spots appear on the surface. Remove, fold into four and serve. Repeat for remaining portions of dough. Serve hot with any vegetarian or non-vegetarian curry of your choice.

Naan

Soft Flatbread

SERVES 4–6

There is a tradition in India of offering a tiny ball of bread dough to the fire. It is a way of showing our gratitude to the source of energy that transforms the raw dough into a lovely, soft bread, which nourishes us.

Though the concept of the naan has its origins in the Middle East, it has become one of the most important breads in Indian cuisine, introduced to us by the Mughals.

INGREDIENTS (makes 12–14)

1½ tsp dry yeast granules
2 tbsp sugar
4 tbsp milk
1 (medium) egg, lightly beaten
4 cups + extra all-purpose flour (maida)
1½ tsp salt
6 tbsp oil

METHOD

In a large mixing bowl, combine yeast with 1 cup of warm water and ½ tsp sugar. Cover and set aside in a warm place for 10 minutes to allow the yeast to froth. After 10 minutes, stir in the remaining sugar, milk and egg and mix well. Sift in flour and salt and gently knead it in to get a soft, pliable dough. Turn out on to a floured surface and knead for 6–8 minutes.

Shape into a ball and brush the surface with oil. Place dough in a bowl, cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside in a warm place for 1 hour. When the dough has doubled in volume, knead it again and divide into lemon-sized portions. Shape each portion into a ball and place on a greased tray. Cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 230°C. When dough portions have risen again, roll out each portion (using a rolling pin) into flat ovals, about 3" wide and 6" long. Place naans on a greased baking tray and bake for 2 minutes. Brush lightly with oil and turn over. Bake for 2–3 minutes and brush lightly with oil again. Bake naans till golden and slightly puffed up. Serve hot.

Sheermal

Saffron-Flavoured All-Purpose Bread

SERVES 4

During my trip to Lucknow, I visited the famous bazaar of Hazratganj in the heart of the city. The little lanes and by-lanes there are crowded with stalls and handcarts selling Awadhi delicacies. One of the most favoured dishes is sheermal, a type of sweetened bread that is baked in a tandoor or oven.

Usually, warm water is used to knead the dough, but I prefer milk as it gives the bread a softer, fluffier texture. The saffron lends a most inviting aroma and gives it a lovely light orange colour. Guaranteed to win you tons of accolades from your family.

INGREDIENTS (makes 6)

1 tsp sugar
¼ tsp saffron
⅔ cup whole milk
1½ tbsp active dry yeast
1 egg, lightly beaten
4 tbsp clarified butter, melted
1½ cups + extra all-purpose flour (maida)
¼ tsp salt
2 tbsp icing sugar
15–20 raisins, seedless

METHOD

In a small mixing bowl, dissolve sugar and saffron in milk. Sprinkle with yeast, cover and set aside to froth in a warm place for 10 minutes. Whisk in beaten egg and 2 tbsp clarified butter. In a large mixing bowl, sift flour with salt and icing sugar. Make a well in the centre of the bowl and pour in the yeast mixture. Gently, mix the yeast into the flour and when completely incorporated, turn out on to a floured surface. Knead dough gently for about 10 minutes. Shape into a flattish ball, cover with a damp muslin cloth and set aside in a warm place for 1 hour. Meanwhile, line a baking tray with greaseproof paper. Preheat oven to 230°C. Once dough is rested and has almost doubled in volume, knead it gently for about 5 minutes. Divide dough into 6 equal portions and shape each into a flattish ball. Place a portion of dough on a very lightly floured surface and put 4–5 raisins in the centre. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough into a disc of about 5" diameter and ½" thickness. Repeat with the remaining portions of dough. Place the rolled sheermals on the baking tray and bake for 6–8 minutes. Remove and brush lightly with remaining clarified butter. Serve hot with sultani dal ([p. 90](#)).



Pesarattu

Moong Pancake

SERVES 4

Whenever I see the pesarattu of Andhra Pradesh, I can't help but smile. Years ago, when I was still new to the US, I participated in a pancake-making competition. Some of the most talented names in the food industry were there and I felt nervous. A few minutes into the competition, I stopped cooking for a second and looked around. I could see the other chefs rolling out the thinnest crêpes I'd ever seen. I gulped. How was I going to compete with all these pancake experts?

The contest soon ended and after what seemed like an eternity, the judges reached my table. I watched with bated breath as they tasted my pancake. They seemed to like it. One of them asked me what I had to say about my dish. I replied, 'Once a pesarattu, always a pesarattu!' The judges and the other contestants burst out laughing, and, as I laughed with them, all my apprehensions melted away.

INGREDIENTS (makes 8–9)

- 1 cup husked, split moong beans (moong dal)
- 1" piece ginger, roughly chopped
- 2 green chillies, roughly chopped
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- 1 (large) onion, grated
- 1 tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- Oil as required

METHOD

Wash dal and soak in water for 4 hours. Drain dal and put into a grinder with ginger, green chillies, curry leaves and 1 cup of water. Grind to make a smooth, thick batter. Remove into a bowl, and if too thick, whisk in some water. It should have the consistency of a cake batter. Mix in onion, coriander leaves, turmeric powder and salt. Brush a flat griddle with oil and put over high heat. When very hot, reduce heat to medium-high and pour a ladle of batter in the centre of the griddle. Using a circular motion, spread the batter with the help of the ladle into a pancake. Drizzle about 1 tsp of oil along the edges and cook for 2–3 minutes till golden. Turn over and cook the other side, drizzling ½ tsp of oil. Remove to a plate and serve hot with putnis ([p. 224](#)). (Serve as soon as it is cooked, or it turns soggy.)



Sattu Paratha

Mixed Grain Flatbread

SERVES 4

Sattu is a coarse flour made of a variety of roasted grains and pulses. It's a staple flour of Bihar and this spicy paratha is quite popular there. There are several versions of sattu; this one uses roasted Bengal gram or kala chana.

INGREDIENTS (makes 6–8)

Dough

- 1½ cups + extra wholewheat flour (atta)
- 2 tbsp + extra oil

Filling

- 1 cup sattu flour made with Bengal gram kala chana ([p. 102](#)) made with Bengal gram (kala chana)
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- 1 (large) onion, grated
- 1½" piece ginger, finely grated
- 1 tbsp ready-made chilli pickle spice
- mix or any spicy chutney
- 3 tbsp fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp carom seeds
- 1 tsp dried mango powder
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Dough In a mixing bowl, combine flour with 2 tbsp of oil and mix till it looks like breadcrumbs. Gradually add water and knead to make a smooth, soft dough. Knead in ½ tbsp of oil. Cover dough with a damp muslin cloth and set aside.

Filling In a mixing bowl, combine sattu flour with mustard oil and mix till it looks like breadcrumbs. Mix in the remaining ingredients and knead till the moisture from the onion binds everything together.

To cook Divide dough and filling into lemon-sized portions. Roll out a portion of dough into a small, flat 2" disc. Place a portion of filling in the centre and gather the dough around it to seal the filling inside. Shape the stuffed dough into a ball, place on a dusted rolling board and flatten it slightly with your hands. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough into a 6"-8" round paratha, taking care to roll it evenly and ensuring that the dough is not punctured. Dust lightly with flour and set aside. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling. Put a griddle over medium-low heat and brush with oil. When hot, place a paratha on it, cook for 10 seconds and turn over. Cook for 10 seconds on the other side. Brush with oil, turn again and cook till done on both sides. Repeat for remaining parathas. Serve hot with Bodh Gaya's tomato chutney ([p. 231](#)). You can also spread butter on them if you like.

Kori Roti

Rice Paste Flatbread

SERVES 4–6

A kori roti is actually a roti eaten with kori (chicken). I came across this unique recipe during a visit to Mangalore. These rotis are not the usual soft, round ones. They are made of rice paste and are spread out to dry. Once dried, they form crisp sheets that are then broken into pieces. When soaked into the spicy gravy of the chicken, these rotis absorb all the flavours of the curry and become soft. The magical transformation of the hard, crisp rice sheet into a thin, soft bread continues to amaze me.

INGREDIENTS (makes 12–14)

2 cups rice
¾ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Wash rice and soak it in water for 4 hours. Drain. In a grinder, combine the drained rice with ¼ cup of water and grind to make a fine, thick paste. If the paste is too thick to be ground, add more water, 1 tsp at a time to make grinding easier, but take care not to moisten the mixture too much. Remove into a bowl and mix in salt. Line baking trays with greaseproof paper. To shape a roti, spoon a ladle of rice paste on the paper and spread paste into a thin square sheet. Repeat with remaining batter. Place the trays in the sun for 4–5 days or till rotis are completely dry and crisp. Alternatively, dry out the rotis in a warm oven. Cover the rotis with another sheet of greaseproof paper and place in an oven at 40°C for 3 hours or till rotis are dry and crisp. Cool rotis to room temperature and store in an airtight container. Serve with chicken curry.

Rice Bhakri

Rice Flatbread

SERVES 4–6

I still remember the first time I ate this bread with pandhra and tambda rassa on the streets of Kolhapur. I loved it—the taste, the texture, the suppleness. The subtle taste of the bread absorbs all the flavours of the curries and chutneys it is eaten with. It acts as a good substitute for normal tandoori rotis for people with gluten allergies.

INGREDIENTS (makes 10–12)

¼ tsp salt
1 tsp oil
2 cups + extra rice flour

METHOD

In a pan, combine 2½ cups of water with salt and oil and bring to a boil over high heat. When the water is boiling rapidly, reduce heat to low and mix in the rice flour using a wooden spoon. When all the flour is mixed in, sprinkle 1 tbsp of water over the dough, cover and cook for 2 minutes till some steam forms in the pan. Remove dough to a lightly floured surface, wet your hands and knead the hot dough, dusting lightly at regular intervals to make a smooth, soft dough without lumps. Keep wetting your hands at regular intervals to avoid burning yourself. Divide dough into large lemon-sized portions and shape into flattish balls. Put a griddle over low heat. Meanwhile, place a portion of dough on a lightly floured surface and roll out into a disc of 6" diameter and ¼" thickness. Place the rolled bhakri (roti) on the griddle and cook over low heat till done on one side. Turn over and cook the other side till done, pressing the edges gently with your fingertips to ensure even cooking. When the bhakri is just cooked, place directly over a medium flame for 3–4 seconds. Turn over and cook for another 2–3 seconds to ensure perfect cooking, taking care not to burn the bhakri. Remove from heat. Repeat for remaining dough. Serve hot with pandhra and tambda rassa ([p. 25](#)) or any other curry of your choice.



Sanna

Steamed Rice Cake

SERVES 4

Now here is a bread that really sends your taste buds into overdrive.

Sanna is another Goan bread, which looks and tastes absolutely different from any you may have had so far. It is small and round, white in colour and looks almost like an idli. The most fascinating part of making sanna is that the rice is ground to a batter with toddy and not water!

Don't worry, the toddy does not make it intoxicating; it just acts as a catalyst for the fermentation process, making the faintly sweetened little breads beautifully spongy.

INGREDIENTS (makes 6–8)

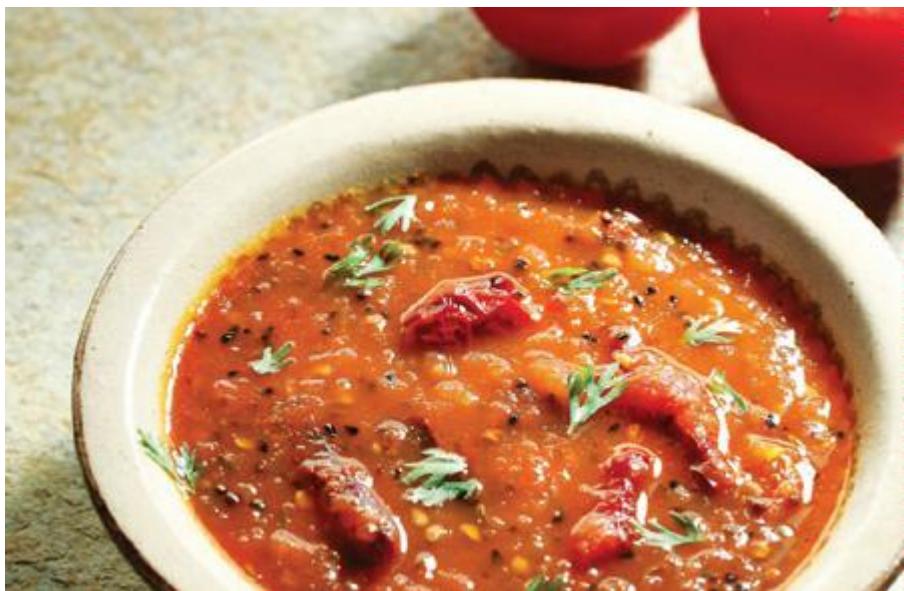
2 cups rice
2 cups toddy
2 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt or to taste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coconut paste

METHOD

Wash rice and soak in water overnight. Drain rice and grind with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of toddy to make a fine, smooth paste. Remove paste to a bowl and mix in remaining toddy with the sugar and salt. Cover and set aside in a warm place for 4–5 hours to ferment. Stir the fermented batter well and mix in coconut paste. Heat water in a steamer. Meanwhile, grease 3 ramekins (baking dishes). Pour batter into each ramekin till three-quarters full. Place in the steamer and steam for 15–20 minutes or till a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Serve hot with lobster chinchoni ([p. 110](#)) or chicken temperade ([p. 141](#)).



CHUTNEYS & MORE



Kolhapuri Chutney

Elephant Apple & Cumin Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

I was in Kolhapur for a summer learning how to make jaggery. It truly is an experience to see sugar cane juice being turned into a thick, golden liquid that solidifies to become jaggery. Since Kolhapur is known for its extremely spicy food, it was ironical that I was learning how to make jaggery there. Kolhapur has a big chilli and jaggery industry, and this delightful chutney contains both.

Kapittha is the Sanskrit name for elephant apple. It is a large, knobby fruit with an acidic-flavoured edible pulp. It smells slightly like an onion. The fruit is also used in traditional medicine.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 elephant apples, pulp extracted
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup jaggery, grated
- 2 tbsp red chilli powder
- 1 tbsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp black peppercorns, crushed
- 1 tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl and set aside for 10 minutes. When moisture accumulates and floats to the surface, blend to make a smooth paste. Store in a clean, dry, airtight ceramic jar and refrigerate for up to a week. This chutney is best eaten 24 hours after it is made as the flavour matures.



Putnis

Gram Chutney

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Udupi is a small, peaceful south Indian town that was initially a transit point for me between Mangalore and Manipal. But as I came to know of its history and legendary cuisine, it became an important destination for me.

Putnis is a typical udupi dish, traditionally made with yogurt. I've eaten this dish in many south Indian homes and have come up with my own version.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp husked, split small gram (putnis)
3 green chillies, roughly chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh coconut, grated
1 tsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

2 tsp oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
A pinch of asafoetida powder
1 (small) sprig fresh curry leaves

METHOD

Put a griddle over low heat and separately roast gram, green chillies and coriander leaves till their colour changes slightly. In a grinder, combine roasted ingredients with coconut, tamarind pulp and salt and grind to make a fine paste. Put oil in a small pan over medium heat. When hot, add the remaining tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, pour the tempering over the ground chutney and mix well.

NOTE: It is best eaten fresh, but may be stored in the refrigerator for not more than 2–3 days. Serve with idli, dosas, or even bread.



Kokum Amla Chutney

Kokum—Gooseberry Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

A savoury-sour condiment is always welcome. This recipe is inspired by a simple kokum chutney that I once had in someone's home in Karnataka. It is a great mixture of two very healthy ingredients—kokum and amla. Amla is also known as Indian gooseberry and has been used in Ayurvedic medicine for centuries.

An incredibly simple yet delicious chutney, the secret is to use fresh amlas when they are in season to get the maximum flavour. Kokum, apart from lending a tangy flavour, gives the chutney a beautiful bright red colour that makes it stand out in a plateful of other delicacies.

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup kokum
- 1 cup (small) amlas, pitted
- 1 tsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted
- 2 green chillies, roughly chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup jaggery, grated
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste

METHOD

In a blender, combine kokum, amla, cumin seeds and green chillies and grind to make a coarse paste. Remove to a bowl. Mix in jaggery and salt and stir till jaggery dissolves. Transfer to a clean, dry, airtight glass or ceramic jar and refrigerate to store for up to a week. Serve with hot roti or paratha.



Anardana Aur Mirch Ki Chutney

Pomegranate & Chilli Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

Kashmir is called ‘heaven on earth’ for a reason. And in spite of the ongoing tension and warlike conditions, it continues to bloom and spread its fragrance throughout the country.

This recipe comes from the Kashmir Valley and is just as beautiful as the place. Anar or pomegranate is available in plenty in Kashmir, thanks to all the trees planted there by the Mughal emperor Jehangir in the seventeenth century. Anar and chillies, sweet and spicy, soothing red and fiery green—need I say more?

INGREDIENTS

- 4 green chillies, roughly chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh mint leaves, roughly chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste
- Sugar to taste
- 1 (medium) onion, roughly chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
- 1 cup fresh pomegranate seeds

METHOD

In a blender, combine all the ingredients except the pomegranate seeds. Grind to a fine paste. Remove into a bowl and mix in the pomegranate seeds. Serve immediately.



Green Coconut Chutney

Fresh Coriander–Coconut Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

A simple coconut chutney served with almost all south Indian snacks.

INGREDIENTS

Chutney

- ¾ cup fresh coconut, grated
- 1 cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
- 2 green chillies, roughly chopped
- 1" piece ginger, roughly chopped
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- ½ tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

- 1 tbsp oil
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp husked, split black gram (urad dal)

METHOD

In a food processor, combine all chutney ingredients except salt and grind to make a smooth paste. If the paste is too thick, mix in ¼ cup of water. Remove into a bowl and mix in salt. Put oil in a small frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add mustard seeds and dal. When mustard seeds crackle, pour the tempering over the chutney. Mix well and serve.

NOTE: Ideally served fresh, this chutney can be refrigerated or frozen for up to 3 days, though the colour will change.

Red Coconut Chutney

Chilli–Coconut Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

Another version of the coconut chutney.

INGREDIENTS

Chutney

- 1 cup fresh coconut, grated
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
- 2 dried red chillies
- 2" piece ginger, roughly chopped
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp coriander seeds
- $\frac{1}{3}$ tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

- 1 tbsp oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp mustard seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp husked, split black gram (urad dal)

METHOD

In a food processor, combine all chutney ingredients except salt and grind to make a smooth paste. If the paste is too thick, mix in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water. Remove into a bowl and mix in salt. Put oil in a small frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add mustard seeds and dal. When the mustard seeds crackle, pour the tempering over the chutney. Mix well and serve.

NOTE: Ideally served fresh, this chutney can be refrigerated or frozen for up to 3 days, though the colour will change.

Pudina Chutney

Fresh Mint Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

A basic chutney that can be served with any starter or snack.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup fresh mint leaves, roughly chopped
¾ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
4 green chillies, roughly chopped
8 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
½ tsp salt or to taste
1 tsp lime juice

METHOD

Combine all ingredients except lime juice in a food processor and grind to make a smooth paste. Remove into a bowl and mix in lime juice.

NOTE: Ideally served fresh, this chutney can be refrigerated or frozen for up to 3 days, though the colour will change.

Bodh Gaya's Tomato Chutney

Sweet & Sour Spicy Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

I was visiting Bihar to attend the Kalachakra Puja at Bodh Gaya in January 2011. The Kalachakra tradition revolves around the concept of time (kaala) and cycles (chakra): from the cycles of the planets to the cycles of human breathing, it teaches the practice of working with the most subtle energies within one's body on the path to enlightenment with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This was a very special moment as this was the last puja led by His Holiness. During the puja, I ate a lot of paley bread (traditional Tibetan flatbread) and butter tea. One day, one of the devotees got some tomato chutney from home to be eaten with the bread and tea. Trust me, this was a marriage made in heaven!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp oil
- ½ tsp nigella seeds
- ½ tsp fennel seeds
- ½ tsp carom seeds
- ½ tsp fenugreek seeds
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- 4 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
- 6 (large) tomatoes, puréed
- ¾ tsp salt or to taste
- 6 tbsp sugar

METHOD

Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add all whole spices together and sauté for about 30 seconds. Pour in puréed tomatoes and cook over medium heat till chutney thickens. Remove from heat, mix in salt and sugar, and stir till sugar dissolves. Remove into a clean, dry, airtight glass or ceramic jar and refrigerate to store for up to a week.

Tomato Khatta

Tomato Chutney

MAKES 1 CUP

My first reaction, when I tasted this dish at the Jagannath Puri Temple in Orissa, was, ‘Whoa! The gods here sure are lucky!’ Tomato khatta is a popular temple side dish. No festive celebration is complete without it. Long after my journey through Orissa ended, the taste of that heavenly chutney still lingered on my palate. But no matter how hard I tried, I just could not find the exact temple recipe. Then the gods smiled on me.

I met Chef Dhawal Karandikar at Hotel Trident in Mumbai, from whom I finally got the authentic recipe. The sourness of the tomatoes coupled with a tinge of sweetness from the jaggery and dates makes for a fantastic accompaniment to any meal.

INGREDIENTS

1½ tsp oil
½ tsp cumin seeds
2 dried red chillies, torn to pieces
1 sprig fresh curry leaves
1½ tsp fresh mango ginger, crushed
2 (medium) tomatoes, finely chopped
½ tsp salt or to taste
¼ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
2 tbsp jaggery, grated
1 tbsp dried dates, finely chopped
1 tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated
1 tsp cumin powder

METHOD

Put oil in a small frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add cumin seeds, red chillies and curry leaves. When the spices crackle, add mango ginger and sauté for a few seconds. Stir in tomatoes, salt, turmeric powder and chilli powder and cook till tomatoes are mushy. Add jaggery, dates, coconut and cumin powder and cook till jaggery dissolves. Cool and transfer to a clean, dry, ceramic bowl or jar.

NOTE: It is best eaten fresh but may be stored in the refrigerator for not more than 2–3 days.



Shakarkand Ki Chutney

Sweet Potato Chutney

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

The legendary Kamalabai Ogale is credited as being the Mother of Maharashtrian cooking. I remember having her book for many years and not being able to follow it because I couldn't read Marathi. Then I met Mugdha Savkar, one of the research assistants of the food team on *MasterChef India*. At once, all the recipes came to life through Mugdha's translation of Mrs Ogale's book.

This chutney is generally made on days of fasting by Maharashtrian women, when they do not consume any grains. Even otherwise, it acts as a delicious accompaniment to a variety of dishes. To describe the recipe in Kamalabai's words —it is simply 'ruchkar'!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 (medium) sweet potatoes, sliced
- 4 green chillies
- ¼ cup fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup peanuts, roasted and powdered
- ¾ tsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted
- 1 tbsp green mango, grated
- 1 tbsp fresh coconut, finely grated
- ½ tsp salt or to taste
- 1 tbsp sugar

METHOD

In a large mortar, combine all the ingredients except sugar and salt and pound to make a coarse paste. Remove to a bowl. Mix in salt and sugar and transfer into a clean, dry, airtight glass or ceramic jar. Refrigerate for not more than 2–3 days. Set aside for 30 minutes before serving. Serve with roti, paratha or any rice-based dish.

NOTE: This chutney will ooze moisture when refrigerated. Simply stir it well when serving.



Imli Ka Raita

Tamarind & Yogurt Relish

MAKES 1 CUP

This is one of my favourite recipes. The tamarind tree is considered sacred in Andhra Pradesh. It is believed that the original Vedas, the texts of knowledge of ancient India, were written and hidden under a tamarind tree in a place called Kandi Mallaya Palli in Andhra Pradesh. Tamarind was so important that, according to local traditions, the parents of a girl would never give their daughter's hand in marriage to a boy who did not have a tamarind tree in his backyard!

Despite knowing that tamarind was used elaborately in every meal, this dish came as a real surprise to me. At first the idea of mixing tamarind (which is sour) with yogurt (another sour ingredient) seemed a little strange. But just one spoonful of the raita left me drooling for more. Tangy, creamy and easy to make, this lip-smacking raita is a winner all the way.

INGREDIENTS

Raita

- 1 cup plain yogurt, whisked thoroughly
- 2 tbsp tamarind pulp ([p. 13](#))
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp or to taste salt
- 4 tbsp sugar

Tempering

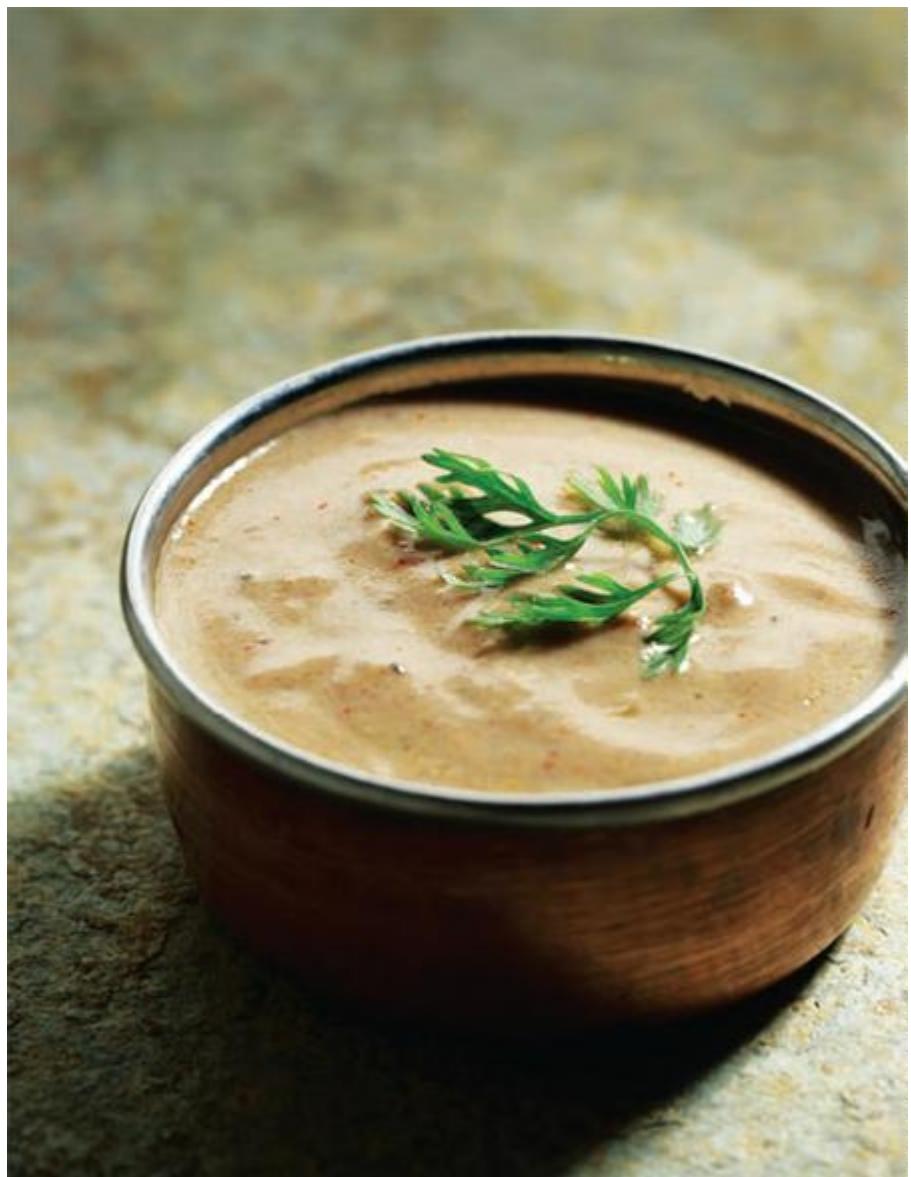
- 1 tbsp oil
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves
- 1 tsp ginger, grated

Garnish

- A few sprigs fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped

METHOD

In a mixing bowl, whisk all the raita ingredients together. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add the remaining tempering ingredients. When the spices crackle, pour the tempering over the prepared raita. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve immediately with hot roti or paratha.



Sandge

Sun-Dried, Marinated Pumpkin Peel

MAKES 8–10 PIECES

For us Indians, food is not merely a necessity for survival; it is a religion in itself. Indians respect their food, and so they make it a point to make optimum use of every fruit and vegetable that is available.

In Maharashtra, I saw rows of colourful cloth covered with white pumpkin peel, spread out in courtyards in the scorching heat to dry. Intrigued by the sight, I decided to ask the women around me about it. What I got was an age-old, truly mouth-watering recipe, which is made with leftover pumpkin peel after the flesh has been used!

INGREDIENTS

1 cup thick peel of white pumpkin (of 1 to 1½ kg), diced

Marinade

½ cup plain yogurt

¼ tsp asafoetida powder

½ tsp red chilli powder

½ tsp cumin seeds, lightly roasted and coarsely crushed

¾ tsp salt or to taste

To serve

Oil for deep-frying

METHOD

In a bowl, combine pumpkin peel with the marinade ingredients. Mix well and set aside to marinate for about 30 minutes. Arrange marinated pumpkin peel on a tray and brush with any remaining marinade. Place tray in the sun for 1–2 days to allow the pieces to dry thoroughly. Make the marinade again with the same proportion of ingredients. Marinate the dry sandge in it for 30 minutes. Again, arrange on a tray and brush with any remaining marinade to coat the pieces properly. Place the tray in the sun for another 2–3 days till the sandge are thoroughly dried. Remove and store in a clean, dry, airtight glass or ceramic jar for up to a year. To serve, put oil in a kadhai over medium heat. When hot, deep-fry the sandge till light golden. Serve sandge with any rice-based dish.

NOTE: White pumpkin peel can be substituted with red pumpkin peel, sliced carrots, French beans or bitter gourd slices.



Aloo Achar *Potato Pickle*

MAKES 1 CUP

India never ceases to surprise me. I always knew she was a treasury of chutneys and pickles and yet, when I came across this recipe, I was astonished. Making a pickle with potatoes? Now why didn't I think of that one! The potato is the most versatile of vegetables; you can use it in every kind of dish imaginable, then why not in a pickle? This achar is the perfect blend of flavours and leaves a nice, tingling sensation on your tongue.

INGREDIENTS

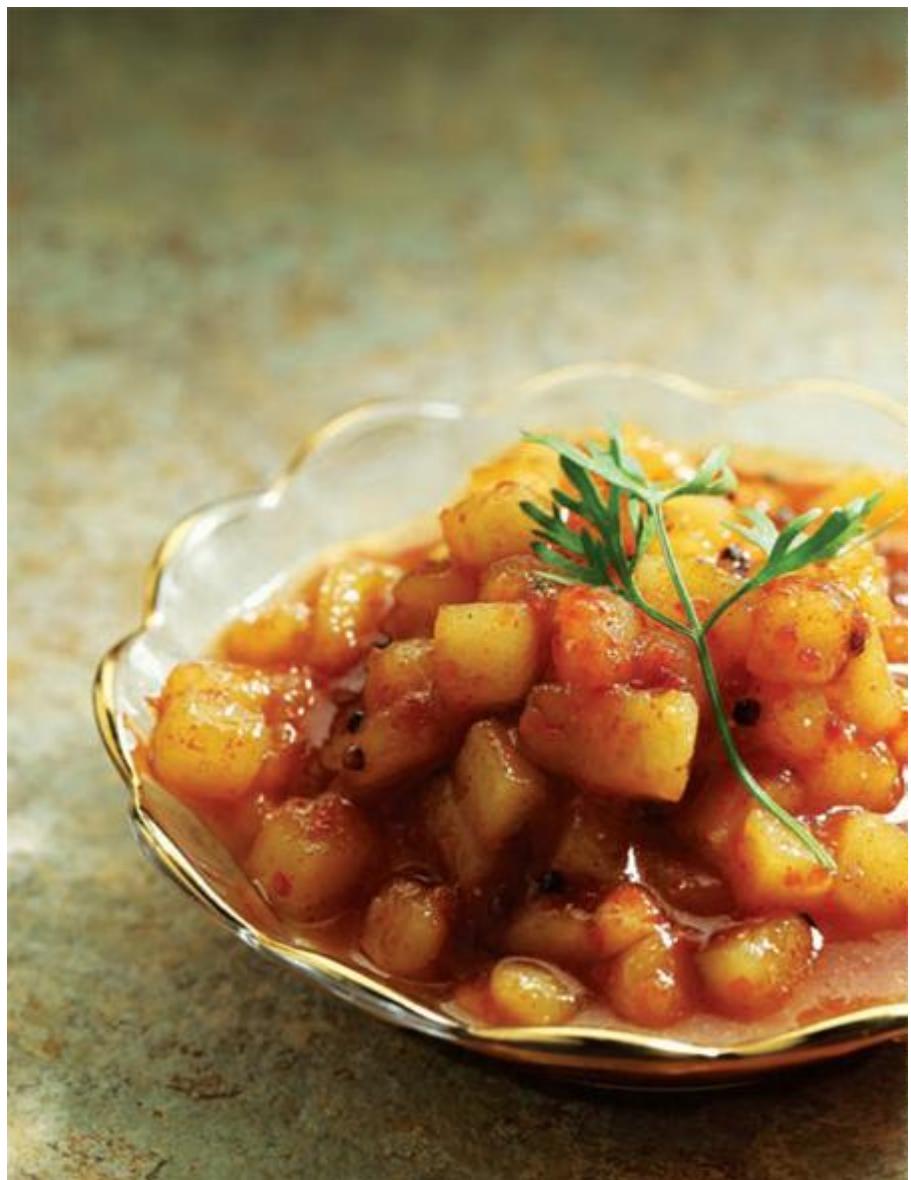
2 (medium) potatoes
2 tbsp mustard paste (commercial or [p. 84](#))
2 tbsp lime juice
1½ tbsp red chilli powder
½ tsp fenugreek seeds, roasted and coarsely powdered
½ tsp turmeric powder
2 tbsp jaggery, grated
¼ tsp salt or to taste

Tempering

2 tbsp oil
⅓ tsp asafoetida powder
½ tsp mustard seeds

METHOD

Peel potatoes and dice finely. Wash in several changes of water to remove all the starch. In a grinder, combine mustard paste with lime juice and grind very well till frothy. Remove into a bowl. Add chilli powder, powdered fenugreek seeds, turmeric powder, jaggery and salt. Mix well. Drain potatoes, pat dry and mix into the paste. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add asafoetida powder and mustard seeds. When mustard seeds crackle, pour the tempering over the potato mixture. Remove and transfer to a clean, dry, airtight glass or ceramic jar and refrigerate to store for up to a week. It can be eaten after about 30 minutes, though it does taste better once matured. Serve with hot roti or paratha.



Bombil Pickle

Bombay Duck Pickle

MAKES 1 CUP

Chef Michael Swamy, head of the Food Team on *MasterChef India*, was the first to introduce me to East Indian cuisine. He invited me to his home in Mumbai for lunch one day, where his cook, Angeline, served us some bombil pickle. I have tasted several versions of this dish since, and this is my version. Many people add brown vinegar to this pickle, but the addition of vindaloo paste gives the best result.

INGREDIENTS

Vindaloo paste (for about ¾ cup)

- 2 tbsp oil
- 20 dried red chillies
- 30 cloves
- 5 × 1" sticks cinnamon
- 30 black peppercorns
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 40 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 4 tbsp vinegar

Pickle

- 10 red Kashmiri chillies
- 1 tbsp tamarind pulp (p. 13)
- 10 black peppercorns
- 6 cloves
- 2" stick cinnamon
- 6 cloves garlic
- 1" piece ginger
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 (medium) onion, roasted over an open flame
- 2 tbsp brown vinegar
- Sugar to taste
- 1 tsp salt or to taste
- 4 tbsp oil
- 2 tbsp vindaloo paste
- 15 (dry) Bombay ducks, cut into 1" slices

METHOD

Vindaloo paste Put oil in a frying pan over low heat. When hot, separately fry all the spices in the order given till each one changes colour and becomes fragrant. Cool to room temperature, combine with vinegar in a grinder and grind to make a smooth paste. Use as required. This paste can be frozen for 5–6 months.

Pickle In a grinder, combine all ingredients except oil, vindaloo paste and Bombay ducks. Grind to make a fine paste without adding any water. Put oil in a frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add ground paste and 2 tbsp vindaloo paste and cook, stirring continuously,

till oil floats to the surface. Remove from heat and allow mixture to cool to room temperature. Mix fish into the cooked spice paste and fill into a clean, dry, airtight ceramic or glass jar. Pour the extra oil on top of the pickle before covering and store in a cool, dry place. Leave to mature for a week. This pickle will last for up to a year.



DESSERTS & SWEETS



Khubani Ka Meetha & Anar Ka Gola

Apricot Purée & Pomegranate Sorbet

SERVES 4

Qubani or khubani is Urdu for apricot. Khubani ka meetha is a Kashmiri dessert that numbs your senses with its nectar-like sweetness. On any special day, you'll find Kashmiri women busy stirring woks full of a deep burgundy substance, which is the sweetened apricot pulp.

Khubani ka meetha has now become a popular dish in Hyderabadi cuisine too. Traditionally served with almonds and cream, it also tastes great with ice cream. I, however, discovered that it tastes absolutely blissful with freshly made pomegranate sorbet, whose sweet, fresh lightness complements the creamier and heavier khubani perfectly.

INGREDIENTS

Pomegranate sorbet

2 cups fresh pomegranate juice
3 cups sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lime juice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp lime zest

Khubani

24 apricots, soaked in water overnight
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup heavy cream, whipped till soft peaks appear

METHOD

Pomegranate sorbet In a mixing bowl, combine pomegranate juice with sugar and whisk till sugar dissolves. Stir in lime juice and zest. Pour mixture in a metal bowl and freeze till hard. Remove, break into pieces and pass through a food processor till ice is just crushed. Return to the freezer and refreeze.

Khubani ka meetha Drain apricots. Remove seeds, crack them open and reserve the almonds. Purée apricot flesh in a blender. In a pan, combine puréed apricots with sugar and cook over low heat, stirring continuously till sugar dissolves and mixture turns into a thick syrup. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature.

To serve Crush the sorbet once more. Spoon khubani ka meetha on one side of a bowl. Put a scoop of pomegranate sorbet next to it. Drizzle with cream and sprinkle with reserved almonds. Serve immediately.



Chhena Poda

Fresh Cottage Cheese Cake

SERVES 4–6

Somewhere in Orissa, I once came across rows of stalls selling sweets. I had never seen anything of the sort before and was intrigued. My driver told me that we were in the famous Kalinga Sweet Market and that this was where I could get the best sweets in all of India, made by the most experienced and expert halwais (sweetmeat makers). I was deeply impressed and one by one began to taste whatever was available. The sweets were unbelievably superb! I can't remember another instance in my life when I ate so many sweets at one go.

Although I loved every single thing, my favourite was the chhena poda. The term chhena poda literally means 'burnt cottage cheese'. It is a cake made with cottage cheese which is caramelized to form a beautiful crust on the cake. The batter is wrapped in a sal leaf and baked in a charcoal oven for several hours to achieve a perfectly spongy and aromatic cheese cake.

So, take the next flight to Orissa and head straight to Kalinga Sweet Market. If you can't, well, here's the recipe for you.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups chhena
- 2 tbsp semolina
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup whole milk
- 15 cashew nuts, cut into pieces
- 1½ tbsp calumpong nuts (chironjee)
- 1½ tbsp raisins, seedless
- ½ tsp green cardamom powder
- 1 tbsp clarified or unsalted butter
- 1 (large) banana leaf (optional)

METHOD

Preheat oven to 110°C. In a mixing bowl, combine chhena, semolina and sugar and knead thoroughly. Mix in milk and beat to make a thick batter. Add nuts, raisins and cardamom powder and mix well. Grease a cake tin lightly. If using the banana leaf, cut off and discard the thick central vein. Cut the leaf into 12" long pieces. Wash and pat dry. Line the cake tin with the leaf pieces. Pour batter into cake tin. (Cover with more banana leaf pieces, if using.) Bake in the preheated oven for 1 hour or till the surface is golden brown and a wooden skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Remove from the oven and allow to cool in the tin. Turn out, cut into pieces and serve.



Khaja

Sugar-Coated Pastries

SERVES 4–6

I was on my way to the ruins of the ancient Nalanda University in Bihar, which was a famous centre for learning. On the way, I saw a stall selling khajas. Khaja is a type of crisp square croissant dipped in sugar syrup. They are incredibly crumbly and so delicious that I just had to munch on the khajas before setting foot into the realms of knowledge.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

2 cups + extra all-purpose flour (maida)
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup clarified butter

Paste

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup clarified butter
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour (maida)

Sugar syrup

1 cup sugar
4 cloves

To shape and cook the khaja

All-purpose flour (maida) for dusting
Clarified butter for deep-frying

METHOD

Dough In a mixing bowl, combine flour with clarified butter and mix with your fingertips till it looks like breadcrumbs. Gradually add water and knead to make a soft, smooth, pliable dough. Cover dough with a damp muslin cloth and set aside for 30 minutes.

Paste Meanwhile, melt clarified butter in a pan over low heat. Remove from heat, allow to cool slightly and mix in flour to make a thick paste. Cover and set aside.

Sugar syrup In a pan, combine sugar with 1 cup of water and cloves and bring to a boil over medium heat. Boil till sugar dissolves completely and the syrup achieves a two-string consistency. (To test, dip your forefinger into slightly cooled syrup. Gently rub your thumb on it and pull the thumb and finger apart. One to three strings should form.) Keep warm.

To shape and cook the khaja Divide dough into large lemon-sized portions and shape into cylindrical rolls. Place a roll on a lightly floured surface and using a rolling pin, roll into a strip about 10" long and 2" wide. Brush the thick paste over this strip and fold into half. Brush with more paste and fold over again. Repeat thrice. The final shape should be a square khaja. Repeat the shaping procedure for remaining dough. Melt clarified butter over medium heat in a kadhai (wok). Slide in 4–5 khajas at a time and fry till golden and crisp. Remove, drain on absorbent paper for a few seconds and add to sugar syrup. Immediately remove from syrup and place on a strainer (with a plate under it) to drain away extra syrup, thus preventing

the khaja from getting soggy. Allow to cool to room temperature before serving. Can be stored in an airtight container for up to a week.



Shakkarporeh

Deep-Fried Sugar Cookies

SERVES 4–6

Shakkarporeh is a very common Indian sweet, and you get it especially during Diwali. It is the first sweet I ever made so it is very close to my heart. There is also a salty version called namakpareh. Here is my favourite, the sweet version, for you.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup whole milk
½ cup sugar
½ cup clarified butter
1½ cups + extra all-purpose flour (maida)
Oil for deep-frying

METHOD

In a pan, combine milk with sugar and clarified butter and put over low heat. Stir continuously till sugar dissolves. (The milk may acquire a curdled look, but it is not spoilt.) Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Gradually mix in flour and knead to form a smooth, pliable dough. To shape the shakkarporeh, divide dough into large lemon-sized portions. Place a portion of dough on a lightly floured surface and with a rolling pin, roll out into a thick disc of about 4" diameter and 1" thickness. Dip a knife in the flour and cut the disc into strips about 1" thick. Cut the strips into 1" pieces and set aside. Repeat for remaining dough. Put oil in a kadhai (wok) over medium heat. When hot, add 10–12 shakkarporeh and fry, turning regularly till golden and crisp. Remove and drain on absorbent paper. Cool to room temperature and serve. Can be stored in an airtight container for up to a week.

Daulat Ki Chaat

Sweet Milk Foam

SERVES 4–6

Walter D’Rozario, my Chef de Cuisine at Junoon, told me about this dish when I first used a foamer and exclaimed that it was a superb modern technique. Walter corrected me, saying, ‘It’s been used in India for centuries, didn’t you know?’

Daulat ki chaat, also known as nimish, is a tremendously loved dessert made in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. In the freezing foggy mornings, you’ll find vendors (wrapped in layers and layers of clothing) busy making something that looks like yellow clouds in a vessel.

It is a light and foamy dessert, but actually quite filling. It’s so exciting to watch the vendor ladle out the foggy dessert into little glasses for customers to eat. Try it today and enjoy the sweet taste of the clouds.

INGREDIENTS

- 10 cups whole milk
- 3½ cups heavy cream
- 2 tsp (heaped) cream of tartar
- 1 cup caster sugar
- ½ tsp saffron, dissolved in 1½ tsp rose water
- 2 tbsp pistachios, slivered

METHOD

In a large mixing bowl, combine milk, cream and cream of tartar. Mix thoroughly, cover and refrigerate overnight. Once milk has chilled for about 16 hours, mix in 4 tsp of caster sugar and saffron (with rose water). Using an electric whisk or beater, beat the milk at very high speed till a rich foam begins to accumulate on the surface. When the foam is thick, spoon it off with a teaspoon or fork and place in a tilted tray. (Any extra milk will accumulate at the bottom of the tilted tray; keep putting this milk back into the bowl.) When the tray is full of rich foam, spoon the foam into small clay cups, bowls or glasses, lightly sprinkling it with caster sugar between spoonfuls. Continue beating and accumulating the foam till all the milk is used up. (In case milk does not foam too well, chill it in the freezer for a few minutes and continue.) When all the foam has been portioned, garnish with pistachios and refrigerate till serving time.

Anarsa

Rice Flour & Banana Dumplings

SERVES 8–10

Diwali preparations in India begin two months in advance. Houses are painted, walls are decorated, new clothes are bought, shops are stacked with firecrackers and an enormous variety of sweets and savouries are prepared.

One of the most important sweets of Diwali is the anarsa. It is very popular in central and western India. In some parts of Maharashtra, offering a ‘bhog’ of anarsa to the lord marks the beginning of the festival.

I had the anarsa in Bihar when I was in India one Diwali, thanks to the *MasterChef* shoot. Made of rice, banana and clarified butter, and topped with tiny poppy seeds, this sweet requires considerable practice to make. You need to get just the right consistency and put in the exact quantity of banana. The indication of a perfect anarsa is that its upper crust acquires a net-like texture, while the underside remains smooth and even.

Though the method is almost the same, the shape of the anarsa in central India differs from that in western India. In central India, it is round like a ball while in Maharashtra it is flatter.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups rice
1½ cups sugar, powdered
¼ cup whole milk
½ ripe banana, mashed
1½ tbsp poppy seeds
2 cups clarified butter

METHOD

Wash rice twice and soak in water for 3 days, draining and refreshing the water every day. On the fourth day, drain rice and set aside in a sieve for 20 minutes to drain thoroughly. Spread the drained rice on a clean muslin cloth or kitchen towel and set aside to dry for about 4 hours. Using a grinder, grind the dried rice to a fine powder and sift it through a fine-meshed sieve. In a mixing bowl, combine the rice powder with powdered sugar. Mix thoroughly, and when the mixture comes together like a dough, shape into a tight ball. Place the ball in an airtight container and set aside for 4 hours. Transfer dough to a wide bowl. Wet your palms with milk and knead dough till it holds together. Mix in ½ tsp of mashed banana at a time till dough is slightly sticky. The dough should not become soft or soggy. Divide dough into marble-sized pieces, shape into small balls and cover with a damp muslin cloth. To shape the anarsa, sprinkle a pinch of poppy seeds on a piece of clean, thick plastic and place a marble of dough on the poppy seeds. Using your fingertips, flatten the dough into a 2" disc. Repeat with 10 more portions of dough. Melt clarified butter in a kadhai (wok) over low heat. Meanwhile, shape a few more anarsas. Carefully slide an anarsa, poppy-seed side up, into the hot clarified butter and control the anarsa with a frying spoon to prevent it from spreading out too much. (When the anarsa is added to the clarified butter, it tends to spread,

due to the moisture of the sugar.) When the anarsa is golden and the surface resembles a fine mesh, remove and drain on absorbent paper. Cool to room temperature and serve.

NOTE: The prepared anarsas can be stored in an airtight container for up to 10 days. The dough (without milk) can be stored refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 2 months.

Pithagurir Payas

Rice Powder Soufflé

SERVES 4–5

A classic Assamese dessert, pithagurir payas is a dish to die for. Any good news, no matter how big or small, is celebrated by making a bowlful of this payas. It is easy to make and the slight hint of lime gives the dish an unexpectedly refreshing flavour.

INGREDIENTS

Rice powder

Rice as required

Payas

5½ + ½ cups whole milk

6 tbsp rice powder

6 tbsp sugar

1 tsp lime rind

4 tbsp heavy cream

Garnish

4–5 fresh lime leaves

METHOD

Rice powder Wash rice and soak for 1–2 hours. Drain. Spread over a clean cloth and leave to dry. Grind the dried rice to a fine or coarse powder, as required. (Rice flour cannot be used as a substitute.)

Payas Pour 5½ cups of milk into a pan over medium-low heat. Stir continuously with a wooden spoon till it comes to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring continuously till it reduces to about 4 cups. In a small mixing bowl, combine rice powder with ½ cup of milk and mix till very smooth. Gradually add this mixture to the hot milk and continue cooking till milk begins to thicken. Mix in sugar and lime rind and cook till mixture begins to coat the back of the wooden spoon. Remove from heat and let cool. Whisk cream till thick; fold it into the thickened custard. Pour into serving bowls, top with lime leaves and chill till set. Serve chilled.



Haldi Patra Pitha

Sweet Turmeric Rice Flour Dumplings

SERVES 4

In Orissa, when I first saw a group of women walking over rice in an open field, I couldn't believe my eyes. One of the women told me they were turning the rice to dry it well. I asked if I could do it with them and she readily agreed. So there I was, walking over rice, talking to those lovely women, turning rice and learning how to make this dish.

Haldi patra pitha is a sweet usually made for the festival of Prathamastami.

INGREDIENTS

Batter

- 1 cup husked, split black gram (urad dal)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup rice
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup semolina
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

Filling

- 1 tbsp clarified butter
- 2 cups fresh coconut, finely grated
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp nutmeg powder
- $\frac{1}{3}$ tsp green cardamom pods, crushed

To cook

- 15 fresh turmeric leaves

METHOD

Batter Wash dal and soak in water for 4 hours. Wash rice and semolina separately, till all starch is removed and the water runs clear. Soak separately in water for 4 hours. Drain dal, rice and semolina and combine in a grinder. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and grind to make a smooth, thick paste of the consistency of peanut butter. (Some more water may be added to aid grinding, but do not make the batter too moist.) Mix in salt, cover and set aside for 5 hours.

Filling Melt clarified butter in a frying pan over low heat. Add coconut and roast for 2 minutes. Mix in sugar and cook, stirring continuously till it dissolves and the mixture thickens to the consistency of a very soft fudge. Remove from heat and mix in nutmeg and cardamom powder. Cool to room temperature.

To cook Heat water in a steamer. Remove and discard stems from the turmeric leaves. Wash the leaves and pat dry. Spread batter evenly on the smooth side of the turmeric leaves and spread an even layer of filling over it. Fold each leaf vertically and place the folded leaves in the steamer in a single layer. Steam haldi patra pitha for 15–20 minutes and serve hot.

NOTE: The haldi patra pitha is served with the leaf intact. The diners peel the leaf off themselves.



Til Kut

Sesame Seed Fudge

SERVES 4–6

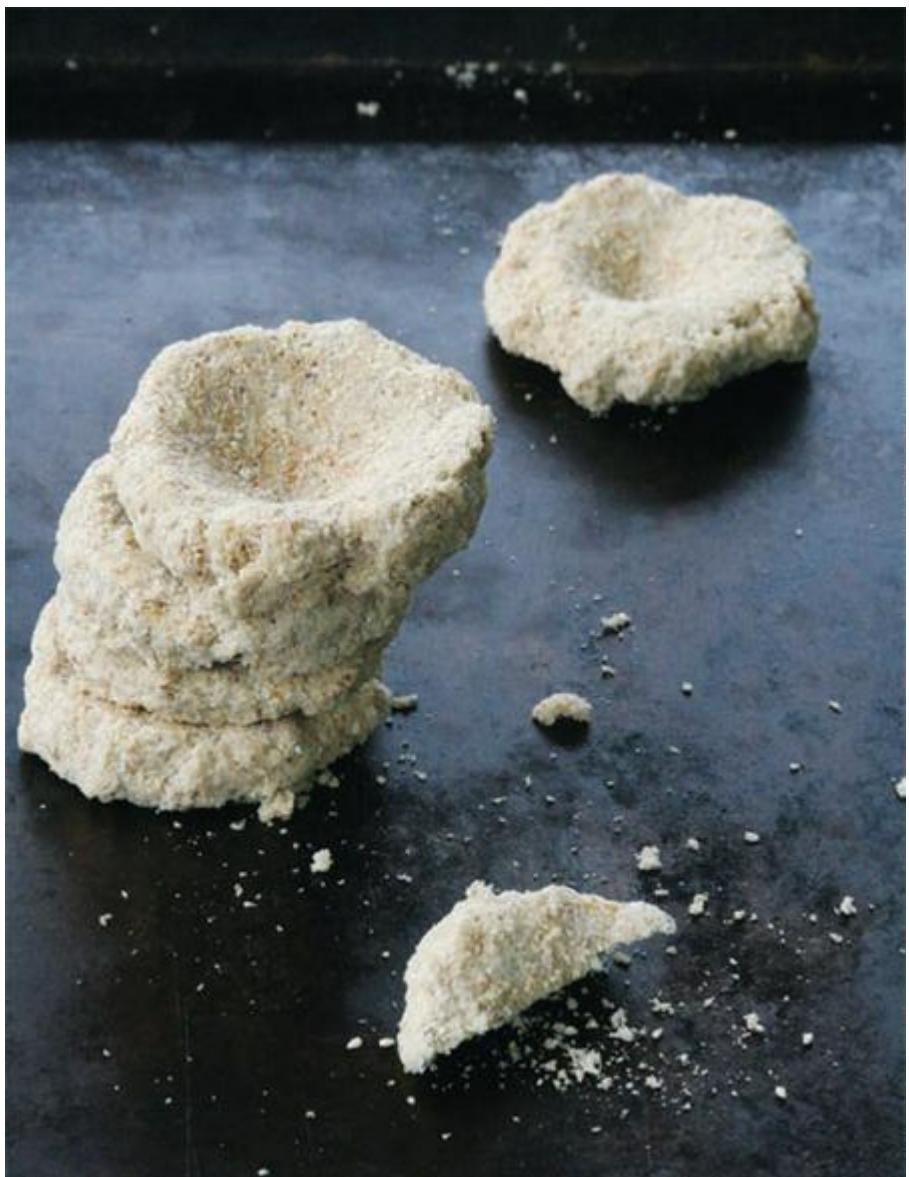
This sweet is found only in Jharkhand and Bihar. It is usually made in winter because sesame seeds provide the body with warmth and help combat the cold. There are two basic types of til kut: one is white, made with sugar; and the other is the brown variety made using jaggery. I learnt how to make til kut from a cook at a local store in Gaya. Hope you enjoy making it as much as I did.

INGREDIENTS

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup clarified butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup jaggery, grated
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
2 cups + extra white sesame seeds, lightly roasted and coarsely crushed

METHOD

Melt clarified butter in a heavy kadhai (wok) over low heat. Add jaggery, sugar and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and stir continuously with a wooden spoon till jaggery and sugar dissolve to form a syrup. Continue cooking the syrup till it reaches the colour and consistency of molasses. Turn the caramel out on a well-greased surface and allow to cool for a few seconds. Cover your hands with food grade plastic gloves and shape the hot caramel into a roll. Stretch the roll, fold in half and stretch again. Repeat the procedure in quick steps till caramel develops the consistency of fondant, or a thick, ribbon consistency. At this stage, knead in 2 cups of crushed sesame seeds till well incorporated into the caramel. Shape mixture into a long roll and cut into large lemon-sized pieces. To shape the til kut, roll a piece of the prepared sesame fudge into a ball and place on a surface dusted with additional crushed sesame seeds. Using a pestle, pound the fudge gently but quickly to make a depression in the centre, dusting with crushed sesame at regular intervals, to prevent the piece from getting sticky. Brush off excess sesame and keep the til kut aside to dry for 2 hours. Repeat for remaining fudge. Can be stored in an airtight container.



Andé Ka Halwa

Egg Fudge

SERVES 4–6

Indian culture for me is three generations living under one roof with love, understanding and in harmony. Everyone, old and young, shares their happiness, grief, tribulations and successes. And it is the women of the family who hold this bond tightly together in their able hands.

One such woman is Salma Shazia Fatima, the runner-up of *MasterChef India*. In spite of being a strong-willed and successful businesswoman, Shazia is very down-to-earth and family-oriented. And the thing that really floored me was her relationship with her mother-in-law. Their love for each other is so great that at the tasting table, Shazia's mother-in-law took one look at the dish and recognized it as Shazia's—without even tasting it!

This recipe is my tribute to all those women who, like Shazia, are role models for modern India. This is Shazia's recipe for andé ka halwa (egg halwa) and it's her mother-in-law's favourite dish.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp saffron, lightly roasted over very low heat
- ½ cup almonds, lightly roasted
- 250 g khoya/mawa, grated
- 1 cup sugar
- 6 eggs
- ¾ cup clarified butter

METHOD

In a grinder, combine saffron and almonds and grind to make a coarse powder. In another mixing bowl, combine khoya with sugar and stir till sugar dissolves completely. Do *not* cook the mixture. Preheat oven to 230°C and grease a baking tray. In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs till very light and frothy. Fold in the sweetened khoya and saffron–almond powder. Add clarified butter and mix thoroughly. Pour mixture into the greased baking tray and bake for 30–35 minutes or till the surface is golden and a wooden skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Turn out on to a wire rack to cool. Cut into pieces and serve.



The Team



Chef **MICHAEL SWAMY** is a food stylist, photographer and writer based in Mumbai, India. A graduate of the prestigious Cordon Bleu Culinary School, London, Michael has worked with several Michelin chefs. As a food writer, he writes and blogs extensively on food, and is the author of *The East Indian Kitchen* that won the Gourmand Award, 2011 for India, www.michaelswamy.com



An artist at heart and a graduate of the esteemed Sir J.J. Institute of Applied Arts, Mumbai, **PRAVIN POL** turned a childhood hobby into a flourishing career. After a stint in Dubai, Pravin returned to India where he took up food photography, www.pravinpolt.com



MUGDHA SAVKAR, a graduate of hotel management from the Naval Institute of Technology, Colaba, Mumbai, is a food stylist and food researcher. She has trained at places like the Orchid Hotel and the Oberoi Hotel. As a food researcher, she has been involved in the theoretical aspects of several projects.



Although she did her masters in numismatics and archaeology from Mumbai University, **MRUNAL SAVKAR** has always had a keen interest in food. This, coupled with a natural propensity for deep research, makes Mrunal a valuable addition to the team for book and article projects.



Dynamic and constant is the best way to describe **GANESH SHEDGE**. Starting his career as a production assistant on several reality TV shows, Ganesh happened to be a part of the Food Team on *MasterChef India*. His eagerness has led him not only to learn cooking, but also to styling. Ganesh has contributed immensely to the food trials done on the recipes for this book.





Acknowledgements

I dedicate this book to my mother and motherland—
my creator and my heaven

I thank each and every person who has shared the treasure of her heirloom recipes and trusted me so much for bringing these to the world.

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