

## vegetable biryani recipe

### Ingredients

For the rice:

- 2 cups aged basmati rice
- 8 cups water
- 1 tbsp oil or ghee
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 bay leaves
- 3-4 green cardamom pods
- 4-5 cloves
- 1-inch cinnamon stick
- A pinch of saffron strands, soaked in warm milk

For the vegetable curry (masala):

- 2 tbsp oil or ghee
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup mixed vegetables (carrots, potatoes, green beans, peas, cauliflower), diced
- 1 cup plain yogurt, whisked
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 medium tomato, chopped (optional)
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 2 tbsp biryani masala powder (or garam masala)
- 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, chopped

- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- Salt to taste

For assembly and garnish:

- 1 large onion, thinly sliced and fried until golden brown (birista)
- 2 tbsp ghee
- A pinch of saffron strands, soaked in 1/4 cup warm milk
- Optional: Toasted or fried cashews and raisins

## Instructions

### Step 1: Prepare the rice

1. Rinse and soak the rice: Wash the basmati rice in a colander under running water until the water runs clear. Soak the rice in cold water for at least 30 minutes.
2. Parboil the rice: In a large pot, bring 8 cups of water to a rolling boil. Add 1 tablespoon of oil or ghee, 2 teaspoons of salt, and the whole spices (bay leaves, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon). Add the drained rice.
3. Cook for 5–7 minutes, or until the rice is about 80% cooked. It should be tender but still have a firm bite.
4. Drain the rice: Immediately drain the rice in a colander and set it aside to cool slightly.

### Step 2: Make the vegetable curry (masala)

1. Fry the onions (birista): Slice the second large onion very thinly. Heat the oil or ghee in a heavy-bottomed pot or large pan. Fry the onion slices over medium heat, stirring frequently, until they are golden brown and crispy. Remove half of the fried onions and set them aside for garnish.
2. Sauté the aromatics: To the remaining onions in the pot, add the cumin seeds and whole spices (if using). Cook until they splutter and become fragrant. Stir in the ginger-garlic paste and sauté for another minute until the raw smell disappears.
3. Cook the vegetables: Add the mixed vegetables, turmeric, red chili powder, and coriander powder. Cook for 5–7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chopped tomatoes (if using) and cook until they are soft.

4. Add yogurt and herbs: Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the yogurt to prevent it from curdling. Return the pot to low heat. Add the chopped mint and cilantro, biryani masala, and salt. Mix well and cook for a couple of minutes until the mixture is thick.
5. Simmer the curry: Pour in about 1/4 cup of water and stir. Cover the pot and let the vegetables cook until they are tender but not mushy. The mixture should be thick, with most of the water absorbed.

#### Step 3: Layer and dum cook the biryani

1. Layer the biryani: In the same heavy-bottomed pot, spread the vegetable curry evenly at the bottom. Layer half of the parboiled rice over the vegetables.
2. Sprinkle with some of the chopped mint and cilantro, and half of the reserved fried onions. Add the remaining rice on top.
3. Add final touches: Drizzle the saffron-infused milk and the remaining ghee over the top layer of rice. Sprinkle with the remaining fried onions and toasted cashews.
4. Seal the pot: Cover the pot tightly with a lid. For the traditional "dum" cooking method, you can place a damp kitchen towel or foil over the pot before adding the lid to create a tighter seal.
5. Cook on low heat: Place the pot on a preheated tawa (griddle) over very low heat. Cook for 20–25 minutes. This slow-cooking process will infuse the rice with the spices and aromas.
6. Rest the biryani: Turn off the heat and let the biryani rest, covered, for at least 15 minutes before serving.

#### Step 4: Serve

1. Fluff and serve: Before serving, use a fork to gently fluff the biryani, mixing some of the vegetable curry with the rice. Scoop from the bottom to ensure each plate gets a mix of the flavorful vegetables and aromatic rice.
2. Serve hot with raita (yogurt with vegetables) or a side salad.