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## Saag Paneer (Spinach with Fresh Indian Cheese)

It's not hard to love North Indian *saag paneer*—meltingly soft spinach strewn with chunks of mild paneer, or fresh cheese—especially when scooped up with hot flatbread. *Saag* just means *greens* in Hindi, and though spinach is usually used in the U.S., in India *saag paneer* is also made with mustard, collard, fenugreek, or beet greens, and even amaranth or purslane. —Margo True, "Spicy Spinach" (May/June 2002)



*Credit: Todd Coleman*

SERVES 4

### INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CHEESE (or 7 oz. of store-bought paneer may be used instead):

8 cups milk  
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice  
6 tbsp. ghee or canola oil

#### FOR THE SPINACH:

4 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 (1") piece of ginger, peeled and chopped  
1 serrano chile, stemmed and chopped  
6 cups finely chopped spinach  
Kosher salt, to taste  
6 tbsp. heavy cream  
1/2 tsp. garam masala  
1/4 tsp. cayenne  
Indian flatbread or rice, for serving

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the cheese: Line a colander with 4 layers of cheesecloth, draping it over sides, and set in a sink. Bring milk to just under a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring often with a wooden spoon to prevent it from scorching. Reduce heat to medium-low, add juice, and gently stir until large curds form, about 30 seconds. Pour milk mixture into colander and gently rinse off under cold running water any foam and residual lemon juice from curds. Gather corners of cheesecloth together and gently squeeze out liquid. Tie opposite corners of cheesecloth together to make a sack, and hang it from a large kitchen spoon suspended over a deep bowl. Set aside at room temperature until excess liquid has thoroughly drained from cheese, about 1½ hours. Transfer sack to a plate, untie cheesecloth, and loosely drape corners over cheese. Place a large heavy pot on top of cheese, then set aside for 30 minutes to compress cheese. Remove pot and unwrap cheese. Cut into 1/2" x 1" pieces. Heat ghee in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Working in batches, add cheese, and fry until golden brown, about 6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer cheese to a plate and set aside; reserve skillet with ghee.

2. Make the spinach: Place garlic, ginger, chiles, and 1/4 cup water into blender and purée into a smooth paste. Return skillet with ghee to stove, and heat over medium-high heat. Add ginger-garlic paste, and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add spinach, salt to taste, and cook, stirring often, until spinach wilts, about 1 minute. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and cook, stirring often, until spinach is very soft, about 15 minutes. Stir in cream, garam masala, and cayenne.

3. Add cheese to skillet, cover, and continue cooking until liquid thickens and spinach is soft, about 15 minutes. Serve with flatbread or rice, if you like.

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