



# OPOS COOKBOOK 5 MINUTE MAGIC

Recipes that always work - for anyone, anywhere, anytime!

**RAMAKRISHNAN**  
WITH UBF AND OPOS SCHOOL STUDENTS



Join the **One Pot One Shot** Revolution today!  
Cook cleaner, greener, healthier, tastier and faster.



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Recipes that always work - for anyone, anywhere, anytime!

# RAMAKRISHNAN

WITH UBF AND OPOS SCHOOL STUDENTS



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To

The pioneers who believed in OPOS, even before it was born and the  
OPOStars who continue to shape it.

Amma and Karthik, generations pre and post OPOS.

The OPOS generation. May they never experience blood, sweat or tears in  
the kitchen.

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत् ।  
उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम्

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 17, Verse 10

Foods that are overcooked, stale, putrid, polluted and impure are for the ignorant.

**Raw Beans**



**Boiled**



**Flashed**



## FOREWORD

OPOS VS. MODERNIST CUISINE

OPOS - THE STORY

OPOS - COOK FREE!

OPOS IS NOT PRESSURE COOKING

OPOS PRIMER

OPOS - FIRST STEPS

OPOS – BOOK STRUCTURE

LESSON 1: STANDARDISATION

LESSON 2: FLASH

LESSON 3: MORE FLASH

LESSON 4: FLASH AND MIX: TAWA PULAO

LESSON 5: FLASH AND MASH: TOMATO SOUP

LESSON 6: LAYER AND FLASH: KURMA

LESSON 7: MORE LAYER AND FLASH

LESSON 8: LAYER AND FLASH STARCHES: PASTA ARRABIATA

LESSON 9: LAYER AND FLASH MEATS: PEPPER CHICKEN

LESSON 10: LAYER AND FLASH MEAT WITH STARCH: CHICKEN BIRIYANI

THE OPOS WAY:

OPOS VS. TRADITIONAL PRESSURE COOKING

"I WAS ALWAYS OPOSING, WITHOUT KNOWING THE NAME!"

OPOS - THE BEST WAY?

ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

THE BEAUTY OF SIMPLICITY!

THE TECHNIQUES BEHIND THE MAGIC

READY TO GO?

COMMON PROBLEMS AND FIXES:

BREAKFAST

OPOS BREAKFAST THEMES

AVAL NANACHADHU

MALAYALI MUESLI

ACHARI SEMIA

NORTH INDIAN PICKLE VERMICELLI

CHUDA DAHI

[BIHARI MUESLI](#)

**[CHUDA SANTULA](#)**

[ODIYA CURRIED MUESLI](#)

**[DADPE POHE](#)**

[MARATHI PRESSURE COOKED RICE FLAKES](#)

**[IDIYAPPAM PULAO](#)**

[TAMIL SPICED RICE NOODLES](#)

**[KANDA BATATA POHA](#)**

[MARATHI RICE FLAKES WITH POTATOES AND ONIONS](#)

**[MORE KALI](#)**

[SRIRANGAM CHEESECAKE](#)

**[MUESLI](#)**

[SWISS MIXTURE](#)

**[NO PREP UPMAS](#)**

[TAMIL SPICED PORRIDGE](#)

**[OATS PULAO](#)**

[NORTH INDIAN SPICED OATS WITH VEGETABLES](#)

**[PAKHALA BATH](#)**

[ODIYA FERMENTED RICE](#)

**[PONGAL](#)**

[TAMIL RICE AND LENTIL PORRIDGE](#)

**[RAGI KOOZHU](#)**

[TAMIL RED MILLET PORRIDGE](#)

**[RAM KICHIDI](#)**

[GUJARATHI RICE AND LENTIL PORRIDGE](#)

**[RAVA UPMA](#)**

[TAMIL GRITS PORRIDGE](#)

**[RAVA PONGAL](#)**

[TAMIL GRITS- LENTIL PORRIDGE](#)

**[RAVA PULAO](#)**

[NORTH INDIAN SPICED RAVA WITH VEGETABLES](#)

**[RAVA PALAK PULAO](#)**

[NORTH INDIAN WHEAT GRITS PULAO](#)

**[SABUDHANA KICHIDI](#)**

[NORTH INDIAN SPICED SAGO WITH VEGETABLES](#)

**[SAGO UPMA](#)**

TAMIL SPICED SAGO

**SEMIA UPMA**

TAMIL VERMICELLI PORRIDGE

**UGGANI**

KANNADA/TELUGU CURRIED PUFFED RICE

**LUNCH/DINNER**

**BHUGA CHAWAL**

SINDHI BIRIYANI

**BISI BELE BATH**

KANNADA LENTIL RICE

**BRINJI**

TAMINADU'S FLAVOURED RICE

**CARROT PULAO**

NORTH INDIAN CARROT FLAVOURED RICE

**CHOP SUEY**

CHINESE ALL IN ONE NOODLES

**CURRIED PASTA**

PASTA COOKED IN CURRY

**DRUMSTICK RICE**

DRUMSTICK FLAVOURED RICE

**DUM BIRIYANI**

MUGHLAI RICE CASSEROLE

**DUM NOODLES**

PRESSURE INFUSED NOODLES

**KATHIRIKKA SAADHAM**

CHETTINAD EGGPLANT RICE

**KARE RAISU**

JAPANESE CURRIED RICE

**KEERA AVAL SAADHAM**

TAMIL SPINACH – RICE FLAKES CASSEROLE

**KOOTAN CHORU**

TAMIL ALL IN ONE RICE

**KOTHU PAROTA**

TAMIL MINCED AND SPICED FLATBREAD

**LUNCHBOX IDEAS**

**MAC 'N' CHEESE**

[AMERICAN MACARONI WITH CHEESE](#)

**[MAVINAKAYI CHITRANNA](#)**

[KANNADIGA FRIED RICE](#)

**[MILLET BIRIYANI](#)**

[MILLET CASSEROLE](#)

**[MATAR PULAO](#)**

[NORTH INDIAN PEAS PULAO](#)

**[NEI CHORU](#)**

[MOPLAH MUSLIM GHEE RICE](#)

**[PAKHALA BHAT](#)**

[ODIYA FERMENTED YOGURT RICE](#)

**[PANZANELLA](#)**

[TUSCAN BREAD SALAD](#)

**[PAPAD PICKLE PULAO](#)**

[EMERGENCY FLAVOURED RICE](#)

**[PASTA ACHARI](#)**

[PASTA COOKED WITH PICKLING SPICES](#)

**[PASTA AGLIO E OLIO](#)**

[ITALIAN GARLIC AND OIL PASTA](#)

**[PASTA ALFREDO](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA WITH CHEESE SAUCE](#)

**[PASTA CARBONARA](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA WITH EGG AND CHEESE](#)

**[PASTA CON CIPOLLE](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA WITH ONIONS](#)

**[PASTA CON SPINACI](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA WITH SPINACH](#)

**[PASTA CON YOGURT GRECO](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA WITH GREEK YOGURT](#)

**[PASTA LAKSA](#)**

[MALAY PASTA WITH COCONUT MILK SAUCE](#)

**[PASTA POMODORO](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA WITH TOMATOES](#)

**[PESTO PASTA](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA WITH HERB SAUCE](#)

**[PUMPKIN PASTA](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA COOKED IN PUMPKIN JUICE](#)

**[PASTA FUNGHI](#)**

[ITALIAN PASTA COOKED IN MUSHROOM JUICE](#)

**[SAMBAR SAADHAM](#)**

[TAMIL SOUR LENTIL RICE](#)

**[SEMIA DUM BIRIYANI](#)**

[TAMIL VERMICELLI CASSEROLE](#)

**[TAHIRI](#)**

[ALLAHABAD VEGETABLE BIRIYANI](#)

**[THAKKALI SAADHAM](#)**

[TAMIL TOMATO RICE](#)

**[THAKKALI SAADHAM #2](#)**

[TAMIL TOMATO RICE](#)

**[THAKKALI SAADHAM #3](#)**

[TAMIL TOMATO RICE](#)

**[THAYIR SEMIA](#)**

[TAMIL SPICED VERMICELLI WITH YOGURT](#)

**[VANGI BHAT](#)**

[MARATHI EGGPLANT RICE](#)

**[VANGI BATATA BHAJI](#)**

[MARATHI EGGPLANT AND POTATO CASSEROLE](#)

**[AMBUR CHICKEN DUM BIRIYANI](#)**

[TAMIL CHICKEN – RICE CASSEROLE](#)

**[KACHI GOSHT BIRIYANI](#)**

[HYDERABAD MUTTON BIRIYANI](#)

**[SOUTH INDIAN CURRIES](#)**

**[SOUTH INDIAN CURRIES- A PRIMER](#)**

**[ACHINGA MEZHUGUPURATTI](#)**

[KERALA LONG BEANS STIR-FRY](#)

**[AIRAWAT](#)**

[KONKAN SWEET AND SOUR DIP](#)

**[ALLAM PACHADI](#)**

[TELUGU GINGER DIP](#)

**[ARACHU KALAKKI](#)**

[KERALA'S YOGURT DIP](#)

**[AVAKKAYA](#)**

[TELUGU MUSTARD MANGO PICKLE](#)

**[AVIYAL](#)**

[KERALA'S VEGETABLE MEDLEY](#)

**[AVIYAL BASE](#)**

[KERALA'S SOUR COCONUT SALAD DRESSING](#)

**[BAGHARA BAINGAN](#)**

[HYDERABAD STUFFED EGGPLANT CURRY](#)

**[BEANS UPKARI](#)**

[KONKANI BEANS STIR-FRY](#)

**[BHENDA SAGLE](#)**

[KONKANI OKRA CURRY](#)

**[CARROT BEANS PORIYAL](#)**

[TAMIL MIXED VEGETABLE STIR-FRY](#)

**[CAULIFLOWER MILAGU PERATTAL](#)**

[CHETTINAD CAULIFLOWER PEPPER STIRFRY](#)

**[CHAMMANTHI](#)**

[KERALA'S COCONUT SOUR DIP](#)

**[CHETTINAD CURRY BASE](#)**

[CHETTINAD MOTHER SAUCE](#)

**[CHETTINAD PARUPPU MASIYAL](#)**

[LENTIL MASH](#)

**[CHETTINAD KOSAMALLI](#)**

[CHETTINAD VEGETABLE MASH](#)

**[CHILLI CHUTNEY](#)**

[CHILLI DIP](#)

**[COCONUT CHUTNEY](#)**

[COCONUT DIP](#)

**[DALCHA](#)**

[DAKHNI MUSLIM PROTEIN STEW](#)

**[DALITOY](#)**

[KONKANI LENTIL CURRY](#)

**[DANGAR PACHADI](#)**

[TANJORE MARATHA YOGURT DIP](#)

**[DOSAKAYA PAPPU](#)**

[TELUGU CUCUMBER - LENTIL STEW](#)

**[ELUMICHAI OORUGA](#)**

[TAMIL LEMON PICKLE](#)

**[ENNA KATHIRIKKA KULAMBU](#)**

[TAMIL EGGPLANT SOUR STEW](#)

**[ENNA MAANGA](#)**

[TAMIL OILY MANGO PICKLE](#)

**[ERISSERI](#)**

[KERALA'S ROASTED COCONUT CURRY](#)

**[FOOGATH](#)**

[ANGLO INDIAN DRY CURRY](#)

**[GHOSALE SUKKE AND CHUTNEY](#)**

[KONKANI RIDGEPOD CURRY](#)

**[GOBI PALYA](#)**

[KANNADA CAULIFLOWER DRY CURRY](#)

**[GOTHSU](#)**

[TAMIL SOUR VEGETABLE MASH](#)

**[GUTTI MULAKKADA KURA](#)**

[ANDHRA STUFFED DRUMSTICK CURRY](#)

**[GUTTI VANKAYA KURA](#)**

[TELUGU STUFFED EGGPLANT](#)

**[HASI GOJU](#)**

[KANNADA FIVE TASTE CURRY](#)

**[INJI POONDU THOKKU](#)**

[TAMIL GINGER GARLIC SOUR DIP](#)

**[ISHTU](#)**

[KERALA STEW](#)

**[KAARA CHUTNEY](#)**

[CHETTINAD SPICY DIP](#)

**[KAARA KARI](#)**

[TAMIL SHALLOW FRIED POTATO CURRY](#)

**[KAARA KULAMBU](#)**

[CHETTINAD SOUR CURRY BASE](#)

**[KADALA KARI](#)**

[KERALA'S CHANNA MASALA](#)

**[KADALA MAAVU KULAMBU](#)**

[SOUR GRAM FLOUR STEW](#)

**[KADANJA PARUPPU](#)**

KONGUNADU CHURNED LENTIL STEW

**KALLA VEETU AVIYAL**

CHETTINAD VEGETABLE MEDLEY

**KARIVEPPILAI THOKKU**

TAMIL CURRY LEAF SOUR DIP

**KATHIRIKKA THOKKU**

TAMIL EGGPLANT SOUR DIP

**KAYAL PULI YANAM**

KAYALPATNAM'S SOUR THIN CURRY

**KAYI KURUMA**

MOPLAH MUSLIM VEGETABLE STEW

**KEERA MASIYAL**

TAMIL SPINACH MASH

**KEERA MOLAGOOTAL**

PALAKKAD SPINACH MASH

**KIZHANGU**

TAMILNADU'S SPICED TUBERS

**KOOTU**

TAMIL COCONUT – LENTIL- VEGETABLE STEW

**KOSAMBARI**

UDUPI SOAKED LENTIL SALAD

**KUMBAKONAM KADAPPA**

TAMIL RICH LENTIL STEW

**KURUKKU KAALAN**

KERALA CONDENSED YOGURT STEW

**KURUMA BASE**

NUTTY COCONUT MOTHER SAUCE

**MAMPAZHA PULISSERY**

MALAYALI MANGO SOUR STEW

**MAANGA PACHADI**

TAMIL FIVE TASTE MANGO STEW

**MAANGA THOKKU**

TAMIL MANGO Dip

**MAPILLAI SODHI**

TAMIL COCONUT MILK STEW

**MASOLU**

KONKANI MOTHER SAUCE

**MILAGU KULAMBU**

TAMIL IYENGAR PEPPER STEW

**MILAGU RASAM CONCENTRATE**

TAMIL PEPPER SOUP

**MIRCHI KA SALAN**

DAKHNI MUSLIM STUFFED CHILLI STEW

**MOLAGA THOKKU**

TAMIL CHILLI DIP

**MORE KULAMBU**

TAMIL YOGURT STEW

**MORU KARI**

KERALA BUTTERMILK STEW

**MUDDA PAPPU**

TELUGU MASHED LENTILS

**MUGA MOLE RANDAYI**

KONKANI SPROUTS STEW

**MUSHROOM KURUMA**

TAMIL MUSHROOM COCONUT CURRY

**NAADAN PARIPPU KARI**

MALAYALI DAL

**PACHA THAKKALI MASALA KOOTU**

TAMIL RAW TOMATO CURRY

**PACHI PULUSU**

TELUGU RAW TAMARIND STEW

**PANDU MIRPAKKAYA PACHADI**

ANDHRA'S RED CHILLI CHUTNEY

**PARANGIKKA PAAL KOOTU**

TAMIL VEGETABLE – LENTIL MILK STEW

**PARUPPU URUNDA MORE KULAMBU**

TAMIL YOGURT STEW WITH LENTIL DUMPLINGS

**PARUPPU URUNDI KUZAMBU**

TAMIL SOUR STEW WITH LENTIL DUMPLINGS

**PAZHAM PACHADI**

TAMIL FRUIT PRESERVE

**PAZHAM PULISSERY**

[KERALA'S FRUIT AND YOGURT STEW](#)

**[PAVAKKA THOKKU](#)**

[TAMIL BITTER GOURD SOUR DIP](#)

**[PITLA](#)**

[MARATHI GRAMFLOUR STEW](#)

**[PODALANGA KOOTU](#)**

[TAMIL SNAKE GOURD - LENTIL - COCONUT STEW](#)

**[PODI KARI](#)**

[TAMIL VEGETABLE CURRY WITH SPICED LENTIL POWDER](#)

**[PONGAL KUZAMBU](#)**

[TAMIL WINTER HARVEST STEW](#)

**[POONDU KULAMBU](#)**

[CHETTINAD SHALLOT SOUR STEW](#)

**[POONDU PULI THOKKU](#)**

[CHETTINAD GARLIC SOUR DIP](#)

**[POORI MASAL](#)**

[TAMIL POTATO CURRY](#)

**[POOSHINIKKA SAMBAR](#)**

[TAMIL SOUR LENTIL STEW WITH WINTER MELON](#)

**[PORIYAL](#)**

[TAMIL DRY VEGETABLE CURRY](#)

**[PULI INJI](#)**

[KERALA'S TAMARIND GINGER SOUR DIP](#)

**[PARUPPU RASAM CONCENTRATE](#)**

[TAMIL LENTIL STEW BASE](#)

**[PARUPPU RASAM CONCENTRATE #2](#)**

[TAMIL LENTIL STEW BASE](#)

**[PARUPPU THOGAYAL](#)**

[TAMIL SPICED LENTIL DIP](#)

**[PULIKAICHAL](#)**

[TAMIL SPICED TAMARIND SAUCE](#)

**[RASVANGI](#)**

[TANJORE MARATHI EGGPLANT SOUR STEW](#)

**[ROOM FRESHENER RASAM](#)**

[TAMIL THIN CURRY](#)

**[SAAGU](#)**

KARNATAKA'S COCONUT STEW

**SALNA**

TAMIL DAKHNI MUSLIM CURRY

**SAMBAR BASE**

**SOUTH INDIAN MASALA**

SOUTH INDIAN ONION-TOMATO SAUCE

**SUNDAL**

TAMIL SPICED LEGUME SALAD

**SOYA KURUMA**

TAMIL NUTTY SOYA CHUNKS STEW

**TAMBLI**

KONKANI YOGURT DIP

**THAKKALI KURUMA**

TAMIL NUTTY TOMATO STEW

**THAKKALI THOKKU**

TAMIL TOMATO DIP

**THAKKALI RASAM**

TAMIL THIN TOMATO SOUP

**THALAGAM**

TAMIL WINTER STEW

**THIKKA PILCHAR**

TAMIL SOURASHTRIAN RASAM

**THORAN**

KERALA'S VEGETABLE CURRY WITH COCONUT

**TIFFIN SAMBAR**

**TIRUVADHIRAI PUZHUKKU**

KERALA'S GRAIN FREE MEAL

**TOMATO PAPPU**

TELUGU LENTIL- VEGETABLE MASH

**TOMATO PAPPU #2**

TELUGU LENTIL- VEGETABLE MASH

**ULLI THEEYAL**

KERALA ROASTED ONION-COCONUT CURRY

**URULAI MILAGU KARI**

TAMIL PEPPER POTATOES

**USILI**

TANJORE BRAHMIN VEGETABLE - LENTIL CRUMBLE

**USILI #2**

**VADA KARI**

TAMIL LENTIL FRITTER CURRY

**VATHA KULAMBU**

TAMIL TAMARIND STEW

**VAZHAKKA THURUVAL**

TAMIL GRATED BANANA STIR-FRY

**VAZHAKKA PODIMAS**

TAMIL BANANA MASH

**VELLA POONDU OORUGA**

CHETTINAD GARLIC PICKLE

**VENDAKKA KULAMBU**

TAMIL OKRA SOUR STEW

**VENDAKKA MASAL**

CHETTINAD'S SPICED OKRA

**VENGAYA THOKKU**

TAMIL ONION SOUR DIP

**SOUTH INDIAN CURRIES – NON-VEGETARIAN**

**AASARI VARUVAL**

ERODE'S INFUSED OIL CHICKEN CURRY

**CHEMEEN ACHAAR**

KERALA'S PRAWN PICKLE

**CHICKEN CHETTINAD**

CHETTINAD CHICKEN CURRY

**CHICKEN SALNA**

TAMIL NUTTY CHICKEN CURRY

**GONGURA KODI**

TELUGU SOUR CHICKEN CURRY

**KOZHI KULAMBU**

TAMIL CHICKEN SOUR STEW

**MEEN KOLAMBU**

TAMIL SOUR FISH STEW

**MEEN MOILEE**

KERALA COCONUT MILK FISH STEW

**MEEN MOLAGITTADHU**

[KERALA PEPPERY FISH STEW](#)

[NANDU MASALA](#)

[CHETTINAD CRAB CURRY](#)

[PALLIPALAYAM CHICKEN CURRY](#)

[TAMIL SPICY CHICKEN CURRY](#)

[PEPPER CHICKEN](#)

[SURA PUTTU](#)

[TAMIL FISH SCRAMBLE](#)

[THENGA ARACHA MEEN CURRY](#)

[KERALA'S FISH IN SPICED COCONUT CURY](#)

[UPPUKARI](#)

[TAMIL SALTED MEAT DRY CURRY](#)

[NORTH INDIAN CURRIES](#)

[NORTH INDIAN CURRIES](#)

[A PRIMER](#)

[ACHARI ALOO PANEER](#)

[POTATO PANEER SPICY CURRY](#)

[ACHARI BHINDI KOFTA](#)

[STUFFED OKRA CURRY](#)

[ALOO BHORTHO](#)

[BENGALI MASHED POTATOES](#)

[ACHARI SUBJI](#)

[VEGETABLES COOKED WITH PICKLE GRAVY](#)

[ALOO CHANNA](#)

[POTATO CHICKPEA CURRY](#)

[ALOO GOBHI](#)

[POTATO CAULIFLOWER CURRY](#)

[ALOO JEERA](#)

[CUMIN SPICED POTATOES](#)

[ALOO MIRCHI](#)

[POTATO CAPSICUM CURRY](#)

[ALOO MATAR](#)

[POTATO GREEN PEAS CURRY](#)

[ALOO PALAK MATAR](#)

[POTATO SPINACH GREEN PEAS CURRY](#)

[ALOO POSTO](#)

BENGALI POTATO POPPY SEED CURRY

**ALOOR DUM**

BENGALI SEALED AND COOKED BABY POTATO CURRY

**AMBOL**

BENGALI SWEET AND SOUR CURRY

**AMTI**

MARATHI SOUR LENTIL STEW

**ARBI MASALA**

COLOCASIA CURRY

**BABYCORN HARA MASALA**

BABY CORN GREEN CURRY

**BAINGAN BHARTHA**

EGGPLANT MASH

**BAINGAN BORANI**

AFGHAN EGGPLANT YOGURT CURRY

**BANDHAKOPIR GHONTO**

BENGALI CABBAGE AND MIXED VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

**BHARWA KARELA**

STUFFED BITTER GOURD CURRY

**BHARWA KUNDRU**

STUFFED IVY GOURD

**BHARWA TAMATAR**

STUFFED TOMATO

**BHARWAN BHINDI**

STUFFED OKRA CURRY

**BHARWAN MIRCHI**

STUFFED CHILLI PICKLE

**BHAATHE**

BENGALI MASHED VEGETABLES

**BHINDI SUBJI**

OKRA DRY CURRY

**CHANNA MASALA**

PUNJABI CHICKPEA CURRY

**CHATNI**

BENGAL'S SWEET AND SOUR DIP

**CHARCHARI**

BENGALI CHARRED STIR-FRY

**CHOLER DAL**

BENGAL'S SWEET LENTIL CURRY

**CHUNDO**

GUJARATHI SPICED JAM

**DAHI BAINGAN**

KASHMIRI EGGPLANT IN YOGURT

**DAL**

LENTIL MASH

**DAL MAKHNI**

PUNJABI BUTTERY WHOLE URAD DAL CURRY

**DALMA**

ORIYA VEGETABLE- LENTIL STEW

**DOPIAZA**

MOGUL DOUBLE ONION MOTHER SAUCE

**GATTE KI SABJI**

RAJASTHAN'S GRAM FLOUR PASTA CURRY

**GREEN CHUTNEY**

INDIAN PESTO

**HARI MIRCH KA ACHAAR**

GUJARATI BOHRA CHILLI PICKLE

**HMARCHA RAWT**

MIZORAM CHILLI CHUTNEY

**KACHUMBER**

SIDE SALAD

**KADHI**

CHICKPEA FLOUR – YOGURT STEW

**KADAI PANEER**

STIR-FRIED COTTAGE CHEESE

**KADDU KI SABJI**

SQUASH CURRY

**KASUNDI**

BENGALI SPICED MUSTARD

**KHATTA MEETHA ALOO**

SOUR AND SWEET POTATO

**KORMA CURRY BASE**

NUTTY DAIRY BASED MOTHER SAUCE

**KUMBH DOPYAZA**

MUSHROOM ONION CURRY

**MAG NI DAL**

GUJARATI DRY LENTIL CURRY

**MAKHNI**

MUGHLAI BUTTERY TOMATO MOTHER SAUCE

**MALAI KOFTA**

COTTAGE CHEESE DUMPLINGS WITH CREAM

**MASALA**

ONION- TOMATO MOTHER SAUCE

**METHI MATAR MALAI**

CREAMY PEAS-FENUGREEK LEAVES CURRY

**METHI MATAR MASALA**

FENUGREEK – PEAS STEW

**MISAL**

MARATHI STARCHY SPROUTS STEW

**MIX VEG JALFREZI**

SPICY VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

**NAVRATAN KORMA**

MOGUL GEM BOWL

**NAWABI CURRY BASE**

ROYAL MOTHER SAUCE

**PADWAL BHAJI**

MARATHI SNAKE GOURD CURRY

**PANCHMELA DAL**

RAJASTHANI FIVE LENTIL STEW

**PALAK PANEER**

CHEESE AND SPINACH CURRY

**PANEER ALOO BHURJI**

POTATO PANEER SCRAMBLE

**PANEER BUTTER MASALA**

PUNJABI FRESH CHEESE CURRY

**PANEER KORMA**

MUGHLAI FRESH CHEESE, CREAMY CURRY

**PANEER MAKHANI**

BUTTERY CHEESE CURRY

**PAO BHAJI**

INDO - PORTUGUESE BREAD AND CURRY

**PASANDA**

MOGUL MOTHER SAUCE

**PINDI CHANNA**

RAWALPINDI'S DRY CHICKPEA CURRY

**RAITA**

INDIAN YOGURT DIP

**RASEDAR SUBJI**

VEGETABLE STEW

**ROGANI KUMBH**

SPICED MUSHROOM CURRY

**SAAG**

SPINACH MASH

**SAI BHAJI**

SINDHI SPINACH - LENTIL MASH

**SAMBHARO**

GUJARATI SPICED SALAD

**SHAHI BHINDI**

ROYAL OKRA CURRY

**SHORSHE DHAROSH**

BENGALI OKRA IN MUSTARD SAUCE

**SHUKTO**

BENGALI VEGETABLE MEDLEY

**SOJNEDATA CHORCHORI**

BENGALI DRUMSTICK STIR-FRY

**SUKHI SUBJI**

DRY VEGETABLE CURRY

**TAMATAR KI KADI**

TOMATO SOUR STEW

**TAMATAR KI LAUNJI**

RAJASTHANI SWEET AND SOUR RELISH

**USAL**

MARATHI SPROUTS STEW

**VANGI BATATA BHAJI**

MARATHI EGGPLANT POTATO CURRY

VARAN

MARATHI LENTIL CURRY

WHITE CURRY BASE

MOGUL WHITE MOTHER SAUCE

ZUNKA

MARATHI DRY CHICKPEA FLOUR CURRY

NORTH INDIAN NON-VEGETARIAN CURRIES

ACHARI GOSHT

PICKLED MUTTON CURRY

ACHARI MURG

PICKLED CHICKEN CURRY

ALOO KONI PITIKA

ASSAMESE EGG AND POTATO MASH.

ALOO MURGHI

POTATO CHICKEN CURRY

DIMER JHAAL

BENGALI EGG AND POTATO SPICY STEW

JUNGLI LAL MAAS

RAJASTHAN'S RED MEAT CURRY

MURG NAWABI

ROYAL CHICKEN CURRY

MURG PASANDA

MUGHLAI MILD CHICKEN CURRY

MUTTON VINDALOO

GOAN HOT AND SOUR MUTTON CURRY

OMELETTE KOFTA

EGG BALLS

PATRANI MACHI

SINDHI STEAMED FISH

PRAWN PICKLE

MANGALORE CATHOLIC PRAWN PICKLE

ROGAN JOSH

KASHMIRI MUTTON CURRY

RONGPU TAKENG

ARUNACHAL'S MASHED EGGS

## **SOUPS**

### **SOUPS**

[A PRIMER](#)

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[\*\*CARAMELISED CARROT SOUP\*\*](#)

[\*\*CREAM OF MUSHROOM SOUP\*\*](#)

[\*\*CREAM OF SPINACH SOUP\*\*](#)

[\*\*DAL SHORBA\*\*](#)

[MOGUL LENTIL SOUP](#)

[\*\*EGG DROP NOODLE SOUP\*\*](#)

[CHINESE EGG SOUP](#)

[\*\*FULL MEAL SOUP #1\*\*](#)

[\*\*FULL MEAL SOUP #2\*\*](#)

[\*\*GAZPACHO\*\*](#)

[SPANISH TOMATO - BREAD SOUP](#)

[\*\*MINESTRONE\*\*](#)

[ITALIAN BIG SOUP](#)

[\*\*POTATO SOUP\*\*](#)

[\*\*TOMATO SOUP\*\*](#)

[\*\*CHICKEN CLEAR SOUP\*\*](#)

[\*\*DRINKS\*\*](#)

[\*\*AAM PANNA\*\*](#)

[MARATHI MANGO DRINK](#)

[\*\*ADRAK PUDINA SHARBAT\*\*](#)

[GINGER - MINT SWEET SYRUP](#)

[\*\*CHAAS\*\*](#)

[SPICED BUTTERMILK](#)

[\*\*CINNAMON SHARBAT\*\*](#)

[CINNAMON INFUSED SUGAR SYRUP](#)

[\*\*DUM TEA\*\*](#)

[PRESSURE COOKED TEA](#)

[\*\*DUM SULAIMANI TEA\*\*](#)

[PRESSURE COOKED TEA](#)

[\*\*JEERAKA VELLAM\*\*](#)

[KERALA'S STERILIZED, SPICED WATER](#)

[\*\*LASSI\*\*](#)

YOGURT DRINK

**MANGO LASSI**

**MILKSHAKE**

LIQUID MEAL

**SATTU**

BIHARI GRAM FLOUR DRINK

**SATTU SHARBAT**

BIHARI GRAM FLOUR DRINK

**SAMBHARAM**

KERALA'S SPICED BUTTERMILK

**TORANI**

FERMENTED RICE DRINK

**DESSERTS**

**AKKARAVADISAL**

TAMIL IYENGAR GHEE AND JAGGERY RICE PUDDING

**HALWAS:**

**BADAM HALWA**

ALMOND FUDGE

**BEETROOT HALWA**

BEETROOT FUDGE

**GAJAR KA HALWA**

CARROT FUDGE

**LAUKI HALWA**

BOTTLE GOULD FUDGE

**KASI HALWA**

KASI'S PUMPKIN FUDGE

**KESARI/SOOJI HALWA**

WHEAT GRITS FUDGE

**BHAPA DOI**

BENGALI CHEESECAKE

**CASHEW- CHOCOLATE BURFI**

CASHEW FUDGE

**CHAKKA PRADHAMAN**

KERALA'S JACKFRUIT PUDDING

**CHAKKAVARATTI**

KERALA'S JACKFRUIT JAM

**CHAKKARA PONGAL**

TAMIL SWEET RICE

**CHOCOLATE FUDGE**

MILK AND CHOCOLATE FUDGE

**DOUBLE KA MEETHA/SHAHI TUKDA**

HYDERABADI BREAD HALWA/ ROYAL BITS

**DRY FRUITS LADOO**

INDIAN GRANOLA

**DULCE DE LECHE**

SPANISH MILK CANDY

**KASHMIRI KHEER**

KASHMIR'S SWEET RICE PORRIDGE

**POHA KHEER**

RICE FLAKES MILK PUDDING

**MAA LAADU**

TAMIL ROASTED GRAM BALLS

**MAMBAZHA PRADHAMAN**

KERALA'S MANGO PUDDING

**MANGO KESARI**

TAMIL FRUIT AND GRITS PORRIDGE

**MEETHE CHAWAL/ZARDA PULAO**

PUNJABI SWEET RICE

**ADRAK MURABBA**

MOGUL PRESERVE

**mysorepak**

MYSORE GRAM FLOUR FUDGE

**NAKED KEY LIME PIE**

AMERICAN EGG AND MILK LIME PUDDING

**PAALADA PRADHAMAN**

KERALA'S RICE PASTA PUDDING

**PANJAMIRDHAM**

TAMIL RAW BANANA JAM

**PARUPPU THENGA**

TAMIL CONE CANDIES

**PARUPPU PAYASAM**

TAMIL LENTIL PUDDING

**PAZHAM NURUKKU**

KERALA PLANTAINS IN SYRUP

**PHIRNI**

MOGUL MILK PUDDING

**PAZHA PRADHAMAN**

KERALA'S FRUIT PUDDING

**RABDI**

MOGUL CONDENSED MILK

**RASAYANA**

FRUIT IN COCONUT MILK

**SHRIKHAND**

SWEET YOGURT CHEESE

**TRIFLE**

LAYERED ENGLISH DESSERT

**QUBANI KA MEETHA**

HYDERABAD APRICOT COMPOTE

**OTHERS****BABA GHANOUSH**

ARAB EGGPLANT DIP

**5 MINUTE BABY FOODS: STARCHES****5 MINUTE BABY FOODS: PROTEIN****5 MINUTE BABY FOODS: FRUITS****BHEL**

MARATHI PUFFED RICE SALAD

**BOILED EGGS****BOILED MILK****FONDUE**

SWISS CHEESE DIPPED VEGETABLES

**HUMMUS**

ARAB CHICKPEA DIP

**JHAAL MUDI**

KOLKATTA'S SPICY PUFFED RICE

**KIRIBATH**

SRILANKAN MILK RICE

**KOFTA**

NORTH INDIAN DUMPLINGS

**LUNU MIRIS**

SRI LANKAN ONION DIP

**MAYONNAISSE**

FRENCH EGG- OIL EMULSION

**MILLETS****ORANGE MARMALADE**

CITRUS FRUIT PRESERVE

**PEANUT BUTTER****POL SAMBOL**

SRILANKAN COCONUT CHUTNEY

**SHAKSHOUKA**

ISRAELI POACHED EGG AND TOMATO STEW

**SICHUAN SAUCE**

CHINESE CHILLI- GARLIC SAUCE

**STOCK****SPROUTS****TORSHI**

PERSIAN PICKLES

**OPOS STAPLES**

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DESKILLED DOUGH MAKING FOR UNLEAVENED BREADS AND DUMPLINGS

**CARAMELISED ONIONS****DAL**

LENTIL MASH

**GINGER GARLIC PASTE****GHEE**

CONDENSED, CLARIFIED AND CARAMELISED BUTTER

**PANEER**

FRESH CHEESE

**PODI**

SOUTH INDIAN SPICED LENTIL POWDER

**RICE****TADKA**

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# Foreword

Peter Macinnis

In one sense, I must be one of the least likely choices to write a foreword to a book on anything to do with the kitchen arts. According to my wife, my favourite kitchen tool is the telephone which I use to call some local restaurant to order a home-delivered meal. I was once in charge of examining Home Science in the Australian state of New South Wales, but I am relatively inept in the kitchen.

When my friend Ramki came to stay with us in Sydney several years ago, we had been collaborating for some time by email. I had seen a picture of him with his family, he had seen assorted pictures of me and my family. That aside, our interactions were mainly about science animations that his team were preparing for the online encyclopaedia that I worked for in Australia. When he suggested a visit, we invited him to stay, and I met him at the airport.

I hadn't really expected somebody to come staggering out of the entry hall with quite that many condiments, spices and extra bits, but he came prepared to cook. Or rather, he came prepared to Cook. I watched, and I was amazed, and our house took on new and exciting smells. This was artistry of a sort that I had never seen before. I learned, and I fed delightedly. I even tried my hand, once or twice under his guidance.

He was a good teacher, and when Ramki returned to Chennai, we kept up our correspondence—though I'm afraid I still used to reach for the phone to get food. Then the company that employed me directly, and him as a contractor, fell into the hands of people with a regrettable attitude to paying debts. We both lost money, but I also lost my job. Unfazed, I went from writing for a salary to writing books about science and history.

Writing is one of those things that gets into your blood, and makes you want to share the infection. I was already an established author, so it wasn't as much of a struggle as it might have been. But when you are a bookish sort of person, it's hard not to encourage your friends, especially when they have a rare talent. I kept nagging Ramki to write a book of his recipes. He kept saying that he would.

It was annoyingly hard at first to get a publisher to pay attention to Ramki's ingenious approach, the work that you are holding in your hands. So it has given me a huge amount of pleasure to hear that Ramki has found a publisher who shared his vision.

It gave me even more pleasure when he asked me to write a foreword for his book. Ladies and gentlemen of the world, be prepared to encounter a work of verve, charm and brilliance, fully the equal of Sachin Tendulkar on a good day.

And now I look forward to the Australian edition.

# OPOS vs. Modernist Cuisine

Mankind has always tried to harness science to make cooking better. The first recorded instance of using science to improve cooking is in a 2200 years old papyrus, where the author talks about using a balance to find out if fermented meat was lighter than fresh meat.

30 years back, a small group of people in the West sought to redefine cooking with science. They discussed sauces, heat transfer, flavouring, textures and chemical reactions in cooking. They sought to harness advances in science to heighten our cooking experience.

These discussions happened at the eGullet forums and international workshops. Soon, this style of cooking had its own kit. Vacuum sealers, Anti-griddle, Whipping siphons. Some were borrowed from hospitals - Syringes, Ultra sound machines and Centrifuge. New pantry staples were proposed. Maltodextrin, Lecithin, Xanthan gum, Transglutamates, Liquid Nitrogen.

New techniques emerged : Gelling, Spherification, Sous vide, Flash freezing. All these techniques could be written on a single sheet of paper but were powerful enough to rewrite world cuisines.

Though some claimed this was nothing new, these techniques led to the rise of a whole new class of restaurants. They empowered a whole generation of chefs to reinvent traditional recipes. They put the fun back into eating out. These techniques created new tastes, colours, textures and flavours. Modernist Cuisine/Molecular Gastronomy was born.

15 years back, a small group of people in the East sought to redefine cooking with science. They discussed curries, heat transfer, flavouring, textures and chemical reactions in cooking. They sought to harness advances in science to empower anyone, anywhere, anytime to cook better.

These discussions happened at Chennai Food Guide, UBF and other food forums, beach cookouts and at occasional workshops. Soon, this style of cooking had its own kit. Measuring cups and scales, hand blender and weighing machine. Some were borrowed from hospitals - like the autoclave.

New pantry staples were proposed: Bottled tadka, dehydrated dal,

caramelised onion and tomato, curry bases.

New techniques emerged: Layering, Attalysis, Controlled caramelisation, Flash cooking. All these techniques could be written on a single sheet of paper but were powerful enough to rewrite world cuisines.

Though some claimed this was nothing new, these techniques led to the rise of a whole new class of home kitchens. They empowered a whole generation of home cooks to reinvent traditional recipes. They put the fun back into cooking at home. More importantly, they empowered anyone, anywhere, anytime to cook great food, almost instantly. These techniques intensified natural tastes, colours, textures and flavours. OPOS was born!



## OPOS - The Story

From a private message:

Member: I want to share this story I read in a book by Devdutt Pattanaik.

“When Valmiki completed his Ramayana, Narada wasn't impressed. “It is good, but Hanuman's is better”, he said.

“That monkey has written the Ramayana too?”, Valmiki did not like this at all, and wondered whose Ramayana was better. He set out to find Hanuman.

In Kadali-vana, grove of plantains, he found Hanuman's Ramayana inscribed on seven broad leaves of a banana tree. He read it and found it to be perfect. He couldn't help himself. He started to cry.

“Is it so bad?” asked Hanuman.

“No, it is so good!” said Valmiki.

“Then why are you crying?” asked Hanuman.

“Because after reading your Ramayana no one will read my Ramayana” replied Valmiki. Hearing this, Hanuman tore up the leaves and ate them.

“You need your Ramayana more than I need mine. You wrote your Ramayana so that the world remembers Valmiki; I wrote my Ramayana so that I remember Ram”.

Valmiki's Ramayana was a work of ambition. Hanuman's Ramayana was a work of affection.

The ones to come to mind after reading this story are all those who shared recipes, experiences and helped shape OPOS! Thanks for the greatest gift you have given us - OPOS! I'm eternally indebted to you for that.

\*\*\*

This message gave me goose bumps. For one, it is a beautiful story that I've not heard before. Secondly, it fits in so well with our work. The 'We' you encounter in the following pages denotes the volunteers of United By Food Facebook group and OPOS School, who helped shape OPOS by repeated experiments, validations and brutally frank feedbacks.

The OPOS project started with a simple goal. To create a set of recipes that work the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. It began 15 years ago when I was struggling to cook. Cookbooks did not help as most instructions were not precise enough. I started hunting for simple recipes that would always work. This became an obsession. I ended up selling my company to focus full time on cooking. Soon, I was fascinated by the grand themes underlying recipes in all mature cuisines. It was magical to see a handful of themes giving rise to infinite recipes. The obsession grew. I tried cataloguing them in my blog, One Page Cookbooks.

It took me a decade, with virtually no readership. The idea was too weird for many people even to try. For all these years, I was so caught up in the frenzy of discovering themes from all cuisines that did not wake up to the fact that no one was using these ideas in their daily lives, apart from a few hardcore followers.

To get more people interested, I conducted an event where I cooked solo, a 10 course marriage feast from scratch, for 500 people, in less than 3 hours. I hoped people would be amazed by the simplicity and ease of this approach. Nothing happened. People still continued to cook the old way. It was clear something was missing. It took a few more years to figure out that the missing bit was OPOS!

Convincing people to change the way they cook is very tough, anywhere in the world. More so in India, where recipes have remained mostly unchanged for centuries. Getting thousands to cook everyday in a dramatically different way, using the very same recipe, with the very same equipment, took a lot of persuasion.

When I proposed most food can be cooked in One Pot, at One Shot (OPOS), without supervision, I was laughed at, accused of corrupting traditional cooking, compromising health and safety. But the need for a technique like OPOS was so great, that I was fortunate enough to convince a core group of volunteers to start practicing OPOS. We limited the equipment to a small pressure cooker, a knife, blender, grater, measuring cups and spoons. We limited the techniques to pressure cooking, blending and mixing, none of which requires great skill. Both the equipment and the techniques were carefully chosen so that they would work exactly the same way for anyone,

anywhere, anytime.

Right from the start, we focused on cooking the core building blocks of food, not limiting ourselves to recipes/cuisines. We started with 'dump all in a pressure cooker' type of recipes. Then we slowly started refining them, seeking better colour, texture, flavour and taste. We relied heavily on validations. Each recipe had to be validated independently by dozens of volunteers before it could be frozen. We insisted on brutally honest feedbacks and learnt from each other's experiences.

New techniques emerged. Some were developed exclusively for OPOS. Some were adapted from existing techniques.

We learnt to cook food in its own juices, at high heat for a short time. We standardised this technique to cook almost all vegetables. We then did the same to all meats and seafood. We figured out how to deskill sugar syrup. We standardized flavourings like ginger-garlic paste, caramelised onions and caramelised tomatoes. The troublesome tadka was bottled. We learnt to flash starches like rice, pasta and noodles without adding water. We deskilled dough for flatbreads, string hoppers and dumplings. We standardized core building blocks like tamarind paste and curry bases.

We then worked on ways to cook all these together, in a single step. Vegetable/meats were layered with curry bases, starches, flavourings and OPOSED into innumerable dishes whose textures, colours, tastes and flavours were totally controllable. Other starches like oats, rava, sago, vermicelli were slowly standardised.

This did not happen in a linear, orderly way. It was very messy. Over 4 years, we stumbled from one to another, burning our way through dishes, hoping to discover fool proof techniques that worked for us all. When we got lucky, we froze the technique and moved on to the next dish. Over 26 such techniques were developed in addition to the basic 'Dump all in a cooker" technique. These techniques define OPOS. Some of these techniques are counter intuitive and flatly go against common sense. However, they all work flawlessly. Volunteers have tested each technique thousands of times in kitchens across the world. Hundreds of dishes using the very same techniques are being posted every single day, for the past 2 years, in the OPOS School

Facebook group.

Like Hanuman's Ramayana written on just 7 leaves, these 26 OPOS techniques can be written on a single sheet of paper. But they are powerful enough to help rewrite most of the world's cookbooks, unlocking all those recipes for anyone, anywhere, anytime. The following pages explain how to use these techniques to deskill and demystify cuisines.

OPOS is not a work of ambition, but a work of love, shaped by thousands of nameless contributors, over almost 15 years. OPOS is not about demonstrating how clever we are, but about sharing the magic we experienced with you. In some Hanuman temples, there is no roof over the idol, as it is [\[U1\]](#) believed He keeps growing with our affection. Similarly, the cuisines and recipes that can be OPOSED keep growing everyday. This is why we planned to name this book as Hanuman's cook book. We later settled for '5 minute magic', as we did not want to provoke religious arguments over the name. To live up to the name, many recipes were restandardised to cook within 5 minutes.

OPOS has now created magic in countless kitchens, empowering thousands to cook free. In the OPOS workshops, these techniques have converted numerous rookies into chefs in just a few hours. All these techniques work the same way - by demystifying and deskilling recipes, unlocking them forever.

Slowly and steadily, with each technique, the magic started happening. We matched the taste of traditional recipes. Soon, we started outclassing them in every department - colour, texture, flavour, speed and nutrition.

More magic happened, across generations. Captivated by OPOS, we saw daughters teaching OPOS to their moms. We saw moms teaching their moms. To our great joy, volunteers repeatedly reported that their babies preferred OPOS food, attracted by the brighter colours, better flavours and textures. We received reports of significant health gains, decreased fuel bills, decreased oil, salt, spice usage and increased use of vegetables.

The bulk of Indian cuisine and many popular International themes has now been OPOSED. OPOS has now become a firm part of thousands of lives.

Much work still needs to be done. We have not figured out how to duplicate the fried effect in OPOS. We have not learnt to OPOS breads. We have not standardised many world cuisines. But we have laid the base for all this to happen. The key building blocks of most cuisines have been OPOSed.

We now believe OPOS is the cleanest, greenest, healthiest, tastiest and fastest way to cook just about anything. We believe OPOS works exactly the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. These beliefs are put to test everyday in thousands of homes. Hundreds of volunteers test each of these recipes every single day. Recipes that do not live up to the OPOS promise are reworked or dropped.

OPOS is a promise. We take great care to ensure all OPOS recipes live up to this promise. The OPOStars ensure this promise is kept. Based on their feedbacks and validations, each OPOS recipe is continuously refined, getting better and better.

We want OPOS to reach every kitchen. Two groups block our path. The first group believes OPOS is just a fancy name for pressure cooking. A 'dump all in a cooker' way of cooking. They believe there is nothing new to learn in OPOS.

The second group refuses to accept OPOS works. They believe it is impossible to achieve the traditional taste, texture, colour and flavour in a single step. Even when they see it happening, they flatly refuse to accept it.

We hope you will join us in taking OPOS to every kitchen. If OPOS works for you, we hope you would spread the word. Share the magic. Every single validation counts. Every bit of help is valuable.

We hope you would rewrite your cuisine with OPOS, unlocking it for all of us. This book is the first step in making it happen. Come, let us start to Cook Free!

# OPOS - Cook Free!

Physically, we are chained to the stove. The leash may be short or long, but a leash is a leash. You may not mind that leash or you may detest it, but you cannot break free.

OPOS cuts this leash with totally unsupervised cooking.

Mentally, we are chained to recipes, cuisines and a thousand rules imposed by a thousand chefs. We treat each cuisine differently, each recipe differently, ignoring the underlying thread that unites them all.

OPOS is built on universal themes, which manifest themselves as different recipes across cuisines.

Psychologically, we are chained to tradition, authenticity and cultural beliefs. Every single cuisine has its own set of food taboos, much of which was created to ensure food safety in an earlier era. Indian cuisine has some of the most complex food taboos. Advances in science have helped us take huge leaps in food preparation and storage, rendering many of these taboos irrelevant.

OPOS questions and breaks food taboos, which are no longer relevant.

Only after we smash our physical, mental and psychological chains, can we start cooking free!

# OPOS is not Pressure Cooking

OPOS is not pressure cooking. Many OPOS recipes use Pressure Baking, a brand new cooking technique. This is the key difference many fail to see. In OPOS, we use pressure cookers like an oven.

Baking is more than ‘Oven-Cooking’.  
OPOS is more than ‘Cooker-Cooking’.

Anyone with an oven can't bake well.  
Anyone with a pressure cooker can't cook well.

You can't become a baker by dumping everything inside an oven.  
You can't become an OPOStar by dumping everything inside a cooker.

Once you load food inside an oven, you have little control over it.  
Once you load food inside a pressure cooker, you have little control over it.

You learn to bake by following the recipes and by using the right equipment.  
You learn to OPOS by following the recipes and by using the right equipment.

Understanding the science behind baking makes you a great baker.  
Understanding the science behind OPOS makes you an OPOStar.

The magic is not in the equipment. It is in the technique.

# OPOS Primer

## 1. The OPOS Magic:

15 years, 780 blog posts, 26097 volunteers, 52 children, tonnes of provisions, 1208 files, 10411 Facebook posts, 5601 photos, 320 videos, millions of arguments, 1 dictator, 15 comedians, 1 world record, 4 restaurants, 16 chefs, 14 events and 22 corporate demos have gone into creating the OPOS magic. You now hold the key to this magical world!

## 2. What is OPOS?

OPOS (One Pot, One Shot) is a set of scientific cooking techniques designed to unchain you from the kitchen, cut drudgery and empower anyone to cook confidently. All OPOS recipes use One Pot and all cooking is done at One Shot. No steps. No supervision. From Pastas to Paneer Makhni, Malai Kofta to Mysorepak, OPOS recipes are easier and faster than cooking instant noodles!

## 3. The OPOS Promise:

OPOS is the cleanest, greenest, healthiest, tastiest and fastest way to cook just about anything.

OPOS works for anyone, anywhere, anytime.

## 4. Why OPOS?

OPOS is Green. One pot to wash.

OPOS is Clean. Hygienic. Less mess.

OPOS is Fast. Fresh food in minutes.

OPOS is Liberating. No supervision.

OPOS is Healthy. Maximises nutrition.

OPOS is Flexible. Cook your way.

OPOS is Economical. Saves fuel and water.

OPOS is Tasty. Intense flavours.

OPOS is Transparent. Works for all.

OPOS is Consistent. Works every time.

OPOS is Universal. Cooks all cuisines!

## 5. Tried and Tested:

Every single OPOS recipe is debated, tested, fine-tuned and validated

hundreds of times by members of United By Food and OPOS School Facebook groups. The work of this passionate group of doctors, nutritionists, dietitians, bloggers, authors, chefs, food stylists, artists, homemakers, actors, scientists, caterers and many others continues to shape OPOS.

## 6. I was always OPOSing!

OPOS is not a fancy word for pressure cooking. Very few OPOS recipes follow the "Dump all into a cooker" technique. Most OPOS recipes skip water, use high heat, layering, precise measures and a combination of 26 techniques listed below. These techniques are responsible for the intense taste, textures, colours and flavours of OPOSed dishes.

## 7. OPOS Techniques:

Attalysis, Bottled tadka, Controlled evaporation, Dum cooking, Emulsification, Flash Cooking, Grits, Hydro distillation, Inner pot cooking, Just enough liquid, Key building blocks, Layering, MPOS, No Prep, Oil free, Pyrolysis, Queuing, Retained heat, Sugar Syrup hack, TurboFlavours, Use of cooked bases, Very Long Marination, Waterless cooking, Xtra long storage, Yolk colour retention and Zoned flashing.

## 8. OPOS vs. Tradition:

Traditional recipes were not designed for today's lifestyle. Many of us lack the time, skill and support to make traditional recipes work. OPOS replaces manual skill with the right equipment and technique. OPOS standardises cooking conditions to make all recipes work the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. Use right equipment and follow recipes to experience magic!

## 9. Equipment needed:

A 2 liter pressure Indian cooker. Measuring cups and spoons. Knife, peeler and grater. Kitchen scale. A stick blender. Heat source (Gas/Induction preferred, electric stoves are sluggish and need preheating). With OPOS, this is the only 'kitchen' you need to feed a small family!

## 10. Measures:

Use standard measuring cups, spoons (1C = 240 ml, 1tsp = 5 ml, 1tbsp = 15

ml) and a kitchen scale. Use measuring cups for liquids and weighing scale for solids, especially in tricky recipes like sugar syrup.

#### 11. Shopping list:

**Starch:** Rice, Poha, Vermicelli, Pasta, Noodles, Puffed rice, Rava, Wheat flour, Rice flour, Millets, Oats, Sago.

**Protein:** Tuvar dal, Mung dal, Channa dal, Chickpeas, Kidney beans, Green Peas, Gram flour, Roasted gram, Soya chunks, Whole mung, Sprouts, Paneer, Mushroom, Chicken, mutton, other meats, Fish, Seafood and Eggs.

**Micronutrients:** Onion, Tomato, Fresh vegetables, Spinach.

**Fats:** Ghee, Virgin oils (Sesame, Coconut, Peanut), Mustard oil, Refined vegetable Oils

**Dairy:** Butter, Cream, Milk, Yogurt, Condensed milk.

#### 12. Shopping List 2:

**Spice Box:** Garam masala, Chilli, Coriander, Cumin, Turmeric, Asafoetida, Sambar, Pepper powders. Mustard, Cumin, Fenugreek, Fennel seeds.

Cardamom, Cinnamon, Bay leaf, Cloves, Ginger, Garlic, Kasuri methi, Urad dal, Dry red chilli.

**Essentials:** Salt, Sugar, Pickles, Papad, Tamarind, Coconut, Chilli, Coconut milk, Coconut milk powder, Cashew, Peanuts.

**Optional:** Cheese, Almonds, Raisins, Sesame, Saffron, Cinnamon, Italian seasoning.

#### 13. Bigger is not better!

The tiny 2L cooker can cook breakfast/lunch/dinner (Pongal/Upma/Rice, Biriyani/Pasta/Noodles/Porridge) for 2, Dry/Wet curries/Soups for 4, Starters (Fondue/Stuffed vegetables/Kadai paneer/Pindi channa/Pepper chicken) for 5, Pickles/Jam/Desserts for 10 and Hard boiled eggs for 15. The best part is, it can cook all the above in 5 to 10 minutes!

#### 14. About the founder

Ramki passionately believed anyone, anywhere, anytime should be able to cook great food, with great ease. He sold his software company to focus full time on his passion. One page cookbooks happened first. OPOS followed a decade later. He is now a consultant, columnist and CEO of Pizza Republic and OPOS Kitchen. He still holds the record for cooking solo a 10 course

marriage feast for 500 people in 3 hours, using OPOS techniques. He can be reached on [Ramki@PizzaRepublic.in](mailto:Ramki@PizzaRepublic.in)

## 15. OPOS or Not?

A recipe that is 'cooked' in one pot, at one shot and lives up to the OPOS promise, is an OPOS recipe. A salad, where everything gets mixed in a single bowl, is OPOS. A milkshake, where everything gets blended at one shot is also OPOS. OPOS recipes need to work exactly the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. Else, they lose the OPOS tag.

## 16. Avoid trouble!

1. Start with Lesson #1.
2. Use standard equipment and follow the recipe to the letter.
3. Go by whistles/timing, whatever happens earlier.
4. Never force open a cooker.
5. If steam leaks/you smell burning, switch off, add water and continue.
6. Watch videos (search OPOS videos in Google/YouTube)
7. Join the OPOS Support Group in Facebook and follow discussions.

## 17. FAQ:

Most questions we get translate to “Can you teach me OPOS with the equipment I have, the way I like, using methods I am comfortable with?”. We can’t!

Q. How to scale up?

A: Cook multiple times. Or scale up everything including cooker size.

Whistles remain same. Time varies.

Scaling up Tips:

- It is easier than you think. Remember to scale up everything proportionately. You need to make sure the quantity you cook matches the cooker size.
- Ensure your cooker is at least 1/4th full and not over 3/4th full.
- In all scaled up recipes, go by whistles. The timing would vary but

- the whistles remain the same.
- Use more water than needed for the first try. All recipes using water can be scaled up safely.
- No water recipes are tricky and need monitoring the first time. Watch out for a burnt smell.
- Use the same heat setting as you used when standardising your 2L cooker. Increase heat once you get comfortable.

Q. Where do I get more recipes?

See the OPOS Chef channel on YouTube. Join the OPOS School on Facebook. Buy OPOS books. Refer OPOS blogs.

18. Top reasons why OPOS recipes don't work.

1. Use of non-standard equipment.
2. Not using measuring cups, spoons/weighing scales.
3. Cutting food into big chunks.
4. Not tracking time/whistles.
5. Adding/omitting ingredients/changing quantity.
6. Trying to personalise a recipe at the first attempt.

In other words, the most common reason for failure is because you have not followed the recipe to the letter. All these can be avoided with a bit of discipline.

The only reason why some recipes might still fail is because the ingredients we use are different. There is no solution for this but to understand the technique and tweak the recipe.

19. One step at a time!

OPOSing requires discipline. Start with lesson 1 and take one step at a time.

- Cook to learn.
- Cook to eat.
- Cook to feed.
- Cook to impress.

There are no shortcuts for these stages!

## 20. Scaling up/Down:

Once you understand the basic techniques, you can easily figure out the way to use bigger cookers/scale up. Till that time, please stick to the recipes. Cook multiple times instead of scaling up. Scale up everything including the cooker size and go by whistles. The timing varies, but whistles remain the same. Most OPOS recipes have been tested on everything from a tiny 1liter cooker to the giant 250 liter cooker.

## 21: "I was always doing OPOS, without knowing the name!".

You have been pressure cooking. Welcome to Pressure Baking – a whole new technique. Unlearn all you know and start afresh.

## 22. "These fancy short cut techniques can't match the taste of traditional recipes".

OPOS is not about shortcuts/quick cooking. It is a way to bring the best out of food. We are lucky that it is also fast! Techniques like flashing and layering unlocked a burst of colour, flavour and texture never seen before! Every single OPOS technique added a bit of magic. Now, OPOS not just matches traditional recipes, it far outclasses them in most cases. Many of us suddenly find non-OPOS food tasteless!

## 23: OPOS is universal.

OPOS works across cuisines. It just teaches you the foolproof way to bring the best out of the building blocks of all cuisines – vegetables, meats and starches. By adding your favourite spices and additives, you can translate each OPOS theme into any cuisine easily!

## 24: The road ahead:

The bulk of Indian cuisine has been OPOSe. Popular international recipes like pasta, noodles, soups, fried rice, etc have been OPOSe too. We look forward to your help in OPOSing, standardizing and validating your cuisines.

## 25. OPOS is protected.

The OPOS logo, the terms OPOS, One Pot One Shot, Flash and Pressure Baking are registered and cannot be used without permission. OPOS is free for personal, non-commercial use.

# OPOS - First steps

Are you ready for the OPOS experience? Get the right equipment and complete the first 10 lessons. OPOS works by replacing manual skill with the right equipment and right techniques. Therefore, it is important you use the right equipment and follow the recipes to the letter. In each recipe, always go by whistles/timing, whatever happens earlier. Almost all OPOS recipes are designed serve 2.

Almost all OPOS recipes have been optimized to have a preparation time of around 10 minutes and cooking time of around 5 minutes.

## ***Equipment:***

Ensure you have a 2-liter whistling pressure cooker (any brand, any material), an induction/gas stove, a stick blender, measuring cups and spoons, kitchen scale, knife, peeler and grater. This is all the equipment you need for all OPOS recipes. The OPOS kit is readily available and can be ordered online.

Note:

- The size of the pressure cooker is usually inscribed on its base.
- A 2L cooker holds 2 liters of water. The base holds 1.5 liters of water (over 6 cups) and the lid holds half a liter.



## **Equipment needed**

- 2 liter Indian pressure cooker.
  - Stick blender (optional)
  - Measuring cups & spoons (1C = 240ml, 1tsp = 5ml, 1tbsp = 15ml)
  - Knife, Peeler & Grater
  - Kitchen scale (optional)
  - Heat source (Prefer Gas / induction. Electric stoves need 5 to 15 minutes of preheating.)
- All recipes in this book are designed to be cooked with this set.

# OPOS – Book Structure

This book is split into 11 major modules:

50 pages of Introduction with the first 10 lessons. The lessons have to be done in the listed order. All the lessons have videos.

40 pages with 23 Breakfast themes from across the country, from Kerala's Aval Nanachadhu to Karnataka's Uggani.

90 pages with 48 Lunchbox themes from Sindhi Bhuga Chawal to Hyderabad Nizami Kachi Gosht ki Biriyani.

300 pages with 138 South Indian Curry themes from Kerala's Achinga Mezhugupuratti to Chettinad Uppukari.

200 pages with 100 North Indian Curry themes from Punjab's Achari Aloo Paneer to Arunachal Pradesh's Rongpu Takeng.

20 pages with 13 Soup themes from Broccoli Cheese Soup to Chicken clear soup.

30 pages with 14 Drink themes from Marathi Aam Panna to the East Indian Torani.

80 pages with 37 Dessert themes from Iyengar Akkaravadisal to Hyderabadi Qubani Ka Meetha.

50 pages with 23 International themes from Middle eastern Baba Ghanoush to Persian Torshi.

30 pages with 11 OPOS Staples from Attalysis for making dough to Yogurt making.

130 pages with OPOS Theory from A primer on Indian cuisine to One Theme, a million recipes.

Most recipes have a detailed writeup tracing the evolution of the recipe, placing them in context. Every single recipe is grouped under one of the five techniques below. If you master one technique, you can fearlessly cook all recipes using that technique, even if you have never seen/tasted them before. All these techniques are covered in lessons 1 to 10.

Techniques used:

1. Layer and Flash.
2. Layer, Flash and Mash.

3. Mix all.
4. Blend all.
5. Pressure cook.

#### 1. Layer and Flash.

This is the most common OPOS technique used and needs standardised equipment to work.

#### 2. Layer, Flash and Mash.

This is the technique used to create soups, gravies and a variety of mashes.

#### 3. Mix all/Blend all.

This technique covers recipes like salads, chutneys and lassis. They do not need a pressure cooker.

#### 4. Pressure Cook.

This group covers the 'Dump all in a cooker' kind of recipes. They can be cooked in an electric rice cooker, instant pot, any kind of pressure cooker or even in an open pot, with more water.

Every single theme listed in the following pages is a template for cooking hundreds more. Understand the techniques and use the Replace/Supplement section in each theme to extend the theme to create infinite recipes.

# Lesson 1: Standardisation

<https://youtu.be/5oGCV4xBh3c>

## **Check equipment and heat source.**

In a 2L pressure cooker, add 1/4C (60ml) water. Close and fix weight. Cook on the highest heat setting of your heat source. Note time for the first whistle. (The hiss with which steam exits from a pressure cooker is called as the ‘whistle’). Switch off stove.

If you get the first whistle in less than 1 minute, decrease heat and try again.

If the first whistle takes longer than 2 minutes, increase heat and repeat.

Adjust heat to get the first whistle between 1 and 2 minutes. Remember this setting. This is your ‘High’ setting.

### **Note:**

1. This exercise is essential before you move to the next lesson.
2. Electric/ceramic/glass top stoves are sluggish. They need to be preheated for 5 to 15 minutes before you place the cooker over them.
3. On gas stoves, the flame should cover the bottom of the cooker without coming up the sides.
4. On induction, the high heat setting is around 1200W.
5. Most OPOS recipes call for high heat. Medium heat is half the high heat level. Low heat is half the level of medium heat.
6. Some gas burners are designed for a wok. The flames heat the sides and not the bottom. These might not work for OPOS recipes.
7. If you are OPOSing for the first time, go for a timing close to 2 minutes. Once you gain confidence, you can increase heat to give you a timing close to one minute.
8. Gas and induction stoves are preferred for OPOS. Induction is foolproof. If you have trouble with a gas stove, try getting burners cleaned.
9. If your handles get heated up or you get a burnt smell, it means your cooker is being heated from the sides and not from the bottom. Change burner/heat source and try again.
10. Do not heat beyond 2 minutes. You risk melting the safety valve.

11. Wait till your cooker and heat source cool down before repeating the experiment.
12. Your cooker might carry warning stickers like “Do not cook on high flame”. “Do not cook without water”. You need not worry about it as long as you follow the recipes here without any change.
13. Everytime you face problems, repeat this exercise to check equipment condition.
14. Try keeping all parameters uniform. Do not use icecold water/ hot water.
15. This exercise is designed only for a 2L cooker.

# Lesson 2: Flash

<https://youtu.be/SiRqdtZXvEc>

**Cook vegetables in their own juice.**

In a 2L pressure cooker, add 1/4C water, 1tsp oil, 2C chopped beans (250g), 1/4tsp salt, 1/4tsp chilli powder. Do not mix. Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles/5 minutes (whatever happens first). Switch off stove. Release pressure. Remove cooker from stove. Marvel at the colour. Mix all.

Undercooked? Do not release pressure.

Overcooked? Cook for just one whistle.

Excess water? Reduce water and try again.

Flash is the OPOS technique of pressure baking or cooking food in its own juices at high heat for a short time. Flash intensifies the natural colour, texture, flavour and taste. It is the most nutritious way to cook most food stuff. You will find more information about flash in the later pages.

**Note:**

1. The bright colour might fool you into thinking beans are undercooked. They are not. Almost all varieties of beans (and almost all vegetables) cook perfectly in 2 whistles.
2. Resist the urge to cook further to evaporate excess water. Just drain it or mix in grated coconut/ cooked dal to absorb it.
3. Elders used to overcooked vegetables might not like the bright colour and crisp textures of flashed vegetables. It is an acquired taste.
4. Do not use too less/too much beans. Too less might burn and too much might overcook.
5. Do not attempt this lesson with other vegetables.
6. You will find most children love flashed vegetables.
7. Cut beans long and you can serve flashed beans as an appetizer,

with a dip.

8. If you face any problem in this lesson, please repeat lesson 1 again to check equipment condition.
9. Do not change anything in the recipe the first time. Follow it to the letter. Every word in the recipe is crucial.
10. This is probably one of the most validated recipes in OPOS history, having been validated thousands of times, in kitchens all over the world. Completing this lesson is mandatory before you move to lesson 3.



Raw  
vs  
Blanched  
Green Beans

# Lesson 3: More Flash

<https://youtu.be/yPDqNweqamo>

**Cook a mix of vegetables in their own juices.**

Repeat lesson 2 with the following changes:

1. Use other fresh/frozen vegetables.
2. Reduce/eliminate water.
3. Reduce/eliminate oil.
4. Use a mix of vegetables.
5. Vary quantity of vegetables (from 1C to 4C).
6. Vary cut size of vegetables (Cut easy cooking vegetables thicker and tough cooking vegetables thinner).
7. Add a thin layer of starch (quick cooking oats/washed and drained thick rice flakes) over the vegetables, to make a meal.
8. Try double flash: Layer a vegetable on one half of the cooker and another vegetable on other half.
9. Try triple flash: Add three heaps of vegetables on the cooker base.
10. Vary flavouring: Add your favourite flavouring as the top layer.
11. Keep notes. Own this technique!

## **Tips:**

1. Do not flash cook beyond 6 minutes.
2. If pressure does not build up in the first 3 minutes, switch off, add more water and continue.
3. If you add no water in layer 1, then layer 2 should have a buffer layer of tomato/onion/watery ingredients.
4. For 2C vegetables, use 1/2tsp (or less) salt, chilli powder and spices.
5. For up to 4C vegetables, cooking time is never more than 6 minutes/2 whistles.
6. Stay near your cooker. If you smell food burning or see steam leaking from the sides, switch off, release pressure, add 1/4C water and continue.

7. Onions burn in 3 minutes, when flashed without water. The burning is faster when they are pressed down by vegetables over them.
8. Starches burn fast. Ensure you use more water or a buffer layer when flashing starchy vegetables like potato.
9. Spice powders/coconut burn when they touch the bottom. Never use them in the bottom layer.
10. Make friends with burning. Flash treads a fine line between perfectly cooked food and burnt food. You will invariably experience burning/safety valve melting. It is a part of the learning experience.
11. Get comfortable with this core technique of flash. Most OPOS recipes are built on this key technique.

1.



# Lesson 4: Flash and Mix: Tawa Pulao

<https://youtu.be/o2UEA3xlwD8>

**Mix flashed vegetables with a starch to make a meal.**

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (chayote, carrot, beans)

Layer 3: 1/4C fresh green peas

Layer 4: 1C potato chopped small

Layer 5: 1/4C roasted peanuts, 2tsp mung dal

Layer 6: 1/2tsp each (chilli powder, salt).

Layer 7 (optional): 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder)

Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles/6 minutes (whatever happens earlier). Switch off. Release pressure. Serve as it is as a grain free meal or mix in 3C cooked rice and serve as Tawa pulao.



# Lesson 5: Flash and Mash: Tomato

## soup

<https://youtu.be/rlS1DWrv3wY>

**Flash and blend vegetables into soups.**

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 5tsp water, 3tsp butter

Layer 2: 1 garlic clove, 1/2C chopped onion

Layer 3: 250g whole tomatoes (5 medium sized tomatoes)

Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 5 minutes (quick) or 7 minutes (for a caramelised version). Switch off. Let pressure settle. Blend all with 1/2tsp each (salt, sugar, pepper). Blend in 1/2C water/stock to dilute.

Note: Whole tomatoes caramelise well. If you use chopped tomatoes/tomato puree, they end up being boiled and do not develop intense flavours.



# Lesson 6: Layer and Flash: Kurma

<https://youtu.be/Cw8eVP8mmG4>

## **Layer and flash with spice paste to make gravies.**

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 6 cashews, 1tsp each (salt, garam masala), 1 green chilli to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (carrot, beans, potato, capsicum)

Layer 3: Coconut paste (see above)

Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles/6 minutes (whatever happens earlier). Switch off. Release pressure.

Mix in 1/2C coconut milk/milk. Serve with pulao/roti/idiyappam/aappam.

If you do not have access to fresh coconut, use cashew/almond paste instead.

## **Notes:**

1. Layering is a key OPOS technique, which helps in building complexity layer by layer.

2. Blend coconut with little or no water so that you get a thick paste. If the paste is thin/watery, it leaks to the bottom of the cooker, getting burnt.

3. Do not mix layers before cooking.

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# Lesson 7: More Layer and Flash

## **Layer and flash with various building blocks**

Repeat lesson 6 by adding/removing layers as you like:

Mandatory layers:

Layer 1: 1/4C water/stock, 2tsp fat (your favourite oil/ghee/butter)

Layer 2: 2C chopped vegetables/mix of vegetables

Layer 3: 1/4tsp each (salt, chilli powder)

Optional layers – add as many as you like

Layer 4: 1/2C thick coconut paste (or cashew/almond/peanut paste)

Layer 5: 1tbsp poppy seed paste (or sesame/pumpkin/other seeds)

Layer 6: 2tsp green chilli paste (Or red chillies/paprika/pepper)

Layer 7: 1/2tsp ginger- garlic paste

Layer 8: 1/4tsp turmeric (or saffron)

Layer 9: 1tbsp fried onions

Layer 10: 1tbsp (Kasuri methi/basil/curry leaves/parsley/rosemary/....)

Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles/6 minutes (whatever happens earlier). Switch off. Mix in 1tsp salt, 1/2C milk/coconut milk/stock/soy milk.

# Lesson 8: Layer and Flash starches:

## Pasta Arrabiata

<https://youtu.be/mnjXYhqrWk>  
**Flash starches.**

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp olive oil

Layer 2: 3 chopped garlic cloves, 1.5C chopped tomato to cover the base completely.

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (chilli powder, salt)

Layer 4: 1C macaroni

Layer 5: 1.5C chopped tomato to cover pasta completely.

Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles/6 minutes (whatever happens earlier). Switch off. Release pressure. Mix all and keep closed for 5 minutes.

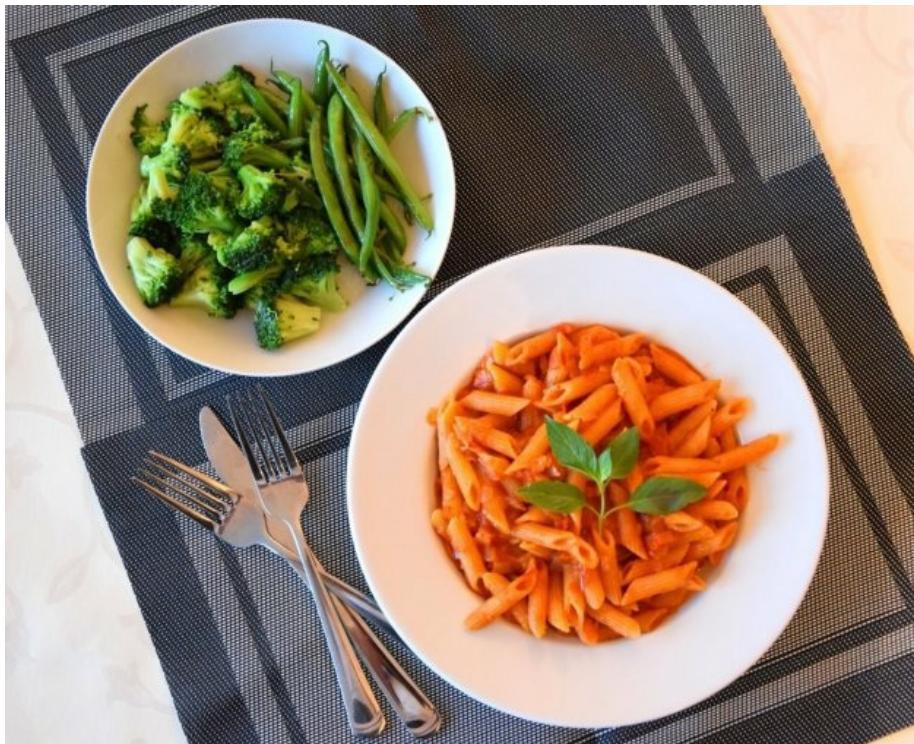
### **Replace/Supplement**

- Macaroni with other pasta
- Tomato with watery vegetables
- Chilli powder with your favourite spice mix
- Olive oil with butter

### **Tips:**

1. Indian pasta cooks fast.
2. Harder pastas need to be washed and used or soaked briefly and used.
3. If undercooked, soak/cook longer/do not release pressure.
4. Pasta needs over thrice its volume of watery vegetables to cook well.

1.



# Lesson 9: Layer and Flash meats:

## Pepper chicken

<https://youtu.be/SEd8Ml8Tk44>

**Cook meat in its own juice.**

Mix 250g chicken chopped small, 3tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, crushed pepper), 1/2tsp each (salt, garam masala), 1/4tsp fennel powder, 1/8tsp turmeric powder.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion, 1 slit chilli, 10 curry leaves

Layer 3: Spiced chicken.

Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 7 whistles/6 minutes (whatever happens earlier). Switch off. Let pressure settle. Open and mix in 1tsp crushed pepper.

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Chicken with soaked/mushroom/paneer/soya chunks
- Pepper with chilli powder
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Onion with shallots
- Curry leaves with mint/your favourite herbs
- Fennel/turmeric with your favourite spices/spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Mix in tomato sauce/lemon juice before serving
2. After opening, can stir-fry in an open pan for a dry curry.
3. Can cook mutton/seafood the same way, by increasing/decreasing cooking time.



# Lesson 10: Layer and Flash meat with starch: Chicken biriyani

<https://youtu.be/jgkoJ7CF3TU>

**Flash starch and meat together.**

Mix 1/4C chopped mint, 1 slit chilli, 1/4C fried onions, 500g chicken chopped small, 1.5tsp each (biriyani masala, chilli powder, salt), 3tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2C yogurt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: 1C spiced chicken

Layer 4: 1C basmathi (soaked 30 minutes and drained)

Layer 5: 1C spiced chicken to cover rice completely

Close and fix weight. Cook on high heat for 5 whistles/6 minutes (whatever happens earlier). Let pressure settle. Open and fluff up.

## **Replace/Supplement**

- Chicken with fish/prawns
- Biriyani masala with garam masala
- Ghee with your favourite oil
- Onion with shallots
- Yogurt with coconut milk

## **Tips:**

1. Can increase rice quantity to 1.5C
2. Can add less yogurt and more water
3. Use bite sized chicken pieces
4. Vegetarians can use mushroom/soya chunks/paneer in place of chicken
5. Can marinate chicken overnight
6. Can shallow-fry marinated chicken before adding
7. Can add 1/2C water/ stock for a juicier biriyani



# The OPOS way:

OPOS seeks to maximise colour, texture, flavour and nutrition. This is how we do it:

Starches:

OPOS advocates cooking starches by absorption, with little or no water. It is a myth that starches should be cooked with excess water, which should then be drained away. This method just wastes water, fuel and food. In OPOS, we follow the absorption method to cook most starches like rice, noodles and pasta, where a grainy texture is important. Overcooking starches with excess water makes them mushy. They are no less nutritious when mushy, but not very appealing to see or taste. OPOS No water biryanis and No water pasta made possible gourmet level dishes not easily achievable with conventional cooking methods.

Animal protein:

OPOS advocates cooking meats/seafood at high heat for a short time, with little or no water. This promotes caramelisation and ensures meats remain juicy. Marination is used to tenderise tough meats instead of increasing the cooking time.

Vegetable protein (Dals):

OPOS advocates using precooked (refrigerated/frozen) dal to prevent overcooking of vegetables when dal and vegetables are cooked together. There is no appreciable nutrition/textture/flavour/colour loss when cooked dal is refrigerated/frozen.

Micro nutrients (Vegetables):

OPOS advocates the high heat, no water, minimal cooking of almost all vegetables. Cooking breaks down cell walls and fibers, allowing our body to absorb their nutrients. Overcooking reduces most vegetables to a colourless, tasteless, flavourless mush. When vegetables are cooked with excess water, their nutrients get leached away. Pressure does not have an appreciable effect on micro nutrients. Only heat does. It is important to note that the duration of heat matters more than the intensity of heat. Prolonged slow and low heat cooking destroys micro nutrients in vegetables. Short, high heat cooking ensures most of them are retained. The colour of cooked vegetables is a reliable indicator of the level of micro nutrients retained.

Spinach:

OPOS advocates cooking spinach just like any other vegetable. The myth that spinach has 'volatile acids' that need to be cooked out in an open pot is not true.

**Tomatoes:**

OPOS advocates using whole tomatoes/deseeded tomatoes to promote caramelisation. Tomato puree/chopped whole tomatoes are rarely used in OPOS as they leak water and prevent complex flavours from developing.

**Spices:**

OPOS advocates use of roasted and ground spices, cooked ginger-garlic paste, caramelised onions and caramelised tomatoes for maximum flavour. As sealed cooking intensifies flavours, OPOS recipes use less than half the quantity of spices and salt as compared to the traditional versions.

**Oil:**

OPOS advocates use of little or no oil in most dishes. Instead we use emulsification to ensure creaminess. OPOS advocates bottled tadka to increase flavour, cut down mess, oil consumption, time and labour.

**Sugar:**

OPOS advocates controlled evaporation of sugar to precisely control the consistency of sugar syrup.

**Yogurt/Coconut milk:**

OPOS advocates minimal/no cooking of yogurt/coconut milk. These are usually mixed in after opening and left to cook in retained heat, to minimise curdling.

**Using Masalas:**

Traditional Indian cooking is masala based. It places enormous emphasis on the right amount of oil, the right tadka, the right combination of spices, the right order of adding them, and the right amount of cooking at every step.

In many traditional recipes, vegetables get overcooked, losing their flavour, colour, taste and texture. This loss needs to be compensated by the masala. In many traditional recipes, the taste of the dish comes from the masala.

Therefore, this masala needs to be different for different dishes. Otherwise everything would taste the same.

OPOS cooking relies on enhancing the inherent taste of food. On maximizing the colour, texture and flavor of vegetables. The food is the star - not the masala. We minimise the use of oil, salt and spices to let the food shine through.

Each vegetable, by nature, has a different flavour, colour, texture and taste. This is enhanced in OPOS. So each dish, by default, tastes different, even if the same masala is used, or even if no masala is used at all!

# OPOS Vs. Traditional Pressure cooking

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Food is cooked with added water.

OPOS: Food is cooked in its own juices, with little or no water.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: The only technique used is 'dump all in a cooker'.

OPOS: Uses a set of validated techniques to bring the best out of food.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Exercises very little control over texture, flavour or colour.

OPOS: Exercises complete control over texture, flavour and colour.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Is chiefly used for mushy foods like dal, potatoes and kichidi.

OPOS: Is used for almost all food.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Causes vegetables to get overcooked, become colourless and texture less.

OPOS: Makes vegetables come alive.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: The goal is quick cooking.

OPOS: The goal is to maximise colour, texture, flavour and nutrition.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Most recipes call for cooking on low/medium heat.

OPOS: Most recipes call for cooking on high heat.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Cooking conditions need not be standardised for recipes to work.

OPOS: Both the cooker and the heat source need to be standardised for the recipes to work.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Seen as a necessary evil. Many households frown on pressure cooked food.

OPOS: Seen as a boon. Babies love OPOSed food.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Is limited to a pressure cooker.

OPOS: Is universal.

Traditional Pressure Cooking: Is about using the cooker.

OPOS: Is about using the technique.

# "I was always OPOSing, without knowing the name!"

"I used to OPOS in my college dorm, but switched over to regular cooking after I learnt more".

"My mom/grandma used to OPOS to save time/fuel and I learnt it from them."

Many people believe OPOS is just a fancy word for pressure cooking. They think OPOS is nothing new and that it was followed in many homes for ages, ever since the pressure cooker was introduced.

Those who claim to have always been OPOSing are in fact partly responsible for the aversion to pressure-cooking in most houses. Invariably, the only technique they followed was to "Dump all in a Cooker, cover with water and cook on low/medium heat" This technique is guaranteed to produce mush.

This is why pressure cooking was restricted to rice, dal and kichidi in most homes. It was seen as a sign of lazy cooking. You never cooked vegetables/greens/biriyani's in a cooker if you wanted good food!

It took us 4 years and countless experiments to put the colour, taste and texture back into food. It required the creation of techniques like flash, controlled caramelisation, layering and a dozen more. With these techniques, whole cuisines, from starters to desserts were OPOSed.

But OPOS is not just about pressure cooking. OPOS is not just a cooking technique. OPOS is a protest.

- It is a protest against the belief that you need to have a fancy kitchen and fancier gadgets to cook well.
- It is a protest against the belief that exotic ingredients shipped across continents are essential for great food.
- It is a protest against the belief that good food needs fancy chefs and fancier restaurants.
- It is a protest against the belief that good food is available only to the rich or the talented.
- It is a protest against the belief that cooking has become so complex that it is best outsourced to professionals.

- It is a protest against the belief that only a select few combinations, identified by 'authorities' work.
- It is a protest against 'authority' - who dictate what you can and what you cannot do with your food.
- It is a protest against glamourisation of food, which tries to convert cooking into a slick spectator sport best watched on TV.
- It is a protest against 'secret' recipes.
- It is a protest against drudgery.
- It is a protest against dividing people based on what they eat.
- It is a protest against complicating food with myriad self imposed rules.
- It is a protest against the belief that you need to spend a lifetime learning to cook well.
- It is a protest against mystifying cooking.
- It is a protest against food chauvinism - which dictates what is 'pure' and 'authentic'.
- It is a protest against food critics and recipe police. Your food, Your way!

OPOS is a protest against the consumer culture. You do not need to keep buying more and more to cook better. The minimalist OPOS equipment lasts a lifetime. It is the only 'kitchen' you need to guarantee a lifetime of good food. You do not need to constantly upgrade your kitchens or gadgets to cook better. OPOS is for life.

Many economists believe the age of plenty is over. We have looted and plundered the Earth in the last 150 years with little regard to the future. Our economies drunk on cheap oil will slow down as the oil runs out. The fuel reserves built up over the last 150 million years have been half consumed in the last 150 years. The drunken orgy seems to be winding down.

Our planet is finite. Our greed is infinite. We need to scale back. We cannot afford to waste food, water and fuel anymore. OPOS is one sustainable, green solution to the problem of feeding yourself. It is just one piece of the puzzle. Many such pieces need to come together if we care about leaving behind a liveable planet for our children.

# OPOS - the best way?

We believe OPOS is the cleanest, greenest, healthiest, tastiest, fastest and easiest way to cook most food. We believe OPOS works the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. These claims appear tall and even arrogant, until you start OPOSing!

## 1. How is OPOS the best way to cook most food?

Almost all experts agree the best way to preserve colour, texture, flavour and nutrition for most foodstuffs is to cook them for a very short time with little or no water. Experts like Harold McGee believe microwaving is the best way to cook food, as it can cook most food in a very short time with little or no water.

"Microwaving is actually one of the best cooking methods for retaining the nutrients in vegetables. It has two big advantages. It's very rapid, thus minimizing the time that enzymes can destroy vitamins. And it doesn't expose the vegetable to liquid water or water vapor, which leach out its water-soluble vitamins and minerals."

However, the OPOS technique of flashing scores over microwaving - for three reasons:

- a. Microwaving does not tell you when to stop. You can easily end up overcooking/undercooking food. Flashing tells you exactly when to stop.
- b. Microwaving dries out the insides, making food rubbery/dry, especially in case of meats. Flashing keeps food moist and juicy.
- c. Caramelisation/Maillard reactions are very tough to produce in a microwave. Food needs to brown to have more flavour. Browning is possible in OPOS.

OPOS brings the best of these worlds together. It combines the nutrient retention of pressure cooking, with the better colour, texture and flavour of stir-frying and the speed of microwaving.

## 2. Can the ultra short cooking time in OPOS cook out pesticides?

Many fondly believe the longer they cook, the greater the chance of pesticides or other poisons being cooked out of food. This is not true. You are not only killing food by overcooking, you are poisoning yourselves as well - as poison remains poison - irrespective of how long you cook it. Wash well and buy smartly to avoid pesticide laden products. Trying to cook them out is

not a good idea.

**3. Does high heat used in most OPOS cooking destroy nutrients?**

Many of us have the image of nutrients as very fragile entities that get destroyed easily. That is wrong. All nutrients are affected by heat, high or low. Any heat starts degrading nutrients.

A vegetable left on a counter top shrivels and loses out nutrients, as it is 'cooked' on low heat over days. Onion/tomato grilled over blazing coals come out juicy, flavourful and full of goodness, in spite of the high heat. Cooking food at the highest possible heat for the lowest possible time is an easy way to preserve nutrients.

**4. Does high pressure used in most OPOS cooking destroy nutrients?**

In the plains, the atmospheric pressure is 15 psi (pounds per square inch). This is due to the weight of the air column pressing down on us. On top of Mount Everest, the atmospheric pressure is just 5psi. All foods cooked in an open pot at sea level are 'pressure cooked' as compared to food cooked on a mountaintop. This does not make them any less nutritious!

**5. How does OPOS prevent food from turning mushy?**

Pressure cookers are hated for producing mush. The culprit is not the high pressure, but the high amounts of water used. It is this excess water which causes mushiness. By minimizing/eliminating water, OPOS puts the texture back into food. The structural integrity is so well maintained in OPOS, that even the edges of cut vegetables retain their edge after cooking.

**6. Isn't grilling/stir-frying the best way to preserve texture?**

Grilling/ stir frying excel in producing great textures and complex flavours. But Acrylamides and other carcinogens form in food when food burns at very high heat. Their formation is more likely in grilling/frying/stir-frying. In OPOS, the temperature is too low for carcinogens to form. In many recipes, optional stir frying is suggested at the end to maximize texture and flavour.

**7. How does OPOS get rid of bad starch?**

In traditional cooking, rice/pasta/noodles get cooked with lots of water, which is then drained. Many believe it is to get rid of 'bad' starch. There is nothing called bad starch. The water in which rice/pasta is cooked is nothing but rice/pasta soup, and is as nutritious as rice/pasta. It is a staple food in many cultures. Dumping this water just wastes water, fuel and food. In OPOS, we practice absorption/ no water cooking, whereby both water and nutrition is not wasted.

## 8. How is OPOS better than eating raw food?

Cooking food is nothing but predigesting food outside our bodies.

Humankind has passed the stage when we could survive on raw food. Our brains are energy monsters and need predigested food to survive. Else, like animals, we would spend most of our time eating and digesting. Cooking actually makes many foods more nutritious, by destroying anti-nutrients. OPOS maximizes this nutrition by preventing over/under cooking.

## 9. How safe is OPOS?

OPOS is probably one of the safest cooking methods. In OPOS, you stay near the heat source for a fraction of time, as compared to most traditional cooking methods.

## 10. Will OPOS blow up my cooker?

Think of your cooker as a balloon. A balloon can burst only when you overfill it with air. Similarly, a cooker can burst only when it is overfilled with steam, which has no safe way to exit. In OPOS, steam is precious as we cook with little or no water. So the biggest problem you will face is burning and not bursting!

## 11. How is OPOS the cleanest, greenest, healthiest, tastiest, fastest and easiest way to cook most food?

Cleanest: Most cooking happens sealed & sterilized.

Greenest: Lowest use of water, fuel. For both cooking and cleaning. Minimal use of cleaning liquids.

Healthiest: Use of Low salt, Low oil, Low spices. Designed to prevent over cooking/ undercooking. Tastiest: Unlocks natural taste, texture, colour and nutrition by proper cooking. Nature does the magic, not OPOS.

Fastest: Most OPOS cooking is done in under 5 minutes.

Easiest: Unsupervised cooking. Can be taught to anyone in minutes. Needs minimal skill. Works the same way across ingredients & cuisines. Learn one, you have learnt them all!

## 11. How can a recipe work the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime?

OPOS standardises the cooking conditions for all of us. Manual skill is replaced by the right equipment and the right technique. The only possible variation in OPOS is the quality of ingredients each of us use and the atmospheric pressure. But this difference is marginal and matters only in rare cases.

# On the shoulders of giants

With more and more people adopting OPOS as a part of their life, there is this debate about OPOS Vs. Traditional cooking. 'Tradition' varies from age to age. Today's 'traditional' chefs were yesterday's innovators. Many chefs rose to fame because they did exactly what we are doing today - they simplified cooking. They empowered the common man to cook easy.

They fought the same battles we fight today - against a previous generation of traditionalists, who were opposing the introduction of gas, microwaves, refrigerators, mixie, simple recipes and easy cooking techniques.

OPOS is not against traditional cooking. It might become tomorrow's traditional cooking.

OPOS is against drudgery.

OPOS is against mystifying cooking.

These are exactly what those chefs stood for, in an earlier generation. OPOS happened not because we are cleverer than them, but because of sheer necessity. Because the time was right. Necessity, as always, is the mother of invention. Tomorrow, someone might invent a better technique, and we need to be open to adopting it.

We now cook better because we are building on their work. We now see farther because we are standing on the shoulders of these giants.

# The beauty of simplicity!

Why do we obsess about condensing recipes into OPOS? What difference does an extra step or an extra vessel make?

There is great beauty in reducing something to its irreducible minimum. This lets you cut out clutter and focus on what is important. The Japanese school of thought 'Wabi' (voluntary poverty) believes that "an excess of possessions and consumption is a burden that diminishes rather than enriches life".

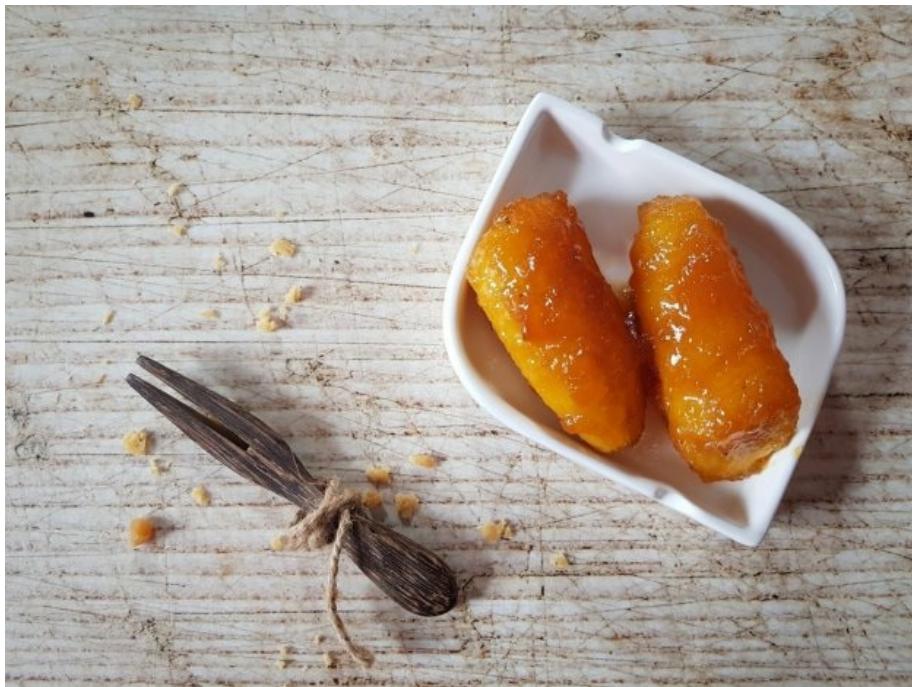
The quest for simplicity cuts across all fields - in poetry, in design, in religion. You can see it all around you. You would see it in a Haiku. You would see it in Shaker furniture. You would see it in a naked Jain monk.

We are drowning in complexity. We pay a big price for abundance. It clutters up our super markets, our homes, our kitchens, our lives - with more and more stuff. In midst of this chaos, we lose sense of what is truly important.

Cistercian monks built magnificent structures with bare, unadorned stone, without using plastering or colour. Islamic art rose to great heights in spite of the ban on depicting man or beast. Shakers created timeless furniture without using "beadings, mouldings and cornices, which were merely for fancy".

When something is reduced to its essentials, you get an amazingly clear perspective on how to make it richer. Simplicity does not mean abstaining. It means focusing on what is really important. Because of this focus, Simplicity can unleash great creativity.

To create simplicity takes great effort. That is what we are trying to do with OPOS. By removing the clutter of gadgets, ingredients and complicated procedures, we are reducing food to its core essentials. This opens up a new world, letting us transcend recipes and cuisines, letting us rediscover what is truly important - healthy, fuss free food, the pleasures of cooking, bonding and sharing!



# The techniques behind the magic

OPOS is built on 26 key techniques. Each of them solves a perplexing problem. Together they make the OPOS magic possible. Every single OPOS recipe uses a mix of these techniques.

What is trivial to one person might appear impossible for another person. Each of these techniques was developed in response to pressing problems that members reported. Bottled tadka was developed as many found the Tadka (frying spices in oil) difficult, for various reasons.

No cutting recipes were developed as many new moms were cooking with a baby on their hip and could not cut. Layering was developed for those with health issues who could not stand in the kitchen for too long. Attalysis was developed for those with arthritis/wrist pain who had trouble kneading dough.

Some techniques were adapted from other cuisines/other fields. Some were developed specifically for OPOS. The ones that worked best were frozen as a new technique. Every single technique listed below has been tested repeatedly in kitchens across the world. It took nearly 4 years and countless validations to hone these techniques into their present form. They are still being fine-tuned.

Every single technique faced resistance mostly because of our cultural conditioning. Many of these techniques go completely against conventional wisdom and might be tough to swallow. But every single one works, and works well!

It is these techniques that maximise the flavour, colour, taste, texture and nutrition in OPOSed dishes. Own them and you will transcend cuisines/recipes. You will learn to Cook Free!

A is for Attalysis;  
To deskill kneading.

B for Bottled Tadka;  
To cut down gunk, prevent burning, eliminate grime, eliminate spattering mess, enable cooking with a baby on you and prevent the smell of curry from getting into your clothes, hair and home.

C is for Controlled Evaporation;  
For hands free cooking of halwas, ghee, thokkus and curry bases.

D is for Dum cooking;

To maximise flavour retention.

E is for Emulsification;

To create a rich, creamy taste with minimal oil.

F is for Flash Cooking;

To maximise the colour, texture, taste and nutrition of cooked food.

G is for Grits;

To ensure faster cooking and to match cooking times by use of grits

H is for Hydro-distillation;

To extract maximum flavour.

I is for Inner Pot Cooking;

To create multiple cooking zones inside the same cooker.

J is for Just Enough Liquid;

To cook pasta, noodles, rice and all starches with minimal water, fuel and labour.

K is for Key Building Blocks;

To generate infinite recipes across cuisines from a single theme.

L is for Layering;

To eliminate burning and enable modular cooking

M is for Multiple Pots, One Shot;

To cook a feast in one step.

N is for No Cutting Futting;

To enable children to cook. To make knife skills optional.

O is for Oil Free, salt free, spice free cooking;

To maximize health and nutrition.

P is for Pyrolysis;

For hands free caramelisation of onions and tomato.

Q is for Queued cooking;

To match cooking times of various ingredients and make possible cooking anything with anything in a single step.

R is for Retained Heat Cooking;

To prevent clumping/curdling due to uneven heating.

S is for Sugar Syrup hack;

To deskill sugar syrup consistency and unlock a wide array of Indian sweets.

T is for Turboflavours;

To create and lock in intense flavours from virtually all foodstuffs.

U is for Use of Cooked bases and Finishing spices;

To eliminate raw smell, deskill the spice-level estimation, ensure maximum flavour and make an instant feasts possible.

V is for Very Long Marination;

To store cut vegetables fresh for weeks and to infuse more flavour.

W is for Waterless Cooking;

For concentrated flavours, great textures and intense colours.

X is for Xtended storage;

To enable extended food storage without refrigeration.

Y is for Yolk colour retention;

To deskill cooking eggs and to eliminate stinky eggs.

Z is for Zoned flashing;

To cook a feast in minutes.

# Ready to go?

1. Trust your equipment.

Use standardised equipment. Ensure equipment is in good working condition. Do not use pressure cookers over 5 years old. Never force open a cooker.

2. Trust the recipes.

Every word in these recipes has been checked, validated and polished over and over again, by people who have grown up with these cuisines. Do not change anything, at least the first time.

3. Trust OPOS.

All recipes listed here are guaranteed to live up to the OPOS promise.

# Common problems and fixes:

## 1. Excess water:

Most recipes are dumbed down versions of those we actually use. They call for more water and less heat to minimize burning. Once you gain confidence, reduce/eliminate water and increase heat to unlock even more magic!

## 2. Raw smell:

Use roasted spices, OPOS ginger-garlic paste and OPOS Tamarind paste to avoid raw smell. Use caramelised onion/tomatoes or understand the OPOS controlled caramelisation technique.

## 3. Burning:

When trying a new recipe, hang around and switch off at the first whiff of a burnt smell. You can smell burning long before it happens. Burning is always caused by lack of enough water. Add more water and try again. Repeated burning might melt your safety valve.

## 4. Undercooked meats/vegetables:

Cut smaller/cook longer/do not release pressure.

Overcooked? Do the reverse.

## 5. Undercooked rice/dal/pasta:

Presoak. Cook longer. Do not release pressure.

Overcooked? Do the reverse.

Keep notes. Mistakes in OPOS are easy to fix.

Still face problems? Join the OPOS Support Group on Facebook for 24x7 support and handholding.

# Breakfast

# **OPOS Breakfast Themes**

Each module listed below is a template for hundreds more you can cook up. The breakfast recipes in the following pages illustrate the theme with one set of ingredients. By changing the layers (base, flavouring and additives), you can cook up innumerable variations across cuisines.

Module 1: Mix in ready to eat starch with raw ingredients into a meal.  
Aval nanachadhu, Chuda Dahi, Muesli.

Module 2: Cook roasted grits in retained heat.  
Rava Upma, Rava Pongal.

Module 3: Pressure cook starch with lentils into a porridge.  
Ram Kichidi, Pongal, Rava kichidi.

Module 4: Cook starches by absorption.  
Achari Semia, Semia-Upma.

Module 5: Cook and ferment starches.  
Pakhala Bhat.

Module 6: Flash vegetables and mix in ready to eat starch.  
Chuda Santula, Dadpe Pohe, Uggani, Kaanda Batata Poha.

Module 7: Flash vegetables with starch.  
Idiyappam pulao, Rava-pulao.

Module 8: Cook spiced starches  
Oats Pulao, Sabudhana-kichidi, No Prep Upmas, Sago Upma, Rava Pulao, Rava Paalak Pulao.

Module 9: Cook grain flour into a porridge  
More Kali, Ragi Koozhu.

# Aval Nanachadhu

## Malayali Muesli

Mix 1.5C thin rice flakes, 1/2C grated coconut, 1tbsp jaggery, 1/8tsp each (cardamom powder, salt). Optionally, mix in 1/2C chopped banana, 1/4C each (dry fruits, nuts), 1/4C milk.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- THIN RICE FLAKES WITH WASHED AND DRAINED THICK RICE FLAKES
- RICE FLAKES WITH THIN WHEAT/MILLET FLAKES/QUICK COOKING OATS
- CARDAMOM WITH YOUR FAVOURITE SWEET SPICES
- JAGGERY WITH SUGAR/HONEY
- MILK WITH COCONUT MILK/YOGURT/FRUIT JUICE

### **Tip:**

1. Can mix in 1tsp ghee/butter for added fat.

Indians invented Muesli at least 1000 years ago. Rice flakes are one of the ancient foods of India, finding numerous mentions in mythology and literature. They are especially popular on the West coast, where they have become a staple.

Boil and pound a grain and you turn it into its flaked version. It can be dried and stored. It gives you instant, ready to eat starch, which just needs a brief immersion in a liquid to make it easily edible. Numerous varieties of rice flakes exist across India. Thick or thin, white or coloured, they all translate to an instant meal.

The cereal can become a snack, breakfast, lunch or dinner depending on how it is used. In Kerala, rice flakes are used to prepare a simple snack, which is also consumed as breakfast - The Aval Nanachadhu (Moistened rice flakes).

The core building blocks of this theme are the pressed cereal, the sweetener,

flavouring, additives and the liquid used.

In Kerala, thin rice flakes (brown/red rice flakes are more common than white) are mixed with lots of fresh grated coconut and jaggery. The mixture is gently kneaded till the rice flakes absorb moisture and hydrate. The moisture in coconut/jaggery is enough to plump up the rice flakes. The proportions of rice flakes/jaggery/coconut vary from place to place.

Some flavouring (cardamom/ginger powder/cumin) is also usually mixed in. Roasted channa dal/sesame seeds and a dash of ghee are occasionally added to supply the protein and fat, making it a nutritionally balanced meal. Sliced bananas are another common additive. They make it more healthy, with the addition of micronutrients. Coconut water/coconut milk/milk is used to moisten it even further. It is usually served as a snack in the evenings with tea/coffee.

Like a muesli, almost anything else can go in - dry/fresh fruits, nuts, milk, yogurt etc.

This simple snack is also an integral part of the Konkani cuisine as phovu kalleilo (Mixed flakes). It is mandatory in most festivities (weddings, baby showers and temple festivals).

Though the sweet variant is the most popular in Kerala, Konkan has a spicy variant of this theme called Olli Mirsangi Phovu, where crushed chilli - ginger paste, grated coconut and salt is mixed in with thin rice flakes.

A sweet and spicy version is the Tambdo Phovu, where the flakes are mixed with jaggery, coconut and flavoured with roast and ground coriander, cumin and red chillies

Poha with cumin (Jeere kalayile phovu) uses roasted and crushed cumin for flavouring. It can be either a sweet dish (with added jaggery) or a spicy one.

It is so commonly used that the Konkanis have a readymade spice mix developed for this theme called the Phova pitto. Rice flakes are mixed with coconut and a bit of this powder into a sweet or savoury version.

Phova Pitto: Roast 4tsp coriander, 1/2tsp fennel, 1/2tsp cumin, 1 clove, a small bit of cinnamon and a dry red chilli. Blend to a powder.

All along the west coast where coconut trees cover the land, grated coconut would be found in all the rice flake based dishes. When you move East to Bihar, coconut disappears and yogurt takes its place. The Chuda Dahi (Rice

flakes with yogurt and jaggery) is a sacred recipe from the dairy rich Mithila cuisine.

Have some thin rice flakes ready in your pantry and look at it as instant rice. Anything you can do with rice can be done with rice flakes. They cost a fraction of Muesli or other fancy breakfast cereals and usually healthier, as they are much less processed.

Try the following:

Breakfast: Mix rice flakes with grated coconut, sugar, coconut water/milk.

Lunch/Dinner: Mix rice flakes with grated coconut, a chutney/pickle and yogurt

Snack/dessert: Mix roasted/fried rice flakes with flavouring and additives.

You can bring all these themes together - the West coast theme of mixing grated coconut with cereal flakes, the Keralite version of using roasted lentils/seeds and ghee to convert a snack to a meal, the Konkani Phova Pittoo theme of spicing the cereal flakes, the Bihari Chuda Dahi theme (mixing in yogurt with cereal flakes), the Chuda Aam theme (mixing in fruit puree), and the Swiss Muesli theme (Using a mix of cereal flakes, fruit and nuts).

You can infinitely extend the theme by changing the flakes (use oat flakes, millet flakes, corn flakes etc), the flavouring, sweetener, liquid and additives. This is the fastest breakfast/snack/meal/dessert you can whip up!

# Achari Semia

## North Indian Pickle Vermicelli

In a 2L cooker, add 2C (170g) roasted vermicelli, 2tbsp mango pickle, 2C water, 1/2tsp salt. Mix all. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

PRESSURE COOK

### Replace/Supplement:

- Mango pickle with your favourite pickle

### Tips:

1. Can add your favourite vegetables.
2. If undercooked, cook longer/do not release pressure.
3. Reduce water for a grainier texture. Increase water for a mushier texture.

Pickles can also be used as concentrated spice pastes. Instead of adding a big set of spices, we can add a bit of pickle while cooking just about anything.

Basic recipes like these offer a blank canvas for you to paint anything you like, by adding more ingredients, or adding nothing at all. Paired with a raita, this becomes a balanced meal all by itself.

3 easy ingredients which require no refrigeration, 5 minutes cooking time, no prep work and a fresh, hot meal for 2 is ready! Recipes like this are ideal when you come back from a long trip to an empty larder.

The building blocks of this theme are the vermicelli used, the flavouring, liquid and additives.

### The Vermicelli:

A variety of roasted vermicelli can be used in this theme. Roasted wheat vermicelli is readily available. We prefer roasted to raw vermicelli as the raw versions become mushy. If you do not get roasted vermicelli, you need to dry roast raw vermicelli before using it.

### The flavouring:

Mango pickle can be replaced by any pickle/thokku/spice mix/curry base/soup powder of your choice.

The liquid:

Water can be replaced with stock, buttermilk other liquids. The quantity of water determines the texture. Use less for a firmer texture and use more for a mushier texture.

The additives:

A variety of vegetables, paneer, mushroom, green peas, papad or soya chunks can be cooked along with vermicelli.

Garnish:

You can garnish it with a basic tadka/chopped herbs or an elaborate tadka with caramelised onions and spices.

Play around with these building blocks to make the recipe as simple/as complex as you like!

# Chuda Dahi

## Bihari Muesli

Mix 1C thin rice flakes, 1C yogurt and 1tbsp jaggery.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice flakes with other cereal flakes/rolled oats
- Jaggery with sugar/honey/other sweeteners
- Yogurt with milk/fruit pulp

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in chopped fruits.
2. If using thick rice flakes, wash and drain to hydrate them before using.

Across Nepal, India and Bangladesh, Poha becomes a snack, meal or dessert. Central India loves it. It is a staple in Maharashtra.

The first recorded mention of poha is over 3000 years ago in the Rig Veda where it is called pruthuka. The Bhagavatha Purana (written 2000 years later) has a poha story, familiar to most Indian children.

Krishna the God-King, and Sudama (Kuchela), the pauper, were classmates. Krishna later becomes a mighty king whereas Sudama barely has enough food to feed his family. His wife urges him to visit Krishna for help. With great reluctance, Sudama decides to go. As a gift to Krishna, his wife borrows four handfuls of poha (rice flakes) from her neighbours and knots it in Sudama's upper garment, being too poor even to afford a bag.

Sudama is not prepared for the grandeur of Krishna's palace. He is taken to Krishna's private chambers. Seeing Sudama, Krishna embraces him and seats Sudama on his bed, shocking the palace folk.

After exchanging childhood stories, Krishna demands "Where is my gift?". Sudama is too embarrassed to give the meager bundle. He tries to hide it. Krishna snatches it, grabs a handful and munches on it with relish. He

reaches for a second handful, but Rukmini, his queen, grabs his hand and shakes her head.

Later, Sudama leaves, being too embarrassed to have asked for anything. When he reaches home, he sees a huge mansion, chariots and his whole family clad in finery. The result of the one handful of poha Krishna ate!

Lord Krishna gives so much for so little, that if Rukmini had not stopped him, Krishna's second handful would have bankrupted him and made Sudama an emperor!

Krishna's love for poha is the reason poha based recipes are prepared in many homes during Janmashtami, Lord Krishna's birthday.

# Chuda Santula

## Odiya Curried Muesli

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (onion, tomato)

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (beans, carrot)

Layer 4: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli, cumin powders), 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C thin rice flakes, 1/4C each (grated coconut, roasted peanuts).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice flakes with other cereal flakes
- Beans/carrots with your favourite vegetables
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Wash and drain thick flakes before using.
2. Briefly stir-fry after opening.
3. Mix in lemon juice before serving.



OPOS Chuda SANTULA

Wherever you find warriors/traders, you'd find their cuisines have innovated to create staples that are designed to last. The Marwari traders/Rajput warriors of West India have their wheat based Bati, designed to last weeks, unrefrigerated. Rice loving East India did the same with pressed and puffed rice, which lasts for months. These were essential innovations to let their people travel vast distances without worrying about cooking.

Chuda Santula (Pressed rice with mixed vegetables) is a popular Oriya breakfast. Chuda (Flattened rice) and Mudi (puffed rice) are staples in Eastern India. They are the world's earliest breakfast cereal. Unlike today's highly processed and expensive breakfast cereals, Chuda/Mudi was designed to be a poor man's everyday food - cheap, nutritious, easy to store and eat.

Till today, puffed rice and flattened rice remain the cheapest and healthiest breakfast cereals you can find. They have been a part of Indian cuisine for at least 2000 years, finding mention in the great epics.

When rice grains are parboiled, rolled and dried, we get flattened rice.

When rice grains are soaked and mixed with hot sand, the intense heat flashes the water inside rice into steam, puffing it up like popcorn.

Both puffed rice and flattened rice are ready to eat cereals, and need no cooking. Flattened rice can be thick or thin. The thicker versions need to be

soaked in water for a few minutes and drained to make them edible.

Both have excellent shelf life and can be stored unrefrigerated for months. They are chemical free and gluten free. Stock up on them! Mix them with anything to make a quick meal.

- In East India, they are eaten exactly like a breakfast cereal, mixed with milk/yogurt and fresh fruits like banana/mango. In many East Indian villages, flattened rice mixed with jaggery is eaten as a quick snack.
- The flattened rice- yogurt combination is revered in the East. During Makar Sankaranti, it is mandatory. People actually greet each other with "Happy dahi chura" (Happy curd rice)!
- In Central India, pressed rice is toasted, mixed with nuts and spices and eaten as a crunchy snack - the chiwda.
- In Kerala, thin pressed rice is moistened by mixing it with fresh grated coconut, banana and jaggery and is eaten for breakfast.
- In Maharashtra, flattened rice is soaked, stir-fried with spices and vegetables to make a variety of Poha - very much like the Tamil variety rice.
- In Nepal, thin flattened rice is whisked with egg and cooked into a hearty omelette.
- In Bangladesh, biryanis and pulaos are made with both flattened and puffed rice.
- In Tamilnadu, the Pori kadalai (puffed rice mixed with roasted gram/peanuts) is popular. Puffed rice is also stir-fried with a tadka of spices into the masala pori.
- Puffed rice is turned into the addictive chaats - Bhel Puri and Jhaal Mudi, across the country.

In this theme, Oriya cuisine pairs flattened rice with cooked vegetables and protein into a balanced meal. The building blocks of Chuda Santula are the flattened rice, mixed vegetables, flavouring and additives.

Both thin and thick varieties of Chuda can be used. The thin ones can be used straightaway and the thicker ones need to be hydrated by briefly soaking them in water till soft (1 - 5 minutes) and draining excess water.

A variety of vegetables can be used. Onions, tomatoes and potatoes appear in

most versions.

Mustard, ginger, curry leaves, turmeric, asafoetida, fennel, fenugreek, fresh herbs are all used for flavouring. Chilli powder or chopped green chillies lends the bite.

Coconut/peanut is added for a protein punch, making it a balanced meal. Chuda Santula is also served with coconut chutney, adding more protein.

**Preparation:**

In the traditional method, the tadka is made, vegetables are stir-fried with flavourings and chuda is mixed in.

In OPOS, we flash vegetables at one shot. Pressed rice is mixed in and left to cook in retained heat. Pressed rice can also be added as a top layer and flashed along with the vegetables. The quantities are balanced to have a moist but non soggy meal. Tadka, as in most OPOS recipes, is optional.

This is one of the fastest breakfasts you can fix and would make a nice addition to your kid's lunch box. You can actually layer the vegetables the previous night, cook it the next day morning and mix in flattened rice, to save time.

Now, contrast this chemical free, healthy, time tested food against deep fried, chemical laden, highly processed foods. It is a pity we are losing the battle to eat healthy!

# Dadpe Pohe

## Marathi Pressure cooked rice flakes

Wash and drain 2C thick rice flakes (poha). Mix 1/2C grated coconut, 1tsp ginger garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (cumin powder, sugar, salt), 1/8tsp each (turmeric, asafoetida powders), 2 chopped green chillies.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion

Layer 3: 2C spiced poha (see above)

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all with 1tsp lemon juice and 1/4C crushed peanuts.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Poha with other rolled cereals
- Onion with shallots
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix
- Chilli powder with chilli paste.

#### **Tips:**

1. Thin poha need not be washed.
2. Ensure poha is well drained and is not clumpy.
3. Go by timing even if you do not get a whistle.

Poha is a staple in central India. It is here we find the most creative poha based recipes. Dadpe Pohe is one of the rare indigenous recipes in Indian cuisine that uses the dum method of cooking.

# Idiyappam Pulao

## Tamil Spiced rice noodles

Crush, wash and drain 100g dry Tamil rice noodles (idiyappam).

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (beans, carrot), 1/2C fresh green peas,

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger- garlic paste, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1 chopped chilli

Layer 4: Idiyappam

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Let cool.

Fluff up. Mix all and serve.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice noodles with other noodles
- Beans/carrot with your favourite vegetables
- Oil with ghee/butter
- Ginger- garlic paste with your favourite spice mix
- Green peas with sprouts/mushrooms/paneer

#### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked, soak longer/cook longer, do not release pressure.
2. If overcooked, soak less/cook less.
3. Can also soak dry idiyappam in hot water, drain, shred and mix it in after opening.

Dried rice flour noodles are readily available in most South Indian stores. Once hydrated, they can be flashed along with vegetables into a pulao/biriyani.

#### **Vegetables:**

All vegetables that can be flashed can be used in this theme. Watery

vegetables are avoided as they can turn the pulao into a mush.

**Flavouring:**

A basic flavouring of ginger-garlic paste and chillies is enough for a pulao, but an elaborate flavouring with more masalas, caramelised onions and whole spices are required for a biriyani.

**Starches:**

Washed and drained dried idiyappam, roasted vermicelli, small grits, potatoes, thick poha and all starches that can get cooked in the same time as the vegetables can be used.

# Kanda Batata Poha

## Marathi rice flakes with potatoes and onions

[https://youtu.be/QSJNYmR\\_v0](https://youtu.be/QSJNYmR_v0)

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion

Layer 3: 1C potato chopped small, 2 chopped green chilli, 1/4tsp turmeric, 1/2tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 2C thin poha, 1tsp lemon juice and 1/4C crushed peanuts. Keep covered for 5 minutes.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice flakes with other cereal flakes
- Onion with shallots
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Thin poha need not be washed. Thick poha needs to be washed and drained.
2. Ensure poha is well drained and not clumpy.
3. Onions start burning after 4 minutes. Use a timer to avoid burning.



Pressed rice

cooked with onion and potato is a much loved combination in Maharashtra. This is usually garnished with fresh grated coconut/sev, making it a complete meal. Starch from pressed rice and potato, protein from peanuts/sev and fat from peanuts makes this a balanced meal.

# More Kali

## Srirangam Cheesecake

<https://youtu.be/5TeJYzzXmVg>

Mix 1C each (rice flour, yogurt, water), 1tbsp sesame oil and 1/2tsp salt to a smooth batter. Add 1 chopped green chilli, 5 chopped curry leaves. Pour batter in a greased, shallow vessel.

In a 2L cooker, add 1C water. Place vessel with rice batter over water. Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice flour with roasted grain flours

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in bottled tadka.
2. Can vary water ratio to change texture.
3. Use a shallow and broad inner vessel.
4. Can use idli moulds to cook batter.
5. Can use roasted rice flour

Kali/Koozhu is a thick soup/porridge made from grain flour. You can vary the consistency by varying the amount of water added and the cooking time.



OPOS Sorekali

# Muesli

## Swiss Mixture

Mix 2C each (rolled oats, crushed cornflakes), 1/4C each (chopped almonds, raisins, roasted sesame seeds), 1/4tsp cinnamon powder.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rolled oats with rice flakes/millet flakes
- Almonds with your favourite nuts
- Raisins with your favourite dried fruits
- Sesame with your favourite seeds
- Cinnamon with your favourite sweet spices

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in fresh fruits while serving.
2. Eat mixed with milk/yogurt.

Muesli (meaning mixture) is a breakfast cereal usually made from rolled oats, dried fruits and nuts. It is eaten mixed with yogurt, fresh fruits or milk. Introduced by a Swiss physician in 1900, it soon became a popular breakfast cereal in the west. The original Bircher - Benner Muesli recipe calls for mixing a spoon of rolled oats, a spoon of lemon juice, a spoon of sweet cream, a spoon of crushed nuts (hazelnuts/almonds) and a grated sour apple.

Filled with fruit, whole grains and nuts, muesli is a healthy way to start the day. It is a nutritionally balanced meal with carbohydrates from cereals, protein and fat from nuts and micro nutrients from dry fruits.

Indians have been eating Muesli for millennia. References to Poha (Flattened rice) eaten mixed with milk, yogurt and fresh fruit appear in Mahabharata. The Tamil Pori Kadalai is actually Muesli in disguise. So is the Jaal Mudi, which is nothing but a spicy version of Muesli. The Maithili Brahmin classics Chuda Dahi and Chuda Aam are Muesli too!

Cereal flakes are made by steaming and flattening grains. This process

partially cooks the cereal. Though corn flakes are the most popular, all cereals can be flaked/rolled. Though oats are commonly used in muesli, all cereal flakes can be mixed in, in any ratio you like.

You can even toast the cereals if you do not like the raw taste. (Heat a pan. Add a handful of rolled/flaked cereals. Stir and toast a couple of minutes on medium heat. Or you can roast using an oven/microwave).

As most consumers do not realize how simple it is to make Muesli, manufacturers make a killing on it. Packaged Muesli has a whopping markup. With dry fruits/nuts, rice flakes, corn flakes and oat flakes being readily available, all you need to do is to mix them up to have your own muesli. Muesli lasts for months and needs no refrigeration. You can easily mix up a big batch on a lazy Sunday and live off it for months. Mix in some powdered milk while mixing muesli and all you need to do is to add water while eating. This then becomes an ideal travel/camping food and an emergency meal. Have a small pack in your office/car/briefcase and you have food security for a day.

# No Prep Upmas

## Tamil Spiced Porridge

Wash and drain any of the following:

2C thick rice flakes (or)

200g dried idiyappam (rice vermicelli) broken into big pieces (or)

2C quick cooking oats (or)

2C thick vermicelli. (or)

2C bansi rava (coarse wheat grits)

Mix in 1tbsp bottled tadka, 1tsp salt. Add to a small vessel.

In a 2L cooker, add 1C water. Place the small vessel over water. Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove vessel. Fluff up and let cool. Optionally, mix in 1/4C each (grated coconut, chopped cilantro, flashed vegetables). Serve with raita.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice flakes/oats with quick cooking starches

### **Tips:**

1. Undercooked? Soak longer/Cook longer.
2. Overcooked? Soak less/Cook less

# Oats Pulao

## North Indian spiced oats with vegetables

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (carrot, beans)

Layer 3: 2 chopped green chilli

Layer 4: 1C rolled oats, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp garam masala.

Sprinkle 1/4C water. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Oil with butter/ghee
- Oats with other cereal flakes
- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables
- Peas with sprouts/paneer/tofu

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use roasted quick cooking oats for a nuttier flavor.
2. Can increase water for a mushier texture.
3. Onions start burning in 4 minutes without water.

# Pakhala Bath

## Odiya Fermented Rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1C rice, 2.5C water. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles. Let cool. Mix in enough water to cover rice. Keep covered overnight. Mix in 1tsp salt, 1C yogurt, 1C water and serve.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- White rice with millets
- Yogurt with buttermilk

### **Tips:**

1. Ferment longer for a tangier dish.
2. Can mix in chopped onion, tadka, chillies etc.
3. Serve with pickles/sun dried and fried vegetables.
4. Can strain out rice and serve the liquid as a drink.

Ayurveda governs the belief of Indians about foods that warm or cool the body. The 'cooling' foods are consumed in summer and the 'warming' foods in winter. Fermented rice is a very popular summer drink/meal in rural India, especially in the East and South. Bangladesh, Assam, Nepal and Burma have their own versions. Rural India swears by it and believes it wards off sun stroke.

This recipe is at least 1000 years old and is called Neer aagaram (water- food) in Tamil, Pakhala bath (water rice) in Oriya and Panta Bhat in Bengal.

Orissa elevates it to the status of food fit for the Gods. This is one of the very few fermented dishes offered as a prasad. Orissa celebrates March 20 as the day of the fermented rice- Pakhala Dibas. This dish finds mention in ancient Indian literature.

" ଆନ୍ଧ୍ରନୀର ବାତମ ପୋକକୁମ  
ଅରୁବିନୀର ପିତତମ ପୋକକୁମ  
ଚୋତନୁନୀର ଇରଣ୍ଣୁମ ପୋକକୁମ "

This siddhar song claims water-rice is actually a medicine that can cure stroke and indigestion.

Seen as a poor man's food, it fell out of favour, but is now making a comeback. It has now found a place in the menu of five star hotels in Orissa. It is served as a drink, breakfast, lunch or even dinner. Have enough, and it is guaranteed to make you drowsy! Well fermented rice is called Bashi pakhala. It is naturally sour and does not need yogurt for the tang. The less fermented version is usually mixed with yogurt and is called dahi pakhala.

# Pongal

## Tamil rice and lentil porridge

<https://youtu.be/TfhCBkos6r4>

In a 2L pressure cooker, add 1/2C raw rice, 1/4C split mung dal, 3tsp ghee, 1tsp each (salt, crushed pepper, cumin, ginger), 5 curry leaves and 2.5C water. Cook on medium heat for 4 whistles (12 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix well.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with oats/rice grits/millet grits
- Mung dal with your favourite lentils
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix
- Water with stock

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use soaked rice and dal for faster cooking.
2. Can use roasted rice and dal for a nuttier taste.
3. (Rice+ dal) to water ratio can vary from 1:3 to over 1: 5.
4. Can add chopped chilli for a bite.
5. Can be cooked on high heat if you don't mind a bit of spewing.
6. Mix in 1/2C cold water on opening to ensure pongal stops cooking and does not harden further.

#### Pongal and Kichidis (Rice and bean porridge):

Every single culture on earth has a porridge recipe using locally available grain. Some cultures made their porridge from crushed legumes, like green peas. It did not take long before someone thought of cooking grains and legumes together. The idea caught on.

Grains are packed with carbohydrates and legumes are packed with protein. Cooked together, they make a nutritionally balanced meal.

Each culture uses its favourite grain, legume, and flavouring combination to cook up a huge variety of these dishes. In South India, this combination goes by the name pongal when cooked with rice and mung dal or by the name arisi paruppu saadham, when cooked with rice and tuvar dal. The southern districts add a mixture of vegetables to this combination, calling it kootanchoru.

Pongal with millets are still common in rural South India. The little millet was a staple till edged out by rice a few decades back.

This theme is echoed in the North Indian khichidi which is usually a mix of millets and mung dal cooked together with vegetables. The wrongly named South Indian Kichidi uses wheat grits but no lentils and so is just an upma/in disguise.

Sweet versions of this theme exist in South. Called chakkara pongal, it uses rice, mung dal and copious amounts of jaggery and ghee.

A pongal/kichidi is supposed to be mushy. Hence more water is added while cooking them than in cooking just grains. Grits absorb up to seven times their volume of water. So the water ratio is varied from 1:3 to 1:7 depending on how mushy you like your pongal.

Across cultures, this theme is seen as comfort food. The building blocks of this theme are the grains used, the lentil used, the flavouring and additives used.

The classic venpongal of Tamilnadu uses raw rice, split and skinned mung dal flavoured by crushed pepper and cumin. A special recipe called Muniyodharan pongal uses split but unhusked mung dal. This ancient theme is prevalent across India and finds a mention in many records.

In South India coconut chutney accompanies pongal, whereas in the North, it is yogurt, pickle or kadhi (yogurt stew). The North Indian versions also have a lot of vegetables added. The Bengali Khichuri is served with an achaar (oil-based pickle). In other regions, the Khichdi is commonly served with a side of kadhi, and often accompanied by papads. A couplet captures this pairing:

*Khichri ka theen yaar*

*Papad, kadhi aur achaar.*

A Khichri has three best friends

Lentil wafers, yogurt stew and pickle.

Sago finds its way into Maharashtra Kichidis. The Oriya Khechidi uses

ginger and asafoetida for flavouring. The ginger khechidi is a popular dish in the Puri Jagannath Temple. The Bihari Khichri uses garam masala and many vegetables. In UP, tuvar dal replaces mung to cook up the arhar dal ka khichidi. Ajwain and asafoetida flavour it, along with cumin. When cooked with a souring agent, the Kichidi becomes the Karnataka bisi bele bath or the Tamil sambar sadham.

The Maize and beans of the Americas, the Githeri of Kenya, Egyptian Kushari, Arab Mujaddara/Imjadara, British/Scottish Kedgeree, Rice and peas of Caribbean, Hoppin John of Southern US, are all Kichidis at heart. Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have their own variants of kichidis as a part of their national cuisines, calling it khitchdee, khichdee, khichadi, khichuri, and khichari.

The additives/garnish vary across regions. Nuts are common in many regions. Onions (raw/fried) are common in North. Fresh herbs are a common garnish and the coastal regions use grated coconut. The Moguls packed it with dry fruits and nuts. The British added boiled eggs and fish.

Being an eternal favourite, it finds numerous mentions across ages.

Seleucus Nicator, a Greek ambassador (358 BC–281 BC), records that South Asians loved a rice and pulses dish.

"The munj (Mung) is boiled with rice, and then buttered and eaten. This is what they call Kishrī, and on this dish they breakfast every day." Ibn Batuta, 1340.

The French traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who came to India six times during 1640–1685, records that khichdi was prepared with green lentils, rice and butter and that it was a typical peasant evening meal.

'I remember the savour of your khichdi and biriyani during the winter'. Aurangazeb's letters to his son.

"The elephants of the palace are fed upon Kitchri." -- Abdul Razzak, 15th Century.

Kichidi recipe, 1590, cooked in Mogul kitchens, as recorded in Ain-I-Akbari:  
"Cook 5 ser each rice, split dal and ghee with 1/3 ser salt."  
(1 ser roughly equals 1 Kg)

Various Englishmen mention it in their memoirs:

"The diet of this sort of people admits not of great variety or cost, their delightfulest food being only Cutcherry, a sort of pulse and rice mixed

together and boiled in butter, with which they grow fat." Fryer 1673.

"Some Doll and Rice, being mingled together and boiled make Kitcheree, the common food of the country. They eat it with Butter and Atchar " -- A. Hamilton, 1727.

"Kitcharee is only rice stewed, with a certain pulse they call Dholl, and is generally eaten with salt-fish, butter, and pickles of various sorts." -- Grose 1750.

"He was always a welcome guest . . . and ate as much of their rice and Cutcheree as he chose." -- Forbes 1803.

Isn't it amazing such a simple dish can be so flexible and can move so many people?

# Ragi Koozhu

## Tamil Red millet porridge

Mix 1/4C ragi flour, 1.5C water to a smooth batter in a vessel.

In a 2L cooker, add 1C water. Place the vessel with ragi batter over water.

Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove inner vessel. Mix in 1/4C yogurt and 1/2tsp salt. Or mix in 1/4C milk and 1/2tsp sugar for a sweet version.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ragi flour with roasted/sprouted grain flours
- Can mix in 1tsp ghee/oil

#### **Tips:**

1. Can cook longer for a thicker porridge.
2. After cooking, can keep covered for 2-4 days for the porridge to ferment.

This is poor man's food in India. A pity, as it is one of the easiest and healthiest foods to make.

Man has been boiling crushed grains into porridge from time immemorial. With the advent of flour making technology, we started boiling flour into porridge - the Koozhu, as it is called in Tamilnadu.

Though the Ragi Koozhu is the most common porridge cooked in Tamilnadu, any flour can be cooked into a Koozhu.

The flour porridge can be sweet, (cooked with sugar and milk). It can be savoury, cooked with salt and spices. It can be cooked thick so that it becomes a semi solid (Kannidiga Ragi Mudde, Tamil Kali) or it can be cooked thin so that it becomes a drink. When thin, it is called a Kanji, when semi-thick it is called Koozhu and when a semi solid, it is called Kali. The English group it all under one term - Porridge.

It can even be fermented to make a healthier version. It can be further enriched by using malted flour (made from sprouted grains).

When the flour is roasted, it gets precooked and requires no further boiling. It can then be made into an instant porridge by mixing it with a liquid.

The cheapest and the most basic flour porridges are the Tibetan Tsampa and the Bihari Sattu. Tsampa is just roasted barley flour, which is eaten as it is or mixed with tea. The Bihari sattu is just roasted gram flour, which is eaten on its own or mixed with buttermilk. The nutritive value of these simple dishes enabled Sherpas to conquer Himalayas and power Bihari labourers through back breaking manual work.

You can even make this porridge with mix of different flours. This roasted flour mix briefly boiled into a drink was popular in Tamilnadu as sathumavu (Healthy flour), till the packaged ones declared them uncool.

The industrial versions of these flour porridges (Horlicks, Milo, Ovaltine) are mostly malted flour mixed with milk powder, sweeteners and some additives (whey powder, cocoa powder). They are marketed as healthy drinks (they would be, if they cut out the chemicals and preservatives), at 10 times the price. Our repressed love for sattumavu has made India one of the biggest markets for these drinks.

These flour mixes are easy to do at home - just mix any combination of flour, lentil, seed, nut flour, in any proportion. Mix in water/milk and a brief boil would give you goodness in a jiffy.

This version of Ragi Porridge detailed above is very popular especially during summer months as it is believed to cool the body. During the Tamil month "Aadi", huge vats are cooked in temples (especially Amman temples) and distributed free.

Interestingly, it is not cooked in any of the temples of the Vedic Gods, pointing to the fact that this porridge predates the spread of Hinduism in the South. Another interesting clue is given by the small quantity of cooked rice which is mixed into this porridge - I believe this is because rice was once such an expensive grain, that it was just used as a garnish, the way cashew is used today!

The sweet versions of this theme are ideal baby food. The salty versions are served with pickles/onions/chillies. A dash of yogurt is usually mixed in for

the tang. If left to rest overnight, it turns slightly sour by fermentation. This predigestion by bacteria makes it even healthier and probiotic.

A mug of filling Ragi koozhu on the streets of rural India costs Rs.5, and is probably the healthiest breakfast you can have!

Every single cuisine on earth cooks this theme using local flour.

The French cook refined flour into La bouye Farin (White Flour Porridge)

The Mexicans cook maize flour into Atole and Champurrado. The Spanish took this dish to Philippines. Filipinos replaced maize flour with rice flour and cook it as Tsampurado.

The Africans cook corn/sorghum/maize and millet flours into Uji, Ugali etc.

The Mielie pap of South Africa, Sadza of Zimbabwe, Nshima of Zambia,

Tuwo of Nigeria, Pap of Caribbean and Sobagaki of Japan are all variants of this theme. The consistency may differ, the additives may vary, but the core theme remains the same across the world.

Own this ultra simple theme - it can feed you for life!

This recipe uses roasted flour, to cut cooking time and uses the double boiler method to prevent foaming and clumping.

# Ram Kichidi

## Gujarathi rice and lentil porridge

In a 2L pressure cooker, add 1/4C each (basmathi rice, mung dal), 1/4C each chopped (potato, onion, brinjal, beans, turnip), 3tsp ghee, 1tsp each (salt, cumin, ginger), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, garam masala), 1 bay leaf, 1" bit cinnamon, 2 slit chillies, 2C water. Cook on medium heat for 4 whistles (15 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix well.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with oats/pressed rice/millet grits
- Mung dal with your favourite lentils
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix
- Water with stock

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use presoaked/roasted rice and dal.
2. (Rice+ dal): Water ratio can vary from 1:3 to over 1: 5.
3. Can be cooked on high heat if you don't mind a bit of spewing.
4. Medium heat is half of the high heat setting you use.



# Rava Upma

## Tamil Grits porridge

<https://youtu.be/4XimOVq3OX0>

In a 2L pressure cooker add 2C water, 2tsp oil, 1tsp each (salt, chopped ginger), 1 chopped green chilli. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C double roasted, fine rava. Close and let rest for 15 minutes (No further heating needed).

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rava with other similar sized roasted grain grits

### **Tips:**

1. Reduce quantity of water for a drier texture.
2. If you don't get pre roasted rava, dry roast rava. Let cool. Roast again till it does not taste raw.
3. Can roast dry/with oil/ghee.
4. Ensure you use fine rava. Bigger grits do not work in this recipe.
5. Can add turmeric for a coloured version.



Grits porridge is one of the ancient foods of mankind. All cultures boil their favourite cereal grits in a liquid into porridge. Every single grain can be and is cooked into porridge.

Cooking grits is faster than cooking whole grains as grits have a larger surface area. Presoaking/roasting grits makes them even easier to cook. All our breakfast cereals are actually instant porridges where the cereals are precooked and just need a brief soak to become edible.

In India, a huge range of porridges are cooked as upmas in the South and kichidis in the North. In their most basic version, they are just flavoured cereal grits. But they can support a range of additives.

Uppuma (oooh- pooh- ma)/upma is a South Indian savoury porridge, generally made from cream of wheat (Sooji/Rava). Known as Upma in Tamil and Malayalam, Uppindi in Telugu, Upeet in Marathi and Uppittu in Kannada, they all mean "Salty- flour". In North India the savoury version is usually made from millet grits, especially Bajra (Pearl millet). With wheat grits, the sweet version called Sooji Halwa, is more common. In South India, the savoury version is the most common, though South India has a sweet version too, called Kesari.

Uppuma/Kichidi is nothing but a porridge made from cracked grains. Porridge has been on the diet of humans for ages. They have been found in the stomachs of 5000 year old bodies! For much of history, fine flour was a luxury as flour making technology was not available. However, it is easy to coarsely grind a cereal or legume. These grits were then boiled in a liquid. This is a simple, foolproof way to draw nourishment from grains or legumes.

So it is no wonder almost all nations have their own versions of Upma made from locally available grains, flavoured by their traditional flavourings.

You will find Oats porridge (from steel cut oats or rolled oats) in most of Europe and USA (cooked with milk and sugar) and maize porridge in Mexico (cooked with milk and chocolate).

A variety of cornmeal porridges are common in the southern US. Sorghum porridge is popular in many African nations. The famous peas porridge made from pea grits is eaten in England and Scotland. You'll bump into Barley porridge (Tsampa) in Tibet, Cornmeal porridge (Polenta) in Italy, Buckwheat porridge in parts of Russia, Millet porridge in Namibia, Middle East and Rye porridge in Finland.

You can alter the amount of water to make the porridge dry or mushy. All porridge thickens dramatically on cooling.

The key problem in cooking grits is clumping caused by uneven heating. This problem can be solved by cooking pre-roasted grits in retained heat.

The key features prized in most grit porridges are:

1. The grits should have been fully cooked, but should retain their shape and texture. They should not have been cooked into a mush.
2. There should be no lumps, however small.
3. The consistency should semi solid and not rock hard even when the porridge is cold.

The OPOS version is especially suitable for making large batches of porridge (over 1 kg) where stirring is back breaking!

The retained heat cooking technique relies on the fact that the grits are already mostly cooked (by roasting) and need only a soak in the boiling water to become fully cooked. This is the same principle which makes the OPOS kesari work.

# Rava Pongal

## Tamil grits- lentil porridge

In a 2L pressure cooker, add 2.5C water, 1/4C mung dal, 3tsp ghee, 1tsp each (salt, chopped ginger), 1 chopped green chilli. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (7 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C double roasted rava. Close and let rest for 15 minutes (No further heating needed).

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rava with other similar sized grain grits
- Mung dal with soaked tuvar/masoor dal
- Raw dal with roasted dal
- Water with stock

#### **Tips:**

1. Vary quantity of water to vary texture.
2. If you don't get pre roasted rava, dry roast rava. Let cool. Roast again till it does not taste raw.
3. Can roast rava dry or with oil/ghee.
4. Can add chopped vegetables.
5. Use 30 minutes soaked mung dal for faster cooking.

# Rava Pulao

## North Indian spiced rava with vegetables

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2 chopped green chillies, 5 curry leaves

Layer 3: 1C each chopped (carrot, beans)

Layer 4: 1C roasted rava, 1/2tsp salt, 1 chopped green chilli

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Oil with butter/ghee
- Rava with other roasted grits
- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables

#### **Tips:**

1. Can add rava in an inner vessel if you face burning.
2. Place rava in an inner vessel if you are using more rava and less vegetables.

# Rava Palak Pulao

## North Indian Wheat grits pulao

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped spinach

Layer 3: 1C rava mixed with 2C chopped spinach, 2 chopped green chillies, 1tsp salt.

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up and keep closed for 5 minutes.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Green chillies with chilli powder
- Spinach with your favourite edible greens
- Wheat rava with other roasted grain grits

### **Tips:**

1. Wash and drain non-wheat grits for faster cooking.
2. Spinach can be filled to the brim in a cooker as it shrinks dramatically on heating.

# Sabudhana Kichidi

## North Indian spiced sago with vegetables

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (carrot, beans)

Layer 4: 1 chopped green chilli,

Layer 5: 1C sago soaked till soft (at least 2 hours) in 1C water and drained, 1tsp oil, 1/2tsp salt.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Oil with butter/ghee
- Rava with other roasted grits
- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables

#### **Tips:**

1. Soak sago for 2-3 hours till the pearls are soft and can be crushed easily.
2. Drain sago well. Else it would clump up.

Sabudhana kichidi or Tapioca pearl kichidi is especially cooked during religious fasts when rice/wheat are avoided.

These pearls are made from the starch stored in the stem/roots of palm trees. They are a staple in the near East and East Indies. This starch is extracted from the stems of a variety of palm. The starch is extracted by and processed into tiny balls. Sago was introduced to India around 100 years back and soon became popular. When India faced a supply glitch during the second world war, a group of entrepreneurs from Salem, Tamilnadu, started making these pearls using Tapioca. It grew up to a huge industry. Salem still produces the bulk of Tapioca pearls.

The production process is elaborate. The root is cleaned and crushed to extract milk. The starchy milk is allowed to settle into cakes. These cakes are shaped into tiny granules and roasted/steamed to firm them up. They are then sun dried and packed.

Two common types of Sago are produced: The larger milky white common sago and the smaller, translucent Nylon sago. The Nylon Sago goes through a process very similar to parboiled rice. Both varieties can be cooked the same way. Both need to be soaked till soft, drained well and then used in this recipe.

The building blocks of this theme are pearls used, flavouring and additives.

#### Pearls:

You can use Tapioca pearls, Palm tree pearls, Nylon sago or the common sago. They all cook the same way. You need to soak them till they are soft and completely drain them before using them. Even a little amount of water makes them mushy. If they disintegrate on soaking, they are not to be used in this recipe. The pearls should not clump together when they are added. Too much cooking turns them to mush.

#### Flavouring:

A tadka is the only flavouring needed. The tadka can be changed to suit the region.

#### Additives:

Potatoes are added for more starch, onion- tomato supply micro nutrients and peanuts are added for protein. These additives convert the kichidi into a full meal.

#### Technique:

You can use both retained heat cooking or the layer and flash technique to cook the pearls.

# Sago Upma

## Tamil spiced sago

Soak 1C sago in 1C water for 2 hours (till soft). Drain well. Mix in 1tbsp bottled tadka, 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder ), 1/4tsp turmeric powder. Place in a small vessel.

In a 2L cooker, add 1C water. Place vessel with sago over water. Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all. Optionally, mix in 1/4C grated coconut, chopped cilantro, flashed vegetables. Serve with raita.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chilli powder with sambar powder/chopped green chillies
- Pearl sago with nylon sago

#### **Tips:**

1. Undercooked? Cook longer.
2. Overcooked? Release pressure.
3. After soaking, air dry sago completely before adding if you want a grainy texture.

# Semia Upma

## Tamil Vermicelli Porridge

<https://youtu.be/d1FUFcUdnsU>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onions, 2tsp chopped ginger

Layer 3: 2 chopped green chillies, 5 curry leaves, 1/2tsp salt

Layer 4 : 1C double roasted thick vermicelli

Cover with water (1C). Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all. Fluff up.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables

### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked, cook longer.
2. If overcooked, release pressure.
3. If clumpy, reduce water.
4. Do not use thin, unroasted vermicelli
5. If your vermicelli is not roasted, add to a pan and roast on low heat with constant stirring. Check taste. If it tastes raw, let cool and roast again



Semia Upma (Vermicelli Porridge) is a pasta porridge. Vermicelli was introduced to Indian cuisine by the Arabs. Indian cuisine embraced it. Vermicelli soon found its way into sweet and salty porridges.

Both sweet porridges (Vermicelli Kheer/Kesari) and salty versions (Vermicelli Kichidi/Upma) are cooked the same way - by boiling. Unlike Italians, we started roasting vermicelli before using - the way we roast dal and grain grits, to minimise their raw smell.

Unfortunately, the kichidi/upma cooking methods turn vermicelli into a mush. It loses all its bite and clumps together. Indian cuisine has no problem with this, as we prefer overcooked to undercooked food.

This recipe is an attempt to put the bite back into vermicelli and cook it the way pasta ought to be cooked - al dente.

The building blocks of this theme are the pasta used, the vegetables and the flavouring.

#### Pasta:

Any thin pasta (Capellini/Vermicelli/Angel hair pasta) can be used in this recipe. The trick is to wash it and drain so that it absorbs water and loses its crunch. This softened pasta is cooked with a measured amount of water to cook it fully, yet retain a bite. Each strand comes out separate, with no trace of mushiness, unlike the traditional upma.

**Vegetables:**

All upma/kichidi vegetables can be used. Onions provide the moisture and are supplemented by carrots/beans.

**Flavouring:**

The regular upma flavouring of curry leaves, chilli powder, turmeric powder is used. Tadka is optional.

# Uggani

## Kannada/Telugu curried puffed rice

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1C each chopped (onion, tomato)

Layer 3: 2 chopped green chillies, 1/2tsp salt, 1tsp jaggery, 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5min). Release pressure. Dunk 5C puffed rice in water and drain. Mix all with 1/4C each (chopped cilantro, crushed peanuts), 1tsp lemon juice.

### LAYER AND FLASH

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Puffed rice flakes with other puffed cereals/cereal flakes.
- Chillies with chilli powder
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix.

#### Tips:

1. Can mix in salad vegetables for a crunch.
2. Can mix in spiced lentil powder for a drier texture.

Uggani (Puffed rice salad) is a staple in parts of Andhra/Telengana/Karnataka. The word means nothing in Telugu and is most likely a corruption of the Kannada word Oggarnae.

The Kannada name for this recipe is Girmit/Mandakki Oggarnae (tempered puffed rice). It is likely that Oggarnae got shortened to Ugrani/Oggani/Uggani/Buggani/Vaggani in Telugu.

Uggani is a staple breakfast in northern Karnataka and Rayalaseema. It is a popular street food, being paired with Mirapakaya Bajji (batter fried chillies) or onion pakodas.

Uggani is designed to be a balanced meal, which explains its popularity as a breakfast dish. The carbohydrates come from the puffed rice, protein from the

roasted gram/spiced lentil powder and fat from the tempering. Onion - tomato forms the sauce that holds all these together.

The building blocks are the base, the starch, protein and additives.

The base:

Spiced and cooked onion- tomato forms the base. Unlike the North Indian bhel puri, where onions-tomatoes are mixed in raw, they are always cooked in this theme. This cooked base converts the dish to an Upma variant, a staple breakfast, unlike the Bhel Poori which is still seen as a snack and is never eaten for breakfast.

Starch:

Puffed rice is most commonly used, though this theme can be extended with other puffed cereals.

Protein:

Unlike the Bhel Poori, addition of protein is mandatory in Uggani as this is designed to be a balanced meal. The protein is added either as roasted gram/roasted lentil powder/peanut/coconut.

Additives:

A souring agent (Tamarind/lemon juice), fresh chopped herbs and chopped salad vegetables are usually mixed in. Jaggery is added in some versions for a mild sweetish note. Chopped raw onions, tomatoes and chillies are also mixed in as a garnish in some versions.

Serving:

Uggani is usually served with batter fried chillies/onion pakodas.

## Lunch/Dinner

# Bhuga Chawal

## Sindhi Biriyani

Soak 1C basmathi rice in water for 30 minutes. Drain. Mix in 1/4C caramelised onion, 1/8 tsp turmeric powder, 1/4 tsp each (chilli powder, garam masala), 1/2 tsp salt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 2 nos. each (bay leaves, cardamom, cloves)

Layer 3: Basmathi rice

Sprinkle 1C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up and serve.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi with your favourite rice variety.
- Onions with shallots.
- Caramelised onions with fried onions.
- Turmeric with saffron
- Chilli powder with slit chilli/pepper powder.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Ghee with butter/your favourite oils.
- Water with stock.

### **Tips:**

1. Reduce water quantity for a grainy texture.
2. Increase water quantity for mushier texture.
3. Can add vegetables of your choice, to make it more nutritious.
4. Can add protein (paneer, soaked soya, mushroom, sprouts) to make this into a full meal.
5. Can use dry fruits and nuts as garnish.



Bhuga Chawal

(Onion Rice) is a Sindhi staple. This is about as basic a Biriyani can get. This ultra simple Biriyani is capable of packing a serious flavour punch. The building blocks are the rice, caramelised onions and the flavouring.

#### Rice:

Fragrant varieties like basmathi are preferred, but you can use any rice of your choice. The same theme would work with millets too, though the water ratio needs to be tweaked based on the millet used.

#### Onions:

The traditional recipe calls for onions to be caramelised. We use caramelised/readily available fried onions instead. You can extend the same theme with other aromatics like carrot, ginger, mint etc.

#### Flavouring:

Any combination of Muglai spices work. Cinnamon, cardamom, star anise, cloves, bay leaves are all used. Ghee provides the base note of flavour. The spices can be used in various ways. You can briefly stir-fry them in ghee or tie them up in a bundle and cook them with rice or powder them and mix it in with rice. Each alters the flavour subtly. In all cases, using fresh roasted spices gives the maximum flavour.

#### Water:

The amount of water you add determines the texture of rice. Use less water for a grainier texture and more water for a softer texture. The water quantity

would also vary with the rice used.

**Serving:**

Serve it hot with sai bhaji, raita/yogurt or with a pickle and a papad. Dry vegetable curries (usually potato/brinjal) are popular accompaniments.

# Bisi Bele Bath

## Kannada Lentil rice

<https://youtu.be/nABJlZtrHno>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C each (rice, tuvar dal), 1/4C grated and roasted coconut, 1/2tsp each (Kashmiri chilli powder, garam masala), 1tsp each (sambar powder, salt, jaggery), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 1tbsp each (tamarind pulp, ghee), 3C water and 5 curry leaves. Cook on high heat for 8 whistles (10 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C cold water.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with poha/cereal grits/millets
- Tuvar dal with mung/masoor dals
- Sambar powder with Bisi Bele Bath powder/ your favourite spice mix
- Coconut with copra

### **Tips:**

1. Can vary dal: rice ratio from 1:1 to 2:1.
2. Can vary (dal+rice): water ratio from 1: 3 to 1: 5.
3. Use soaked rice and dal for a mushier consistency.
4. Can add 1C chopped vegetables.
5. Adding cold water locks the porridge consistency, preventing it from tightening up.



Bisi Bele bath (Hot lentil rice) or more formally, Bisi Bele Huli Anna (Hot lentil sour rice) is one of the signature dishes of Kannadiga cuisine. Bisibele bath is much loved in Karnataka and is a part of wedding/festive feasts. Kannadigas eat it for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Any time is BBB time!

Food historian K.T. Achaya claims this stems from Kattogara, a 10th-century preparation that combined rice with ghee, salt and garlic. Kannadiga cuisine is vast, with very different food habits. The hilly Malenadu has its own cuisine, the coastal regions have a different cuisine and the open plains have a unique cuisine of their own. Achaya does not point out the region in Karnataka where bisi bele bath first originated. Cooking rice with ghee and flavouring was a common technique all across the South. The addition of lentils, tamarind and two sets of spices sets BBB apart from flavoured rice. Therefore, Achaya's claim does not seem very valid.

Others believe the BBB comes from the royal Wodeyar cuisine. This claim seems more valid for the reasons below:

1. Traditional BBB does not have any vegetables, apparently because the kings preferred to have the vegetables served separately.
2. In the royal cuisine, expensive spices like cardamom, mace and poppy seeds were liberally used. These spices set BBB apart from other lentil rice recipes in the South like koottanchoru, sambar rice and arisi paruppu saadham.
3. The Wodeyars, though meat eaters, had a separate vegetarian kitchen run by Brahmin cooks. These kitchens were ultra orthodox and did not even

include onions and garlic. It is in these kitchens that food for religious ceremonies was prepared. BBB is likely to have originated from these kitchens, which is why garlic/onions are still not a part of this recipe.

4. Byadagi chillies, tamarind, coconut, cardamoms, cloves, star anise, cinnamon, peppercorns - the building blocks of BBB were all regularly used in the royal kitchens. In fact, the BBB masala could have stemmed from the Mysore garam masala, which is made from equal portions of cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon.

5. Other Kannada regions like Malenadu (Hilly region)/coastal regions or even Udupi do not stake a claim for this dish, though the Udupi cuisine is credited to have perfected it.

6. There is no mention of Bisi Bele Bath in Kannadiga literature before the Wodeyar reign.

Therefore, along with the Mysore Masala Dosa, Mysorepak and Mysore Rasam, it is very likely the credit for BBB should go to Mysore cuisine.

The BBB is a part of a large family. Across the world, carbohydrates and protein together make a balanced meal. This is why various combinations of rice and beans are popular in many cuisines.

In India, we have many themes where rice and lentils are cooked together. The North Indian Kichidi, South Indian Pongal, Sambar Sadham, Kootan choru and Arisi Paruppu sadham are all variants of the rice and beans theme. It is to this illustrious family Bisi Bele Bath belongs, with a few key differences.

1. It uses both North Indian and South Indian spices for flavouring. It uses asafoetida, turmeric and chilli powder along with sweet spices like cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and star anise.
2. It uses as much lentils (or more, in some versions) as rice. All other lentil-rice preparations listed above use much less lentils as compared to rice.
3. Coconut is mandatory.
4. It uses the Kannadiga specialty, the Byadagi chilli, for its colour and bite.
5. Many versions call for the addition of jaggery, a much-loved ingredient in the Mysore cuisine.

These differentiate it from its closest equivalent, the Tamil Sambar Sadham. The Bisi Bele Bath is richer, more aromatic and packs more protein than the Tamil sambar sadham.

The traditional preparation calls for multiple steps:

1. Roast coconut and an array of spices in ghee.
2. Grind to a powder.
3. Simmer tamarind extract until it loses its raw taste.
4. Cook rice and dal.
5. Mix and simmer everything together.

The OPOS version replaces these steps with a single step. Though readymade spice mixes are available for BBB, but you can make your own from a mixture of sambar powder and garam masala. Many versions call for roast and ground channa dal. You can replace it with paruppu podi (spiced lentil powder).

BBB does not demand vegetables, though you can use your favourite mix of vegetables. Bisibelebath is served piping hot with generous helpings of ghee. Crunchies like boondi/chips/sev/onion raita is the usual accompaniment. Tadka is optional, though it adds another layer of flavour.

Try out this royal dish and the never before cooked variants!

# Brinji

## Taminadu's flavoured Rice

Mix 1/2C each chopped (carrot, beans, potato), 1/2C each (fresh peas, grated coconut, mint), 1/4C caramelised onions, 1tsp each (salt, chilli powder, ginger-garlic paste, garam masala, pepper powder) and 1/4C coconut milk.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 2 bay leaves

Layer 3: 1/2C chopped tomato

Layer 4: 1C mixed vegetables

Layer 5: 1C (30 minutes soaked and drained) Basmathi rice

Layer 6: 1C mixed vegetables to cover rice completely

Add 1C water along the edges. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes).

Let pressure settle. Mix all and fluff up.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi with millets/your favourite rice variety
- Carrot/beans/with your favourite vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Increase soaking time, cooking time and water quantity if your rice is undercooked.
2. Soak rice in hot water if you face undercooking.
3. Use less water for a grainy texture.
4. Use more water for a mushier texture



The word Brinji means nothing in Tamil, always a reasonable indicator that the recipe is a borrowed one. Historians believe rice cultivation came to India from China. From here, it spread to the west. All the western words for Rice come either from the Tamil word (Arisi) or from the Sanskrit word (Vrihi).

The Tamil Arisi became the Greek Oryza, Latin Oriza, French Ris, Italian Riso, German Reis, Polish Ryż and English Rice. However, that is not how our dish gets its name. We need to dig deeper.

The Sanskrit Vrihi became the Pashto vriže, Old Persian brizi and Iranian berenj.

In Central Asia, especially in Iran (Ancient Persia), polished white rice is called berenj. Persians excelled in cooking rice. It is likely that this polished white rice cooked with mild spices by Arab traders, caught the fancy of a Tamil nation and came to be called Berenji or Brinji. Rice boiled in milk is still called Sheer Berenji (Milk Rice) in Iran. It is likely that flavoured rice boiled in water might have been called just Berenji.

Central Asians taught us refined ways to cook rice. These methods came to us through the South and the North. The Arab traders taught us the relatively simpler methods of cooking rice. The armies of cooks accompanying the Sultans and Moguls taught us fancier versions of cooking rice into Pulaos and Biriyani.

Let us look at an ancient Persian recipe, still cooked in Iran. I would imagine an ancient trader cooking it in India, with the locals watching.

“Wash rice and boil it with one and a half times its volume of water. When

the water is absorbed, add ghee and cook covered until the rice is cooked".

This recipe is still the traditional rice dish of the Gilan province. It could almost be the recipe of the present day Brinji if you add bay leaves and spices!

Rice was always a luxury, until around 50 years back. It was cooked only during festive occasions. Refined rice was even more expensive. It was used only in very special dishes. Unlike today, plain boiled rice was almost never cooked. An expensive grain like rice called for a special dish.

One such special dish is the Brinji, which is halfway between plain flavoured rice and a Pulao/Biriyani/Tahiri. The only thing common to all is the use of polished rice. The Brinji is much older than Biriyani/Pulao/Tahiri, which are relatively new entrants to Tamil cuisine. Being older, the Brinji has internalised South Indian ingredients like coconut and pepper. It also uses local rice varieties unlike Pulao/Biriyani, which call for Basmathi. It uses more water and so the texture of a cooked Brinji is not as grainy as a Pulao/Biriyani.

Brinji has coconut and pepper, but no yogurt. Biriyani uses yogurt, but no coconut or pepper. Pulao has no coconut, pepper, yogurt, meat and usually has a single dominating vegetable/spice. A Tahiri has no coconut, pepper, meat and usually has a mix of vegetables.

I would think the Brinji is the earliest version of Biriyani/Pulao cooked in Tamilnadu. 50 years back no one knew Biriyani or Pulao in Tamilnadu. All they knew was Brinji. The Tamil name for bay leaves - Brinji elai (Brinji Leaf) come from the fact these leaves were invariably used in a brinji!

Down South, in places like Madurai, the heart of Tamil culture, Brinji is still more popular than the Biriyani/Pulao.

True to its roots, the Brinji is paired with kuruma, another Central Asian dish. This is not the korma of the North cooked with dairy, but the South Indian version with coconut taking place of milk.

The building blocks of a Brinji are the rice used, the flavouring, vegetables and additives.

Rice:

South Indian short grained rice is more commonly used. Flavoured varieties

like Seeraka Samba are preferred. This recipe uses basmathi, which is easier to standardise than the bewildering array of rice varieties used in Tamilnadu. You can even use soaked millets to replace rice.

#### Flavouring:

Bay leaves, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom are all commonly used along with Indian pepper. Ghee provides a base note of rich flavour. The early recipes did not have chillies and relied only on pepper for the bite.

#### Vegetables:

It is possible that the early recipes used little or no vegetables, like today's pulao. The star was the rice itself. But today a variety of 'English' vegetables are used. Native vegetables are almost never used, again indicating that this might be a borrowed recipe.

#### Additives:

Coconut and coconut milk sets apart the Brinji from the Biriyani/Pulao and Tahiri. Fried bread pieces are also mixed in a Brinji.

#### Serving:

Brinji is usually served with a raita and a vegetable kuruma.

# Carrot Pulao

## North Indian Carrot flavoured rice

In a 2L cooker, add 2tbsp butter, 1C soaked and drained basmathi rice (soaked atleast 30 mins), 1 slit chilli, 1tsp each (salt, ginger- garlic paste), 1C water, 1C chopped carrot. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Open and fluff up.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot with your favourite vegetables
- Butter with ghee
- Water with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in flash cooked vegetables for a more intense colour.
2. Presoaking rice lengthens the grains
3. Reduce water quantity for a grainier pulao.
4. Increase water quantity for a mushier pulao.

This theme is about cooking rice with flavouring and additives (vegetables/meats) so that they absorb each other's flavours. The Pulao theme comes to us from Central Asia. Moguls (Persianised Mongols) brought it to India. The name Pulao (Hindi/Urdu), Pulaou (Tamil), Pilaf (English), Pilao (Afghanistan), Plov (Uzbek) all come from Persian/Turkish word Pilav. Variants of this dish with the same name are found all across Central Asia.

Learn to cook Pulao and you have learnt to cook the staple of a dozen cuisines!

Once you master the pulao theme, variations are very simple.

Change base:

Replace rice with Bulghur/Millets/Quinoa/Vermicelli/Oats/Pasta other starches.

Change additives:

Instead of carrot, use any of the following:

Leftover curries (Bhaji pulao);  
Fresh fenugreek leaves (Methi pulao);  
Paneer (Paneer pulao);  
Any Indian pickle (Achari pulao);  
Mushrooms (Khumb pulao);  
Sprouted lentils (Matki pulao);  
Korma (Korma pulao);  
A mix of vegetables, dry fruits and nuts (Navratan pulao);  
Marinated chicken (Chicken pulao);  
Soaked soya chunks (Soya pulao);  
Chopped spinach (Palak pulao);  
Cashew paste and cream (Shahi pulao) and so on.

Change flavouring:

Add 1tbsp saffron (Zafrani pulao);  
Use half cup mint leaves (Pudina pulao);  
use 1tbsp cumin seeds (Jeera pulao);

Change liquid:

Instead of water, use  
Stock (Yakhni pulao);  
Coconut milk (Nasi Lemak);  
Coconut water;  
Milk;  
Yogurt;  
Tomato/other fruit juices.

You can extend and personalize this immensely flexible theme the way you like. It will feed you for life!

# Chop Suey

## Chinese All in one noodles

Crush 1 pack (85g) noodles. Wash and drain. Mix in 2tsp oil, 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli sauce, soya sauce, vinegar, ginger-garlic paste)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil,

Layer 2: 1/2C each (cabbage, carrot, beans) cut into matchsticks, 1/2C green peas

Layer 3: Noodles

Cook on high heat for two whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cabbage/carrot with your favourite vegetables/seafood/cooked meat
- Dried noodles with wet noodles (fresh noodles)
- Water with stock

### **Tips:**

1. If noodles are undercooked, do not release pressure.
2. If overcooked, do not wash/cook less.
3. Use less water for a firmer noodle texture.
4. Crush the noodles before opening the pack. It is a lot easier.
5. Can stir-fry briefly after opening.
6. Instant noodles can be cooked the same way, without washing.



There are as many noodle preparations as there are Chinese. Two of them, both from Southern China, are very popular - the Hakka noodles of the Hakka Chinese and the Chow Mein of the Taisanese. Both are noodles stir-fried with various additives and flavouring, with minor variations, very similar to Indian Chitranna.

Hakka noodles came to India with the Chinese immigrants, took on Indian flavourings, vegetables and laid the foundation of the Indo Chinese cuisine. Chow Mein (stir-fried noodles) prepared with leftovers, went to US with the Taisan Chinese immigrants and became the Chop Suey (Tsap Seui: Mixed leftovers).

The building blocks of a Chop Suey are the noodles, the flavouring and the additives.

#### Noodles:

A variety of noodles can be used, though wheat/egg noodles are common. In this recipe, the noodles are washed and cooked in steam. Ensure the noodles you use are not too thick or too thin. Very thin noodles will turn into a mush and very thick noodles will remain uncooked.

#### Flavouring:

The favourite Chinese trio of vinegar, soya sauce, chilli sauce is common, though you can use your favourite flavourings.

#### Additives:

All kinds of vegetables, mushrooms, processed meats, cooked meats, fresh seafood, eggs, paneer, tofu, sprouts etc. can be used.

Corn starch slurry is usually mixed in to hold all together in a sauce, but it is optional here as the starch leached out from noodles forms a sauce on its own.

# Curried Pasta

## Pasta cooked in curry

[https://youtu.be/BMlv\\_J4jpQE](https://youtu.be/BMlv_J4jpQE)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1C (85g) washed and drained macaroni

Layer 3: 1/4C small soya chunks

Layer 4: 1tbsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (chilli powder, garam masala, salt)

Layer 5 (optional): 1/4C curry base/leftover curry

Add 1C water to just about cover pasta. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes).

Release pressure. Mix all.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with other pasta
- Soya with paneer/tofu/mushroom/fresh green peas
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Indian pasta cooks fast.
2. Harder pasta needs to be soaked/cooked longer.
3. Can mix in cheese/cream.
4. If using larger soya chunks, soak and drain before adding.
5. Any leftover curry/subji can be used.

If the Japanese can extend rice with curry into Kare Raisu, we can do the same with pasta!

After all, it is no secret that Indians find Italian pasta recipes too bland to our taste. A nation mixing chat masala with fresh fruits and Jajira masala with cola can be excused for spicing up pasta to its taste. We are spice junkies, and

proud of it!

This recipe treats pasta as just another starch and spices it up into a full meal, with protein and additives.

The building blocks of this theme are the pasta, curry base and additives.

Pasta:

Macaroni has been used, but can be replaced with any pasta of your choice.

Curry base:

The onion - tomato based Masala has been used here but can be replaced with any curry base/leftover curry/thokku or even spice mixes like Puliogarae.

Additives:

Soya chunks, papad supply the protein and can be replaced with other protein sources (Fresh peas, mushrooms, tofu etc). Mix in cheese/coconut milk/cream for an added protein punch.

Do play around and cook up pastas never cooked before!

# Drumstick Rice

## Drumstick flavoured rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1C basmathi rice, 3 slit chillies, 6 curry leaves, 1tsp chopped ginger, 1C drumstick flesh, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp turmeric powder, 1/4tsp asafoetida, 2tsp ghee, 2C water.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle. Open, fluff up and mix in 1/4C crushed peanuts.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi with your favourite rice
- Drumstick with other vegetables
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Water with stock
- Curry leaves with your favourite herbs
- Peanuts with roasted nuts/sev

#### **Tips:**

1. Reduce water for a grainier texture.
2. Presoak rice for longer grains.
3. Split open drumsticks and use a peeler to peel flesh.

An array of variety rice is cooked across the South. Karnataka lays claim to most of them, owning even the word Chitranna. The traditional way of preparing them is a multi step process. Rice is cooked separately and spread out to cool. When rice cools, the starch hardens and the grains become firmer and separate. This rice is stir-fried with a variety of spices and additives to create a wide range of chitranna.

We can convert this into OPOS by cooking rice with additives, flavouring and mixing tadka at the very end. This theme can be extended with an array of additives and flavouring to create infinite chitranna recipes.

The building blocks of this theme are the grain, additives, liquid, flavouring

and the protein.

The grain:

Rice is most common starch used. Though this recipe calls for basmathi, any rice variety can be used. Avoid using new rice/raw rice, which becomes mushy on cooking. Aged rice/parboiled rice works well in this recipe. If rice is overcooked, reduce water quantity/cooking time. If under cooked, presoak it/cook longer. Millets/wheat grits can be used in place of rice, though the water ratio needs to be tweaked accordingly.

Additives:

A variety of vegetables both cooked/raw can be used in place of drumstick. Each imparts their colour, flavour and taste to this recipe. You can use any of your favourite vegetables/fruits or even mix in dry curries.

Drumstick rice is rarely cooked, but is showcased here to demonstrate how any aromatic vegetable can fit in this theme.

Liquid:

Water is the most common liquid used for cooking. Other liquids like buttermilk/milk/stock can be used for more variations. If you are adding milk/coconut milk, you need to mix in salt after cooking, or the milk would curdle.

Flavouring:

Flavouring comes chiefly from the vegetable used and the spice mix/tadka. You can mix in your favourite spice powders/dry/fresh herbs to flavour it to your taste.

Protein:

The addition of peanuts/sev/stir-fried lentils in the tadka add in a bit of protein, turning this into a balanced meal.

Play around with the theme and make lunchboxes more interesting!

# Dum Biryani

## Mughlai rice casserole

<https://youtu.be/Mm8nDFiwMdc>

Mix 1/4C yogurt, 1/2tsp each (biryani masala, chilli powder), 1.5tsp each (salt, ginger-garlic paste), 1/2C each chopped (carrot, beans, mushroom), 1/4C each (caramelised onion, chopped mint), 1/2C fresh green peas. Soak 1C basmathi rice for 30 minutes. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1C spiced vegetables

Layer 4: 1C rice

Layer 5: 1C spiced vegetables to cover rice completely

Add 1C water along the edges without disturbing the layers. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all and fluff up.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi with thick poha/puffed rice/vermicelli
- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables
- Biryani masala with garam masala/your favourite spice mix
- Peas with soaked soya/paneer/sprouts
- Water with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in 1/4C fried onion for a deeper flavour.
2. Ensure top layer of rice is completely covered.
3. Lesser the water, grainier the texture.



### The Persians

refined cooking rice into high art. Almost all experts believe the Biriyani is a Persian dish, coming to India with the Sultans/Moghuls. However, many wrongly believe that the name Biriyani is derived from Beiryan (Persian: to fry) which they claim refers to rice being fried in oil before being cooked.

The original Persian Beryani does not have rice at all. It was just chopped up, boiled and fried meat served between two pieces of Persian flatbread. This meat sandwich is the ancestor of our Biriyani. Later, rice came to replace the flatbread. This was made possible by a technique called Dum pukht (Persian: "steam-cooked") where both rice and meat were steamed together. This technique led to the creation of the Biriyani we know and love today. Beriyan (frying) did not create the Biriyani, but Dum Pukht (steam cooking) did. This is why a Biriyani is still called Dum Pukht in Persia and dan pauk in most of South East Asia (especially Burma).

A Biriyani is in fact a rice sandwich, where layers of meat/vegetables are cooked sandwiched between layers of rice. It is interesting to see that many rules for a good sandwich also apply to a Biriyani.

1. It should be perfectly cooked, but not soggy.
2. It should have multiple layers.
3. It can have vegetable/meat fillings.
4. It should be assembled in a colourful, artistic way, with all layers clearly visible - the brilliant white of the rice layer, with splashes of saffron, the brown/red/orange meat layer, and the whitish brown layer where these layers mix.

In addition, the golden rule in a Biriyani is that no two grains of rice should

stick together. Many confuse a Biriyani and another Middle Eastern rice recipe, the pilaf. Remember that a Biriyani is a sandwich at heart, whereas a pilaf (pulao) is not. A pulao is a one pot dish where rice gets cooked in a meat/vegetable broth. (Interestingly the Spanish Paella, Russian Plov and the Cajun/Creole Jambalaya are just variations of the pulao). But a pulao does not get assembled in layers like a Biriyani.

Like any recipe, when Biriyani moved into different regions, it used the rice, flavouring agents and additives much loved in that region. The utensils used, the fuel and the cooking style also changed from region to region, giving us a huge array of Biryanis.

In India, we see two major classes of biryanis – the Pakki biriyani of Awadh (Lucknow) and the Kachi Biriyani of Hyderabad. The North Indian Pakki Biriyani assembles semi-cooked meat and semi-cooked rice, cooking them together.

The Hyderabadi Kachi (raw) Biriyani is a completely different invention. Here the sandwich is assembled with raw ingredients (meat and rice) and steamed together.

Most biryanis use variations of these two major styles. Keeping in mind the spirit of the biriyani, we can now mix and match the base, flavouring and additives, giving rise to a countless array of Biryanis.

#### The Base:

The long grained Basmati rice is the most preferred rice as it is aromatic and does not stick together. But as you travel further South, you'll see Biryanis made from the shorter Seeraka Samba or even from the hardy Ponni rice. Biriyani made from Ponni keeps well and lasts much longer than that made from Basmati. Ensure all rice is well washed and cooked so that no grains stick to each other after cooking. Both raw or parboiled rice can be used. Raw rice cooks faster but par boiled rice is firmer and chewier. To make rice softer, it can be soaked in water before being cooked. Stir-frying rice also makes it less prone to sticking together.

Almost any starch can be cooked into a Biriyani. A Bangladeshi Biriyani uses puffed rice instead of rice. Some Srilankan/Arcot Biryanis use idiyappam (string hoppers) as a base instead of rice. Even pressed rice gets cooked into a Biriyani. There is no reason why you cannot use other grains/grits/starches in cooking biryanis.

This technique layers soaked starch with marinated vegetables and pressure

cooks everything together at one shot.

#### The flavouring techniques:

These vary from region to region and actually from cook to cook. A variety of whole spices are fried in oil/ghee. Onions are then fried and other ingredients are added. Popular flavouring agents are cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, saffron and bayleaf. Kewra/saffron water/rose water is sprinkled on top just before serving.

Different regions have their own flavouring. Asafoetida and fennel powder is used in Kashmir, green chillies and southern spices like coriander powder, turmeric powder are used in Hyderabadi biryanis, Kalpaasi (dried lichens) and Marathi Mokku in Dindigul Biryani, Khus Khus in Malabar biriyani, cashew-cumin-fennel paste in Arcot biriyani, black cumin and fennel in Awadhi biriyani, almonds and cashew (and sometimes coconut) in Malaysian Nasi biriyani, a paste of sesame seeds, black cumin and dry fenugreek leaves in Memoni biriyani. Experiment with your favourite flavouring techniques!

#### Additives:

A whole range of meat/vegetables can be used in a Biryani. Mutton/chicken are most common. In Kerala we find the fish/prawn Biryani, in parts of Tamilnadu we see the Turkey Biryani and in Karachi we bump into the Beef Biryani. Almost any meat can be used for a Biryani. The Nizam of Hyderabad boasted of 49 varieties of Biryani made from quail, deer, hare and other meats. A variety of vegetables can also be used in to cook up the Tahiri (Tehri) Biryani. Sindhi and Calcutta Biryanis include potatoes, a combination unthinkable elsewhere.

#### Utensils:

Different regions cook biriyani using their traditional cooking utensils (made of copper/bronze/aluminium/mud). Some regions prefer wide, shallow utensils, some prefer cylindrical utensils and some regions prefer the conical vessel with a rounded base – the handi. The Biryani is cooked over different fires - wood fire, charcoal or coconut shell embers. Most large scale cooking of Biryani happens in the open and is a communal event.

#### Side dishes:

Biryani is eaten with a wide variety of additives. In Sri Lanka it is eaten with a pickle, Mint Sambol (mint chutney), or scrambled eggs. Indian biryanis are usually served with Raita. South Indian Biryanis are served with a sour dish of eggplant (brinjal) or Mirchi ka salan. Keralite biryanis are served with a

coconut dip, the Chammanthi. In Tamilnadu, a Muslim biriyani meal is complete only with the serving of a dessert (sweet sticky rice/bread halwa).

#### The technique of Dum:

‘Dum’ is a technique where the vessel is sealed and cooked from above and below with gentle heating. This gentle cooking allows the flavors of rice and meat to mix and slightly dries out the rice, making each grain separate. Usually the vessel is placed in a ring of charcoal, the lid is sealed with dough and charcoal is placed on the lid. This gentle cooking may last from 30 minutes to over an hour. We replicate this with a pressure cooker, which is nothing but dum cooking on steroids.

Traditional Biryanis from each region follow a similar recipe, with minor variations. So there are no hard and fast rules about what goes into a Biriyani, as long as the spirit of the recipe is followed. Remember that the meats and rice need to be perfectly cooked, layered and the rice grains should not stick to each other. As long as you follow this, you can experiment with a variety of bases, flavouring techniques and additives and will end up with lip smacking Biryanis every time!

#### Marination:

The process of soaking the meat in a tenderizing paste is common to North Indian Biryanis. Usually yogurt is mixed with ginger- garlic paste, spice powders and the meat is coated with this mixture and rested for 1 – 2 hours. A variety of tenderising agents like raw papaya paste, yogurt or lemon juice etc may be added. Though meat is usually marinated for 1-2 hours, the marinated meat can be refrigerated overnight. South Indian Biryanis do not use marinated meats.

Experiment with a variety of bases, flavouring techniques and additives to create never before cooked Biryanis!

# Dum Noodles

## Pressure infused noodles

<https://youtu.be/tqEF7R7AO9k>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil, 1/2C water

Layer 2: 2 chopped green chillies

Layer 3: 1/2C each (carrot, beans, mushroom) cut into strips

Layer 4: 1tsp each (salt, ginger-garlic paste)

Layer 5: 1 pack noodles (90g), crushed.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all, fluff up and keep closed for 5 minutes.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables
- Mushroom with paneer/soya chunks/sprouts/sausages
- Water with stock
- Noodles with instant noodles

### **Tips:**

1. Reduce water for a drier version.
2. Overcooked? Release pressure.
3. Undercooked? Use washed/soaked noodles or cook longer.
4. Can briefly stir-fry cooked noodles in an open pan for a glazed look.
5. Crushing noodles is essential for it to cook well.



Instant noodles are popular because of their convenience. But they are far from healthy. This theme seeks to create the same convenience using regular unprocessed noodles.

Noodles are pasta. Like pasta, they need to have a bite. But the instant noodle lobby has successfully convinced us that mushy noodles are good! That can be forgiven, but they have also convinced us instant noodles are healthy! That is an outright lie!

Instant noodles were invented in post war Japan as a cheap and fast way to fill up your belly. Like all highly processed foods, they became unhealthier over time. The more you process food, the less it starts resembling food.

Not many people know that most instant noodles are deep fried. Many have trans-fats. If the package does not say 'No trans fats', you can be reasonably sure that the frying was done with hydrogenated oil.

Till today, most instant noodle manufacturers do not give a straight answer to the simple question "Does your product contain MSG?". All have other chemicals added for flavour and colour. It gets worse - almost all instant noodles have high sodium and fat content - the primal taste triggers. This is why it is easy to get addicted to them. The cup Noodles (in which you just add boiling water) are even worse, being much more processed. Instant noodles are certainly not a healthy snack!

In the traditional method, noodles are cooked in lots of water, drained and

then stir-fried with spices and additives. We use the same absorption technique used in rice and pasta to cook noodles the OPOS way.

We use a measured quantity of water that is designed to be completely absorbed on cooking. The amount of water needed varies with the brand of noodles you use. Use the given recipe as a starting point and fine tune the water required for the brand you prefer.

The quick release technique to stop cooking is also used here to avoid overcooking the noodles and vegetables. On heating, your cooker is filled with super heated steam. This steam continues to cook food till it settles down, long after you switch off heat. This steam needs to be released immediately, to stop cooking. It is done by gently lifting the weight. Quick release is especially suggested for Indian noodles which are made from low gluten flour. Spaghetti/other SE Asian noodles might not need the quick release technique, as they are firmer.

The building blocks of this theme are the noodles used, the vegetables, protein additives and the flavouring - thus making up a balanced meal.

Though instant noodles work with this theme, it is designed to use regular, unprocessed noodles. Instant noodles can at best be an occasional snack. The lesser your food is processed; the better it is for you!

# Kathirikka Saadham

## Chettinad eggplant rice

Mix 3C chopped eggplant, 1tbsp caramelised onion, 1.5tsp salt, 1tsp each (sambar powder, ginger- garlic paste, tamarind paste), 1/2tsp each (pepper powder, garam masala), 1/4C yogurt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp ghee, 2tbsp water

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1C spiced eggplant

Layer 4: 1C 30min soaked and drained basmathi

Layer 5: Cover with 2C spiced eggplant, 1/4C chopped mint.

Add 1C water along the edges without disturbing the layers

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

Fluff up.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi with seeraka samba
- Eggplant with your favourite vegetable
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Ghee with your favourite oil
- Thenga molaga podi with grated and roasted coconut

### **Tips:**

1. Add less water for a grainy texture.
2. Add more caramelised onions for a browner colour.
3. Ensure the top layer of rice is completely covered with vegetables/herbs. Else it will be dry and not fully cooked.
4. After opening, mix all and keep closed for 10 minutes before serving.
5. You can cut down soaking time by soaking rice in hot water.

6. Can mix in 1tbsp thenga molaga podi (spiced coconut- lentil powder) for a crunch.

Kathirikka Sadham (Eggplant rice) is Chettinad's answer to the Marathi Vangi Bath. Eggplant is much loved across India. In Maharashtra it is cooked with rice into a full meal. All other southern states, especially Karnataka and Tamilnadu seem to have borrowed this idea from the Marathis. This recipe is more popular in Chettinad cuisine than in mainstream Tamil cuisine. It is not considered a part of the popular variety rice family which is still ruled by lemon rice, tamarind rice, tomato rice and coconut rice.

The flavouring is a mix of both North Indian and South Indian spices, hinting that this could be a borrowed recipe.

The building blocks are the grain, vegetable, flavouring, additives and the liquid used.

**Grain:**

Any variety of rice that does not become mushy after cooking can be used. The texture of the rice can be controlled by soaking, varying the amount of water used and the cooking time. A variety of millets can also be used in place of rice.

**Vegetable:**

Eggplant can be replaced with capsicum, carrot, zucchini or any fleshy vegetable of your choice. Watery vegetables are not preferred. If eggplant is used, a souring agent (yogurt/tamarind) is essential to counter the mild irritation eggplant can cause.

**Flavouring:**

Both North Indian garam masala and South Indian sambar powder are used for flavouring. You can use any spice mix/whole spices/herbs of your choice to vary flavour.

**Additives:**

Dry roasted coconut gives the crunch and a nice texture. The traditional recipe calls for roasting coconut with lentils and blending them into a powder, which has been replaced with the readymade Thenga Molaga Podi (Spicy coconut- lentil powder). Bottled tadka can also be mixed in for a burst of flavour.

**Liquid:**

Water can be replaced with stock/coconut milk/buttermilk or other liquids for interesting variations

Serving:

This is usually served as a main course with a dry curry, a Thayir pachadi (raita) and some fried papad.

# Kare Raisu

## Japanese curried rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp butter, 2C water, 1C basmathi rice, 1/2C each chopped (potato, carrot), 1/4C caramelised onion, 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt, coriander powder), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, sugar, cumin, chilli powders), 1/4tsp turmeric powder. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement:

- BASMATHI WITH YOUR FAVOURITE RICE
- WATER WITH STOCK/CURRY BASE
- Vegetables with 1C leftover curry

#### Tips:

1. Can add chopped sausages/tofu.
2. Can garnish with a pickle.
3. Use soaked rice for a softer texture.

Karē raisu (カレーライス) (Curry- Rice) is so popular in Japan, rivaling noodles, that it has been elevated to the level of a national dish. It is a regular fixture of school lunches, and is even part of the official menu of the armed forces. Most Japanese eat it more than once a week.

For 2 centuries, Japan had closed its doors to Westerners, in a bid to guard Japanese society against 'corrupting' influences. The doors opened 150 years back, after the ruling Shoguns were toppled during the Meiji Restoration. Immediately, the British trading ships came calling.

By this time, Curry was already a staple in the British navy. This English curry was a heavily modified version of the Indian curry, toned down for the Western palate. Huge quantities of 'Madras curry powder' was made by British manufacturers like Crosse and Blackwell. These powders soon found their way into Japan, and were an instant hit.

Like everything they touch, Japanese improved the curry powder. They converted the powder into a roux by adding wheat flour. This made the stew thicker and prevented the curry from splashing/dripping. The roux was then pressed into blocks, and could be conveniently used. And the fire caught on!

Japanese started making a stew of vegetables and meats with these curry blocks. This thick stew was served over a bed of rice, topped with a pickle - and the Kare raisu was born!

In the traditional preparation, meat (usually beef/pork) is stir-fried with vegetables (Onion, potatoes and carrots). Water and curry roux would be added and simmered together into a thick stew. We convert this into OPOS by cooking the rice in curry, making it even more flavourful.

The building blocks of Kare raisu are curry and rice.

**Curry:**

Any of the OPOS curry bases/any curry can be used. Even thokkus/pickles can be used as they are nothing but concentrated curry bases. Feel free to experiment with your own variants.

**Rice:**

White, sticky rice is preferred in Japan, but this theme can be extended with any of your favourite rice variety. Rice can even be replaced with millets. Replace rice with udon noodles and you get kare-udon. Use ramen noodles instead and you get kare-ramen.

**Garnish:**

Usually a crunchy pickle (fukujinzuke - Japanese pickles made from radish, eggplant, lotus root and cucumber) or rakkyo (pickled shallots) is used as a garnish. You can also top it up with tonkatsu (breaded pork cutlet) to make katsu-kare.

**Serving:**

Kare Raisu is served with a spoon and is usually eaten for lunch.

You can cook rice along with any of your favourite curries/curry bases (sambar, makhni, dopyaza, kuruma). This is a very flexible theme and can never go wrong!

# Keera Aval Saadham

## Tamil Spinach – rice flakes casserole

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped spinach

Layer 3: 1C thick poha (rice flakes) washed and drained

Layer 4: 1tsp salt, 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 2 finely chopped green chillies

Layer 5: 1/2C grated coconut, 2C chopped spinach

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Spinach with your favourite edible greens
- Coconut with coconut milk
- Poha with rolled oats/other flaked grains

#### **Tips:**

1. If starch is undercooked, presoak before adding.
2. Ensure you do not use chlorinated water to wash spinach. The flavour of chlorine gets intensified inside a cooker.
3. Prefer fresh, tender spinach and remove woody portions.
4. Spinach can be packed inside a cooker to completely fill it. It is safe, as spinach shrinks dramatically on heating.
5. Can mix in more poha after cooking if you like more carbohydrates. Thin poha can be mixed in as it is and thick poha needs to be briefly soaked and drained.

Keera Saadham (Spinach rice) is an especially healthy recipe. Spinach is also easily the most nutritious and cheapest vegetable you can buy in India, all year round. In this recipe, spinach is paired with another Tamil staple - pressed rice, to create a balanced, nutritious meal in a single step.

The building blocks of this theme are the edible greens, starch, protein and fat.

#### Edible greens:

Tamilnadu is blessed with a huge array of edible greens, all of which can be turned into a full meal using this theme. Ara Keerai, Mola keerai, Vendhiya keerai, Murunga keerai, Agathi keerai, Thandan keerai, Pasala keerai, Ponnangani Keerai, Mudukaruthan keerai, Dhoodhuvalai keerai, Siru keerai, Paruppu keerai, Pulicha Keerai, Manathakkali keerai, Sigappu mulai keerai, Vallarai keerai etc., the list goes on!

#### The starch:

Traditionally, rice is preferred in this recipe. This recipe replaces rice with poha (pressed rice) to shorten cooking time and ensure the spinach is not overcooked. Any quick cooking cereal can be used in place of pressed rice. Millet flakes, quick cooking oats, rolled wheat, rolled maize can all be used. If the cereal is thick, soak it for a few minutes before using it in the recipe.

#### The protein:

Coconut is commonly added to spinach dishes - for taste, texture and flavour. In this theme, they are added as a protein source. Any other protein can be used in place of coconut - paneer, soya chunks, lentils, sprouts etc.

#### The fat:

Coconut oil used in the recipe can be completely omitted if you wish for a fat free recipe. You can use any oil/fat of your choice to replace it.

#### The Additives:

More molaga (Sundried chillies soaked in buttermilk) is commonly used in many versions of spinach dishes. Onions and garlic can also be used for more flavour. Tamarind is used in some versions for a hint of sourness.

#### The cooking process:

In traditional cooking, rice is cooked separately, spinach is chopped, sautéed with spices, additives and both are mixed together.

#### We use the following techniques here:

1. Spinach is not chopped as gets mashed up on cooking and only requires some vigorous mixing at the end. The whole bunch is cleaned and added whole, with just the roots removed.
2. Poha is layered over spinach and no water is used. This ensures poha gets steamed and plumped, without getting mashed.

# Kootan Choru

Tamil all in one rice

<https://youtu.be/T3YSPF8CEOA>

In a 2L cooker, add 1C chopped mixed native vegetables, 1C chopped spinach, 1/4C each grated (coconut, raw mango), 2 slit green chillies, 5 crushed shallots, 1/2C rice, 1/4C tuvar dal, 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powders), 1/2tsp salt, 1tbsp oil. Add 3C water. Cook on high heat for 5 whistles. Let pressure settle. Mix all.

**PRESSURE COOK**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with soaked millets
- Rice with rice grits
- Raw dal with roasted dal
- Tuvar with mung/masoor dal
- Spinach with your favourite edible greens

## **Tips:**

1. CAN COOK ON MEDIUM HEAT IF YOU FACE SPEWING.

This fast disappearing dish defines South Tamilnadu. Healthy, simple to prepare and bursting with flavour, this is what generations packed for their trips. Especially popular in Tirunelveli and Nagerkovil, this is a simple, can't go wrong theme. It is infinitely flexible.

Called kadamba saadham/kalavai sadham elsewhere, the name kootanchoru is apt on many levels.

- It has a mix of vegetables.
- It can be seen as a mix of many basic Tamil curries - Kootu (coconut and lentil based), Kulambu (Tamarind based) and Sambar (Tamarind and lentil based).

- It is usually prepared when people gather together.

It is as healthy as a dish can get. Made usually with vegetables just picked from the kitchen garden, greens from Drumstick tree or Araikeerai, all cooked together with rice and dal. This is why only country vegetables are used and not the more expensive "English' vegetables.

Served hot or cold, thick or thin, grainy or gooey, it never fails to please!

Variations exist across Tamilnadu using different rice varieties or omitting vegetables (which makes it the Kongu nadu's Arisi Paruppu Saadham). You can use the basic template to cook your own masterpiece.

# Kothu Parota

## Tamil minced and spiced flatbread

<https://youtu.be/74NejDGoYKw>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water , 3tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion arranged in a ring, 1C chopped deseeded tomato arranged in the centre

Layer 3: 6 curry leaves, 1tsp each (ginger- garlic paste, salt, garam masala, chilli powder).

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all with 2C finely chopped parota.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Parota with other flatbreads (Naan, chappati, roti etc)

#### **Tips:**

1. Can stir-fry briefly after opening.
2. Do not use fresh bread. Older, drier breads work better.
3. Can mix in leftover curry.

A kothu parota is nothing but a bread salad. All cultures worry about what to do with leftover bread. Tamils convert leftover Idlis into Idli upma and masala vada into Vada Kari. The Italian cuisine chops up leftover bread and mixes it into its salads, making the panzanella. In the Middle East, Bulghur/couscous replace bread to make the Tabbouleh.

The Arab version using pita in place of bread is called Fattoush. There is a whole class of such dishes in the Middle East collectively known as Fatteh.

The Spanish cuisine blends leftover bread with olive oil into a soup, making the Gazpacho.

The building blocks of a Kothu parota are the bread used, vegetables used, dressing and additives. By varying them, you can cook up a huge array of bread salads.

1. Vary dressing: Mix in a wide array of readymade curry bases or even salad dressings.
2. Vary Vegetables: Can add a range of fresh salad vegetables/greens. A huge range of dry curries can also be mixed into the salad.
3. Add protein: Addition of protein can convert the simple salad into full blown meal. Add soaked lentils, sprouts, boiled eggs, flaked fish or cooked meat.
4. Vary Starch: Add chopped chappati/naan/poha/kappa/torn dosa/cooked rice/chopped idli. Any leftover bread can be chopped up and mixed in.

# Lunchbox Ideas

<https://youtu.be/6p4cxGfp8z8>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C each (chopped onions, deseeded tomato)

Layer 3: 1C chopped potato

Layer 4: 1/4C fresh green peas

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli, coriander, cumin, garam masala powders)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 3C starch (puffed rice/ torn bread/string hoppers/chopped dosa/cooked rice/chopped flatbreads).

Or wrap it in idiyappam/chappatis into rolls.

Or use as sandwich stuffing.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with your favourite vegetables
- Green peas with mushroom/paneer/tofu/sprouts
- Garam masala with your favourite spice powders

### **Tips:**

1. Can stir-fry briefly after opening.
2. Any ready to eat starch can be mixed in.
3. Can mix in any leftover curry.

# Mac 'n' Cheese

## American Macaroni with Cheese

<https://youtu.be/KUw6thZvJhw>

In a 2L cooker add 2tsp butter, 1C macaroni (85g) and water just enough to cover pasta (1C). Mix. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (3 minutes). Release pressure gently as you will experience spewing. Mix in 1/2C grated cheddar cheese. Close and serve after 5 minutes.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with other pasta
- Water with milk/stock
- Cheddar with your favourite cheese
- Butter with olive oil

#### **Tips:**

1. Can add pizza seasoning/your favourite spice mixes.
2. If pasta is undercooked, cook longer/do not release pressure.
3. Indian pastas cook perfectly in one or two whistles.
4. Harder pastas need a few minutes of presoaking and more whistles.



Mac and Cheese is classic American comfort food. Cooked pasta was served with basic roux (flour and milk based sauce), when one did not have fresh vegetables at hand. Later cheese was added to this roux, to make a cheese sauce. When this cheese roux was mixed with macaroni, the Mac and Cheese was born!

The traditional method calls for the preparation of roux, boiling and draining pasta and simmering all together with cheese.

In OPOS, we cook pasta by the absorption method, like rice. The absorption method is endorsed by many chefs, who cook pasta in an open pot, with a measured quantity of water. We use the same technique here, but in a pressure cooker.

Our goal is not just to cook the pasta but to make a complete meal in one step. This means that the sauce needs to be made automatically as the pasta cooks. We do this by balancing the volume of cooking liquid so that it not only cooks the pasta but absorbs the starch from the pasta to create a thick sauce. After cooking, we mix in grated cheese. This melts in the retained heat and makes the pasta extra creamy.

When you open the cooker the pasta will look all squished up and the sauce will look clumpy. Don't worry. Just mix well and let it rest. It would fluff up, absorb excess liquid and look perfect.

# Mavinakayi Chitranna

## Kannadiga fried rice

<https://youtu.be/eZ7tXueNQ0w>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 2 chopped chillies, 1tbsp chopped ginger, 5 curry leaves

Layer 3: 1C peeled & chopped sour mango

Layer 4: 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida).

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (3 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 2C cooked and cooled rice, 1tbsp bottled tadka, 1/4C each (roasted peanuts, grated coconut).

### LAYER AND FLASH

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Rice with poha/puffed rice/rolled oats
- Rice with cooked millets
- Mango with your tomato/pineapple/your favourite fruits
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix

#### Tips:

1. Do not use hot rice. It will clump up on mixing.

In the South, rice is always served hot and a bit mushy. This hot rice is mixed in with a variety of curries. South Indians frown on cold rice and do not use it for anything but curd rice. So what do you do with leftover cold rice? The Kannadigas found a solution - the Chitranna.

The key to isolating an OPOS theme is to identify the spirit of a recipe. This spirit pervades all the innumerable variations. This spirit defines a dish. Only after you identify the theme, which unites a class of recipes, can you try extending it with OPOS.

A rice grain is made of tiny starch granules bonded to each other. When heated with water, the bonds break and water enters the grain. The starch granules absorb water and swell. They become soft and mushy when hot because of the absorbed water and broken bonds. On cooling, the starch

granules link up again. Rice becomes firmer (Verachu poradhu). The Chinese fried rice and the Kannadiga Chitranna, both of which call for cooked and cooled rice, exploit this principle. Almost all other ways of serving rice serve it hot. This crucial difference defines the Chitranna and fried rice. It is this principle, which is responsible for the grainy texture that defines all Chitrannas and fried rice.

Flavourings and additives are mixed with this cooked and cooled rice. Chinese fried rice is necessarily stir-fried but a Chitranna is mostly mixed together. It is called Kalandha Saadham (mixed rice) in Tamil. Thus, the OPOS Chitranna theme would be "Mix seasoning and additives with cooked and cooled starch".

Infinite versions of this theme can be cooked by varying the flavouring and additives, though traditionally only a handful of them are popular. For most Kannadigas, Chitranna means Lemon rice, as it is the most commonly cooked variant - so much so that it has come to represent the theme itself!

Chitranna literally translates to coloured rice. Many kinds of coloured rice are cooked all over Karnataka. The following are common:

Maavina kai chitranna (Mango rice), Kai sasive chitranna (Coconut- mustard rice), Kayi Masale chitranna (Coconut spiced rice), Kothambari chitranna (Cilantro rice), Yellina chitranna (Sesame rice), Nimbe Hannina Chitranna (Lemon rice), Sabbasige Soppu Chitranna (Dill Rice), Karibevu Chitranna (Curry leaves rice) etc.

We can embrace and extend this theme further by mixing in the cooked and cooled rice with any OPOS podi, any OPOS thokku/pickle, or any OPOS dry curry. This makes infinite versions of the classic theme possible.

In traditional Kannadiga cuisine, rice is replaced by other starch - pressed rice/string hoppers to create the Avalakki Chitranna and the Shavige Chitranna. We can extend this to other starches like millets or even pasta/sago/noodles etc.

In the traditional version, fresh tadka is mixed in. The tadka usually has mustard, urad dal, channa dal, dry red chilli and curry leaves. We replace this with the bottled tadka. All chitrannas are usually garnished with grated coconut, chopped herbs and fried/roasted nuts.

This version is popular in Tamil cuisine as Maanga sadham (Mango Rice). The ruling trio of Tamil variety rice is Tamarind rice, Lemon rice and

Tomato rice. These are very popular in small eateries for lunch. They get packed into innumerable lunch boxes. Families still pack them for trips/picnics.

Mango rice belongs to this family of sour fruit rice, but it is not a staple as raw mango is not available year round.

You'll note that all these are popular rice varieties are built on a sour fruit, which makes them resistant to spoilage. The shelf life is directly proportional to their sourness - which is why Tamarind rice lasts the longest, followed by lemon rice, mango rice and tomato rice. If the mango you use is really sour, your mango rice will have a longer shelf life.

You can control the texture by controlling the amount of water used. You can even use soaked rice and completely skip water by sandwiching it between mango pulp layers, to get an ultra grainy texture.

The building blocks of this theme are the starch, a sour fruit pulp/juice, spices and additives.

#### Starch:

The traditional recipes use short grained rice, mainly because it is cheaper. As we move up North, the use of basmathi becomes more common. You can use soaked millets in the same theme to replace rice. You can extend this theme with washed and drained pressed rice/vermicelli using the no water cooking technique.

#### Sour fruit pulp:

Mango, tamarind, tomato and Gooseberry are commonly used sour fruit pulps. The sour fruit pulp can be semi cooked, fully cooked or even mixed in raw at the very end.

In Tamil mango rice, grated mango is usually partly or fully sautéed. In the Telugu version, grated mango is not cooked, but mixed in with the rice at the very end.

Instead of sour fruit pulp, you can add sour fruit juice (lemon, citron etc), sour pickle/thokku or even other sour liquids like wine/vinegar/soy sauce etc.

#### Spices:

Turmeric powder and asafoetida appear in most variety rice recipes. Ginger and curry leaves are common. The tadka is invariably mixed in. All these can be supplemented/replaced with your favourite flavouring.

#### Additives:

Most variety rice varieties lack protein. So they are either paired with papad or have protein mixed into them. The tadka is usually protein packed with a lot of lentils (chana dal, urad dal etc). More protein is also mixed in the form of roasted/fried peanuts/coconuts. Boiled lentils are never added as they spoil fast. Instead spiced lentil powder (paruppu podi) can be mixed in.

Serving:

These rices are meant to be eaten without a curry. They are usually served on their own with just crispies/papad or just a pickle.

# Millet Biriyani

## Millet casserole

Mix 1/2C each chopped (beans, capsicum, carrot), 1/4C fresh green peas, 3/4C yogurt, 1/2tsp each (chilli powder, Biriyani masala), 1tsp each (salt, ginger-garlic paste), 1/4C chopped mint, 3tbsp caramelised onions.  
Soak 1C sorghum till soft to bite. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp ghee, 1/4C water

Layer 2: 1.5C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1/2C mixed vegetables

Layer 4: 1C sorghum

Layer 5: Remaining mixed vegetables to cover sorghum completely

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sorghum with other millets
- Beans/carrot with your favourite vegetables
- Green peas with sprouts/soya chunks/other fresh lentils/mushroom
- Biriyani masala with your favourite spice mix
- Yogurt with coconut milk

### **Tips:**

1. Cook on medium heat if you face burning/add more water.
2. Larger millets need more time for soaking.
3. The soaking time varies with the millet used. Try biting the soaked grain.
4. If there are no hard bits, they are ready to be used.

Millets are grass seeds, like rice or wheat. Unlike rice, wheat and maize, their usage is so low that a large variety of them have been collectively grouped as 'other grains' or millets. They are still a part of rural Indian diet, which sees

rice/wheat based diet as wimpy food! Millets are more nutritious than rice/wheat. They are gluten free and have a low Glycemic Index (they release sugar slowly into the blood stream). The world is just rediscovering this wonder grain.

Though rice Biriyani is the most popular, a variety of extensions are possible. Poha Biriyani, Puffed rice Biriyani, Idiyappa Biriyani are all consumed across India.

We extend the Biriyani theme by using millets in place of rice. By the use of minimal water and long soaking, we ensure millets do not clump up. This fits them neatly into the Biriyani theme, which decrees no two grains should stick together.

By sandwiching and cooking the millets between the flavoured base layers, we can infuse them with flavour.

Finger millet (Ragi), Proso millet (Varagu), Pearl millet (Kambu), Foxtail millet (Thinai), Sorghum (Cholam), Barnyard millet (Kudravaali), Little millet (Saamai) are all popular in rural India. All of these can be used in this theme, if you keep the above tips in mind.

# Matar Pulao

## North Indian Peas Pulao

In a 2L cooker, add 2tbsp butter, 1C basmati rice, 1/2C fresh peas, 2 slit chillies, 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt), 1/2tsp garam masala, 2C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Open and fluff up.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi rice with soaked millets/soaked rice
- Peas with sprouts/your favourite vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Water with stock/milk

### **Tips:**

1. If using unsoaked rice, add more water and cook longer.

This is the fastest pulao you can cook. Though cooking is done in 7 minutes, the resting time of 10 minutes is essential for rice to cook through and firm up. Fluff it with a fork before serving.

The rice will be sticky compared to regular pulaos, but with no compromise in taste. The rice will get firmer and less sticky when it cools and you can fluff it well with a fork.

This recipe is ideal for those who are in a hurry and can't afford the soaking time!

# Nei Choru

## Moplah Muslim Ghee Rice

In a 2L cooker, add 2tbsp ghee, 1C basmathi rice (30 minutes soaked and drained), 5 cashews, 20 raisins, 1tsp each (crushed pepper, cumin, salt), 1/4C caramelised onions, 2 cloves, 2 crushed cardamom, 5 curry leaves, 1C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Open and fluff up.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Basmathi with jeeraka shala/your favourite rice
- Water with veg/meat stock/coconut milk
- Cashew/raisins with your favourite nuts/dry fruits
- Caramelised onion with fried onion

#### Tips:

1. Can add protein (minced meat, paneer, soya chunks, mushroom).
2. Serve with chicken curry/mutton ishtu.

The West was always hungry for Indian spices. And the Arabs grew rich by being situated smack in the middle. The Arabs have been trading with the Malabar coast for over 2000 years. Nature made it easy for them. The aptly named trade winds acted as a giant conveyor belt across the Indian Ocean. Summer winds blew South East, taking ships straight from gulf of Eden to the West coast of India in about four months. The traders had 2-3 months to trade and they would leave with the winter winds blowing North West, taking them back home. And it was with these traders that Islam first came to India, as soon as it arose. These Arab Muslim traders assimilated the language, culture and cuisine of the regions they settled in. Those who settled in the Malabar region now have Malayalam as their mother tongue. Their cuisine is a mix of ancient Arab cuisine and Malabar cuisine. They are not bound by the Hindu taboo against beef. So this is one of the very few regions in India where beef is widely consumed.

The traders were accepted by the local community and were given local women in marriage, being affectionately called Moplah (son-in-law). India, as usual, happily extended its hospitality to everyone who came, be it Muslim, Christian, Greek or Jew. All became son-in-laws! Across Malabar, you have Muslim Mappilas, Nasrani Mappila (Saint Thomas Christians) and Juda Mappila (Cochin Jews).

The Moplah traders and Arabs monopolised the overseas trade for almost 1000 years and prospered, till the Portuguese found a sea route to India. Very soon, violent clashes broke out. Around 500 years back, Portuguese massacres over half the Moplah population, gaining complete control of the spice trade. 200 years later, the Moplahs regain some of their past glory during Hyder Ali's invasion of Malabar, by receiving land grants for their support. They lose it all under the British rule and the Moplah rebellion breaks out, only to be brutally put down. With trade in their blood, they bounce back after independence, becoming successful traders and businessmen. A large chunk also move over to the Middle east.

The Moplah cuisine is largely meat based. Like any coastal cuisine, seafood is much loved and coconut is widely used. All local vegetables are used (carrot, eggplant, taro, yam, tomato etc.). Even specialties like drumstick leaves have become a part of Moplah cuisine. Like the rest of Kerala, red rice is a staple and coconut oil is the preferred cooking medium. The remnants of their ancient cuisine is found in recipes like Pathiri (Rice flatbread), alisa,(a broken wheat and meat porridge, probably from Arabic Harisa), Mutta mala (egg yolks cooked in sugar syrup), Kinnathappam (sweetened and steamed egg whites) etc.

Techniques alien to Indian cuisine (heating a vessel from top and bottom with charcoal) also points to their ancient cuisine. Their Neichoru is probably India's earliest pulao. Neichoru is commonly cooked in most Malabar houses and is certainly on the menu during family gatherings or parties.

The Moplah cuisine became heavily influenced by Kerala's cuisine. Coconut, coconut oil and southern spices came to be liberally used. Curry leaves and cumin found their way into Neichoru, unlike North India, where they are never used. The ginger- garlic combination, so popular in the North Indian Biriyani is conspicuous by its absence here. Also note the use of pepper native to Kerala and the absence of chilli, which came later.

This is true of most Middle East recipes which came to India. Those which

came with the Arab traders 2000 years ago have fused with South Indian spices and cooking techniques. Those which came 1000 years ago with the Arab conquerors via North India still have not become totally Indianised.

# Pakhala Bhat

## Odiya fermented yogurt rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1C rice, 2C water. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (7 minutes). Let cool. Cover rice with water. Let ferment overnight. Mix in 1C yogurt, 1tsp salt, 1/4C chopped onion, 1 chopped chilli.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with rice grits/millet grits
- Onion with shallots
- Chilli with ginger
- Cilantro with your favourite herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Can ferment more or less depending on your taste.

# Panzanella

## Tuscan bread salad

Mix 1C each chopped (onion, cucumber, tomato), 2C chopped flatbread, 1tbsp chopped cilantro, 1tsp chilli flakes, 1tsp lemon juice, 1/2tsp salt, 1tbsp olive oil.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Flatbread with other breads
- Onion, tomato with your favourite salad vegetables
- Chilli flakes with green chillies/pepper

### **Tips:**

1. Prefer dry/older breads. Fresh ones make the dish soggy.
2. Add cheese/nuts/baked beans/sausages/canned fish/sprouts for protein.

Soak dried bread in water to soften it, tear and mix in with chopped fresh vegetables from your garden, some basil with a dash of olive oil and vinegar. That's panzanella.

Almost anything can and is mixed into this bread salad - lettuce, cucumbers, olives, cheese, wine, capers, tuna, anchovies, celery, carrots, parsley, boiled eggs, mint, bell peppers, lemon juice, garlic and many more. Made with crusty bread, the dish gets better with time. The bread soaks up flavours. This salad can be even made a day in advance.

Want to do it the Tuscan way?

Take a few days old crusty, almost dried out salt less bread. Dunk it in sea water. The harder the bread, the longer it needs to soak. Squeeze and tear into bite sized pieces. Mix in chopped onions, tomatoes, olive oil and vinegar.

And you have the Panzanella (pahn-zah-nell-lah) or Tuscan bread salad. The recipe is older than tomatoes in Italy and so the early versions had just onions. The word literally means “pane” (bread) and “zanella” (soup bowl).

Rich or poor, all ate it. Poets sung praises of this simple dish. To honour royalty, a version was even created with the green of basil, white of bread and red of the tomato, symbolizing the flag of Italy.

# Papad Pickle Pulao

## Emergency Flavoured rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1C basmathi rice, 1/4C Indian mango pickle, 1/4C torn raw papad, 1/2tsp salt. Add 2C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up and serve.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with soaked millets/oats/grits
- Mango pickle with any Indian pickle
- Papad with soya chunks/paneer/sprouts/bhujia

### **Tips:**

1. Ideal as travel/camping food.
2. Remember pickles can be used as concentrated spice pastes.

# Pasta Achari

## Pasta cooked with pickling spices

In a 2L cooker, add 1C macaroni, 1tbsp mango pickle, 1C water (to just about cover pasta). Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all and keep closed for 5 minutes.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with your favourite pasta
- Butter with your favourite oil
- Mango pickle with your favourite Indian pickle
- Water with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Indian pasta cooks fast. Harder pasta needs some soaking.
2. If undercooked, do not release pressure/cook longer.
3. When you open, you will find excess water and under cooked pasta. Just mix all and let rest for 5 minutes. All liquid gets absorbed and the pasta gets well cooked in the retained heat.

Achari pasta (Pasta cooked with pickle gravy) is an adaptation of the papad pickle pulao theme, with rice being replaced by pasta.

The building blocks are pasta, a spice mix, a liquid and additives.

The pasta:

Macaroni can be replaced by any of your favourite pastas. Indian pastas cook fast. For harder pastas, we need to increase the cooking time.

The spice mix:

Pickles are used as a concentrated curry base. You can use any pickle of your choice, or even replace them with spice powders. All thokkus and curry bases/readymade soup mix powders can also be used.

The liquid:

Water can be replaced with veg/meat/seafood stock.

Additives:

Fresh legumes, sprouts, mushrooms, paneer, tofu, seafood, sausages or your favourite vegetables can all be added for a protein punch.

'Authentic' Pasta:

Pasta is a broad theme. If you lock it within a few recipes or within the Italian cuisine, it will be a real pity. Pasta is an universal theme, belongs to the whole world and so can be translated into any cuisine!

Whenever I have a discussion about what authentically belongs to a cuisine and what does not, I remember this quote from Carl Sagan's Pale Blue Dot .

"How is it that hardly any major religion has looked at science and concluded, "This is better than we thought? The Universe is much bigger than our prophets said, grander, more subtle, more elegant. God must be even greater than we dreamed"? Instead they say, "No, no, no! My God is a little God, and I want him to stay that way."

This argument holds well for food too! Like religion, people can be very finicky about food - many still believe their cuisines are about using certain ingredients and cooking techniques. It is an immature cuisine which focuses too much on recipes. A mature cuisine does not bother about recipes - it evolves broad themes into which you can slot in any ingredient and cooking technique.

For example one broad theme evolved by Indian cuisine is that "Knead an edible flour with a liquid, roll into thin sheets and cook on a hot skillet into a flat bread". The beauty of this theme is that it can slot in flours Indians never knew existed! It is the genius of a cuisine which can make sweeping generalizations like this. The spirit of a cuisine lives in its themes - not in its recipes. Using new ingredients/cooking techniques do not make a recipe inauthentic.

When Indians settled abroad, it was natural for them to use fruits/vegetables available in the new lands into their recipes - does it make the recipe non-Indian/untraditional/inauthentic?

The spirit of a cuisine is a reflection of the beliefs of a culture. A recipe becomes inauthentic only if it goes against the spirit of a cuisine. Stick true to the spirit of a cuisine and you don't have to worry about authenticity anymore!

If I had Carl Sagan's way with words, I would have said "How is it that

hardly any chef has looked their cuisine and concluded, "This is better than we thought! Our cuisine is much richer than our elders said, grander, more subtle, more elegant. It can even accommodate ingredients and techniques we never knew about. It must be even greater than we dreamed"? Instead they say, "No, no, no! My cuisine is a little cuisine, made only with ingredients and techniques I know and I want it to stay that way!"

# Pasta Aglio e Olio

## Italian Garlic and oil pasta

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp olive oil

Layer 2: 1/4C crushed garlic cloves, 3 chopped green chilli

Layer 3: Place a small vessel. Add 1C macaroni (85g), 1tsp oil, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric, enough water to cover pasta.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove inner vessel. Mash garlic and chilli. Mix all with pasta.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Olive oil with your favourite oil
- Green chilli with chilli flakes
- Macaroni with your favourite pasta
- Water with stock

#### **Tips:**

1. Ensure inner vessel touches the bottom.

In this recipe, the classic 'Spaghetti Aglio e Olio' is tweaked with macaroni and the addition of turmeric and chillies, to suit the Indian palate. This Macaroni Curcuma Aglio Olio e Peperoncino (Turmeric macaroni in garlic-oil - chilli sauce) would be spicy by Italian standards.

Turmeric is very rare in Italian cuisine. A pity - as it converts a bland looking pasta into a bowl of golden goodness. Combined with garlic and chillies, this pasta sauce could almost pass for Indian garlic chutney!

Several pasta recipes have evolved to be cooked with literally nothing. Aglio e Olio is one of the classics, considered a poor man's dish. The sauce is as simple as they come - just garlic cooked and mashed with olive oil.

The building blocks are the pasta used, garlic, oil and additives.

Pasta:

Spaghetti is preferred, though noodles/angel hair pasta can also be commonly used. You can use your favourite pasta shape as the sauce clings well to any pasta shape.

Garlic:

The amount of garlic used here is too much by Italian standards. All this sauce need not be mixed in with pasta. Mix in only as much as you like with the pasta. Garlic can be substituted with shallots/onions for a sweeter sauce.

Oil:

Olive oil is commonly used, though you can replace it with butter/your favourite fat. Remember olive oil/butter alone is a pasta sauce by itself!

Additives:

Italian versions use pepperoncini (Tuscan chillies) for the bite. Addition of cheese adds protein and makes it a balanced meal. A variety of vegetables/meats/sausages/can also be stir-fried along with the garlic.

In the conventional method, garlic is slowly toasted till golden and mashed with oil. Pasta is boiled separately and all are mixed together. We use the pot in pot technique and no water cooking to convert the recipe to OPOS.

# Pasta Alfredo

## Italian Pasta with cheese sauce

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp butter, 2C macaroni (170g), 2C water (just enough to cover pasta), 1/2tsp salt. Mix all. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all with 1/4C grated cheddar cheese, 1/2tsp pepper. Keep closed for 5 minutes.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with your favourite pasta
- Water with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in parmesan cheese and more butter/cream

The idea of using butter/cheese/oil as pasta sauces was common ever since pasta became popular. Drenching pasta with olive oil (or dipping bread in it) would be as natural to an Italian as mixing rice with ghee or dunking a roti in ghee would be to an Indian.

When butter/cheese is mixed in with hot pasta, they get emulsified with the starchy liquid to form a rich sauce.

The Alfredo sauce added a bit of jazz to this theme. The sauce is named after Alfredo Di Lelio I, a restaurateur from Rome, who had a flair for showmanship.

Legend has it that Alfredo tripled the butter quantity and used the heart of the best Parmigiano cheese, to produce an exceptionally rich sauce. He was supposed to have created this sauce to stimulate the appetite of his wife who had just given birth to their son. His wife loved his “Triple Butter Fettuccine”. So did the honeymooning Hollywood stars Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, who were instrumental in America falling in love with this sauce.

Note how the Washington Post article focuses solely on the mixing of butter and cheese into pasta! No 'sauce' was prepared separately - it was created directly in the plate!

"Alfredo always manages to be at each table when the waiter arrives with the platter of 'fettucine' so that he can do the mixing himself. As he mixes the noodles he sways from the waist, keeping perfect time to the music of the orchestra. As he turns the noodles over and over, he puts lumps of butter under the stuff, and the hot platter melts this butter. First the butter comes to the top, then the Parmesan cheese, and pretty soon the whole mass is whirling around until it is a radiant, glorious mound of 'fettucine'. During the mixing, Alfredo actually leads the orchestra; they watch him closely, and harmonize with his movements. At the end of five minutes he stops back to look at his masterpiece through half-closed eyes. Then, with a sweeping gesture, he invites the diner to partake. 'Fettucine' made Alfredo a cavaliere of Italy. I do not know whether the king knighted him with the flat or a sword or the round of a spoon. But he has the decoration, nevertheless, and he is envied by all the rival chefs in Italy."

---"Our Daily Food," Colonel Goodbody, Washington Post, April 16, 1932 (p. 8).

The building blocks of this theme are the pasta, sauce and flavouring.

Pasta:

Homemade, fresh egg fettuccine is the pasta of choice, though it is often paired with other pasta shapes.

Sauce:

Purists still believe the Pasta Alfredo should have nothing but loads of fresh butter, the best Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and black pepper, mixed in with homemade fettuccini. However, many versions have added garlic, cream and even use roux or eggs as cheaper thickeners.

Flavouring:

Though most versions rely on garlic for flavouring, the classic sauce has no flavouring apart from fresh ground black pepper.

Additives:

Some versions call for the addition of vegetables, to make this more nutritious. They can be added along with the pasta.

In the OPOS version, we cook pasta by absorption. The starch from pasta emulsifies butter and cheese into a smooth and creamy sauce on mixing.

This is as close as you would get to the original recipe - which calls for un-rinsed pasta, addition of pasta water and mixing all in a warm platter, so that the butter melts and coats pasta evenly.

The OPOS recipe is in fact closer to the spirit of the theme than the original method, where the pasta is cooked first, transferred to a warm platter and mixed with butter. But the platter has to be warmed sufficiently and the pasta has to be hot enough for this to happen. Else you need to mix in the hot pasta water to ensure melting.

All this can be avoided by cooking pasta the OPOS way. The just cooked pasta retains enough heat to melt butter and the cooker itself serves as the warm platter, eliminating the need for dilution by pasta water.

This combination is a kiddie favourite and the fastest meal you can whip up in a jiffy. Double the quantity and the cooking time increases by just a minute.



# Pasta Carbonara

## Italian Pasta with egg and cheese

<https://youtu.be/gwOE4T27L84>

In a 2L cooker, add 2tsp butter, 2C macaroni (170g), 1.5tsp pepper, 1tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder and enough water to just about cover pasta (2C). Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C grated cheddar, 1 beaten egg. Keep closed for 5 minutes.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with olive oil
- Pepper with chilli flakes/chopped chillies
- Macaroni with your favourite pasta
- Cheddar with your favourite cheese.
- Water with stock
- Turmeric powder with Pizza seasoning/your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked, cook longer/do not release pressure.
2. Use eggs at room temperature.

Pasta Carbonara (Coal miners pasta) is a combination of starch (pasta), protein (eggs), and fat (cheese), making it a balanced meal. Carbonara (charcoal kiln) might be a reference to the coal miners who mixed cured pork and raw eggs into their pasta.

This is one of the easiest pasta dishes to make for a large crowd - as no cooking of sauce is involved. Raw eggs are mixed in with the cooked pasta and they cook in the retained heat, forming a sauce.

The building blocks of this theme are the pasta, eggs, cheese, additives and flavouring.

Pasta:

Spaghetti is the most popular pasta used in this theme, but other pasta threads like fettuccine, trenette, linguine, bucatini are also used. Other shapes like rigatoni, penne would also work. The shape does not matter much and you can safely use your favourite pasta.

#### Eggs:

Raw eggs carry a small risk of salmonella. So, use the freshest eggs or pasteurised eggs. To pasteurize eggs at home, place eggs in water and heat them to 60 degree Celsius. Maintain this heat for 3 minutes. Remove eggs and dunk in cold water to stop cooking.

Purists believe the eggs should not curdle after being mixed into pasta. You can achieve this by whisking the eggs well and vigorously stirring it into the pasta. But the quick and dirty method of cracking the eggs right into the hot pasta and giving a few stirs tastes as good! Some versions just mix the white into the pasta, serving the yolk on top, as a garnish.

#### Cheese:

Pecorino or Parmesan is commonly used, though you can mix in your favourite cheese.

#### Additives:

Salted, cured bacon is commonly pan fried and mixed in. You can replace it with your favourite sausages/meats or even plant protein/vegetables.

#### Flavouring:

The flavouring comes from the cheese and egg. This recipe uses a bit of turmeric powder both for the colour and an earthy flavour. Chopped fresh herbs, pizza seasoning and a variety of spice mixes can be added for more flavour. You can even use garam masala if you like!



# Pasta con Cipolle

## Italian Pasta with onions

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter, 3tbsp water

Layer 2: 1C chopped onions, 3 chopped garlic cloves arranged in a ring.

Layer 3: In an inner vessel, add 2C macaroni (170g), 1tsp each (oil, salt, chilli flakes, dry herbs), enough water (2C) to cover pasta. Place vessel in the centre of the ring, touching the base.

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash all but pasta. Mix all.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with olive oil
- Macaroni with your favourite pasta
- Water with stock
- Onion with shallots

### **Tips:**

1. Ensure inner vessel touches the bottom.
2. If undercooked, cook longer/do not release pressure.
3. If overcooked, reduce cooking time.
4. Let pasta rest a few minutes so that the liquid is absorbed and it finishes cooking in retained heat.
5. Tough pastas can be briefly soaked to ensure they cook fast.
6. Almost all thokkus/curry bases and chutneys can be served as pasta sauces.
7. To prevent burning add enough onions/watery vegetables as the bottom layer.

Pasta Con Cipolle is a much respected pasta sauce made from caramelised onions. You can look at it as a less spiced version of the Tamil onion thokku.

Every cuisine has a version of their own dip, which accompanies their primary starch.

We eat rice/flatbreads with chutneys, pickles and thokku. Arabs eat pitas with hummus and tahini. Mexicans pair their tacos and tortillas with salsa. Italians serve their pastas with pesto and pasta sauces.

The cooked sauces last much longer than the fresh sauces, and usually have a souring agent blended in, to increase shelf life. We use tamarind. Arabs use sumac. Mexicans use lemon juice. Italians use wine.

Across cultures, a variety of vegetables or meat are cooked with spices and mashed into a sauce. Some of these become classics.

In Italian cuisine, garlic, onion and tomatoes serve as a foundation of a huge variety of cooked pasta sauces.

The theme is simple - Cook edibles with flavouring and mash them into a sauce.

The conventional method calls for preparing pasta separately and the sauce separately. For the sauce, garlic is stir-fried in olive oil. Onions are added and slow cooked till they caramelize. A variety of other vegetables/meats are then added and cooked together. Basil/parsley/oregano is used for flavouring, pepper/chillies lend the bite. Wine adds a bit of sourness.

Using flash cooking and Pot in pot techniques, we convert this hour long recipe into a 5 minute OPOS recipe.

Thokku/soups/curry bases have already been covered. Here, we just add a pot of pasta over it and cook all together. The ingredients are balanced to ensure they all cook together, at the same time.

The building blocks of this theme are the pasta and the sauce.

Pasta:

You can use your favourite pasta shape as long as it is not too big. Just about cover it with water or stock and let it cook in an inner vessel.

The Sauce:

The sauce is built from butter, garlic, onion additives and flavouring.

Butter can be replaced with olive oil or your favourite oil.

Garlic lends the base note of flavour for many pasta sauces and is much loved in the Italian cuisine. However, it can be skipped for a satvik version.

Thinly sliced onions are layered over oil and caramelise beautifully in just 5

minutes, just in time for the pasta to cook. The onion and pasta quantity is optimised so that their cooking times match.

A variety of additives can be added to onions:

- Adding tomatoes give us Pasta Marinara.
- Adding mushrooms gives us Pasta Funghi.
- Adding minced beef gives us Pasta Bolognese.
- Adding eggplants gives us Pasta Melanzane.

You can add any vegetable of your choice to create an unending array of pasta sauces.

Flavouring:

Dry herbs like basil/oregano are commonly used. Pepper is used for the bite. Pizza seasoning is a quick way of adding a burst of flavour.

Play around with this theme to cook up your own sauces!

# Pasta con Spinaci

## Italian Pasta with Spinach

Wash and drain 1C (85g) dry macaroni. Mix in 2tsp oil.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter, 1/4C water

Layer 2: 2C chopped spinach (100g), 1tsp each (salt, pepper)

Layer 3: Macaroni

Layer 4: Cover with 2C chopped spinach

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure and fluff up pasta. Keep closed for 5 minutes.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with other dry pastas
- Spinach with your favourite edible greens
- Butter with olive oil.

#### **Tips:**

1. If pasta is undercooked, do not release pressure/cook longer.
2. If overcooked, release pressure/cut cooking time.
3. Can mix in grated cheese as garnish.



# Pasta con Yogurt Greco

## Italian Pasta with Greek yogurt

In a 2L cooker, add 2C macaroni (170g), 1tsp salt, 1tbsp butter. Add enough water to cover pasta (2C). Mix all. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up pasta. Let cool. Mix in 1/2C thick yogurt, 1tsp chilli flakes.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with your favourite pasta
- Water with stock
- Butter with olive oil

#### **Tips:**

1. Overcooked? Release pressure immediately/Cook for 1 whistle.
2. Undercooked? Presoak pasta/cook longer/do not release pressure.

Italians sneer at mixing rice with yogurt. But they do the same with Pasta con Yogurt Greco (Pasta with Greek yogurt).

Mixing carbohydrates with yogurt is a classic combination practiced across the world, in all areas with a cattle rearing culture. The only places it is absent is where cattle farming never took hold (Meso America and parts of South east Asia).

In these regions, yogurt still remains a dessert or an occasional indulgence and is not a part of the regular diet. 10,000 years ago, a mutation in our genes enabled us to digest milk, even in adulthood. Soon, milk products became a firm part of our diet. Yogurt was probably one of the first milk products consumed as it can even be consumed by lactose intolerant people. The fermentation uses up lactose in milk, making it more easily digestible.

The Thayir Sadham (Rice with yogurt) is worshiped in Tamil cuisine.

Flatbreads/paired with raita/kadhi is revered in North Indian cuisine. The North Indian Kichidi and stuffed parathas are commonly paired with yogurt.

Pitas with Yogurt sauce are common across the Middle East.

A variety of millet porridge across India (Koozhu, Kali) and Africa (Ugali, Pap, Nshima) are eaten mixed with yogurt.

Roasted potatoes with yogurt are popular across Europe and America.

In the same way, pasta with yogurt sauce is loved in the Italian cuisine. Unlike Tamil cuisine which does not use any vegetables in the starch- yogurt combination, Italians mix in a variety of cooked or raw vegetables along with pasta and yogurt.

We use the OPOS technique of cooking pasta by absorption method. This leaches out starch into water, creating a sauce while the pasta gets cooked. This creamy sauce is further accentuated by mixing in vegetables and Greek Yogurt (or strained yogurt) to produce a balanced meal. Like the Tamil Thayir Sadham, mixing in fruits and nuts is common in the Italian version too! Themes across the world exhibit striking similarities indeed!



# Pasta Laksa

## Malay Pasta with coconut milk sauce

In a 2L cooker, add 2C macaroni (170g), 1tsp each (salt, chilli flakes), 1tbsp butter, 1 pandan leaf (or bay leaf). Add enough water to cover pasta (2C). Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up. Mix in 1/2C coconut milk.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with your favourite pasta
- Butter with olive oil
- Water with stock
- Coconut milk with other vegan/animal milks/cream

### **Tips:**

1. On opening, pasta would look clumpy and watery. Mix all, fluff up and keep closed for 5 minutes. Pasta would absorb excess water and finish cooking in retained heat.
2. Can add vegetables/seafood/processed meats to beef up the laksa.

Laksa comes from the Peranakan/Nonya cuisine, a mixture of both Chinese and Malay cuisines. Peranakan (descendants) is a generic term denoting the descendants of the Chinese - Malay union. Nonya refers to those who actually cooked - the womenfolk. Nonya is a respectful term denoting married women (who created this cuisine) and is used exactly the way 'Aachi' is used in Chettinad.

500 years back, a Malaccan Sultan marries a Chinese princess who comes with an entourage. This fusion of Chinese and Malay gave birth to the Peranakans.

Very soon, the cooking styles merged and a new culture, cuisine, language and race were born. Turmeric, galangal, tamarind and coconut milk from Malay cuisine merged with the fish sauces, shrimp paste and soy sauce from

Chinese cuisine, giving rise to a completely new cuisine.

Laksa comes from this fusion cuisine, built on spiced coconut milk and noodles. It spread across to neighbouring regions - Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and parts of Thailand.

Laksa (Probably from Sanskrit laksh: Hundred thousand, indicating the huge number of strands) assumes many forms.

The building blocks of a laksa are the liquid base, the noodles used, the flavouring and additives.

The base:

Coconut milk or sour fruit pulp (tamarind/kokkum) or a combination of these are used in most Laksas.

The noodles:

Thick rice noodles (laksa noodles), thin rice vermicelli (bee hoon), egg noodles, bean noodles, yellow noodles, udon noodles, even spaghetti are used. Even sliced up rice cakes/noodle balls are used in some versions. All pastas are noodle variants and so can find a place in the Laksa theme.

Additives:

Bean curd puffs, fish sticks, shrimp, seafood, shredded fish, chicken, boiled eggs, mung beans, potatoes, fish cakes, mushrooms, bean sprouts, chopped omelette are all commonly used.

Flavouring:

Shallots, garlic, turmeric, coriander, candlenut, lemongrass, pepper, chillies, basil, prawn powder/paste go into pepping up various Laksa versions.

In this recipe, we use the absorption technique to cook pasta in coconut milk, and mix in additives to convert it into a laksa. The cheese added makes this recipe straddle both Malay and Continental cuisines and can be replaced with nut paste for a more native version.

# Pasta Pomodoro

## Italian Pasta with tomatoes

<https://youtu.be/mnjXYhqeWk>

Wash 2C macaroni (170g). Drain. Mix in 2tsp oil.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 2C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, pepper), pasta

Layer 4: 2C chopped tomatoes to cover pasta completely

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all and fluff up.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Butter with your favourite oil
- Pepper with chilli powder
- Onion with shallots/garlic

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in grated cheese.
2. Can mix in chopped fresh herbs.
3. If undercooked, cook longer/do not release pressure.

# Pesto Pasta

## Italian Pasta with herb sauce

Blend 3 garlic cloves, 1 green chilli, 1/2C each (chopped cilantro, mint), 1/4C each (cashew nuts, cheddar), 1/2tsp salt, 2tsp olive oil to a smooth/coarse paste.

In a 2L cooker, add 2C macaroni (170g), 1tbsp butter. Add enough water to cover pasta (2C). Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up. Mix in blended paste.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with other pasta
- Mint/cilantro with your favourite herbs
- Cashew with your favourite seed/nut
- Cheddar with parmesan

### **Tips:**

1. Can add pesto along with cooking liquid for a deeper flavour.
2. The resting time is needed for pasta to cook in retained heat.

Anything pounded with fresh herbs, garlic, olive oil, cheese and nuts becomes a pesto. This pounded sauce is an instant pasta sauce. Like Indian chutneys, pestos come in both cooked and uncooked versions.

The building blocks:

Pasta:

A variety of pasta shapes can be used, except the very thick and the very thin.

Pesto base:

Cooked/uncooked herbs, edible greens, vegetables, fruits can all be used for the sauce.

Basil, Mint, Cilantro, Parsley, Argula, Watercress, Chives, Swiss chard, Kale, Spinach varieties are all commonly used.

Vegetables like squash, zucchini, sun dried tomato, can also be used.

**Binder:**

Nut/seed powder is commonly used as a binder to hold the sauce together. You can use a variety of your favourite nut/seed powders/pastes as a binder. The binder combines with the starch leached from pasta and produces a thick sauce.

**Cheese:**

Parmesan is traditionally used, but you can use any of your favourite cheeses. In this case, the cheddar we have used melts well and coats the pasta with a clingy sauce.

**Oil:**

Olive oil is usually used for a creamy mouth feel but can be replaced with butter or any of your favourite oils.

**Flavouring:**

Garlic lends the base note of flavour and can be replaced with shallots/onions your favourite spices.

**Souring agent:**

Lemon juice, sour cream, yogurt, wine, balsamic vinegar can all be used to add a fresh tangy taste.

**Additives:**

Pepper is used for a bite and has been replaced here with chillies.

You can change these building blocks to create a variety of pesto combinations like Basil Parmesan Pesto, Argula almond pesto, Spinach cashew pesto, Pumpkin chilli pesto, Kale sesame pesto, Zucchini sour cream pesto, Swiss chard Sun dried tomato pesto etc.

# Pumpkin Pasta

## Italian Pasta cooked in pumpkin juice

Wash 2C macaroni (170g). Drain. Mix in 2tsp oil.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 3 chopped garlic cloves, 2 chopped chillies

Layer 3: 2C finely chopped yellow pumpkin, 1tsp salt

Layer 4: 1C washed and drained macaroni

Layer 5: 2C finely chopped yellow pumpkin to cover pasta completely

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle.

Mix all till pumpkin breaks up and becomes sauce. Serve immediately if you like it al dente. Else close and serve after 10 minutes.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with other pasta
- Chillies with chilli flakes
- Pumpkin with your favourite vegetables

### **Tips:**

1. 1C pasta needs over 4C watery vegetables to cook.
2. If adding fewer vegetables, add more water.

# Pasta Fungi

## Italian Pasta cooked in mushroom juice

[https://youtu.be/EY69LCEo\\_ac](https://youtu.be/EY69LCEo_ac)

Wash 2C macaroni (170g). Drain. Mix in 2tsp oil.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 3 chopped garlic cloves, 1C chopped onions

Layer 3: 1C thinly sliced mushrooms (100g), 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder)

Layer 4: 1/2C washed and drained macaroni (50g)

Layer 5: 1.5C thinly sliced mushrooms to cover pasta

Layer 6: 1/2C washed and drained macaroni (50g)

Layer 7: 1.5C thinly sliced mushrooms to cover pasta

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (9 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix well

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Macaroni with other pasta
- Chilli powder with chilli flakes
- Mushroom with your favourite vegetables

### **Tips:**

1. 1C pasta needs over 4C watery vegetables to cook.
2. If adding fewer vegetables, add more water.

# Sambar Saadham

## Tamil sour lentil rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C tuvar dal, 1/2C rice, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1.5tsp each (salt, sambar powder), 1/2C each chopped (tomato, onion, eggplant), 6 curry leaves, 1 slit chilli, 2tsp ghee, 2.5C water. Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Mix all.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar dal with Masoor/Mung
- Water with stock
- Tomato with tamarind paste
- Eggplant with your favourite vegetables
- Ghee with your favourite oil
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Rice with rice grits/soaked millet grits

### **Tips:**

1. Mix in 1/2C cold water to stop sambar sadham cooking further in retained heat and thickening.
2. Can use presoaked rice and dal for faster cooking.



It takes close to 1000 years for new foods to be accepted into a cuisine. Till that time they are viewed with suspicion.

It appears we are very fragile during breakfast and can eat only tried and tested food. We pick up some courage during lunch and are willing to experiment with some new foods. But it is only in the evening that we become bold and are open to try out anything.

In Tamilnadu restaurants, wheat based foods are almost never served for breakfast, because wheat was a later entrant. Millet based breakfast is common in rural areas, indicating millets predated rice.

Idlis start selling at 5.30 AM, Pooris at 8 AM, chappatis at around 10 AM, parotas only after 12 AM and naans/pizzas only after 6 PM! This order is reversed in North India!

Tuvar dal was a later entrant to Tamil cuisine. Mung dal predated it. In orthodox ceremonies it is mung dal which is used and not tuvar dal. Sambar also appears to have been a later entrant, probably arising after the Tanjore Maratha rule. It is most likely a variant of the Marathi Aamti. There is no recorded mention of sambar in Tamil literature. It is certain that the Tamil staple curry was Kulambu, and not sambar. In fact sambar is still called Paruppu Kulambu in some pockets.

All this theory might explain why we relish sambar rice for lunch, but never consume it as breakfast.

Sambar rice is technically a pongal, with tuvar dal replacing mung dal, with the addition of a few more vegetables, tamarind and spices. But while pongal

is relished for breakfast, sambar rice is not! Cultural conditioning is strong indeed!

This recipe breaks down sambar rice into its basic components, avoids the use of packaged powders and offers an easy way to convert sambar rice into Rasam rice or into its Kannadiga cousin Bisi Bele Bath.

The building blocks of sambar rice are rice, dal, vegetables, a souring agent and spices.

You can replace sambar powder and hing with coriander powder and shallots. This makes the recipe safe to serve even to non Indians. For the same reason, you can use tomato as the souring agent and not tamarind.

Now conversion to Rasam rice is easy. All you need to add is more water and some crushed cumin. That's it!

Conversion to Bisi Bele Bath is as easy. Just add bisi bele bath powder/or garam masala, grated copra and a bit of jaggery.

You can use variations of this single theme to feed a South Indian for life.

# Semia Dum Biryani

## Tamil Vermicelli casserole

<https://youtu.be/ClnzS5UZf3U>

Mix 2C roasted semia (100g) with 1tsp ghee, 1/4C each chopped (carrot, beans, potato, paneer), 1/4C yogurt, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder, garam masala).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion

Layer 3: Spiced vermicelli

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all. Keep closed for 5 minutes for vermicelli to cook fully in retained heat.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Vermicelli with similar sized noodles/pasta
- Vermicelli with rolled oats/rice flakes/rava
- Garam masala with Biryani masala
- Paneer with tofu/mushroom/fresh green peas

### **Tips:**

1. Ensure vermicelli is not clumpy when layered inside cooker.

Semia Dum Biryani is rarely cooked as it is tough to get it right the traditional way. Biryani demands that no two grains should stick together. As vermicelli is more delicate than rice, it can easily become mushy and clumpy. It then can be served only as a Vermicelli kichidi and not as a Biryani.

Dum dishes get their flavour from being cooked sealed, under pressure. The better the seal, the better the flavour. Traditional dum recipes are sealed with kneaded dough. This does not permit enough pressure to build up.

We supercharge the Dum technique with a pressure cooker, which has the best possible seal commercially available.

The traditional recipe starts by sautéing the flavouring, onions and vegetables. Water is then added and the stir-fried vermicelli is added last. All are simmered till water is absorbed.

In the OPOS version, we use the No water, Layering and Controlled caramelisation techniques to condense this laborious process to a single step. This Biryani also illustrates one core theme of OPOS - As with one, so with others. If rice can be cooked into a Biryani, so can pasta, vermicelli/noodles/millets, using the same technique. Some tweaks are required based on the ingredient used, but the core logic remains unchanged. The building blocks of this theme are the vermicelli, flavouring, protein, additives and liquid used.

#### Vermicelli:

You can use raw/roasted/stir-fried vermicelli. The key is to wash/soak the vermicelli for as little time as possible so that it becomes soft. If you soak it longer, it becomes a mush. I suggest washing and draining multiple times in place of soaking. Place the vermicelli in a colander and wash a few times till it loses its hard core and becomes soft to bite. You can try using similar sized pasta/noodles in place of vermicelli.

#### Flavouring:

Ghee supplies the base note of flavour. The regular Biryani masala of bay leaves, spice powders, ginger garlic paste and mint leaves build the flavour. Play around with them to personalise the flavour to your taste.

#### Protein:

As a Biryani is designed to be a full meal, a protein additive is mandatory. Paneer is used here and can be replaced with other vegetable/animal protein.

#### Additives:

Mixed vegetables supply the micronutrients. You can add any combination of your favourite vegetables.

#### Liquid:

Coconut milk/yogurt is used to lend a sour/milky note. You can use milk/fruit juice or any liquid of your choice to vary taste.

The texture of the Biryani can be changed by changing the quantity of water and the cooking time.

Try out your own variants!

# Tahiri

## Allahabad Vegetable Biriyani

Soak 1C basmathi rice in water for 30 minutes. Drain.

Mix 1C potato (cut small), 1C cauliflower florets (cut big), 1/4C each (fresh green peas, chopped beans), 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, chilli powders), 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1/2C yogurt and 1/4C chopped mint.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp ghee, 2 bay leaves

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1/2C vegetable mix

Layer 4: 1C basmathi rice

Layer 5: 2C vegetable mix to cover rice completely

Add 1/2C water along the edges. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes).

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Peas with soya chunks/paneer/tofu/mushrooms
- Cauliflower with your favourite vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Mint/cilantro with your favourite fresh/dry herbs.
- Water with milk/coconut milk/stock

### **Tips:**

1. Reduce/increase water quantity to vary texture.
2. Ensure rice is completely covered with herbs.

# Thakkali Saadham

## Tamil Tomato Rice

<https://youtu.be/CrRGOyQK0wU>

Mix 3C chopped tomato, 3 chopped green chilli, 1/4C each chopped (mint, cilantro), 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/4tsp each (garam masala, turmeric, chilli powders), 1tsp each (sambar powder, salt).

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil, 1 bayleaf

Layer 2: Arrange 1C chopped onion in a ring, 1C tomato in the centre of the ring

Layer 3: 1C soaked (30 minutes) and drained basmathi rice

Layer 4: 2C chopped tomato to cover rice

Add 1C water along the edges. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes).

Let pressure settle.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato with other fruits/vegetables
- Mint/cilantro with other fresh/dry herbs
- Garam masala/sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Basmathi rice with other rice/millets/cereal grits
- Onion with shallots, Oil with ghee, water with stock.

### **Tips:**

1. Vary vegetable quantity to suit your taste.
2. Decrease water quantity for a drier version.
3. Can soak rice in hot water for 15 minutes.

# Thakkali Saadham #2

## Tamil Tomato Rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1C raw rice, 1tsp sesame oil, 1/4C tomato thokku, 1/2tsp salt. Mix all. Add 2.5C water. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1tbsp bottled tadka.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato thokku with other thokku
- Raw rice with soaked parboiled rice/rice grits
- Raw rice with soaked millets

### **Tips:**

1. Increase water for a mushier consistency.
2. Use presoaked rice for faster cooking.

# Thakkali Saadham #3

## Tamil Tomato Rice

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil, 1 bayleaf

Layer 2: 3C chopped tomato, 3 chopped green chilli

Layer 3: 1tbsp caramelised onion, 1/4tsp each (garam masala, turmeric powders), 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste , sambar powder, salt)

Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1tbsp bottled tadka, 4C cooked and cooled rice.

# Thayir Semia

## Tamil spiced vermicelli with yogurt

<https://youtu.be/x2sfA4J38VU>

In a 2L cooker, add 1C roasted vermicelli (120g), 1 chopped green chilli, 2 tsp chopped ginger, 1tsp salt, 1tsp sesame oil, 1/4tsp asafoetida and 2C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes). Let cool. Mix in 2C yogurt, 1/4C grated carrot, 1tbsp each (chopped cilantro, cashew nuts, raisins).

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Vermicelli with noodles/pasta
- Water with stock
- Sesame oil with butter/your favourite oil
- Cashew/raisins with your favourite nuts/fruits

#### Tips:

1. Reduce cooking time/release pressure manually for a less mushy texture.
2. Replace most of yogurt with milk if it is to be consumed later.

Thayir semiya (Curd Vermicelli) is the Tamil version of Pasta in white sauce, just that Indians invented this a few centuries before Italians even knew pasta!

Semia (Vermicelli: Italian for Little worms) is nothing but a pasta. This pasta has been a part of Indian cuisine for centuries, long before Italian cuisine laid claim to it!

1000 years back, Italy did not know pasta. But the Chinese have been making noodles from various flours for over 3000 years. Marco Polo records "Chinese subsist for the most part upon rice, and millets, which grains yield in their soil, a hundred grains for one. Wheat indeed does not yield a similar

increase, and is eaten only in the form of vermicelli".

Wheat was not as popular in the Chinese cuisine as rice or millets. So wheat based noodles were not very common. The Chinese wheat noodles were made from soft wheat and did not lend itself to pasta with a bite.

Pasta required hard wheat, which was plentiful in the Middle East. It is possible the Arabs picked up the noodle making technique from the Chinese and used hard wheat flour to make the earliest pastas.

Two Arab noodles still exist today. The Persian Faloodeh (Indian Falooda), made from rice and She'reya (Little hairs), made from hard wheat. The Falooda is paired with Kulfi and the She'reya is still used to cook up a milk and dates pudding - the Sheer Khurma.

It is this She'reya that entered Indian cuisine as seviyan or semiyan (Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi), shemai (Bengali), sev (Gujarati), shavige (Kannada), sevalu (Telugu), and semiya (Tamil, Malayalam).

The She'reya belongs to the family of dry pastas. The invention of dried pasta was a key step in pasta becoming popular. It might have been an invention borne out of sheer necessity. The Arab traders and conquerors needed a portable, long lasting, non messy travel food and the dried pasta was born.

Arabian traders packed this dried pasta on long journeys over the "Silk Road" to China. Arab soldiers carried it with them on their conquests. This dry noodle-like product was very convenient as it could easily be turned into a hot, nutritious meal - the earliest 'fast food'!

It is likely the Arabs perfected the art of making dried pasta at least 1000 years back. The first recorded mention is in the Talmud (5th century AD), where the Holy book talks about pasta being cooked in boiling water.

1000 years back, Arabs conquered Sicily and introduced pasta to Italy. It is no wonder that ancient Italian pasta recipes show clear signs of Arabic parentage.

The earliest mention of vermicelli in Italy is found in a Pisan document from February 13, 1284, where a baker hires a helper in making and selling vermicelli. Early recipes for vermicelli call for a sauce of almond milk, sugar, and saffron with the boiled vermicelli - a tell tale sign of the Arabic influence.

500 years after its introduction, pasta gained quick popularity and soon Italians claimed it as their own!

Arab traders probably brought this She'raya to India. Indian cuisine embraced it - using it extensively to cook desserts, puddings and as a rice substitute in many recipes.

In this recipe, vermicelli replaces rice in the classic Tamil recipe - curd rice and its Kannadiga version, the Bagala Bhat. This is a full balanced meal on its own, with carbohydrates coming from pasta and the yogurt supplying both fat and protein.

The building blocks of this theme are vermicelli, additives, yogurt and the garnish used.

#### Vermicelli:

Any thin noodle/pasta can be used in place of vermicelli in this theme. However the cooking times and techniques vary with the type of vermicelli used. Roasted vermicelli is preferred as it retains its shape better. The traditional recipes call for cooking vermicelli in boiling water with constant stirring, to prevent it from clumping up. We use a measured quantity of water which is all absorbed by the time the vermicelli is cooked. Clumping is completely avoided in the OPOS version.

#### Flavouring:

Chillies and ginger supply the base flavour. You can add more herbs/spices of your choice for elaborate flavouring. A tadka of fried mustard, curry leaves, dry red chillies and asafoetida is common.

#### Additives:

Almost anything that can go with curd rice goes with Thayir semia. Fruits (mango, pomegranate, grapes, raisins), salad vegetables (grated carrot, chopped onion), herbs (cilantro), fried curd chillies (more milagai) are all used.

#### Garnish:

Stir-fried cashew/boondi or even a crunchy sev/mixture is common.

# Vangi Bhat

## Marathi eggplant rice

Mix 3C chopped eggplant, 1/2tsp each (pepper, chilli, garam masala, coriander, cumin powders), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 1tsp each (salt, jaggery), 1/4C yogurt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1C spiced eggplant

Layer 4: 1C (30 minutes soaked and drained) basmathi rice

Layer 5: 2C spiced eggplant to cover rice completely

Add 1C water along the edges. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (8 minutes).

Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1/4C grated coconut.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggplant with your favourite vegetable/mix of vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Water with stock/whey

### **Tips:**

1. Add more water for a mushier consistency.

It is interesting to see the North and South Indian spices mixing in Central India. Mustard, turmeric, asafoetida and curry leaves are common in South Indian curries. Cumin, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves and garam masala are widely used in North Indian curries. In Central India, both these are used together in many dishes.

The Vangi bhat is actually a Biriyani at heart and follows all principles of a good Biriyani. The rice grains should be separate, the rice used is Basmathi, the spice combination is that of a Biriyani, with South Indian spices and the eggplant should not become mush. It follows all the classic Biriyani rules. It

is even served with raita, exactly like a Biriyani!

Parts of Andhra and Karnataka were once a part of the Maratha Kingdom, carved out by Chatrapathi Shivaji from the Bijapur sultan. So this recipe is considered traditional in Andhra and Karnataka too.. They are all called by the Marathi name Vangi Bhat (Eggplant Rice), which clearly indicates the source of the recipe.

The Tanjore Maratha kingdom, established by Shivaji's brother, introduced this recipe to Tamilnadu and it is still served in many Tamil restaurants.

In Maharashtra, Vangi Bhat would be paired with papad and raita, Andhra would serve it with Majjiga Pulusu (yogurt stew) and in Tanjore, we will see Dangar pachadi or Thayir pachadi as accompaniments.

Innumerable versions of this classic recipe exist, with differing spice combinations and additives, but at heart it is just rice flavoured chiefly by eggplant.

# Vangi Batata Bhaji

## Marathi Eggplant and potato casserole

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp peanut oil,

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion, 6 curry leaves, 2 chopped green chillies

Layer 3: 1C each (eggplant chopped big, potato chopped small)

Layer 4: 1/4C grated coconut, 2tsp tamarind paste

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (cumin, coriander, garam masala powders), 2tsp jaggery, 1tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all with 1/4C crushed peanuts.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potatoes with other starchy vegetables
- Peanuts with other nuts/seeds
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Coconut with coconut milk
- Peanut oil with butter/ghee/your favourite oil
- Tamarind with tomato/other souring agents

### **Tips:**

1. Serve as a grain free, balanced meal.
2. Mix in crushed roasted papad/bhujia for extra protein.

Recipes like this are actually grain free balanced meals, masquerading as curries. A nutritionally balanced full meal should meet your carbohydrate, protein, fat and micro-nutrient requirement.

In many of these grain free balanced meals, the carbohydrates come from starchy vegetables (potato, banana and other tubers), protein comes from lentils/nuts/dairy and fat comes from the added oil. Additives supply the fiber/micro-nutrients.

Though we are accustomed to consume starch in the form of rice/rotis, it is optional. Our carbohydrate requirement can be met in many other ways. Kappa (Tapioca) replaces rice in parts of Kerala. Potatoes replace rice/bread in Ireland. Green bananas are the chief starch in many Latin American countries. Sweet Potato and other tubers sustain the population in many African countries.

Cereals (rice, wheat, and maize) and root vegetables (potatoes and cassava) supply most of the starch humanity needs, but other starch sources are popular in pockets. Tubers, Rhizomes, Nuts (acorns, chestnuts), Fruits (bananas, breadfruit etc), flowers, roots (kudzu) are all starch sources, though we see them as vegetables.

Vangi Batata Bhaji (Eggplant Potato dry curry) is a Marathi full meal which is eaten as a curry. Though it is eaten with flatbreads (usually chappati/bhakri (millet bread) or rice, it is a grain free balanced meal by itself.

The core building blocks are a vegetable, a starch, protein and spices. The vegetable used here is the Marathi favourite - eggplant. Potatoes supply the starch, protein comes from peanuts, coconut and the vegetable provides the trace nutrients. Fat comes from the added oil and tadka. All are cooked together with a sweet - spicy and tangy sauce with jaggery, a spice mix (usually Marathi goda masala) and tamarind.

As with many Marathi dishes, jaggery lends a sweet touch, and also makes possible a glossy sauce that coats the vegetables. Peanut powder, another Marathi favourite additive, supplies the protein and acts as a thickener.

The traditional recipe calls for a tadka, followed by onions and spices. Eggplant is then added and stir fried. Water gets added next and the curry is simmered till eggplants are cooked and the water dries out. Jaggery, boiled potatoes, coconut and peanut powder are then mixed in and the whole mass is stirred and cooked till done.

We can achieve a similar effect by the flash technique and by varying the size of vegetables. The quick cooking eggplant is cut into large chunks and the potato is cut into smaller chunks so that both get cooked together at the same time. Bottled tadka and chopped herbs are then mixed in as a garnish. The Marathi tadka uses mustard seeds, turmeric and asafoetida, unlike the South Indian tadka which usually skips turmeric.

Extend the theme with other starch/protein/fat combinations!

# Ambur Chicken Dum Biryani

## Tamil Chicken – rice casserole

Mix 2C (500g) chicken, 1/2C yogurt, 1.5tsp chilli powder, 2tsp each (salt, ginger – garlic paste), 1tsp Biryani masala, 1/4C caramelised onion, 1/4C chopped mint.

Soak 1C (250g) seeraka samba rice for 1 hour and drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp peanut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1C chicken

Layer 4: Rice

Layer 5: 1C chicken to completely cover rice

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Seeraka samba with other rice varieties
- Chicken with other marinated meats
- Chilli powder with red chilli paste
- Biryani masala with your favourite spice mix
- Oil with ghee/your favourite oils
- Onion with shallots
- Cilantro with your favourite fresh herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Increase water quantity if you face burning.
2. Cover rice completely with chicken/herbs.
3. Ensure chicken is not cut into big chunks.



# Kachi Gosht Biriyani

## Hyderabad Mutton Biriyani

<https://youtu.be/ASQIV-NJ4H4>

Mix 500g mutton chopped small, 1/2C yogurt, 1/4C each (mint, caramelised onion), 1tbsp ginger-garlic paste, 2tsp chilli powder, 1.5tsp each (biriyani masala, salt), 3 slit chillies and 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Soak 1C basmathi rice in water for 30 minutes. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: Half the spiced mutton mix

Layer 3: Basmathi rice,

Layer 4: Remaining mutton mix to cover rice completely.

Add 1/2C water along the edges without disturbing the layers. Cook on medium heat for 5 whistles (12 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all and fluff up.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mutton with other red meats/minced meat.
- Caramelised onion with fried onion
- Water with stock
- Biriyani masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Cover top layer of rice completely with mutton/herbs.
2. Cut meat into small pieces and marinate overnight for softer meat.
3. Play around with each building block, personalising the Biriyani to your taste.
4. Note what you do, record observations and fine tune.
5. Reduce water for a drier texture.



### Kachi Gosht Ki

Biriyani (Raw mutton Biriyani) is Hyderabad's signature dish. Two major styles of Biriyani making are popular across the country- The Kachi Biriyani of Hyderabad and the Pakki Biriyani of Awadh.

In the Kachi Biriyani, raw meat and raw rice are assembled and cooked together. In the pakki Biriyani, semi cooked rice and semi cooked meat are assembled and cooked together.

The Kachi Biriyani is considered to be the epitome of Nizami Cuisine, as it takes great skill to cook. Chefs spend decades apprenticing under Biriyani masters to learn this skill. Those decades are spent in trying to solve the core problem - how do you make mutton and rice cook perfectly together at the same time?

In traditional method, this is done by judging the doneness by look and smell. Gaining this skill takes decades.

In OPOS, we replace this skill by a standardised, fool proof process. Then the building blocks can be varied the way you like, getting a Biriyani perfectly personalised to your taste. This allows infinite variations and tweaks to flow out of a simple theme, demystifying it for all time.

Think of these building blocks as sliders in a graphic equiliser. You can set them to your preference. Irrespective of what you do, the core OPOS recipe

guarantees you an edible dish (irrespective of how you set your graphic equalizer, you will hear music). But you can take it to the next level and personalise it to your taste by playing with these sliders (building blocks). This is the core strength of OPOS - it lets you vary one variable at a time.

The building blocks of a KGKB are meat, marinade, spices, rice, liquid and garnish.

Let us see how to tweak each slider to pack the Biryani with taste and flavour.

#### Meat:

Gosht (Persian for meat/flesh) usually refers to Beef/Goat/Buffalo meat, though it technically could refer to any meat. Most red meats take roughly the same time to cook and the differences can be evened out by 'precooking' them (sautéing, marinating, tenderizing,...) or by varying the cut sizes. In deference to Islamic beliefs, pork is never used in a Biryani. Mutton was the meat of choice of the Nizams, but beef/buffalo is also common, especially in the poorer sections. The ratio used here is 2 parts mutton to 1 part of rice. In most Indian Biryani's, the Mutton: Rice ratio is under 1.5: 1.

#### Tips:

1. Use tender meat
2. Smaller the cut pieces, faster the cooking
3. Though not common, you can sauté meat for a caramelised flavour before marinating it.
4. Brining the meat can make it juicier

#### Marinade:

Meat tenderisers (Papaya/Pineapple etc) and yogurt denature meat proteins, 'precooking' meat. This way, we can ensure even tough cuts of meat and rice cook at the same time. The longer the marination, the better the 'precooking'.

#### Tips:

1. The longer the marination, the faster the meat cooks
2. Addition of fried onions fills up the marinade with a rich onion flavour, eliminating the need to sauté onions separately.
3. Ginger-garlic paste can be raw or sautéed. The cooked versions give a more rounded taste.

4. Yogurt acts both as a souring agent and as a tenderizer. It also supplies the moisture needed for the Biriyani to cook.

5. Use freshly roast and ground Biriyani masala for the best flavour.

(Any combination of Shahi Jeera, Cinnamon, Cloves, Bay leaves, Mace, nutmeg, cardamom, fennel, cumin, star anise etc can be used). If buying packaged ones, check for the expiry dates and use them up fast.

Rice:

Rice is washed and briefly soaked to ensure excess starch is washed away and the grains bloom well. Basmathi can be replaced with a variety of rice or even millets. The no water cooking technique ensures the starch does not get mushy on cooking.

Tips:

1. Soak for less time if rice is overcooked

2. Soak rice in flavoured water (water flavoured with whole spices) for added flavour.

3. Wash rice multiple times to remove excess starch

Liquid:

Yogurt used as a marinade, the meat juices, and the water from soaked rice generate enough steam to cook the Biriyani.

Tips:

1. Add more liquid if you face burning

2. Add flavoured liquid (water flavoured with whole spices/mutton stock) for greater flavour

Garnish:

A garnish of fried onions is common. Saffron mixed in warm milk is sprinkled for extra flavour. A sprinkle of rose water/kewra water is also used. Halved boiled eggs are also common.

The Technique:

Layering and no water cooking are the key techniques that deskill this recipe. The alternate layers of marinated meat, herbs, rice and meat ensure the flavours mingle well.

Tips:

1. Can use whole spices in the bottom layer (Bay leaf, cinnamon etc)

2. Can use finely chopped onions/shallots as the bottom layer

Serving:

Serve hot with raita/Mirchi ka saalan

This quantity fills two bowls, serving 2 adults. The cost of 2 bowls of Biriyani in Chennai is around Rs.300, but the meat: rice ratio is 1: 1 or less than that.

Here, we use a 2: 1 meat to rice ratio, but still the overall cost remains the same. (Mutton Rs.240, Rice: Rs.25 and others: Rs.35)

# South Indian Curries

# South Indian Curries- A Primer

<https://youtu.be/zsp35-yd9zA>

For the sake of convenience, the five states of Andhra, Telengana, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu lying on the Deccan plateau are referred to as South India. They have similar climatic conditions and share similar religious beliefs. They were relatively insulated from foreign conquests which plagued North India. This is why the cuisine of South India shows a remarkable similarity in the way food is cooked, served and eaten.

The building blocks of South Indian curries are Coconut, Tamarind, Dal and Yogurt.

These are flavored with Mustard, Curry leaves, Cumin, Ginger, Garlic, Chillies, Cilantro, Coriander, Turmeric powder, Asafoetida and Sambar powder (a blend of coriander, chilli, turmeric, fenugreek and asafoetida powders).

A variety of fats are used. Ghee, Sesame oil (Tamilnadu), Coconut oil (Kerala, Konkan coast) and Peanut oil (Andhra) are preferred. Refined vegetable oils have now become common.

The vegetarian sources of protein are lentils (Tuvar dal, Mung dal, Channa Dal, Masoor dal, in that order), native chickpeas and other peas, beans/lentils.

Chicken, Mutton and Eggs are common non vegetarian protein sources. Beef/Pork are not common. Fish/seafood is widely consumed in the coastal regions.

A huge variety of vegetables and edible greens are consumed.

Tamarind is the chief souring agent. Mango and yogurt are also used. Kokkum is preferred on the West coast.

Various combinations of the core building blocks (Lentils, tamarind, coconut and yogurt) translate into various South Indian curries. Any combination of these building blocks, in any proportion, will give an authentic South Indian curry!

The following are the major curry families cooked across the South:

- Tamarind based curries (Kulambu/Pulusu/Huli)

- Tamarind and lentil based curries (Sambar/Pappu Pulusu/Pulingari)
- Thin tamarind/lentil based curries (Rasam/Saaru/Chhaar)
- Roasted Lentil powders (Podi/Pudi)
- Dry Vegetable curries (Poriyal/Kura/Palya/Thoran)
- Raw coconut curries (Thuvaiyal/Chutney/Chammanthi)
- Cooked coconut curries (Kuruma/Saagu/Erisseri)
- Cooked coconut- lentil curries (Kootu)
- Lentil- vegetable curries (Pappu)
- Raw Yogurt curries (Thayir pachadi)
- Cooked Yogurt curries (More Kulambu/Majjiga pulusu/Pulisseri/Majjiga Huli)
- Coconut- Yogurt blended curries (Tambli, Aviyal).

All these curries are flavoured by one single tadka - fried mustard, dry red chillies, curry leaf and asafoetida. All these curries are eaten mixed with hot cooked rice, accompanied by a dry vegetable curry/papad/pickle.



# Achinga Mezhugupuratti

## Kerala long beans stir-fry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C (250g) chopped long beans, 1/4tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Yard long beans with French beans/broad beans/cluster beans
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil

### **Tips:**

1. Do not release pressure if you want a mushier consistency.
2. Chop finer and skip water if you want a grilled layer.



Achinga Mezhuguperatti from Kerala showcases how a simple curry devoid of any spice can turn out so divine. It comes from the vegetarian Kerala Brahmin cuisine.

Kerala cuisine can be divided into the meat based Malabar cuisine of North Kerala and the predominantly vegetarian Travancore/Palghat/Thrissur cuisine of South Kerala. The non vegetarian curries of the Syrian Christians and Moplah Muslims form the bulk of Malabar cuisine.

The Namboodhiri cuisine of the earliest Brahmin settlers and the Palakkad/Thrissur/Trivandrum cuisine of the later migrants from Tamilnadu sets the tone of the vegetarian cuisine of Kerala.

Vegetarian or not, most Kerala curries are built around coconut and yogurt. Unlike other South Indian states, tamarind or lentils play only a marginal role. Coconut meat, coconut milk and coconut oil are combined with chilli, cumin and yogurt to create a variety of lightly spiced, easy to prepare curries. It is in Kerala we see black pepper jostling chilli aside in many curries. Unlike the rest of South India, tamarind, cilantro or tomato are not extensively used. Use of raw coconut oil as a garnish, use of jackfruit seeds and baby jackfruit as vegetables are unique to Kerala curries. All these curries are eaten with hot cooked rice. Unlike the thin, white rice eaten in other South Indian states, fat grained, red rice is preferred in Kerala.

# Airawat

## Konkan sweet and sour dip

Blend 1tbsp tamarind paste (or a marble sized ball of tamarind), 6 chopped dates, 1tsp jaggery, 1 dry red chilli, 2tsp chopped ginger, 1/4C water, 1/2tsp salt to a smooth paste.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind pulp with kokum/mango/sun dried tomato
- Jaggery with sugar
- Dates with raisins/other dry fruits
- Chilli with pepper

### **Tips:**

1. Can add 1tbsp vinegar for increased shelf life.
2. Can blend with 1tsp oil for a creamier consistency.

Sweet and sour dips are popular in many cuisines. The west uses various combinations of sugar and vinegar. But Indian cuisine relies on fruits instead. Fruit chutneys are common in many Indian cuisines. Tamarind based chutneys are common across the South. The Konkani airawat combines these two themes to make the sweet and sour chutney.

The use of dates in Indian cuisine is not very common. But the West coast has been trading with Arabs for over 2000 years and so was well exposed to dates. The use of dates has so permeated the West coast that this dip has become mandatory in many Konkani religious occasions (Satyanarayana pooja, sacred thread ceremony) or festivities (Airawat is mandatory in Konkani weddings).

Sweet and sour fruit pulp cooked with spices is popular across the country as a dip/spread/dessert. The North Indian Sonth chutney simmers tamarind pulp with jaggery and ginger. The Malabar Moplah Biryani chutney is very similar to the Konkani Airawat and is also a part of traditional religious/social

festivities. Though the Konkani Airawat accompanies vegetarian foods, the Malabar version is paired with mostly non vegetarian dishes, proving the versatility of this theme.

The Jains have a series of similar fruit chutneys. Cooked tomato puree/tamarind puree is blended with dates and spices into a dip served with dhoklas, chaats, kachori etc.

The sweet toothed Bengalis cook up the same sweet and sour dip theme, but use it as a dessert! Sour fruits like Mango, pineapple, tomato and tamarind are cooked with sweeteners (sugar/jaggery/dry fruits) and spices into a desserty dip, which is served not as a part of the regular meals, but at the very end, and is eaten as a dessert. The Bengali specialty dates jaggery (Khajur ka gud) echoes the Konkani Airawat.

Extending the core theme:

The common theme uniting all these dips is the use of sour fruit pulp, a sweetener and spices. The sour and sweet base acts as its own preservative. In many cases the dip is simmered to reduce water content and prolong shelf life.

Try using a variety of sour fruit pulp - fresh/cooked/raw/sun dried, blend them with sweeteners (Sugar/jaggery/honey) and your favourite spice mixes.

# Allam Pachadi

## Telugu Ginger Dip

<https://youtu.be/TRgQFioDTjI>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1/4C peanut oil

Layer 2: 2C finely chopped young ginger

Layer 3: 1/2C tamarind (fibers and seeds removed) or 1/4C thick tamarind paste

Layer 4: 1/2C jaggery, 2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Blend all to a paste.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Jaggery with sugar
- Peanut oil with your favourite oil
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend all without cooking, for a raw dip.
2. Can blend with 1tbsp oil for a creamier consistency.
3. Clean young ginger can be used unpeeled.
4. Old ginger is fibrous and not suitable for this dip.
5. Use old tamarind for a darker colour and new tamarind for a lighter colour.
6. Can increase amount of tamarind used, for a longer shelf life.
7. Blend in bursts to avoid overloading your blender.

Allam Pachadi (Ginger Chutney) is a staple in most Telugu homes. It is served with breakfast to accompany Idli/Dosa/Pesarattu. It is also served with rice during lunch and dinner.

Ginger is an excellent appetiser and digestive. Ginger pickles/preserves are popular across the country. They are pickled in many ways. Very young,

fresh ginger can be eaten raw or lightly pickled. Slightly more mature ginger gets cooked with salt/sugar/spices.

The Moguls pickle ginger with sugar into the Murabba. Across North India, strips of tender ginger are pickled with chillies and lemon juice into the Adrak ka Achaar. Both sweet, sour and spices come together with in the Keralite Puli Inji and the Andhra Allam pachadi.

The building blocks of this theme are ginger, a souring agent, sweetener and spices.

Ginger:

Fresh ginger is most commonly used. A few versions also use mango - ginger in place of ginger to make the Mamdi Allam Pachadi. You can try experimenting with other rhizomes like fresh young turmeric/galangal.

Fresh, young ginger need not be peeled. Older gingers need to be peeled as the peel is woody and chewy. Ginger can be chopped/grated/ground to a paste to alter the texture of the jam.

Souring agent:

Tamarind is most commonly used souring agent. The colour of the tamarind varies from light brown (new tamarind) to pitch black (Old tamarind). The colour of the dip varies with the colour of the tamarind used. Though not common, other sour fruit pulps can also be used.

Sweetener:

Jaggery acts as both a sweetener and a preservative. Ensure the jaggery you use is of good quality and is free of sand. Sugar/other sweeteners can also be used.

Spices:

Chilli powder is the chief spice and is supplemented with turmeric powder in some versions. The level of chilli powder can be varied as per your personal preference. It can even be mixed at the very end. Some versions mix in a bit of fenugreek powder for a slight bitter note. Many versions use the tadka (Mustard, curry leaves and dry red chillies).

Salt:

Salt acts as a preservative along with jaggery.

The ratio of Ginger - tamarind- jaggery - chilli powder and salt varies from household to household. You can alter the proportion to your liking. Usually equal quantities of Ginger, Jaggery and Chilli powder are used. Tamarind and salt ratio varies depending on how sour and salty you want it.

#### Preparation:

Traditionally, ginger is stir fried, tamarind pulp, jaggery, chilli powder are added and the whole mass is simmered till thick. It is then blended and stored. The no water cooking technique minimises water content in the pickle and results in a much thicker version than traditionally possible. Due to this low water content, this will also last much longer.

# Arachu Kalakki

## Kerala's Yogurt Dip

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1tbsp chopped brined baby mango, 1 chopped green chilli, 1/2tsp each (cumin, salt), 1/4tsp mustard and 1/4C yogurt to a smooth paste. Mix in more yogurt/buttermilk/water to dilute it to the consistency you like.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cumin/mustard with your favourite spices
- Ginger with garlic/fresh herbs
- Brined mango with your favourite Indian pickle
- Green chilli with dry red chilli/pepper

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in tamarind/lemon juice if yogurt is not sour.
2. Can blend with 1tsp oil for a creamier consistency.

Arachu Kalakki (blended and mixed) is a Kerala Brahmin delicacy. You can look at it as a blended raita or as a Konkani Tambli variant. It is one of the rare dishes which rely on blending in a salted pickle for its tang. It is also one of the very few Indian recipes which calls in for mustard paste, a technique practiced mainly in Bengal and Orissa.

Pickling sour fruits in brine is an age old technique. In India, large gooseberries and baby mangoes are commonly used for making brined pickles. These are blended with coconut, yogurt and chillies to make the Arachu Kalakki.

Tangy and spicy, it is usually served with a relatively bland dish like the Molagoottal. Some versions also use boiled yam in place of pickles to make a less tangy version.

Though only baby mangoes/large gooseberries are traditionally used, this theme can be extended with any pickle - even pickled cucumbers, gherkins, olives, jalapenos or with a huge array of Indian pickles. All these can be blended in to make exotic versions.

This goes equally well with rice, idiyappam and can even be served as a side dish with flat breads (exactly like a raita).

# Avakkaya

## Telugu Mustard Mango Pickle

Mix 1kg chopped and deseeded sour mango, 250g mustard powder, 250g powdered sea salt, 150g chilli powder, 100g dry chick peas. Shake well. Mix in 250g sesame oil.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango with grated mango/baby mango/dosakka/other sour fruits
- Mustard powder with OPOS podi (see OPOS Staples)
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Chickpeas with garlic, ginger, sesame seeds or fenugreek seeds.

### **Tips:**

1. Can add jaggery.
2. Can add more spices (turmeric, fenugreek powder, fennel powder, cumin powder).
3. Use roasted spice powders, roasted/sun dried salt for a longer shelf life.
4. Oil is optional.
5. Get the mango cut into big pieces with the kernel intact.
6. Oil is optional. It is not a preservative, just a sealant.

A cuisine is almost always defined by its simplest recipes. The humble Avakaya (usually denotes Mango pickle with rind) defines Telugu cuisine. It is served at almost every meal and Telugu people stop just short of worshiping it. As the saying goes, a true blooded Telugu will always opt for Aavaakaya over Amritham (Ambrosia).

The start of summer is avakka season and the whole family gets involved. The husband/wife go to purchase the greenest, freshest, sourest mangoes, the

kids get to wash and dry them, the husband gets to cut them (difficult work because the hard kernel needs to be cleanly sheared), kids would help remove the seed and the wife would prepare the pickling powder. This lasts for the better part of a day and forms a part of many childhood memories. Cooking becomes a bonding experience.

But there is actually no cooking at all. Nature does all the work!

This pickle is a technique of preserving mango in its own sour juices. Any acidic medium inhibits the growth of microorganisms which cause spoilage. Here, the sour fruit juice acts in the same way as vinegar would, though it is not as strong. Hence it is fortified with spices and salt. Then the whole mass is covered with oil, which seals the surface and prevents the entry of contaminants.

An acid is pickle's best friend and water is its worst enemy. As avakka is designed to last at least one year, elaborate precautions are taken to remove even minute traces of water.

1. The mango is washed and completely dried.
2. Salt and spices are roasted/sun dried to reduce their water content.
3. The pickle is never allowed to come in contact with water.

As long as this single rule is followed your avakka will last months, unrefrigerated.

Ava (Mustard) kai (raw fruit) can be looked at as a fiery version of the yellow mustard sauce popular in the west. In fact, if you mix in red chilli powder with western mustard, you have something resembling Avakka gravy! The sourness of western mustard comes from vinegar whereas in Avakka it comes from sour mango juice.

Here's how this pickle works: Mustard powder, salt and chilli powder is mixed with cut, sour mango pieces. The salt draws out the juices by osmosis and the mango shrinks. The sour juice, spices and salt act as preservatives. Oil seals the pickle.

Thus, the core building blocks are Mustard, Chilli powder, Salt, Mango and Sesame oil.

This core theme is translated across Andhra into myriad recipes by minor

changes of building blocks.

Mustard is replaced by roasted lentil powder (usually Mung dal) to give Pesara Avakkaya. Roasted peanut powder is used to make Palli Avakaya. Roasted sesame seeds are added to give Nuvvu Avakaya. Any OPOS podi can be mixed in to create a never ending variety of Avakaya.

Different varieties of chilli powders can be used, though Andhra prefers the hottest ones. A part of chilli powder is replaced by jaggery to give Bellam Avakaya with a mild sweet bite. Other spices like turmeric, asafoetida, fenugreek powder, cumin powder, fennel powder etc can also be mixed in according to your preference.

Sea salt is usually preferred but you can experiment by adding different varieties of salt.

Various additives can also be added in and the sour juice 'cooks' them all - even the hardy dry chick peas! Raw Garlic, kabuli channa, kala channa, fenugreek seeds are all usually mixed in.

Baby mangoes, sun dried mango, grated mango, boiled mango are all used in place of raw mango. We have an interesting variation where the mango is completely replaced by Andhra's favourite vegetable - Dosakka (Round, yellow cucumber) to make Dosa Avakaya. The cucumber is deseeded, chopped up and added in place of mango. Here, the preservation happens only by the spice mixture and the shelf life is correspondingly much shorter. Another version is Usuri Avakaya where whole gooseberries replace mango. You can experiment with your favourite sour fruits in place of mango.

A tadka of mustard is sometimes added for an extra burst of flavour.

Quite a few myths surround the preparation, all of which are false.

- Sesame oil needs to be heated and cooled before being mixed in.  
False.
- All mango pieces need to have a bit or kernel or they will spoil.  
False.
- When garlic cloves are added, they should be whole, else the pickle will spoil. False.
- Menstruating women cannot touch the pickle jar - else it spoils.

False.

A couple of kilos of Avakaya can last a small family for months, and cost very little to produce. Here's the breakup, with cost in rupees (2015).

Mango 1Kg: 100

Mustard powder 250 gms: 36

Sea Salt 250 gms: 3

Chilli powder 150 gms: 36

Sesame Oil 250 gms: 76

Chickpeas 100 gms: 11, which works out to Rs.140/Kg.

As you can see, half the weight of the pickle is mango and the spice paste makes up the other half. This ratio can be scaled up proportionately for any quantity. This is one of the easiest pickles to make. All you need to do is to mix!

# Aviyal

## Kerala's vegetable medley

[https://youtu.be/aWv\\_UcqPFXc](https://youtu.be/aWv_UcqPFXc)

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1tsp each (salt, cumin, coconut oil), 2 green chillies to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each (carrot, beans, banana, squash) cut into matchsticks

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C yogurt, 5 crushed curry leaves, 1tsp virgin coconut oil.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables.
- Yogurt with vegan yogurt/strained yogurt/sour cream/other souring agents.

#### **Tips:**

1. Banana, yam, cluster beans, drumstick, snake gourds, pumpkin, squash, cucumber, long beans are commonly used.
2. Cut tough vegetables into thin strips and easy cooking vegetables into thick strips to balance cooking time.
3. Oil blended with coconut emulsifies it and produces an exceptionally creamy sauce. Mix this in just before serving for a creamy aviyal.
4. Replace blended coconut paste with finely grated coconut, finely chopped chillies and crushed cumin if you want to avoid the blending step.
5. Cumin is optional.
6. Unless the paste is thick, it will seep to the bottom and cause burning.



Aviyal is a mix of vegetables in a thick, sour and creamy coconut-cumin base. It is one of Kerala's signature dishes. Like many Namboodiri recipes, Aviyal proves that a divine recipe need not be complicated, nor use a ton of spices. Unlike many Indian curries, Aviyal needs minimal flavouring.

Aviyals are eaten mixed with rice or served as a side dish with Adai (thick savoury pancakes). They also make great accompaniments for a variety of flatbreads. They can even be snacked on as a salad or even be consumed as a fully balanced meal.

Like any old and much loved dish, Aviyal has its own creation myths. A legend has it that Bheema, one of the Pandavas, was employed as a cook during his exile and created the first Aviyal by boiling up piles of vegetables with yogurt and coconut.

Another legend has it that the cooks of Travancore maharaja faced a shortage of vegetables and so decided to mix various vegetables to cover up the shortfall. The king liked it so much that he decreed it to be cooked at every

feast. Aviyal still forms a part of Sadhya - the traditional Kerala feast.

# Aviyal Base

## Kerala's sour coconut salad dressing

Blend 1C chopped coconut, 4 green chillies, 2tsp each (cumin, salt, coconut oil), 1/2C sour yogurt to a paste. Mix in 6 crushed curry leaves. Bottle and refrigerate.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Coconut with thick coconut milk
- Green chilli with dry red chilli
- Cumin with your favourite spices/spice mix
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil

### **Tips:**

1. Use as a dip.
2. Mix with flashed vegetables as a salad dressing.
3. Eat mixed with rice as a curry.
4. Lasts weeks refrigerated.
5. Blending in coconut oil emulsifies the base, making it creamy.
6. The sourer the base, the longer its shelf life.
7. Lasts for weeks in the refrigerator and months frozen.
8. All leftover dry curries can be mixed with the base to create instant Aviyals.
9. The base can be served by itself with rice/flatbreads as a curry.

It is easy to extend themes if we isolate the base. We can look at Aviyal as a cooked vegetable salad, dressed with a sour coconut dressing. The vegetables are more or less common across regions, but the dressing differs widely. Once we isolate the dressing, we can sidestep all discussions about 'authenticity', as you can make the base the way you like it.

The building blocks of the Aviyal base are coconut, a souring agent,

flavouring and additives.

**Coconut:**

Coconut is ground coarse/fine, or just crushed into a coarse paste. It forms the base for all Aviyal variations.

**Souring agent:**

Yogurt is the most common, followed by tamarind, mango or even tomato. You can experiment by adding your favourite souring agents or even skip them altogether.

**Flavouring:**

Cumin and turmeric are commonly used. Crushed curry leaves and coconut oil mixed in at the end add a burst of fresh flavour. Other flavouring appear across regions.

Onion, fennel, shallots, ginger, garlic, pepper, dry red chillies are all used. Even garam masala manages to sneak in!

**Additives:**

Chettinad adds cashew powder/roasted gram powder/poppy seed powder in its version. More yogurt/water/buttermilk can be mixed in to create a less-thick version (Aviyal Kulambu).

More additives can be mixed in to create a range of Aviyals as listed below:

1. Paal Aviyal: Mix in thick coconut milk/other milk with the base.
2. Creamy Aviyal: Replace yogurt with sour cream.
3. Katti Aviyal: Replace yogurt with strained yogurt.
4. Puli Aviyal (Tamarind Aviyal) Replace yogurt with 2tsp tamarind paste.
5. Manga Aviyal (Mango Aviyal) Replace yogurt with 1/4C sour mango.
6. Aviyal Kulambu. Mix in more buttermilk/water and Tamarind.

**Vegetables:**

Any vegetable can be used in an Aviyal, though preference is given to native vegetables like banana, yam, Malabar cucumber, squash, pumpkin, snake gourd, drumsticks, runner beans and cluster beans. Potato, carrot, ivy gourd, unripe tomatoes, raw cashews, colocasia, jack fruit seeds, sweet potato, other tubers are used too. A mix of at least four vegetables is mandatory.

You can play around with the base- vegetable combination to create your

own versions of Aviyals.

1. Cooked Vegetables with Cooked base.

Flash vegetables with a layer of Aviyal base on top.

2. Cooked Vegetables with Raw base.

Flash vegetables and mix in base after opening.

3. Raw vegetables with Raw base.

Use salad vegetables (green papaya, carrot, radish, cucumber, capsicum, cabbage, lettuce, tomato) and mix in aviyal base to make a salad.

4. Mix of all the above.

Mix in cooked/raw vegetables, with cooked/raw base to create an interesting array of aviyals.

# Baghara Baingan

## Hyderabad stuffed eggplant curry

<https://youtu.be/q18O-H7oZkM>

Slit 250g eggplants into 4 so that they remain joined at the base.  
Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 10 cashews, 2tsp tamarind paste, 1tsp each (salt, cumin, coriander, chilli, garam masala powders). Stuff inside slit eggplants.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: Arrange 1/2C finely chopped onion arranged in a ring. Add 1/2C chopped deseeded tomatoes at the centre.

Layer 3: Stuffed eggplants

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove eggplants. Mash/blend the gravy. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Coconut with copra
- Cashew with other nuts
- Onions with shallots

#### **Tips:**

1. Ensure eggplants are not too big.
2. Long baby eggplants are ideal.



The Mughals loved rich, mildly spiced curries. But when they came further South, they bumped into more potent southern spices. Turmeric, Tamarind and chilles seduced them and found their way into the Nizami curries, as exemplified by the Saalan and the Baghara baingan. In these curries, Peanut and coconut came to replace the cashew and dairy in Mogul curries.

This theme can be used to cook any vegetable/meat, though eggplant is most commonly used, probably because this mirrors Gutti Vankaya Kura, another delectable Telugu recipe!

#### Variations:

Use any nut paste (peanut paste/sesame paste).

Use coconut paste/grated coconut instead of coconut powder.

Can replace tomatoes with more tamarind.

Can make this a No water curry by adding more tomatoes.

Can replace green chillies with chilli powder.

Can add ginger garlic paste.

# Beans Upkari

## Konkani beans stir-fry

<https://youtu.be/SiRqdtZXvEc>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped beans

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder), 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C grated coconut.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Beans with cluster beans/broad beans/long beans or other vegetables
- Chilli powder with sambar powder
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil
- Coconut with cooked dal

#### **Tips:**

1. Water is optional if beans are juicy.
2. Most vegetables can be cooked the same way.



Upkari is the collective name for Konkan's stir-fried dry curries. A huge variety of fresh vegetables are cooked with minimal spices and minimal oil into an array of Upkaris. It is the fresh taste of the vegetable, and not that of the masala, that is prized. Upkaris are served with rice/flatbreads accompanied by a dal (dalitoy) or they can be eaten just as a snack.

Several kinds of Upkaris exist. Saaru Upkari comes with gravy and is cooked from dry legumes. Avalakki Upkari is just thin rice flakes lightly spiced and mixed with grated coconut, consumed as a breakfast. Pej Upkaris are made from starchy vegetables cooked and mashed into a chunky stew. But it is the vegetable Upkari which is the most popular and is served at almost every meal.

The building blocks are the vegetables used, the flavouring and the additives.

Vegetables used:

French beans, Long beans, Ivy gourd, Cabbage, Snake gourd, Cauliflower, Bottlegourd, Tender cashew, Beet, Carrots are all used. An Upkari usually has one vegetable, though potato has worked its way into numerous Upkaris.

Several specialty ingredients like bamboo shoots, mushrooms and tender cashew nuts are used. The soft cashew nuts are seasonal and are only available during February and March. Konkanis gladly sell their souls to lay

their hands on these young nuts.

Apart from fresh vegetables, sprouts, fish and prawns are also cooked into Upkaris.

#### Flavouring:

All vegetarian upkaris are flavoured by a simple tadka of mustard, asafoetida and curry leaves. Grated coconut is the only additive mixed in.

In the traditional method, either boiled vegetables are stir-fried with a tadka or chopped vegetables are simmered in minimal water and allowed to cook dry.

We replace this technique with flash cooking. In case potatoes are to be added in, they can be chopped small and cooked with the vegetable at one shot.

#### Tips:

1. Use the freshest seasonal vegetables
2. Avoid adding too many spices

Most dry curries in Udupi use the following mixtures for flavouring:

1. Grated coconut mixed with slit green chillies.
2. Coarse paste of coconut, cumin and green chilli.
3. Coarse paste of coconut, mustard and dry red chilli.
4. Grated coconut and Udupi Rasam powder.

Any of these can be added as a layer over the vegetables, to produce a variety of upkaris.

# Bhenda Sagle

## Konkani okra curry

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1tsp each (sambar powder, jaggery, salt, tamarind paste), 2 dry red chillies, 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 5 curry leaves

Layer 3: 250g okra chopped into bite sized pieces

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Okra with your favourite vegetables
- Raw coconut with stir-fried coconut
- Chilli powder with Udupi sambar/rasam powder
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil

#### **Tips:**

1. The smaller you chop okra, the slimier it gets.
2. Can use stir-fried okra to reduce sliminess.
3. Can use whole okra to minimize sliminess

Sagle means full/whole in Konkani. Bhendi refers to Okra. Though okra is not used whole in Bhendi Sagle, the name has stuck, probably from another recipe Gulla Sagle, which uses whole eggplant (Matti Gulla).

The building blocks of a Sagle are the vegetable used, coconut, lentils and the additives.

#### Vegetables:

Eggplant(Gulla Sagle), Okra (Bhenda Sagle), Drumsticks (Mashingasaang Sagle), Tender cashew (Bibbe Sagle), Bitter gourd (Kaarate Sagle), Mango (Aambe Sagle) are all commonly cooked. You can cook any of your favourite vegetable/greens into a sagle. You can choose to include/omit onions.

#### Coconut:

Like most coastal Indian cuisines, coconuts play a huge role in Konkani cuisine. Coconut defines a Sagle. It can be used grated, grated and roasted or blended into a coarse paste with other ingredients.

#### Additives:

A variety of ingredients are mixed/blended with coconut to spice up a Sagle. The commonly used additives are listed below.

Sour: Tamarind/Hog plums/Bimbli/Kokkum.

Sweet: Jaggery/Sugarcane/Sugar.

Astringent: Turmeric/Coriander powder.

Bitter: Turmeric/Fenugreek.

Pungent: Asafoetida/Chilli (Byadagi)/Pepper/Teppal (Sichuan Pepper).

Protein: Roasted and spiced lentil powder is usually mixed in for a protein punch.

#### Consistency:

The consistency of a Sagle can vary from being dry to gravy. You can add water and simmer a Sagle to get a gravy version. If it is dry, it starts resembling a Sukke.

#### Garnish:

A basic tadka of mustard seeds and curry leaves in coconut oil is common.

#### Serving:

Sagle is served hot with rice/flatbreads.

The traditional method calls for sautéing the vegetable, adding the spiced coconut paste, water and simmering all together till done. We use the No water and layering techniques to achieve the same result, in one step.

# Carrot Beans Poriyal

## Tamil mixed vegetable stir-fry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: Add 1C chopped beans on one half of the cooker, 1C chopped carrot on the other half.

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (sambar powder, salt)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1tsp bottled tadka.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/beans with your favourite vegetables
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix/chopped chillies

### **Tips:**

1. Do not release pressure if you want them mushy.
2. Water is optional if vegetables are juicy and fresh .
3. This recipe is designed to illustrate the double flash technique.

It comes as a shock to westerners that Indians abhor fresh vegetables. They scour the pages of book sized menus in Indian restaurants looking for a salad to start their meal. If they are lucky, one measly "Green Salad" might be listed, usually slices of onions, tomatoes and cucumbers with no greens or dressing!.

This happens across the country. We are united by our love of overcooked vegetables! The closest we have to a salad is a dry vegetable curry, cooked across the country under numerous names.

Almost always it is braised vegetables, heavily spiced. Every single vegetable is cooked this way. All these dry vegetable curries are amazingly similar at the core.

These dry vegetable curries are an integral part of Indian cuisine. In South India, the rice is eaten with a variety of gravies. Dry curries accompany all these dishes. A variety of vegetables, leafy greens, fresh and dried pulses are cooked into delicious poriyals. The most common cooking technique is braising, where the vegetables are cooked in a covered pan on low heat with minimum water.

You can use one master spice mix for flavouring all your poriyals. Just mix in the spice mix with boiled vegetables and your basic poriyal is ready.

If you cook sambar/kootu/aviyal long enough so that all the water evaporates away, what you have left is nothing but a poriyal. You can think of poriyals as dry sambars/kootus. This is why you can flavor poriyals with exactly the same techniques you use to flavor sambar/kootu/kulambu. Sambar powder, kootu podi, rasam powder, kulambu powder can all be used to flavor poriyals.

To illustrate, if you cook a kulambu long enough so that all water evaporates, you'll end up with puli kuthi poduthuval. Cook up a sambar long enough to dry it and you have paruppu potta poriyal. Cook up a kootu long enough and you have thenga araichu vita poriyal. In many households, thick kootus/sambars are actually used as poriyals.

Like all curries, changing the building blocks gives rise to different classes of poriyals.

Change the base and you have a range of poriyals. Instead of carrot/beans, use spinach and you have varieties of Keerai poriyal. Use boiled and mashed potato/mashed banana and you have podimas. Use boiled pulses and you have Sundal. Use sprouts and you have sprouted poriyals. Use mushroom and you have mushroom poriyal etc.

Change additives:

Add tamarind and you have pulikutthi poduthuval (Poriyals with tamarind), add spiced lentil paste and you have the usili. Add boiled tuvar dal and you have paruppu poriyal and so on.

Change flavouring and you have another class of poriyals like podi potta poriyal, araichu vitta poriyal or thalithu kottiya poriyal.

Across India, you'll see these building blocks change, giving rise to innumerable dry curries. The vegetables used, spices, oils and additives vary across regions.

- Thoran in Kerala is cooked with generous amounts of roasted coconut.
- The Namboodri Mezhuguperatti is just cooked vegetables with a coconut oil dressing.
- The Kerala Brahmin Poduthuval and Malabar upperi use generous amounts of fresh grated coconut.
- Chettinad Perattal uses fennel powder, garlic, ginger and pepper powder.
- Kongunadu Thirattal packs a punch with a paste of shallots, pepper, green chilli mixed in with the vegetables.
- The Usili has spiced and steamed lentil crumble mixed in with the vegetable.
- The Iyengar Kariamudhu has a very simple mustard, red chilli and curry leaf flavouring.
- The Tamil Sourashtra Ambat has a tadka of both North Indian cumin and South Indian mustard. It also uses a heavy dose of ginger garlic paste.
- The Hebbar Iyengar Karimnd is a corruption of the Tamil Iyengar word Kari Amudhu and uses similar flavouring as the Tamil version, but for the use of local vegetables.
- The hilly versions cooked by the Kodavas, (Kari) and Badugas (Udakka) use onions.
- The Poriyals of the West coast called Gashi/Palya/Bhaji/Upkari/Talsani use coconut oil and grated coconut like the Keralite versions. A bit of sugar/jaggery is sometimes added.
- The Bihari Chokka, Orissa Chakata, Bengali Sheddo, Assamese Pitika, North Indian Bhartha, Tamil Podimas are all poriyals at heart, though mashed up.
- The East coast uses mustard oil and a mixture of five spices (Panchphoran) to cook up the Oriya Charchari and the Bihari/Bengali Tarkari.

- Cumin with a bit of garam masala and onions forms the backbone of most North Indian sukhi sabjis.

Learn one, you have learned them all. Don't let the names confuse you. They do not matter. Just remember the theme.

# Cauliflower Milagu Perattal

## Chettinad cauliflower pepper stirfry

<https://youtu.be/TJWKd8LCGLI>

Mix 1/4 tsp each (turmeric, garam masala, fennel powders), 1tsp each (pepper, salt, oil, ginger- garlic paste) with 250g cauliflower florets.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped shallots, 10 curry leaves,

Layer 3: Spiced cauliflower.

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1tsp crushed pepper.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cauliflower with your favourite non-watery vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Shallots with onions

#### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked use smaller florets/do not release pressure.
2. If overcooked, use bigger florets.

Cauliflower Milagu Perattal from the Chettinad cuisine is a fantastic curry if done right. The key is to ensure the cauliflower is fully cooked, but remains firm and does not turn mushy. The Chettinad cooks stir-fry it to perfection.

# Chammanthi

## Kerala's coconut sour dip

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1/2tsp tamarind paste, 1/2tsp salt, 1 dry red chilli, 1tsp coconut oil to a coarse paste.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Coconut with raw/cooked vegetables
- Tamarind with other sour fruit pulp

### **Tips:**

1. Do not blend too long.
2. Blend in 5 second bursts to reduce heating.

Chammanthi is Kerala's favourite dip. Anything edible blended to a paste with coconut, chillies and salt becomes a chammanthi. A variety of edibles like nutmeg flesh (jathikka), papad, dried seafood, herbs, pickled mango (uppu manga) are blended into chammanthis across Kerala.

Chammanthis belong to the same family as the Mexican Salsa/Italian pesto/Indian chutney/Tamil Thogayal. All these blended recipes taste extra delicious when they are not blended, but crushed (using a mortar and pestle/ammikkal). When a high-speed blender is used, it heats up the ingredients. This makes them lose the fresh flavours and taste. If you are using blender, blend in very short bursts with very cold water/ice cubes to prevent heating.

Chammanthi with pickled ingredients (pickled baby mango/pickled gooseberries) mixed with yogurt into a thin sauce becomes the Kerala Brahmin special — the Arachu kalakki. All chammanthis mixed with yogurt become the Konkani Tambli, eaten mixed with rice.

Chammanthis are usually served with a starchy food. Kanji (rice gruel)/Kappa (steamed yucca/tapioca)/Unda (steamed rice flour balls)/hot rice and ghee, Idli, Dosa or Aapam go well with chammanthis. Even Biriyani is accompanied by chammanthi.

The name of the chammanthi can change based on what is blended in, as in Inji Chammanthi, when ginger is blended in or Onakka chemeen chammanthi, when roasted dried prawns are blended in.

When grilled coconut is used, we get Chuttu aracha Chammanthis (grilled and blended). When a dash of coconut oil is blended in, we get Vellichenna Chertha Chammanthi (coconut oil added) and so on.

Chammanthis last for 3-4 days refrigerated. A special variety called Podi chammanthi (powdered chutney) is blended with sun dried/roasted coconut. This dry version would last for weeks, unrefrigerated.

The chammanthi base is usually coconut, which is blended with raw vegetables (carrot, onion), cooked vegetables (squash, beetroot, ridge gourd etc), nuts, roasted lentils, fruits (mango, nutmeg), roasted seafood (sun dried prawns, fish, shrimp), pickles and so on. Some chammanthis omit coconut altogether, like the Ulli chammanthi, which replaces coconut with raw/stir-fried shallots.

Ginger, pepper, fresh herbs, garlic, oils, spices and herbs are also blended in, for extra flavouring. Remember the key building blocks and blend in your own favourite spices and additives to whip up exotic chammanthis!

# Chettinad Curry Base

## Chettinad mother sauce

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped onions, 15 garlic cloves

Layer 3: 1tbsp chopped ginger, 3 green chillies, 1/4C mint

Layer 4: 1/2C finely chopped coconut, 2 whole tomatoes

Layer 5: 2tsp each (coriander powder, fennel), 1tsp each (chilli powder, garam masala), 1.5tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Onion with shallots
- Green chilli with dry red chilli
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Mint with your favourite fresh herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Layer curry base over meats/vegetables and flash for an instant curry.
2. Mix curry base with flashed vegetables for an instant gravy.
3. Serve as it is along with rice.
4. Cook longer for greater caramelisation.

This curry base can be used to prepare a range of Chettinad curries including the famous Chicken Chettinad.

Like all curry bases, this can be used as is, mixed with flashed meats/vegetables, layered with raw meat/vegetables, used as a pasta sauce, diluted and served as a soup, or mixed with other curry bases to create a fresh curry base.

The possibilities are endless. Cook up your own variations!

# Chettinad Paruppu Masiyal

## Lentil mash

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C mung dal, 1C water, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1/2tsp crushed cumin, 1tbsp ghee, 6 curry leaves, 2 crushed garlic cloves, 1 slit green chilli . Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2tsp salt.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ghee with your favourite oil
- Garlic with shallots
- Green chilli with dry red chilli
- Mung with soaked tuvar/masoor dal/sprouts
- Curry leaf with your favourite fresh herbs
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Use roasted dal for a nuttier flavor.
2. Use a measured quantity of water to minimize spewing.
3. Use of ghee/oil minimizes foaming.
4. Use soaked dal for faster cooking.

Chettinad Parippu Masiyal (Chettinad Lentil Mash) uses just crushed raw spices for flavouring. The use of uncooked garlic as flavouring is rare in Indian cuisine. In stark contrast to Brahmin cuisine which avoids onion/garlic, Chettinad cuisine embraces it wholeheartedly. Chettinad's love affair with garlic is so strong that many of its signature dishes are based on garlic.

Chettinad Poondi Vengaya Kulambu (Garlic-shallot sour stew), Vella Poondi Ooruga (Garlic pickle), Poondi Thuvaiyal (Garlic sour dip), Poondi Kulambu (Garlic sour stew) and Poondi Milagu Rasam (Garlic pepper thin soup) are all classic Chettinad dishes which derive their punch chiefly from

garlic.

Even the Chettinad version of Kara chutney and Thalippu Vadagam (sun dried lentil paste) rely on garlic as a key flavouring agent. But in all the above recipes, garlic is cooked. In the Chettinad Paruppu Masiyal, uncooked, crushed garlic used as the key flavouring, along with crushed curry leaves and crushed cumin.

Chettinad realised garlic should be crushed and not chopped if you want an intense flavour. Garlic has the amino acid alliin and the enzyme allinase stored separately in its cells. When crushed, these two combine to produce allicin, which is responsible for the garlicky flavour and heat. The more you crush garlic, the greater the flavour and heat. Allicin is a potent anti-microbial and anti-fungal compound. It however, breaks down on heating/storage. This is why the bite of garlic reduces on heating/storage.

The key to this curry is to crush the garlic well and use it with crushed curry leaves and crushed cumin. This imparts an intense flavour making even tadka optional.

Like most South Indian dals, paruppu masiyal is served with hot rice and ghee, as the first course in a meal. Chettinad paruppu masiyal is a staple in many Chettiar homes and is always a part of marriage feasts.

The same theme is echoed in other parts of Tamilnadu with different flavouring and additives. Versions with added sambar powder, coconut or tamarind are common too. Though the Chettinad version uses only Mung dal/Tuvar dal, this theme can be extended by varying the building blocks to translate into innumerable recipes.

# Chettinad Kosamalli

## Chettinad vegetable mash

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped eggplants (chopped big)

Layer 4: 1/2C potato chopped small

Layer 5: 2 chopped green chillies, 2tbsp each caramelised (onion, tomato)

Layer 6: 1/2tsp each (sambar powder, tamarind paste), 1tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash all.

Mix in water to the consistency you like.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Shallots with onion/garlic
- Eggplant with your favourite vegetables
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Make sure eggplants touch the floor if you want a burnt flavour.
2. Serve with idiyappam/idli/dosa.

Kosmalli/Kosamalli/Kosmari mean nothing in Tamil. The North has a salad called Kachumber consisting of finely diced onions, tomatoes, cucumbers and cilantro, spiked with lemon juice and chillies. The orthodox Udupi cuisine dropped onions, added grated coconut and soaked mung dal and called it Kosambri. The Tamil cuisine borrowed this recipe and named it Kosmalli. The Chettinad cuisine named a completely different dish as Kosamalli - for reasons unknown.

Mashed eggplant curries are common in most cuisines. The North Indian Baingan Bhartha and the Tamil Gothsu are famous mashed eggplant curries. Both these are thick dips.

It is this theme that the Chettinad cuisine borrowed, adding potatoes and shallots, cooking it into a thin curry it named Kosamalli.

It is usually served with idli/dosa/adai/aappam/uttappam and particularly with dishes made from stir-fried idiyappam (string hoppers). Kosamalli has found a firm place in Chettinad marriages and festivals. It is also seen as a 'safe' curry and served to people recovering from an illness and even to children, as it is believed to tickle their tastebuds.

The traditional preparation involves grilling eggplant, removing the skin, boiling potatoes and mashing them by hand. This mash is mixed with water, spices, tamarind and simmered into the Kosamalli. The laborious grilling has now given way to plain boiling of the eggplants and potatoes together with spices.

We use the no water cooking technique to cook the vegetables in their own juices along with spices into a thick mash. It is then mashed together with enough water. The skin of both potato and eggplant is peeled in the regular preparation, but is skipped here. The building blocks are the eggplant, a starch (potato), a souring agent and the flavouring. Vary them to cook up your own versions!

# Chilli Chutney

## Chilli dip

Blend 1/2C chopped green chillies, 1tsp each (salt, cumin), 2 garlic cloves, 1/4C each (roasted peanuts, chopped cilantro), 1tbsp oil to a paste. Mix in 1tsp lemon juice.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Green chillies with fresh/soaked dry red chillies
- Cumin with your favourite spice/spice mix
- Onion with tomato/other salad vegetables
- Cilantro with your favourite fresh herbs
- Peanuts with roasted lentils/other nuts
- Lemon with raw mango/tamarind/vinegar

### **Tips:**

1. Blend in oil to make the dip creamier.
2. Blend in bursts/blend with ice to prevent heating.
3. Use as a spread/dip with flatbreads.

Minor variations of spices and additives in this theme produces some popular chilli dips from across the world. The West is still scared of the chilli and does not have a dip of its own yet except the watered down Tabasco sauce! Let's see a few simple chilli dips across cuisines:

- Blend chilli + lemon juice + salt and you get the Tunisian Harissa.
- Blend cilantro and garlic cloves with Harissa and it becomes Latin American Aji.
- Blend in cumin and olive oil with Aji and it becomes Yemeni Skhug Yarom.

This combination of chilli + souring agent is echoed across the world.

- Roasted chillies + vinegar + salt blended together give the

### Indonesian Sambal Olek.

- Chilli + salt + avocado + lemon juice gives the Mexican Guacamole.
- Replace avocado with Mango and we have the manga chutney, replace avocado with guava and we get the Jain guava chutney.

This is a foolproof theme and will work with almost any combination of ingredients!

Many plants produce toxins, to deter animals from eating them. Occasionally, these toxins (called alkaloids) come to be more prized than the plant. These alkaloids are responsible for the popularity of Vanilla, Tobacco, Opium, Cocoa, Coffee and Chilli. The chilli plant produces alkaloids called Capsaicinoids. They bond with pain receptors in mammals and fool the brain into believing the body is on fire. The brain responds by increasing sweating, heart rate, and by releasing endorphins — body's 'feel-good' chemicals. This 'Chilli high' has made it the second most traded spice across the world, after black pepper.

### History:

Chilli was domesticated in Central America 6000 years ago. 500 years back, Columbus introduces chillies to Europe, from where the colonial powers take it across the world. Chilli immediately starts replacing the much more expensive black pepper. Now, over 400 varieties of chilli are used in the world, but almost all of them belong to five major species. Each region has its own favourite chilli with varying degrees of heat. All can be used interchangeably — just vary the quantity depending on the heat. The heat of a chilli is measured in Scoville units. The hottest chilli on record, the Indian Ghost Chilli has a Scoville unit of 1 million, meaning it has to be diluted a million times to lose its heat.

### World Chilli varieties:

- Mild: Anaheim, Poblano pepper, Banana peppers, Japanese Shishito.
- Medium Hot: Birds eye chilli, Hungarian wax pepper.
- Hot: Hungarian Cherry, Italian Fresno, Jalapeno, Rocoto, Serrano.
- Very hot: Cajun Cayenne pepper, Caribbean Scotch bonnet, Peruvian Aji, Habanero, and Indian Bhoot jalokia.

### The Indian experience:

400 years back, Portuguese brought Chilli to India, completely transforming Indian cuisine. India now accounts for half the world's production. Andhra Pradesh alone produces a quarter of the world's chillies. Not surprisingly, Andhra cuisine is among the hottest in the world.

Indian hot chilli varieties include Hindpur (Andhra), Sannam (long and thin chillies from Andhra, Maharashtra), Jwala (Gujarat), Kandhari white chillies (Kerala), Gundu (short and fat chilli from Tamilnadu), Nalchetti (Maharashtra) and Bhoot jalokia (ghost chilli from North east). The milder varieties include Byadagi (Karnataka), Kashmiri, and Chappata (Andhra). Indian cuisine uses fresh/dried chillies or chilli powder in almost all its curries.

Ultra orthodox cuisines and many temple cuisines still shun the introduced chilli, preferring the native pepper. The vada malai (garland of fried lentil fritters) for Hanuman, for instance, does not use chilli.

### Chilli Tips:

1. The smaller the chilli, the hotter it is. Dry chillies are usually hotter than fresh ones.
2. If you have your mouth burned by chilli, cold milk, yogurt, bread or ice cream provide relief. Water does not help.
3. Removing the seeds, veins or cooking a chilli reduces its heat.
4. Removing stalks from fresh green chillies increases their shelf life.
5. Chilli powder is anti microbial and finds wide use in Indian pickles.
6. Many chilli leaves are edible. In Philippines, Korea and Japan, the mildly hot leaves of the chilli plant are consumed as greens.

### Confusing names:

Chilli pepper has nothing to do with pepper. It was so named as its heat was similar to that of the pepper.

Chile or chile pepper (US), chilli or chilli (UK) denote hot chillies.

Heatless chillies are called capsicums/bell pepper/sweet pepper.

In Europe, especially Poland/Hungary, Paprika denote bell peppers. It can also denote mildly hot chilli powder.

In Mexico, heatless chillies are called Pimento.

To add to confusion, fresh and dried chillies go by different names. Mexican Poblano when dried is called 'ancho'. Smoked and dried jalapenos become Chipotle. In the US, chile also denotes a stew made using chillies (By this

definition, all Indian curries are Chilli!). In Latin America Aji refers to hot chillies and also to the sauce made from them.

Uses:

All these sauces listed here can be used as dips/spreads. They can be eaten mixed with rice pasta/noodles/couscous or as spread on bread. They can also serve as a base for stews or as a marinade. They make excellent dipping sauces for finger foods.

# Coconut Chutney

## Coconut dip

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 2 chopped green chillies, 1/4C roasted channa dal, 1/2tsp each (salt, coconut oil), 1/4C water to a smooth paste.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Green chillies with fresh/soaked dry red chillies
- Roasted channa dal with roasted peanuts/cashew/other nuts

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in herbs for a green dip.
2. Blend in short bursts to avoid heating the chutney.
3. Can blend with ice cubes to minimize heating.

Coconut chutney is probably the easiest, foolproof chutney you can make. A blend of coconut, chillies and salt, it is ready in a jiffy. You don't even need a mixie/blender. All these can be just pounded together to make a flavourful chutney.

Infact, pounding/crushing is how purists insist any chutney/pesto/salsa be made. In this case the purists are right to rue the use of modern appliances. An ammikkal (mortar and pestle) gives a far superior chutney than a blender. The reason is simple - a high-speed blender actually cooks the chutney!

Chutney/Pesto/Salsa are fresh dips and lose their freshness in a high speed blender. The ultra high speed blending causes them to heat up and kills their freshness. So, if you are using a blender, use the following tips::

1. Blend in very short, 3 second bursts.
2. Blend using crushed ice or ice cold water.

These will prevent the chutney getting heated up and losing its flavour.

Coconut chutney is the most consumed (and the most abused) chutney in South India. The chutney which gets heated up while blending has a very short shelf life. And has no flavour at all. Unfortunately that's exactly the

way it is served in many restaurants!

This is a very flexible and versatile chutney. It is eaten with almost everything. Usually roasted channa dal (Pori kadalai/pottu kadalai/dalia) is blended in to bind the chutney together (very much like what pine nuts do in a pesto).

In Tamilnadu, it is called Thenga Chutney and accompanies idlis and dosas. In Andhra, it is known as Kobbari Pachadi and is eaten with rice. In Kerala, it is called Thenga Chammanthi and is served with congee (Rice porridge).

In Karnataka, coconut is blended with yogurt into a Tambli and is eaten mixed with rice. Andhra boasts of some of the most innovative Coconut chutneys.

The basic building blocks of coconut chutney are coconut, binder, chillies and additives.

Coconut mixed with a souring agent forms the base for many varieties of chutneys. Mango, tamarind leaves, tamarind, yogurt, lemon are all traditional. You can experiment with your favourite sorting agents like vinegar, amchoor, kokkum, sumac or other sour fruits.

Coconut blended with fresh green chillies or dry red chillies gives two very different looking and tasting chutneys. For more variations, try using other chillies like jalapeno, habenaro etc. All chilli/pepper varieties work. You can even try adding wasabi, mustard or horseradish.

Roasted/fried or sun dried coconuts blended with dry chillies and other dry additives become dry chutneys or podis. These dry chutneys can be stored for weeks unrefrigerated. In Kerala, mature coconut is grilled over naked flame to burn off excess oil before being blended into chutney. Called chuttu aracha chammanthi, the grilling burns off fat from mature coconuts and imparts a smoked flavour.

Change the amount of water you add while blending the chutney and they go from being a dry, coarse paste to a runny liquid and everything in between.

A wide variety of goodies like vegetables/herbs/nuts and pulses can be blended along with coconut to create scores of chutneys. Almost all nuts, herbs, tomato, carrot, ginger, garlic etc., can be blended in. In the coastal regions, roasted sun dried prawns or sun dried fish are also blended in.

Experiment by blending your favourite goodies with coconut.

Once you get comfortable playing with these basic building blocks, you'll not

go wrong in dreaming up your own chutneys!

# Dalcha

## Dakhni Muslim Protein Stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onions arranged in a ring with 1C chopped, deseeded tomatoes at the centre

Layer 3: 1/4C each (soaked and crushed channa dal, mutton mince)

Layer 4: 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp each (salt, garam masala, chilli, coriander powders), 5 mint leaves

Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash all with 1C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Channa dal with other lentils
- Mutton with chicken/other meats
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Water with stock

#### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked, cook longer.
2. Can mix mutton mince with spices and refrigerate overnight.

Like the Salna, the Dalcha is a Deccani Muslim invention. No mentions of it appear in the Mogul or Sultani cuisine. It is very likely this theme arose from Hyderabad, the epicentre of the Deccani Muslims. Till today, it is a staple in Deccan Muslim households but is virtually unknown in North India.

The royal Mogul cuisine uses the choicest cuts of meat. But as it moved away from the palace kitchens into homes of the common folk, it started taking on the ingredients and techniques that commoners would use. Instead of the more expensive boneless meats, meat with bones came to be used in many recipes. Later, in curries like Salna, the same concept was extended with just

leftover bones. Dalcha takes it a step further and extends the curry with the still cheaper vegetable protein - lentils! In some versions, vegetables are also added in, making it more nutritious and less expensive!

The name Dalcha probably comes from Dal - Cha. Dal denotes lentils and Cha might denote either rice (Chawal) or Charu (South Indian word for essence). It is usually eaten with biriyani/ghee rice/pulao. It pairs equally well with parotas and rotis.

The building blocks of a Dalcha are the protein base, the souring agent, the flavourings and the additives.

The protein base is usually mutton bones and a dal (channa dal). Some versions use a combination of dals (Channa, Tuvar, Masoor etc). The souring agent varies across versions. Tomatoes, mangoes, tamarind are all used. The flavourings are usually a mix of both Mughlai and South Indian, like many Deccanised Mogul curries. You will find both Mughlai sweet spices (Garam masala, cinnamon, mace, bay leaves) with South Indian spices (turmeric, mustard, curry leaves). The additives are usually vegetables. These core building blocks remain common across versions.

Mutton Dalcha is the most commonly cooked Dalcha. The vegetable version is the Kaddu Ki Dalcha (using bottle gourd) and Brinjal dalcha (using eggplant). In some versions, especially the ones with Brinjal, peanut powder replaces lentils. So, depending on the combination of the building blocks, a Dalcha can morph into anything from a Mutton sambar to a Kathirikkai Rasavaangi! All are no less authentic and traditional than the other!

With the building blocks identified, this theme can be extended to cook up a huge array of Dalchas. Mutton can be replaced/supplemented with any meat/vegetable protein (paneer, soya chunks, mushrooms)

Tomatoes can be replaced/supplemented with other souring agents (Tamarind, mango, mango powder). The flavouring can be a combination of your favourite spices and herbs.

# Dalitoy

## Konkani lentil curry

In a 2L cooker, add 2tsp coconut oil, 1/2C tuvar dal, 1C water, 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powders), 1 slit chilli. Mix all. Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash. Mix in 1/2tsp salt, 1/2C water.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement

- Tuvar dal with masoor/mung/other lentils
- Asafoetida with ginger, garlic
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Water with stock
- Chilli with pepper
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil

#### Tips:

1. Presoak dal for faster cooking.
2. Roast dal for a nuttier taste.

When a cuisine elevates a dish to the status of a God, it must be something special. Though very special to Konkanis, this is as basic as a recipe can get. Konkanis stop just short of worshiping Dalito, though it is affectionately referred to as their Kuladeva! The GSD (Gaud Saraswat Brahmin) cuisine spins around Dalito. This is often the first recipe taught at Konkani households.

Dalito/Dali Tove (Dali - Tho - way) meaning lentil curry, is just cooked lentils with minimum seasoning. It can be thick or thin, spicy or bland, coloured or plain, garnished or simple depending on where it is cooked. It is always cooked fresh, served hot and paired with rice and a pickle or a veg/seafood curry/papad. It is also served with Idlis or dosa..

In the basic version, the only seasoning used is asafoetida, chillies and salt. The tadka of mustard, curry leaves and dry red chillies in coconut oil is common. It is mandatory in Konkani meals and festivities. Those cooked in temples as prasad are believed to have the best taste!

The building blocks are the dal, flavouring, additives and garnish. These change from place to place, though each region vigorously defends its version, claiming it to be the best.

This theme can be extended by varying the building blocks..

Tuvar dal can be replaced by other lentils (mung, masoor). Flavouring can be changed as per your taste. Onions/garlic/ginger/fresh or dried herbs, fenugreek are used in different regions. Tomato, coconut and coconut milk find their way into the dalitoy. You can try experimenting with your favourite additives

The garnish is usually a simple tadka. A dash of lemon juice and fresh herbs are also used. Each region has its own set of rules, which are rigidly followed.

In South Canara, ginger and turmeric are never added. Asafoetida is the only flavouring. But in North Canara, ginger and turmeric are always added and asafoetida is skipped.

In most temples it is kept Spartan, with just asafoetida. Even turmeric is skipped.

In Goa, coconut milk/grated coconut are added. As you go up North, a bit of sugar/jaggery finds its way into the stew.

You can safely ignore these rules and customise it to your liking.

In the traditional preparation, dal is cooked separately and simmered briefly with flavouring and garnished with a tadka. In the OPOS version, these steps are replaced by adding chillies, asafoetida and coconut oil along with the dal. Bottled tadka can be finally mixed in.

# Dangar Pachadi

## Tanjore Maratha Yogurt Dip

Mix 1tbsp urad dal flour, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp chilli powder, 1C yogurt.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Raw urad dal flour with roasted urad dal flour
- Urad with other dals/OPOS Podi
- Urad flour with any nut/roasted lentil powder.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in bottled tadka.
2. Serve with rice/roti.

Throughout its history, raiders attracted by India's riches have poured through North-Western mountain passes. With the coming of Islam, the united Arab, Turkish and Persian tribal onslaught on India gained momentum. 700 years back, the raiders conquer North India and proclaim themselves Sultans. Soon, partly forced by the Mogul onslaught, they give way and start moving South. They conquer much of Deccan plateau, leaving just the southern tip untouched. Governors are appointed to govern these vast territories. It was just a matter of time before the appointed governors proclaim themselves as Sultans. Five Turkish sultanates rule over most of South India - Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmednagar, Bidar, and Berar.

The Bijapur Sultanate (Karnataka) under Adil Shah, in a bid to endear itself to Indians, changes court language from Persian to Marathi and appoints Marathis to key positions. One of them was Shahaji Maloji Bhosle (born 1594). He fathers Shivaji (born 1630 to his first wife) and Venkoji (born 1629 to his second wife).

In 1638, Shahaji captures Bangalore from Kempe Gowda and is appointed its governor. His son Shivaji later rebels against the Bijapur Sultan, and succeeds in carving out an independent Maratha kingdom. Though his son

rebels, the father stays with the Sultan. After Shahaji's death, his son Venkoji becomes the governor of Bangalore.

At this time Tamilnadu was under the control of the Nayaks, appointed by the Vijayanagara Empire. This empire had driven out the first Sultans, but later fell to them. The nayaks appeal to the Bijapur sultan to sort out a succession dispute. History does repeat itself! 3 centuries earlier, the Pandya prince appeal to the Delhi sultan to sort out their succession dispute, this resulted in Malik kafur conquering Tamilnadu. Now, the Bijapur Sultan sends Venkoji, who does the same thing! He settles the dispute by occupying Tanjore and declares himself the King. Problem solved! His descendants would rule Tanjore for the next 200 years.

A later king Serfoji offers Brahmins vast tracts of land in Kumbakonam, Tanjore and Mayavaram. Many Brahmins migrate from Maharashtra and North Kannada. Over time, caste differences between the descendants of the Maratha soldiers, nobles and Brahmins vanish and a new community, the Tanjore Marathi Deshashtas emerge. Their mother tongue is Tanjore Marathi, but many still speak Kannada and all speak Tamil. Their cuisine changes under multiple influences and soon a fusion cuisine emerges.

The use of lentils with souring agents, use of milk, jack fruit in curries, soaked lentil salads are all unique to Tanjore Marathi cuisine. Sambar, RasaVangi, Vangi Bhat, Pitlai, Aama vadai and Gothsu, now a part of Tamil cuisine, are actually Tanjore Maratha recipes. Urad dal vada and Rice Kheer – both mandatory in Tamil festive celebrations are taboo during Marathi festivals; cooked only during death related ceremonies (Use of black sesame, considered taboo during Tamil Brahmin festivities, is mandatory in Marathi festivities!). Vegetables like Onion, garlic, bitter gourd, brinjal, colocasia, banana stem, banana flower are also avoided during festivals. Surprisingly, sambar is taboo during festivals, as it probably does not have the prestige accorded to an authentic Maratha recipe.

The Marathis had a spiced lentil powder, the Dangar, made from roasted and ground urad dal. The Tanjore Marathis mixed this powder with yogurt and created a new dish - the Dangar Pachadi! Though infinite raithas exist across the country, this style of mixing in roasted lentil powder has never been tried before.

The classic recipe uses only urad dal flour, but the theme can be extended to any OPOS podi. Mix a variety of OPOS podis with yogurt and create your

own versions of this classic theme!

# Dosakaya Pappu

## Telugu cucumber - lentil stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil, 1/2C chopped tomatoes

Layer 2: 2C skinned and deseeded dosakaya (round cucumber 250g), 3 slit chillies

Layer 3: 1/2C cooked tuvar dal (thick)

Layer 4: 1/4 tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 1/2tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Dosakaya with your favourite vegetables
- Tuvar dal with your favourite lentils (mung, masoor)
- Turmeric powder/asafoetida with your favourite spices/spice mix
- Soaked dal with cooked dal
- Tomato with 1tbsp tamarind paste

#### **Tips:**

1. Reduce water for a thicker consistency.
2. If the dal is not thick, it will seep to the bottom and burn.

Dosakaya Pappu (Cucumber and lentil curry) or more accurately Dosakka Pesara pappu (Cucumber and Mung dal curry) is a classic from the Telugu cuisine.

Dosakaya pappu paired with Avakka, hot sona masoori rice with a dash of ghee is soul food for Telugu people. You can look at the Telugu pappu as a Tamil kootu without coconut. Like a kootu, almost any vegetable/combination of them can go into a pappu. The flavouring is simple and is designed to bring out the flavours of vegetables.

Though lentils are cooked across the country into a stew, certain regions have evolved their own styles of cooking it. Punjab mastered the art of cooking the

slimy urad dal, ignored by other cuisines, into Maa ki Dal. Udupi taught us how to make a salad out of uncooked dal (Kosambari). Telugu cuisine demonstrates how a huge variety of vegetables and greens can be cooked with lentils into infinite stews.

The pappu is a thick lentil stew, revered in Andhra. Served with hot rice, ghee and Avakkaya pickle, it is a heavenly way to start a meal.

Though Tuvar dal is most common, Andhra uses a variety of dals and combines it with an array of vegetables and greens, cooking innumerable pappu varieties.

Mudda pappu (Tuvar dal), Pesara pappu (mung dal), Misore Pappu (Mysore pappu/Masoor dal) are commonly cooked lentil stews. Senaga pappu (Bengal gram/chana dal) is usually cooked with sour spinach (gongura) into the Gongura pappu.

A combination of different lentils is used to cook the Mukkula pappu, a theme echoed across the west (Panchmela dal). Any lentil you like can be cooked into a pappu.

The lentils can be fresh, soaked, roasted, blended into grits or even powdered. Each method changes the taste and texture of the pappu.

A pappu need not have any additives. Plain boiled dal with a bit of salt and turmeric is a staple across the country. In Andhra it is eaten as the Mudda Pappu.

A huge variety of pappu cooked with Raw Mango (Mamdikkaya pappu), Spinach varieties (Aakukoora Pappu/Thota koora pappu/Gongura pappu), the much loved dosakka (Dosakka Pappu), tender Tamarind leaves (Chinta chiguru pappu), Squash (Gummadiikaya Pappu), Ridge gourd (Beerakkaya pappu), Bottle gourd (Sorakkaya Pappu) are common.

Pappu is a simple stew and does not need elaborate flavouring. Usually a simple garnish of fried mustard, red chilli and curry leaves is sufficient. The tadka can even be omitted, making this oil free.

The building blocks are Dosakaya, lentils, additives and flavouring.

Dosakaya:

This variety of round yellow cucumber is completely missing from

Tamil/Kerala/Karnataka cuisines, but is revered in Andhra. This vegetable can be bland, sour or even bitter. It is usually tasted before being used. If it is very sour, then the quantity of tomatoes/tamarind is reduced. If it is bland, more chillies, salt and souring agent are added to compensate. If too bitter, it is usually avoided.

A huge variety of other vegetables/edible greens can be used in place of dosakka to cook up a bewildering array of pappu!

#### Lentils:

Tuvar dal is the most common followed by Mung and Masoor. Channa dal is not so common but is occasionally used. Any lentil/sprouts of your choice can fit into this theme.

We can use cooked dal to ensure vegetables do not get overcooked and retain their bright colours. If colour is not a big concern, the presoaked dal can be cooked along with vegetables.

#### Flavouring:

Onions are commonly used for flavour, though they are skipped in many Brahmin households and replaced by asafoetida. Elaborate flavourings are absent. Turmeric powder is common in most versions. Coriander powder is occasionally used.

#### Additives:

Tomatoes/tamarind are used in most pappus for a hint of sourness. A crunchy tadka (mustard, urad dal, curry leaves, dry red chillies) is mandatory. Slit green chillies provide the bite.

#### Consistency:

The consistency varies from being a thick mush to a semi soup. Most versions demand that the vegetables retain their shape. Some insist that the lentils need to be well cooked but retain their shape. You can vary the consistency by varying the amount of water used, by varying the cut size of vegetables and by presoaking dals before using.

You can cook up a different pappu for every day of your life, using the very same theme.

# Elumichai Ooruga

## Tamil lemon pickle

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp vinegar, 2tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped and deseeded lemons

Layer 3: 1tbsp each (salt, chilli powder, coriander powder), 3tbsp jaggery and 1/2tsp (turmeric powder, asafoetida)

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all and bottle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Lemon with your favourite sour fruits
- Sesame with your favourite oil
- Coriander powder with your favourite spice mix
- Jaggery with sugar

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix all and let sit for a week. Cooking is optional.
2. Will taste bitter on cooking. Let it mellow down. Serve after a week.
3. Do not use aluminium cooker for cooking with strong acids.



# Enna Kathirkka Kulambu

## Tamil Eggplant Sour stew

<https://youtu.be/MGt-MYaOjQE>

Mix 1tbsp each (sambar powder, tamarind paste, oil), 1/2tsp salt. Slit 5 eggplants into quarters and smear spice paste inside.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tbsp sesame oil,

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion, 5 chopped garlic cloves arranged in a ring with 1C chopped deseeded tomatoes at the centre

Layer 3: 1tsp each (tamarind paste, sambar powder), 1/2tsp salt

Layer 4: Stuffed eggplants.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash all except eggplants.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onion with shallots
- Eggplant with your favourite fleshy, non watery vegetables
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Prefer egg sized brinjals.
2. Slit slowly from top so that it stays attached at the bottom.



Enna Kathrikka Kulambu is a much loved curry in Tamil cuisine and is considered a delicacy. It is surprising how cuisines across vast distances have paired eggplant with an overload of oil. The Middle Eastern Imam Balyadi, The Italian Melanzane sott'Olio and the Tamil Enna Kathirikka rely on a liberal use of oil to cook eggplant.

Stuffed brinjal appears in many avatars in South Indian cuisine. The Telugu Gutti Vankaya Kura, the Nizami Baghara Baingan and the Tamil Enna Kathirikka Kulambu are all variants of the same family.

The theme is similar across cuisines. Eggplant is slit, stuffed with a spicy mixture and cooked in tangy gravy. The stuffing, the gravy base and the flavouring varies across regions.

The traditional method calls for the preparation of the base, the shallow frying of masalas, eggplant with patient stirring till done.

In the OPOS version, we use the no water cooking, layering, use of deseeded tomatoes and controlled caramelisation techniques to convert this laborious recipe into a single step. This is how it works: On heating, the layered onions start caramelizing. The deseeded tomatoes roast and start leaking juices. This leads to steam buildup. The buildup steam pressurizes the cooker and prevents burning. The steam saturated atmosphere cooks everything perfectly without

the need for stirring. On opening, the eggplants are removed and the rest is mashed to become the gravy base.

By varying the building blocks, you can fit this theme into any cuisine.

Replace sambar powder with garam masala, sesame oil with ghee/mustard oil, tamarind with amchoor and it becomes North Indian.

Replace sambar powder with coconut- chilli paste, sesame oil with coconut oil, tamarind with raw mango and it becomes a Keralite recipe.

Replace sambar powder with zatar, sesame oil with olive oil, tamarind with sumac and this becomes an Arab theme.

Eggplant is loved across the world and you can easily cook up your own variants to fit any cuisine!

# Enna Maanga

## Tamil oily mango pickle

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 3tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 250G (2C) chopped sour, raw mangoes

Layer 3: 2tsp each (salt, chilli powder)

Layer 4: 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida)

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all and bottle. Add more oil to cover the pickle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Mango with your favourite sour fruit
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Salt with jaggery

#### **Tips:**

1. Cooking optional. Can mix all and serve.

Enna Maanga (Oil Mango) is an unusual theme. Indian cuisine does not practice the ancient food preservation technique of immersing food in oil.

The west preserves many items in oil. Oil seals the surface and prevents microorganisms from entering food. In the Mediterranean region, vegetables, meats, fish, cheese and herbs are all preserved by covering them with oil. The Italians call it Sott'olio, the French call it à l'huile and the Spanish call it en aceite de oliva. They all preserve the abundant summer bounty by covering it with olive oil.

Garlic, chillies, sun-dried tomatoes, artichokes, eggplants, mushrooms, cheese, lemons, seafood like tuna and sardines are all commonly preserved this way.

Indian cuisine completely bypassed this food preservation technique, with a

good reason - the threat of food poisoning. To understand how to preserve foods with oil`, we need to go back a few billion years.

Around 3.5 billion years ago, the Earth was filled with early bacteria. At this time, earth had no oxygen. These bacteria thrived in this oxygen free atmosphere. And then, disaster struck. Some bacteria learnt photosynthesis. A byproduct of photosynthesis is the creation of the highly poisonous and corrosive gas - Oxygen! Soon, (roughly a billion years later), the earth started 'rusting' in what is called the Great Oxygenation event. Oxygen was poison to the early bacteria and they were almost completely wiped out - the first extinction event. As with most holocausts, a tiny group managed to survive - by building protective armour (spore). These bacteria live to this date inside their armoured casings, waiting for an oxygen free atmosphere.

When they do get an oxygen free atmosphere, food and water, they start multiplying. Some of them like Clostridium botulinum produce a toxin -the deadliest we have known. It is so potent that a kilogram of it can wipe off all human life on earth! It is scary to think this toxin occurs naturally when you store food in the absence of oxygen. This very same toxin is used by the cosmetic industry as botox to paralyze muscles and make skin wrinkle free. It is possible to prevent food poisoning by depriving the microorganisms of food and by creating an environment in which they cannot reproduce. Fortunately, all the precautions we take in pickle making work here too!

1. Bacteria cannot function in a completely dry/acidic or sugary/salty medium.
2. Bacteria cannot function at very low temperatures.
3. Bacterial spores cannot survive extended pressure cooking.

In this theme, we use a sour base and pressure cook it to destroy the heat resistant bacterial spores, which can survive open pan cooking. The sourness of the base, the saturation with salt and spices and the destruction of microbial spores makes this pickle safe. Oil is just a sealant and not a preservative. Even our regular pickles cannot be immersed in oil till sourness and salt has permeated everything in the pickle. Else, you run a risk of food poisoning.

This oil immersion technique is popular in the Mediterranean because they infuse the food with an acid (vinegar) and store it in very cold conditions. This technique never caught on in India because the tropical heat encourages bacterial activity. A real pity, because oil absorbs flavours beautifully. The

infused oil can be used as a dip/spread/salad dressing all by itself.

The building blocks of this theme are the sour fruit used, the salt/sugar, spices and the oil used. By varying these building blocks we can create infinite variants. In this style of pickling, the oil is as tasty as the pickle itself.

# Erisseri

## Kerala's roasted coconut curry

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut with 1 green chilli, 1/2 tsp salt, 2tsp coconut oil, 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped squash

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all with 1/2C water, 1/4C thenga molaga podi. (See below).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Thenga molaga podi with grated and roasted coconut
- Squash with your favourite vegetables

#### **Tips:**

1. Release pressure if overcooked.
2. Can mash vegetables coarse or smooth.
3. Can add onions as bottom layer.
4. Thenga molaga podi is a staple in many homes. Make your own by blending 2C grated and roasted coconut (or dessicated coconut flakes), 2 dry red chillies, 1tsp salt.

Erisseri (Burnt/roasted mixture) probably comes from the Tamil words Eri (burn/roast) and Ser (mix). It is the closest equivalent Kerala has to the Tamil Kootu.

Kerala was a part of Tamilnadu till around 700 years back, ruled by the Tamil speaking Cheras and later by the Pandyas. Modern Kerala along with today's Coimbatore and Salem districts were all a part of the ancient Chera Kingdom.

The first among the five great epics of Tamil literature, Silapathikaaram, was

composed by a Chera prince. Kerala shared the same language, culture and cuisine of Tamil nadu till very recently. So it is very likely that the Tamil Kootu lost its lentils and took on the easily available coconut to become the Eriserry.

Out of the four building blocks of South Indian curries - Tamarind, Tuvar dal, Coconut and Yogurt, Kerala almost sidelines the first two and builds its cuisine chiefly around Coconut and Yogurt.

Classic Kerala curries - Aviyal, Kaalan, Pulissery, Eriserry, Thoran, Olan, Kootan, Theeyal, and Chammandhi etc are all built without using Tamarind/Tuvar dal.

The Malayalam saying "Aaru maasam marapuli, aaru maasam manga puli" (Tamarind for six months and mango for the other six) indicates Tamarind supply was not guaranteed throughout the year. This might explain why Tamarind dropped off as a building block.

Similarly, lentils (tuvar dal/mung dal) are not too widely used in the Kerala cuisine. Apart from the parippu kari, there are not many dishes which demand the use of lentils. Whole legumes like Desi Channa (Kadala) or black eyed beans (Van payar) are more commonly used than tuvar/mung dals.

So it is very likely the lentils in the Tamil kootu gave way to more coconut and to black eyed beans (which are a part of many Erisseris)

Most versions of Tamil kootu still use a coconut oil Tadka, which again indicates these themes are related. Whether the Tamil Kootu became the Eriserry or whether the Eriserry moved into interior Tamilnadu, lost the Eri (burnt coconut garnish), retained the Ser (Kootu) and took on lentils to become the Tamil kootu is not very clear.

Eriserry is always served during Keralite festivities - the harvest feast (Ona Sadhya), marriage feasts and Vishu, the New Year feast. It uses a variety of local vegetables. Black eyed beans (Van payar Eriserry), Yam (Chena Eriserry), Raw jack fruit (Chakka Eriserry), Raw plantain (Ethakka Eriserry), Raw banana (Kaya Eriserry), Squash (Mathanga Eriserry) are all commonly used. 'English' vegetables are rarely used.

The coconut- cumin - pepper/chilli base is repeatedly used in Kerala curries.

In Aviyal, in Pulissery, Kaalan and in Erisseri. Chilli came to replace the more expensive pepper in all these curries, but chilli is still avoided in religious/orthodox feasts.

The garnish of fried/roasted coconut makes the dish live up to its name, infusing it with a nutty smell. Being mild, Erisseri is usually served with a tangy curry and rice.

In the traditional method, coconut, cumin and chillies are first ground up together. The vegetables are simmered in this base with water and spices. Some versions even use a bit of jaggery, lending this mild curry a sweet tinge. All versions would have roasted grated coconut as a garnish.

Though this recipe calls for blending, you can use finely grated coconut, crushed cumin and finely chopped chillies to avoid grinding. It also suggests the use of the readily available Thenga Molaga Podi (Coconut spice powder) as a garnish to convert this theme into OPOS.

Now, we can change the vegetables, replace chillies with other varieties/pepper/Sichuan pepper etc., add more flavouring (shallots, ginger, garlic etc) and cook up your favourite variations. South Indians absorbed Mogul curries by replacing milk/nut paste with coconut paste. We can do the reverse here and supplement/replace coconut with other nut pastes/milk.

# Foogath

## Anglo Indian dry curry

<https://youtu.be/RQV9oBK2nGg>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2 chopped green chillies, 3C chopped cabbage

Layer 3: 1/2tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C grated coconut.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cabbage with carrot/beans/your favourite non watery vegetables
- Onion with shallots
- Cumin powder with your favourite spice mix
- Chillies with chilli flakes

### **Tip:**

1. If undercooked, do not release pressure.
2. If overcooked, chop bigger.
3. Can mix in bottled tadka



The Foogath is the

Anglo Indian adaptation of the Indian dry curry. It is not as spiced as Indian curries, and uses a lot of coconut, which the Europeans loved. This was prepared with vegetables familiar to the Europeans and usually avoided the 'native' vegetables. Beans, cauliflower, cabbage, carrot were all commonly used.

A foogath usually contains one vegetable, unlike Indian sabjis which might have a mix of vegetables. The vegetables are usually parboiled and mixed in briefly with the seasonings.

This recipe eliminates the separate step of parboiling vegetables. The elimination of water and the sealed cooking makes this version more flavourful. This recipe also makes the foogath totally oil free. The addition of bottled tadka is optional.

You can have the vegetables crunchy or well cooked by varying the cooking time. Though 'English' vegetables are the ones commonly used in Anglo Indian homes, you can use any of your favourite vegetables/marinated meats in extending this theme.

The emergence of Anglo Indian cuisine:

The West always craved Indian Spices. But no one knew the way to India. So, the trade happened in many stages. The spices changed many hands and their prices were astronomical by the time they reached the consumers. Alexander opened up the land route 2500 years ago, linking India with the West by road. But travel over land was fraught with dangers and the spice prices did not come down appreciably.

550 years ago, drunk on powerful ships and gunpowder, Europe set out to explore the world over water. Finding a sea route to India was on the top of their list.

The Spanish kickstarted it by financing Columbus and ended up owning the Americas.

Their neighbor Portugal started 50 years later. They had better luck with Vasco da Gama and ended up colonising the west coast, starting from Cochin and moving on to Goa.

Denmark started a century later, but found the west coast already colonised.

So they were forced to the East coast and set up trading posts near Karaikkal (Tranquebar/Tarangambadi). The ruins are still remarkably well preserved.

Netherlands followed and founded Dutch trading posts in Pulicat (Chennai) and Sadras (near Kalpakkam).

Fuming at the great wealth their neighbors were generating, Britain and France were the very last entrants into the grabbing game. They followed the age old pattern practised by the Portuguese and the Dutch - Set up a coastal trading post protected by their mighty ships, gradually strengthen it and try moving inward, relying on their guns and cannons.

British open their first trading post at Surat port, followed by Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. All these trading posts slowly morph into forts. The Nawab of Bengal, alarmed at the growing strength of Calcutta's Fort William, tries imposing controls. When the British East India Company pays no heed, he attacks and conquers the fort. The British retaliate by defeating the Nawab at the Battle of Plassey (1757). Almost overnight, the East India Company transforms from traders to rulers. They establish their capital at Calcutta and start collecting taxes. The company rule lasts for a century after which the British Government takes control and the British Raj begins, to last almost another century.

Initially, European men were encouraged (even paid!) to take Indian wives. Their children, born in India to an European father and an Indian mother later came to be called Anglo Indians. Over time, racial segregation sets in and mixed marriages are penalized. The small, fun loving community of Anglo Indians, now disowned by the British and culturally alienated from Indians, evolves its own culture, cuisine and identity. After independence, many Anglo Indians migrate to commonwealth countries. Less than 100,000 remain in India, chiefly around Calcutta, their spiritual home.

A fusion of Indian spices and cooking techniques with European ingredients forms the base of the cuisines of Goa, Pondicherry and the Anglo Indians. Indian taboos against beef/pork/alcohol are ignored. Strong spices like asafoetida are avoided, and the Indian practice of frying spices in oil is minimised. As the Portuguese, French and English stayed the longest, Indo - Portuguese, Indo-French and Anglo- Indian cuisines soon emerged. They are

still found in Goa, Pondicherry and among Anglo Indians.

The Indo- Portuguese cuisine gave us the Xacuti, Vindaloo, Balchão, Sorpotel, Bebinca etc.

The Indo- English cuisine innovated Mulligatawny, Pellow, Kedgeree, Pish Pash, Foogath, Country Captain, Ding Ding, One Eyed Jack, etc.

The Indo- French cuisine gave us the Vadouvan.

# Ghosale Sukke and Chutney

## Konkani Ridgegourd curry

<https://youtu.be/MXrqP7VcuQA>

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 2tsp tamarind paste, 1tsp each (sambar powder, salt), 1 dry red chilli to a thick paste.

Peel a ridge gourd (250g) and cut into thick chunks. Slit and stuff each chunk with coconut mixture.

Chop up ridgegourd peels.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: Chopped ridge gourd peel

Layer 3: Stuffed ridge gourd

Layer 4: Remaining coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Remove ridgegourd and serve as a dry curry. Blend the peels with 1 dry red chilli, 1/4tsp salt, 1tsp oil into a dip.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind with your favourite souring agent.
- Sambar powder with Udupi Saaru Podi/your favourite spice mix.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil

### **Tips:**

1. Blend chutney with 1tsp oil to emulsify it.
2. Use a peeler to peel ridgegourd skin.
3. Serve both curries with rice.
4. Serve the chutney with both rice and tiffin (Idli/dosa).
5. Mix in yogurt with the chutney and it becomes a Thambuli.
6. Choose tender ridgegourd. Mature, fibrous ones are not edible.

Ghosale Curry (Ridgegourd curry) is popular in the Konkani cuisine. It is cooked into many curries - into spicy gravy (Ambat), into a dry curry (Sukke) or a stuffed curry (Sagle). Even the ridge gourd peel is stir-fried and blended with coconut into a chutney.

With the layering technique, it is possible to cook multiple dishes at one shot. Here, both ridge gourd and its peel are cooked together. The cooked ridgegourd is served as a dry curry - the Ghosale Sagle and the peel is blended with masala into a dip, the Gosale Shire Chutney.

You can extend the same theme to cook a variety of vegetables at one shot. All you need to do is to choose vegetables/meats which take similar time to cook, layer them with masala and cook them together. Each layer can then be converted into a different recipe.

By varying the cut sizes of vegetables, it is possible even to include vegetables that have differing cooking times. The time taken to cook something in a pressure cooker depends mainly on its thickness. So, cut faster cooking vegetables into big chunks and slow cooking ones into small chunks. This will ensure they cook together. You can also smear fast cooking vegetables with tamarind paste/yogurt to retard their cooking.

For the dry curry, ridge gourd is cut into thick chunks, so that it does not become mushy on cooking. It is slit and stuffed with masala so that the flavours infuse into it better. On cooking, this layer can be carefully removed, mixed in with garnish and served either as a Ghosale sukke (Dry curry) or as a Sagle (Stuffed curry).

The cooked peel is blended into coarse/smooth chutney.

# Gobi Palya

## Kannada cauliflower dry curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 5 curry leaves, 500g cauliflower florets

Layer 3: 1/2tsp salt, 2 finely chopped chillies, 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C grated coconut.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Coconut oil with your favourite oil
- Curry leaves with your favourite fresh herbs
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Chilli powder with chopped green chillies

### **Tips:**

1. Do not use very big or very small florets.
2. Soak florets in warm salted water to deworm them.
3. If undercooked, reduce floret size.
4. If overcooked, increase size.
5. Choose firm, pure white heads.
6. Buy in winter. Avoid purchasing cauliflower in summer.
7. Mix cauliflower with 1tsp lemon juice/ vinegar for a crisp texture.

Palya is the Kannada version of the dry vegetable curry. Many versions of palya use both North Indian and South Indian spices. Almost any vegetable can be turned into a palya.

In traditional cooking, cauliflower is a tricky vegetable to handle. It either comes out under cooked or mushy. Using flash cooking, we can ensure perfectly cooked cauliflower every time.

This recipe also demonstrates how your cooker can be filled to the brim while cooking food that does not foam/expand. We use 500g cauliflower here, as opposed to 250g in most other recipes.

Filling cooker to the brim is perfectly okay for foods that do not expand/foam. Barring starchy vegetables which expand a bit on cooking, all vegetables can be filled to the brim. Some, like spinach, can actually be crammed in as much as possible, as they shrink dramatically on cooking.

When filled to the brim and cooked for a whistle, the cauliflower comes out with a bite, but is perfectly cooked. You can further fine tune it to your desired doneness by playing around with the cooking time and floret size.

You can vary the texture of the vegetable by varying the cut size and by varying the cooking time. Never flash cook vegetables for over 5 minutes (for a 2L cooker) as it will result in burning/overcooking. The magic zone is between 3 to 4 minutes.

You should invariably get a whistle before this time, if your cooker is healthy. If not, check your cooker by heating 1/4C water at high. If you do not get a whistle in 1 to 2 minutes, you need to get it serviced.

Remember to cook on high. This is counter-intuitive because cooking on medium/low heat can cause burning, but cooking on high can prevent burning! On high heat, the steam buildup happens fast and arrests burning. This does not happen on low/medium heat, especially with floating valve cookers.

# Gothsu

## Tamil sour vegetable mash

<https://youtu.be/i1lovceM1mA>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion

Layer 3: 250g chopped eggplant

Layer 4: 2tsp tamarind paste, 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder), 1tsp each (salt, sambar powder).

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

## Replace/Supplement

- Eggplant with other fleshy vegetables
- Onion with shallots
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Tamarind with tomatoes/lemon juice

## Tips:

1. Mix in chopped cilantro.
2. Use mixed vegetables and mix in cooked dal to convert this to Kalyana Gothsu.
3. The sourer it is, the longer it lasts.
4. Use as dip/spread/curry.
5. Can skip onions for a satvik version.



The Chidambaram Gothsu brings together two themes - the mashed vegetable theme and the sour curry theme. You can either see it as a South Indian version of the North India Baingan Bhurtha/Arab Baba Ghanoush/Egyptian Muttabal/Greek Melitzanosalata or as a Tamil version of the Kannadiga sour vegetable stew - the Gojju.

This is usually served with Idli/dosa/pongal/upma.

The traditional preparation is laborious. First the eggplants are roasted patiently, skinned and mashed. Then the lentils are roasted and ground with spices. Tamarind pulp is mashed and strained. It is only after this that the cooking starts - with a tadka. Onions are sautéed, tamarind pulp is simmered till it loses its raw smell and then the roasted lentil powder and the grilled eggplant pulp go in. All of them are simmered into a thick stew.

This recipe replaces them with a single step, with no compromise in flavours but for the smoky taste. If that is desired, you can cut out the water from the recipe, which will char the bottom layer of the eggplants and impart the grilled flavour.

This Gothsu comes from the Chidambaran Dikshidhar cuisine. They are a micro community with less than 300 families - a far cry from the 3000 strong group who had been caretakers of the temple down the ages.

Chidambaram was earlier known as Thillai. Legend has it that Lord Shiva

strolled into the Thillai forests to teach a lesson to a group of arrogant saints. The saints unleash black magic on Him. First they send a serpent. Siva wears it as an ornament. Next they send a tiger. Shiva slays it, wearing its skin around his waist. Then they unleash a demon. Shiva subdues the demon performs the dance of bliss - The Ananda Thandava, over the demon's body.

It is this iconic figure of the Dancing King, Nada-Raja, that moved Auguste Rodin to tears. The world renowned sculptor visited Chennai's Egmore museum in the 1900's. He was so enraptured by the sculpture, that he started posturing in front of it and was nearly arrested for his strange public display! He later wrote a poem, "The Dance of Shiva".

"....What endowment; what pride of body!  
....One can sense the immobile muscles,  
bathed in luminescence,  
ready to erupt into action if the light  
should shift..."

This is the form in which Shiva is worshiped in Chidambaram, unlike most Shiva temples where the deity is depicted as a phallic symbol, the Lingam.

The Dikshidhars believe Lord Shiva is one of them and is the leader of their clan. They are a tight knit community, marrying only among themselves. Many of their womenfolk have never ventured outside this town. Their lives revolve around the temple. They believe they arrived in Chidambaram from Mount Kailash, along with Lord Nataraja himself, as His personal staff.

The idol dumped into the sea, in the opening scenes of the Tamil movie Dasavatharam, is that of Govindaraja Perumal, removed from the Chidambaram temple by the Saivite King Kulothunga Chola-II. When it was re-installed later by a chieftain of the Vijayanagara empire, many Dikshitars committed suicide as a protest!

The Dikshidhars cook the Kathirikkai Gothsu to accompany the pepper and cumin rice (Samba Sadham) as an offering to the Lord. It is mandatory in all Chidambaram marriage feasts. There are multiple versions of this theme.

The ones served in the temple skip onions, in accordance with the Brahmin beliefs. Some versions use grilled/deep fried/stir-fried and mashed

brinjal. Some versions use an overload of tamarind and oil, converting it to a semi pickle. Some versions add tomatoes and jaggery.

Another variation, the Kalyana Gothsu, adds soaked dal and sambar powder into this theme, taking it very close to being a thick sambar.

Though the Dikshidars wouldn't agree, you can safely extend this theme by varying the key building blocks:

The base:

Eggplant can be replaced with onions, shallots, tomatoes or even potatoes in some versions, you can use any of your favourite vegetables in this theme.

The Kannidiga versions use bitter gourd and even raw mango.

The souring agent:

Tamarind can be replaced by other sour fruit pulp. Or it can be altogether skipped and a dash of lemon juice can be mixed in before serving

The flavouring:

A variety of roast and powdered lentils with spices can be used to flavour the gothsu.

Feel free to try out your own combinations!

# Gutti Mulakkada Kura

## Andhra Stuffed drumstick curry

Mix 1/2 tsp each (salt, chilli, cumin, coriander powders), 2tsp tamarind paste.

Cut 250g tender drumsticks into finger length pieces.

Slit along a ridge and open partially. Stuff in spice mix. Wipe surface clean.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: Drumsticks

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Drumsticks with other vegetables that can be slit and stuffed.
- Spice mix with Puliogarae powder/spiced lentil powder/spiced besan.

#### **Tips:**

1. Ensure drumsticks are not too thick.

# Gutti Vankaya Kura

## Telugu stuffed eggplant

<https://youtu.be/nNkevnQF8NM>

Mix 1/2C spiced lentil powder (paruppu podi), 2tsp each (tamarind paste, ginger-garlic paste), 1/2tsp each (sambar powder, salt). Slit 5 eggplants (250g) into four so that they still remained joined at the base. Stuff spice mix tightly into eggplant. Wipe eggplant surface clean.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: Stuffed eggplants.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes).

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Paruppu podi with coconut paste/ puliyogarae mix/ your favourite podi
- Eggplant with other fleshy vegetables

### **Tips:**

1. Prefer egg sized brinjals.
2. Serve as appetiser/simmer in curry.
3. Wipe the surface of eggplants as the spice paste burns if it touches the bottom.



# Hasi Gojju

## Kannada five taste curry

Blend 1tsp each (tamarind paste, jaggery, salt), 1/4tsp each (mustard, cumin seeds), 1 chopped green chilli, 1/4C coconut, 1tbsp roasted gram with 1/4C water to a smooth paste. Mix in more water to the consistency you like.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Jaggery with sugar
- Mustard with fenugreek powder
- Tamarind with raw mango/yogurt
- Roasted gram with peanuts
- Cumin with your favourite nuts

### **Tips:**

1. Blend to a smooth paste and then dilute with water as needed.
2. Can mix in bottled tadka for added flavor.
3. Can be drunk as a cold soup.
4. The colour of tamarind determines the colour of your gojju.
5. Can blend in your favourite herbs/spices for flavour/colour.

Hasi Gojju (Kannada: Raw Gravy) is an interesting variation of the Kannadiga classic - the Gojju. A Gojju (gravy) is designed to balance five tastes - Sweet (Jaggery), Sour (Tamarind), Salty (Salt), Bitter (Fenugreek) and heat (Chillies). A variety of vegetables are simmered in this spiced base. Hasi Gojju mimics a gojju perfectly, by blending jaggery, tamarind, salt, chillies and mustard/sesame together. Coconut is also blended in to give it a body. A variety of salad vegetables are chopped/grated and mixed into this base.

This is a quick fix side dish and can be served both with rice or rotis. You can look at this as a Raita variant.

Raw dishes are not very common in Indian cuisine. Our fear of food borne

illness is so high that we ensure everything is cooked very well. Most Indians would rather prefer an overcooked dish than an under cooked one! Apart from raita and fresh chutneys, there are very few raw curries in Indian cuisine.

Out of the four building blocks of South Indian cuisine (Coconut, Yogurt, dal and Tamarind), three can be used raw. Only the dal needs to be cooked. So it is really surprising we do not have more raw curries! Tamilnadu and Kerala do not have many raw curries except their chutneys. In Andhra we have the Pachi Pulusu and Pachi Chaaru. Tamilnadu has the Pacha Puli Rasam. In all these raw curries, a souring agent (usually Tamarind) is used to fight spoilage.

Apart from raithas and chutneys (and the lone salad), raw curries are absent in the North too.

It is Karnataka that boasts of an array of raw curries - with innumerable varieties of Tambli, Hasi Gojju, Hasi Charu (Raw Rasam), Hasi Huli (Raw Kulambu) and Kosambari (which even manages to use dal without cooking, the only cuisine in India to have done it!).

The building blocks of a Hasi Gojju are the ingredients with five tastes - sweet, sour, salty, bitter and spicy. These are blended with coconut and roasted gram, to get a body. This is then mixed with chopped/grated salad vegetables/cooked vegetables.

Each of these building blocks can be replaced/supplemented as shown in the recipe. Sugar can replace jaggery, yogurt can replace tamarind, nuts can replace roasted gram, and fenugreek can replace mustard.

Think of this blended sauce as a salad dressing. You can emulsify it with a dash of oil to give it a sheen. This dressing can be used over a variety of salad vegetables or cooked vegetables. Mix in bottled tadka to give it a crunch and another layer of flavour.

The salad vegetables can be chopped or grated. Almost any fruit/salad vegetable can be accommodated in this theme. Southeekayi hasi gojju (Cucumber), Mulangi hasi gojju (Radish), Mavinkayi hasi gojju (Raw mango), Pineapple hasi Gojju, Tomato hasi gojju are all common.

Using cooked vegetables is not very common with Badanekai hasi gojju (Eggplant) being the only exception. But this theme can easily accommodate all cooked vegetables.

The Hasi Gojju has a thick consistency. Mix in more yogurt and you can pass it off as a Hasi Majjigae Huli (Raw Yogurt Curry)!

Try out your own combinations to extend this theme!

# Inji Poondu Thokku

## Tamil ginger garlic sour dip

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 250g each (whole garlic cloves, chopped ginger)

Layer 3: Lemon sized deseeded tamarind pulp (30g) (or) 3tbsp tamarind paste

Layer 4: 10 dry red chillies, 2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend to a paste with 1tbsp jaggery.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Garlic with shallots.
- Ginger with young turmeric.
- Tamarind with vinegar/sun dried tomato.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use unpeeled garlic.
2. Can use cleaned, unpeeled young ginger.
3. Lasts for over a month refrigerated.

Ginger and garlic appear in a supporting role in most Indian recipes, but transform into stars in this theme. Both ginger and garlic are believed to aid digestion and this pickle is believed to stimulate one's appetite.

This thokku is specially designed for those who have lost their appetite for food. It jump startstheir tastebuds!

Like all thokkus, the preservation happens by the absence of water, use of souring agent, salt, jaggery and antibacterial spices.

The traditional recipe follows a complex process. Red chillies are first roasted and kept aside. Ginger and garlic are then stir fried, tamarind, jaggery and

spice powders are added and the mixture is constantly stirred and cooked till it is done. Everything is then blended together.

You can use this dip as a pickle, as a dip, spread or even as a curry base. If you are worried about cooking without water, you can add a dash of water/vinegar, though that will cut down the caramelisation. You can add your favourite non-watery vegetables to extend this theme to other thokkus.

Fleshy vegetables like bittergourd, brinjal, squash, carrot, herbs like mint/curry leaves/fenugreek leaves can all be added in to extend this theme further. Even non vegetarian thokkus are supported by this theme. Use this dip as a base for creating your own versions.

# Ishtu

## Kerala stew

<https://youtu.be/eiMEeZUVw9Y>

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water , 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (potato, carrot, beans)

Layer 4: 1 chopped chilli, 1tsp each (salt, pepper, ginger-garlic paste), 1/2tsp cumin powder, 6 crushed curry leaves

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C each (coconut milk, water).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with your favourite vegetables/meat
- Pepper with chilli paste
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil

### **Tips:**

1. Serve with aappam/rice/idiyappam.
2. English vegetables are usually preferred.
3. Mash coarsely for a thicker stew

Ishtu (most likely a corruption of the word Stew) is common across Kerala. The same basic recipe listed here is cooked with vegetables/meat/fish and is served as an accompaniment to 'breads' - Aapam, idiyappam.

A variety of tubers like potato, tapioca and sweet potato are simmered in a thin coconut broth with minimal spices into an Ishtu. A mix of other vegetables (carrot, green peas, cauliflower etc.) are also added. Addition of meat/seafood to a starchy ishtu converts it into a grain free meal by itself.

An ishtu is nothing but the Mogul Korma in disguise. Anything that 'harms' milk is frowned upon in Indian cuisine. Milk based desserts are fine, because

there is no chance of milk curdling. But curries with milk are frowned upon because of the risk of milk splitting. Cooking curries with milk is something the Central Asians taught us. And something only the North has accepted. Being away from the Mogul sphere of influence, South India still refuses to do it, replacing milk with coconut milk. This happens in the South Indian Kuruma and with the Ishtu.

This is the reason why the exact flavouring for a korma works well in a Ishtu. It is however supplemented by the southern flavouring (coconut oil and curry leaves).

Though not commonly cooked, all Kormas have their equivalent Ishtus and vice versa. Replace milk in a korma with coconut milk and the parentage changes.

Interestingly 'English" vegetables are usually preferred in a ishtu, further pointing to the fact that it is a recent introduction. However, many Ishtus do not have too many added spices. They rely on coconut and the vegetable mix/meat for the flavour. But you can fortify them with more spices, exactly like a korma.

In the traditional version, the thin and thick milk of coconut is called for, as thick coconut milk curdles on cooking. This recipe bypasses it by adding coconut milk at the end.

Though Ishtus are usually served with aapam/idiyappam. They go equally well with flat breads.

# Kaara Chutney

## Chettinad spicy dip

<https://youtu.be/UhGn2kfgr7k>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped onions, 4 chopped garlic cloves placed in a ring, and 1C chopped tomato placed in centre of the ring

Layer 3: 2tsp tamarind paste, 8 dry red chillies, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp asafoetida.  
Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Blend to a paste.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onions with shallots.
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix.
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.

#### **Tips:**

1. Cook longer for more caramelisation.
2. Watch out for a burnt smell when cooking for over 5 minutes.



# Kaara Kari

## Tamil shallow fried potato curry

<https://youtu.be/Dj8Z7gn7Tdw>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 3tbsp oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped potato

Layer 3: 1tsp each (chilli powder, salt), 1/4tsp asafoetida

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Let pressure settle. Open and mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with your favourite starchy vegetables.
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix.

### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked, cut into smaller chunks/cook longer.
2. If overcooked, release pressure/cut into larger chunks.
3. Stirfry in open vessel for a crunchy shell.
4. Ensure dry powders do not touch the bottom of the cooker.
5. Excess oil can be drained after cooking.



Kaara Kari is Tamilnadu's answer to the fried potato wedges. Only that they are not cut into wedges, but into bite sized chunks. Kaara kari can be paired with any rice and curry. You can serve it with flatbreads or even use it as sandwich/roll filling. However, certain combinations are much loved. When served with any of the following, it gets elevated to comfort food!

- Kaara kari with Shallot sambar and white rice
- Kaara kari with Variety rice and Papad
- Kaara kari with Curd rice or Rasam saadham are the kind of combinations Tamils would want to come back to, after a long trip!

The building blocks of a kaara kari are the starchy vegetable, spices and oil

#### Vegetable:

Remember this is a shallow fry. So any non-watery starchy vegetable can be used, though potato is the most common. Other root vegetables like colocasia can be used if peeled and cut into big chunks. Raw banana, sweet potato, yam and other tubers can all be used.

#### Spices:

Chilli powder is mandatory. Other spices can be varied as per your personal choice. The South Indian combination of asafoetida and turmeric powder is commonly used. In spite of the name, the curry is not usually too spicy - just

appears so because of shallow frying.

Oil:

In open pan cooking, you are restricted to oils with a high smoke point. But because of the sealed cooking and steam saturation, you can use any oil of your choice.

Cut size:

Ensure the cut size is not too large or not too small. If too large, the centre would remain uncooked. If too small, the vegetable will not hold its shape and turn to mush. Bite sized pieces are ideal.

# Kaara Kulambu

## Chettinad sour curry base

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 3tsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 250g shallots, 50g garlic cloves

Layer 3: 1/4C coconut blended with 2tsp tamarind pulp, 2 dry red chillies, 2tsp coriander powder, 3tsp sambar powder, 1tsp each (fennel powder, jaggery, salt) to a thick paste.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1/2C water.

### LAYER, FLASH AND MASH

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Shallots with onion.
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix.

#### Tips:

1. Can use as it is or use mixed with flashed vegetables.
2. Can layer over vegetables and flash together.

Kaara Kulambu (Spicy sour stew) is not as spicy as the name suggests. It is the regular Kulambu (Sour stew) enriched with shallots, garlic and spices. The garlic and fennel combination, so loved by Chettinad, is used to flavour the curry.

The base is the caramelised shallot- garlic- tomato paste. The key flavouring comes from the chilli- coriander- fennel - coconut combination. A variety of additives are simmered in this flavourful base.

Unlike sambar which has dal, this stew lacks protein. So it is common to add whole legumes like fresh/overnight soaked black eyed peas, field beans (Mochai) etc.

A variety of vegetables are simmered in this base. Drumstick, brinjal, okra are most common. Stir-fried shallots, garlic cloves are also used.

In the traditional preparation, the onion- garlic- tomato base is first stir fried.

Tamarind extract is then added and cooked till it loses its raw smell. Spices and stir-fried vegetables are then mixed in and simmered till done. A tadka of mustard, curry leaves, fenugreek and dry red chillies is finally mixed in.

We use the no water cooking and controlled caramelisation techniques to convert this into OPOS. This base can be served as it is or briefly simmered with stir fried/boiled vegetables. The base can be bottled and refrigerated for weeks or frozen for months. You can dilute it with more water if you like thinner gravy.

The quantities of tamarind, garlic and tomatoes can be varied as per your taste preferences. Coconut is sparingly used as more coconut will result in the stew resembling a kuruma. A tiny bit of jaggery is added to round off and heighten the flavours.

**Serving:**

Kaara Kulambu is usually served with hot rice and a dry mild vegetable curry/papad. It can also accompany tiffin items like Idli/dosa/upma.



# Kadala Kari

## Kerala's Channa masala

Soak 1/2C desi chickpeas overnight. Drain.

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut with 2 dry red chillies, 1tsp each (salt, coriander powder, ginger - garlic paste), 1/2tsp garam masala, 1/4tsp turmeric powder and 2tsp coconut oil to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: Soaked channa

Layer 3: 2tbsp each caramelised (onion, tomato) paste.

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash coarsely and mix in 1/2C coconut milk.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/supplement**

- Onion with shallots.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Desi chickpeas with other fresh/soaked pulses/sprouts.

### **Tips:**

1. Serve with flatbreads/puttu/aappam/idiyappam/parota.



Kadala Kari (Desi chickpea curry) is Kerala's answer to the North Indian channa masala. It is almost always paired with puttu. Puttu and Kadala curry are soul food to Malayalis.

The building blocks are the legume, coconut, onion- tomato base and flavourings.

#### Legume:

Kadala in Malayalam is a generic name to denote legumes, though they have come to denote desi chickpeas, which are most often used. However, you can use any soaked legume in place of chickpeas.

The Desi channa is smaller, blacker version of chickpeas native to India. It is this version that is found in our native recipes. The whiter, plumper Kabuli chana is a later entrant, as the name shows, from Kabul. Desi Channa is used in most South Indian curries whereas Kabuli channa has taken over the North.

#### Coconut:

Coconut milk, coconut paste, roasted coconut, and coconut milk powder can all be used in the recipe for creaminess. Kerala substitutes coconut milk for milk in many recipes.

#### Onion-Tomato:

This provides a body for the curry. This recipe uses the layering and deseeded tomatoes to ensure caramelisation.

### Flavourings:

Ginger- garlic, curry leaves, turmeric powder, chilli powder, coconut oil are all used. Garam masala is a common addition.

### Preparation:

Traditionally Desi channa is soaked and pressure cooked, onions and tomatoes are stir-fried with flavourings, channa is added back in and all are simmered together.

In this recipe we cook channa without any added water, relying only on steam generated from the vegetables. This produces a more intense flavour in the curry. Coconut milk added at the very end cooks in retained heat and so we do not risk curdling. Bottled tadka is optional.

# Kadala Maavu Kulambu

## Sour gram flour stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 3tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion, 2 green chillies, 4 garlic cloves

Layer 3: 1C chopped tomato

Layer 4: 2tbsp gram flour, 1tsp each (sambar powder, salt)

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend with 1C water.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onion with shallots.
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix.
- Gram flour with OPOS podi/any spiced lentil powder.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use as it is or use mixed with flashed vegetables.
2. Can add a layer of vegetables over layer 3.
3. Lasts for over a week refrigerated.
4. Use roasted gram flour for a nuttier flavor.

Kadala Maavu Kulambu (Chickpea flour sour-stew) is an unusual Tamil curry. It is one of the very few curries which skips all the core building blocks of South Indian cuisine: Coconut, Tamarind, Lentils and Yogurt.

Besan (Chick pea flour) is much loved in the Marathi and Bihari cuisine. The Biharis use it as a staple. Roasted besan flour is consumed as a meal by itself (Sattu).

Marathis cook a thick stew with just besan (Pitla) and even a dry curry (Zunka). Across the North besan is used as a thickener in Kadhis (Yogurt stews).

In Tamilnadu, both rice flour and gram flour are used as thickeners in

Kulambu (sour stew). It is likely that this theme is a variant of the Tamil Kulambu, which dropped tamarind and replaced it with tomatoes. The result is this unusual curry, which is almost never eaten mixed with rice (unlike a regular Kulambu) but used solely with tiffin. The Marathis would see this as a Pitla variant. It also resembles Bombay chutney (another popular besan curry), but for the addition of the onion-tomato base.

The building blocks are the onion - tomato base, gram flour, flavouring and additives.

You can play around with the building blocks, cooking up your own versions of this theme!

# Kadanja Paruppu

## Kongunadu churned lentil stew

Soak whole 1/2C mung dal for an hour. Drain. In a 2L cooker, add soaked mung dal, 1C water, 1chopped tomato, 2 chopped garlic cloves, 1 slit green chilli, 1/2tsp each (turmeric, coriander, cumin powders), 1tsp coconut oil. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Blend coarsely with 1tsp coconut oil.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung with sprouts/fresh lentils.
- Mung with other dry dals.
- Raw dal with roasted dal.
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix.
- Garlic with asafoetida/caramelised onions.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can soak for an hour in hot water to simulate overnight soaked effect.

Kadanja Paruppu (churned lentils)/Paruppu kadayal/Kadanja payiru is a very common dish in the Kongunadu region (North West Tamilnadu), being cooked almost every other day.

In the traditional preparation, the whole lentils (usually whole mung dal or whole horse gram) are soaked overnight and cooked in the morning. The cooked dal is mashed coarsely and then simmered again with seasonings. Once done, the whole mass is coarsely churned with a wooden mallet (mathu). A tadka (usually coconut oil based) is then mixed in. It is served with hot cooked rice. It goes equally well with flatbreads.

A special earthen pot, whose inside is rough and gritty is used for all sorts of

kadayal (churned) recipes. Purists swear that the taste increases many fold when this recipe is cooked and mashed in such an earthen pot with a wooden mallet.

# Kalla Veetu Aviyal

## Chettinad vegetable medley

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion arranged in a ring, 1/2C chopped tomatoes in the centre

Layer 3: 1/2C potato chopped small

Layer 4: 1C eggplant chopped big

Layer 5: 1tsp salt, 1/4tsp each (chilli powder, garam masala),

Layer 6: 1/4C coconut, 2 green chillies, 1/2tsp fennel and five cashews blended to a paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onion with shallots.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Eggplant with your favourite vegetables.
- Tomato with tamarind.
- Cashew with roasted gram/poppy seeds/other nuts/seeds.
- Chilli powder with fresh chilli paste.

### **Tips:**

1. Can add more tomatoes for more gravy.
2. Can mix in yogurt.

Kalla Veetu Aviyal is Chettinad's interpretation of the Malayali Aviyal. As with many dishes, they have interpreted it rather liberally, breaking every single rule of the classic Aviyal. Malayalis would be shocked at the spiced up Chettinad version of their favourite dish!

It is also called Kathirikka Aviyal (Brinjal Aviyal) and is paired not with rice

but with idli/dosa.

Classic Aviyals do not use eggplant, fennel, onion or garam masala - all of which are mandatory in the Chettinad version.

It is likely that the name is derived from Kallar Veetu Aviyal (The Aviyal of the Kallars). Kallar denotes one of the three ancient Tamil clans (Mukkulathor) of Central/South Tamilnadu. According to legend, these three warrior clans - Agamudayar, Kallar and Maravar established the Chera, Chola and Pandya empires. As Kerala was a part of the Tamil Chera Empire, it is likely that the dish percolated into the Chettinad cuisine through these three clans.

It is interesting to note that this remains an Aviyal in spirit, just that it has been interpreted in a different way.

Cumin has been replaced by fennel, basic spices have been replaced by more exotic ones and 'desi' vegetables are absent but for eggplant. These tweaks turn the boiled vegetable salad of Kerala into a kind of kuruma! And like a kuruma, the Kalla veetu aviyal is not paired with rice, but with idli/dosa/chappati.

# Kariveppilai Thokku

## Tamil Curry leaf sour dip

<https://youtu.be/GRbwCbywRXM>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp each (sesame oil, water),

Layer 2: 125g curry leaves, 5 dry red chillies, 1tbsp tamarind paste, 1tsp each (jaggery, salt), 1/4tsp each (fenugreek, asafoetida, turmeric powders).

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (3 minutes). Release pressure. Blend to a paste.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Curry leaf with mint/cilantro/other herbs.
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mixes.
- Dry red chilli with fresh green chillies.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in 2tsp spiced lentil powder (paruppu podi).
2. Can use a mixture of fresh/dried herbs.
3. Try using young leaves. The older ones are good for podis, not for thokku.
4. Hold the stalk upside down, pinch it with your fingers and strip the leaves in a single motion.
5. Wash the leaves well before using.
6. Easier to blend using a mixie.

Kariveppilai Thokku (Curry Leaf Reduction) belongs to the class of Thokkus where fresh herbs are cooked with a souring agent and spices into a thick dip. Most Tamil thokkus have an equivalent in Telugu cuisine as pachadis. The Karivepaku Pachadi of Andhra is a closely related version of this thokku.

The building blocks of this thokku are the fresh herbs, a souring agent and spices. Most thokkus have a bitter spice (usually fenugreek/mustard powder)

and a sweetener (jaggery) added. They both appear in this version.

The same theme can be extended with your favourite fresh herbs (Fenugreek leaves, Cilantro, Mint etc) or even greens (Spinach) or a combination of them. The same theme when extended with sour spinach (Gongura) becomes Andhra's famous Gongura Pachadi.

As curry leaves have little moisture, we need to add some liquid to prevent burning. The colour of this thokku can vary from light green to brown depending on the tamarind used and the spice powders. Use old tamarind (black tamarind) and Kashmiri chillies if you want a darker colour.

# Kathirikka Thokku

## Tamil Eggplant sour dip

<https://youtu.be/-PYY1DvmJog>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped eggplant

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, sambar powder, tamarind paste), 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder).

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mash and bottle.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggplant with fleshy vegetables (zucchini, squash, gourds etc).
- Tamarind with your favourite souring agent.
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix.
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.

### **Tips:**

1. Can used peeled eggplant.
2. Can mix in jaggery/spiced lentil powder.
3. Cut eggplant into small chunks.
4. Can skip water for a roasted flavor.

Kathirikka Thokku (Eggplant relish) is a semi pickle, like all thokkus.

Cooked till most water is evaporated and filled with tamarind, spices, salt and oil, it lasts for days unrefrigerated. Like all thokkus, it is ideal travel food and can be eaten mixed with rice/flatbreads. We've covered herb based thokkus, fruit based thokkus, spice based thokkus and even vegetable based thokkus earlier. The key difference here is the use of lentil powder in a thokku, which converts it into a balanced meal when paired with a starch.

The building blocks are the base, souring agent and the additives

Base:

A variety of non watery vegetables, herbs/spices can be used as the base

#### Souring agent:

This acts as the preservative. Tamarind is the common souring agent used but can be replaced with vinegar/kokkum or even mango powder. The sourer the relish, the longer it lasts.

#### Oil:

Sesame oil is traditionally used for all Tamil thokkus. Oil seals the surface and minimises microbial contamination. While storing, ensure there is a layer of oil over the thokku, to ensure its long life.

#### Additives:

As a thokku is always paired with a starch, Tamil cuisine figured out a way to pack in protein, so that the thokku- starch combination can become a balanced meal. A combination of roast lentils are powdered and mixed in to supply the missing protein. We use the readymade paruppu podi in the OPOS version.

#### Flavouring:

Any combination of turmeric, chilli powder, pepper, asafoetida, sambar powder can be used. A change in the flavouring would change the parentage of the thokku. Mix in garam masala and this would become a baingan bhartha variant.

#### Serving:

Thokku is served exactly like a pickle. It can go with tiffin items like idli/dosa/upma. It can also be mixed in with rice like a curry. It can be used as a sandwich spread or as a dip for finger foods.

# Kayal Puli Yanam

## Kayalpatnam's Sour thin curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2 chopped garlic cloves, 1C chopped tomato, 1tsp tamarind paste

Layer 3: 2 slit green chillies

Layer 4: 1tsp each crushed (cumin, fennel), 1 crushed shallot, 6 curry leaves, 1tbsp grated coconut, 1tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove chillies. Blend all with 2C water.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind with sour fruit pulp.
- Coconut with coconut milk.
- Garlic with ginger.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use as it is or strain and serve as a clear curry.

Kayal Puli Yanam (Kayalpattinam's sour curry) is an interesting curry, packed with history. The word Aanam/Yaanam is an ancient Tamil word for curry/stew. It is Aanam that is mentioned in ancient Tamil literature. How does it still survive in the coastal belt and nowhere else? We need to dig deep.

Kayalpatnam and Kilakarai were ancient trading ports, having extensive trade links with the Middle East. Both these towns still have over 90% Muslim population and remain examples of communal harmony. The communal clashes that ravaged North India did not touch the South.

Islam took two routes to come to India. In South, it was brought in by the Arab traders, as soon as it arose in the Middle east. In the North, it came

almost 700 years later, with the Sultan and Mogul armies.

In the South, the traders settled all across the coastal South Indian peninsula, integrating with the local communities. They retained their faith, but their culture, customs, language and food morphed over time. Due to this integration, communal tensions were far and few.

In the North, the conquerors saw no need to integrate with the local communities. They chose to impose their faith, culture, customs, language and food on the natives. Communal tensions persist to this day.

The Kilakarai and Kayal Muslims were excellent seamen and traders, with trading skills honed over a thousand years. I was talking to an old Muslim smuggler from Kilakarai and asked him about smuggling, which was once prevalent in these coastal regions. His views were interesting!

He said "Listen, we have been trading for a thousand years. Governments come and go. We were trading peacefully long before governments tried to muzzle us. The Portuguese came and claimed they owned the sea. They called us smugglers and seized our vessels. We survived them. The English then monopolised sea trade and wanted all the profits. They called us smugglers because we competed with them. We survived them. Our loyalty is to our customers!"

The names of some Tamil Muslim communities still point to this rich sea trading heritage. Names like Marakayar (from Tamil Mara Kalam or Arabic Markab - Ship) and Kayalar (People from Kayalpattinam) point to their trading and seafaring roots.

When Portuguese colonised Srilanka, a section of Sri Lankan Muslims fleeing persecution settled here. Sri Lankan Tamil is still a repository of ancient Tamil words, lost to Tamilnadu. It is in Sri Lanka that Aanam refers to Curry. And that's how Puli Yanam (Tamarind Curry) got its name. A variety of Yanams are still cooked in Sri Lanka like - Nethili Yanam (Anchovy curry), Kari Yanam (Mutton Curry) and many more.

A cuisine behaves exactly like a culture or language. When two groups of people meet, their culture, language and cuisine starts to morph almost immediately.

The morphing of language is seen in Arwi where Tamil was written in Arabic script. The morphing of culture is seen in some Tamil Muslim women wearing a chain strung with black beads (Karugamani), very much like the Thali. And the morphing of cuisine is seen in their food. Beef, though

permitted to Muslims by their religion, is usually avoided, in deference to local beliefs. The spices used in Tamil Muslim cuisine are very similar to those used in Tamil cuisine, but for a few exceptions.

Pandan leaves, Masi (cured tuna fish) are commonly used as flavouring agents. Kadalpaasi (Seaweed) is used to set puddings. Ada urugai (whole lime stuffed with salt and preserved) is used as a souring agent.

Food preserves history well. This way of preserving lemons exist in Egypt and Morocco, pointing to links between these coastal towns and the Arab world!

The eating style is also Arabic, with people eating from a communal plate during festive occasions.

The building blocks of a Puliyannam are tamarind, spices and additives. Unlike many Tamil rasams, lentils are absent and coconut is present. Shallots and fennel, completely absent from most Tamil rasams, are used here. These spices and herbs are just pounded together and simmered in tamarind water. The tadka is again made from the same crushed mixture, unlike other Tamil rasams. This no-fuss curry does not even call for chopping. Tomato is crushed, spices are pounded and everything is briefly simmered. How much simpler can a curry get!

# Kayi Kuruma

## Moplah Muslim vegetable stew

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 2 green chillies, 2tsp coconut oil, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp each (garam masala, fennel) and 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a smooth paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil,

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (carrot, potato, mushroom, beans)

Layer 4: Coconut paste, 2tbsp each caramelised (onions, tomatoes), 1tsp ginger-garlic paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C coconut milk.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato/beans with your favourite vegetables.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Cashew with your favourite nuts.
- Coconut milk with milk/cream/yogurt.

#### **Tips:**

1. If overcooked, increase cut size/reduce cooking time.
2. If undercooked, cut smaller/do not release pressure.

Kayi Kuruma, is a Moplah Muslim specialty. The Moplahs are descendants of Arab traders who have been trading with the Malabar Coast for over 2000 years. The traders were accepted by the local community and were given native women in marriage, being affectionately called Moplah (son-in-law). As soon as Islam arose, these traders brought it to India. The Arab Muslim traders assimilated the language, culture and cuisine of the regions they settled in. Those who settled in the Malabar region now have Malayalam as their mother tongue, and their cuisine is a mix of ancient Arab cuisine and

Malabar cuisine. They now form a quarter of Kerala's population. They are not bound by the Hindu taboo against beef. So this is one of the very few regions in India where beef is widely consumed. The Moplah cuisine is largely meat based. Like any coastal cuisine, seafood is much loved and coconut is widely used. Like the rest of Kerala, red rice is a staple and coconut oil is the preferred cooking medium.

# Keera Masiyal

## Tamil Spinach Mash

[https://youtu.be/4gua-vc8\\_Eo](https://youtu.be/4gua-vc8_Eo)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1 bunch (250g) cleaned spinach (roots trimmed, chopping optional),  
1 green chilli

Layer 3: 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida).

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mash.

### **LAYER FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Spinach with your favourite edible greens.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix.
- Green chilli with chilli powder.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mash/blend with water for a gravy.
2. Blending dulls colour.
3. Use tender greens. Remove woody bits.
4. Wash well. Wash multiple times to remove all mud.
5. Do not wash in chlorinated water as cooking in a pressure cooker intensifies the chlorine smell.
6. Use a ladle/churn to mash - some texture is preferred.
7. If using a blender, blend briefly. Do not make it into a smooth puree.
8. You can safely fill up your cooker with spinach it shrinks dramatically on cooking.
9. Can use a whole cleaned bunch without chopping.

Keera masiyal (Spinach Mash) is a Tamil Brahmin delicacy. It is as simple as

they come - fresh spinach cooked and mashed with minimal spices. No onions/garlic or anything fancy.

In most rural homes, spinach was invariably grown in the backyard. Many varieties of spinach grow wild. To pull up a bunch and cook it was the most natural thing to do.

The building blocks are simple - just edible greens and minimal spices. The taste, texture and flavour change with the type of edible green being used.

**Edible greens:**

Though a few varieties of spinach (Arai keerai, Paruppu keerai, Mulai keerai, Siru keerai) are commonly used, all varieties of spinach and tender edible leaves can be used in this theme.

**Spices:**

The staple spices of the Tamil Brahmin kitchen - turmeric and asafoetida are the only spices used. You can add more spices/spice mixes or even onion/garlic, for more flavour. The tadka of mustard, urad dal and dry red chillies fried in coconut oil is very common and is added just before serving.

**Preparation:**

The traditional preparation calls for chopping spinach, boiling spinach in water, draining water and then mashing it. Then tadka is made, the mash is added to it and simmered with spices. Rice flour is usually added to thicken the curry.

We eliminate the use of water in OPOS, which eliminates the need for a thickener like rice flour. The spinach is not chopped but used whole, saving labour and locking in more nutrients.

**Serving:**

1. Eat mixed with hot rice and ghee.
2. Use as an accompaniment to rice mixed with a spicy curry like vatha Kulambu/molagu Kulambu.
3. Serve as a side dish to flatbreads.
4. Mix in cooked dal to convert this into keera paruppu.

# Keera Molagootal

## Palakkad spinach mash

Blend 1/4 C chopped coconut and 1/2tsp each (pepper, cumin, salt) to a paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 4C chopped spinach

Layer 3: 1/4C cooked mung dal

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mash all.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Spinach with your favourite edible greens.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix.
- Pepper with chilli.

#### **Tips:**

1. Serve with hot rice and pickle.



Molagoottal is the signature dish of the Palakkad Brahmin cuisine. This dish is so loved, and is served so often that they proudly claim molagoottal runs in their veins!

Kerala has been a home to Brahmins since the earliest times. The Saraswat Brahmins fleeing famine due to river Saraswati failing, trekked down the west coast, settling all along it. Those who settled in Kerala almost 2000 years back came to be called the Namboodiris.

There was another migration from Tamilnadu 700 years back. This was the time Tamilnadu faced the brutality of the Sultan raids. Malik Kafur terrorized Tamilnadu and paved way for brief but brutal and bloody Sultan rule. Temples were prime targets. Many of them were looted and razed. This prompted many Brahmin families, who had settled around temples, to flee to a safer place. The Kerala kings were eager to welcome them, partly to counter the monopoly of Namboodhiris. Waves of Tamil Iyers from the temple towns of Tanjore, Tiruchy, Kumbakonam, Madurai and Tirunelveli migrated to Kerala through the breaks in the mountain chains in the North and South.

The Tamil Brahmin cuisine morphed under the influence of Namboodri cuisine and the non availability of key ingredients like sesame oil and tamarind. Sesame and tamarind were replaced with easily available local

ingredients (coconut oil and yogurt). Similarly local vegetables, spices and cooking techniques were increasingly adopted. Over time, these factors lead to the evolution of Kerala Brahmin cuisine. (In exactly the same way, it also led to the development of a language, a fusion of Tamil and Malayalam)

Like Tamil Brahmin cuisine, Kerala Iyer cuisine is pure vegetarian, avoiding fancy spices, garlic or onions. Coconut, yogurt and vegetables are extensively used.

The molagoottal is a variant of the Tamil kootu, enriched with more coconut. A variety of edible greens and vegetables are simmered with coconut paste and lentils into a mild, thick stew. Ashgourd, yam, spinach, squash and banana stem are commonly used in molagootal. It goes equally well with rice and flatbreads. Being mild, it is usually served with a spicy pickle/curry (Thogayal/Puli Inji/Pulikachal)

Echoes of this theme exist in the North Indian palak dal and the Telugu Thotakoora pappu. It is a simple, can't go wrong dish and very addictive!

# Kizhangu

## Tamilnadu's Spiced Tubers

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onions, 1 chopped garlic clove

Layer 3: 1 chopped green chilli, 2C chopped sweet potato

Layer 4: 1/2tsp salt, 1/8tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash coarsely.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sweet potato with Yam/Potato/Taipoca/other tubers.
- Garlic with ginger.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.
- Onion with shallots

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mash, shape into patties and shallow fry as an appetizer.
2. Can mash, shape into balls and shallow fry as koftas.
3. Can skip the buffer layer and use an inner pot for cooking tubers

Glucose is the fuel that runs all living things, from bacteria to humans. Plants produce glucose and knit the glucose molecules together for easy storage as starch. This storage can happen in the seed, stem, roots or even fruits.

Animals feed on this stored starch. Their digestive systems snip the starch chains to release glucose. After humans settled down, the easily grown starch in each region become the staple of each cuisine.

Wheat, rice and maize are the world's primary source of starch (forming 90% of world's grain production). Most regional cuisines are built on these cereals. Oats, barley, millets and pseudo cereals are also consumed in

pockets.

Some cuisines are based on non grain starches like Sago (Indonesia, Malaysia). In tropical regions, cassava, sweet potato, taro, yams and arrowroot are staples. Cooking banana is a chief source of starch in some Latin American countries. Potato is the primary starch in temperate and subtropical countries.

Potato, commonly eaten in India as a vegetable, is the primary starch in cuisines like the Irish cuisine. The Irish eat potato the way we eat rice. To an Irishman, an Indian eating poori bhaji will appear as strange as someone eating chappati with rice as a side dish would appear to an Indian.

In parts of rural India, tubers are still the primary source of starch. In Kerala, tapioca is widely consumed as Kappa. Boiled sweet potato is still sold in Indian streets as a meal for the poor.

This recipe offers a simple solution for cooking all starchy vegetables.

While using tapioca, do use the sweet variety (take a small bite to check - it should not taste bitter). Poisonous varieties of tapioca exist and require elaborate processing.

If these are cooked with protein (lentils, soya chunks etc), they become a full meal by themselves. The good thing is that all tubers cook the same way, in roughly the same time - nature has made things easy for us!

# Kootu

## Tamil coconut – lentil- vegetable stew

<https://youtu.be/8B9VGj3VNUQ>

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1 green chilli, 1tsp cumin, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder and 2 tsp coconut oil to a smooth paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped ash gourd

Layer 3: 1/4C cooked mung dal

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ash gourd with your favourite vegetables.
- Mung with tuvar/masoor/channa dals.
- Green chilli with dry red chilli/pepper.

### **Tips:**

1. Can refrigerate coconut- cumin-chilli paste for a week or freeze for ever.

The core building blocks of a kootu are lentils, coconut, flavouring and vegetables used. Kootus are always mild, always thick and always have lentils and coconut. Let us change each of them to see what kootus emerge.

Though Bengal gram (Kadalai paruppu), Tuvar dal (Tuvaram paruppu) and Mung dal (Pasi paruppu) are most commonly used, any pea/bean or lentil can be used to cook up a kootu. Any combination of them can work too, as demonstrated by iruparuppu kootu, mupparappu kootu etc. Though not very common, even larger legumes like chick peas or kidney beans can be used.

Grated coconut, coconut paste or even coconut milk can be used in a kootu. Coconut is just one type of plant milk our cuisine uses. We now know there

are many other plant milks like soy milk, almond milk and rice milk. All these can be used for creating a range of never before cooked kootus. Animal milks can be used too! There are some versions of kootu called paal kootu in which milk supplements/replaces coconut.

Cumin and green chillies form the core flavouring. You can experiment with a variety of cumin (Persian, Mexican, black cumin etc) and its cousins (caraway, fennel, ajwain etc). Similarly, a variety of fresh or sun dried chillies can be used.

#### Vegetables:

Almost any vegetable, edible greens or a mix of them can be used. If you have no vegetables, torn pieces of papad or sun dried vegetables can be used as vegetable substitutes.

#### Flavouring:

- In Thalichu kottiya kootu, we use mustard, curry leaves, red chillies and asafoetida fried in oil (usually coconut oil).
- In Podi potta kootu, any podi (spiced lentil powder) can be mixed in.  
In Varuthu araicha kootu, the coconut- cumin- chilli combination is shallow fried before being ground up.
- In Araichu vitta kootu coconut, cumin and chillies are blended together
- In Poricha kootu, the regular dal is supplemented by fried and ground up lentils.
- In Pori kadalai kootu, roasted channa dal (pottu kadalai/odacha kadalai) is blended in with the coconut - cumin- green chilli mixture and this paste becomes the base in which vegetables are cooked.
- In Masala kootu, garam masala is mixed in, taking the taste of the kootu closer to a North Indian subji.

Any of these flavourings or any combination of them can be added as a layer in the recipe above to make infinite kootu varieties.

A Kootu is always mildly flavoured. Too much of spices/chillies are never used. This is why tamarind is rarely used. However, our love for tamarind is so strong that it is sometimes added to cook up a puli kootu (Tamarind

kootu).

A kootu cooked with yogurt is a Thayir kootu. The popular Aviyal is a type of thayir kootu. A sweetish pal kootu is cooked up from milk/coconut milk - and can almost be called a Kuruma. Like most Tamil curries, all kootus can be garnished with a pinch of mustard and curry leaves fried in oil.

Kootus can be eaten not just with rice, but with a variety of flatbreads like chappatis and parathas. Being mild, they also serve as an excellent introduction to South Indian cuisine.

Try the basic recipe, then systematically vary the building blocks and cook up a never ending variety of kootu!

## Kosambari

### Udupi soaked lentil salad

Soak 1C split and husked mung dal for 1 hour. Drain. Mix in 1C each grated (carrot, cucumber), 1/4C grated coconut, 1 finely chopped green chilli and 1tsp each (salt, lemon juice). Mix all.

**MIX ALL**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung dal with channa dal.
- Carrot/cucumber with your favourite salad vegetables.
- Green chilli with pepper powder.
- Lemon juice with your favourite salad dressings.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in chopped mixed herbs.
2. Can serve as a salad/curry/a filling for rolls/sandwiches.

Dals are cooked in a million ways across India, but it took the genius of Udupi cuisine to figure out that some dals can be made edible by just soaking them. And such soaked dals form the base for two Udupi salads - Hesaru Bele Kosambari (Mung dal salad) and Kadale Bele Kosambari (Channa dal

salad)

Soaked lentils are served as an offering in Udupi temples and these might have later led to Kosambaris. These salads are a part of most religious feasts (especially Navarathri and Rama Navami). They are served at every Udupi wedding feast. A sweet version with just soaked dal, jaggery and coconut is also made.

Though not common, thin flattened rice can be mixed in with this salad to instantly convert it into a nutritionally balanced full meal.

The name got corrupted to Kosambir/Kosemalli when this salad moved into other parts of the country. This recipe is especially special, because this is one of the very few salads that Indian cuisine has innovated.

# Kumbakonam Kadappa

## Tamil rich lentil stew

Blend 5 cashews, 2 green chillies, 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt, coconut oil), 1/2tsp each (cumin, garam masala powder) and 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1 chopped onion

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (potato, carrot)

Layer 4: Spice paste (see above)

Layer 5: 1/2C cooked mung dal.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Mix in 1/2C coconut milk.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato/carrot with other vegetables.
- Mung with tuvar/masoor dal.
- Cashew with other nuts/seeds.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix lemon juice before serving.
2. Mix in water to the consistency you like.
3. This curry thickens on cooling.
4. Cut down dal/nut powder if you like it runny.
5. Tomatoes are added in some versions.



Kadappa, which means nothing in Tamil, is cooked as an accompaniment to 'Tiffin' (Idli, dosa etc), especially in the towns of Thanjavur and Kumbakonam.

As with most recipe names that mean nothing in their native language, this is very likely a borrowed theme, probably coming to Tanjore during the Maratha rule. I think it is probable that the name might be a corrupted version of the Marathi Kada Pav.

Kada Pav is a Marathi gravy served with Pav, where the vegetables are not mashed as in a regular Pav Bhaji. Echoes of this theme are found in Kadappa, which uses similar vegetables (Potatoes, carrots), similar flavouring, and even has a dash of lemon juice mixed in, just like the Kada Pav. But coconut and lentils also found their way into this curry in Tamilnadu, probably morphing the Marathi Kada Pav into the Kumbakonam Kadappa.

The Kadappa is another example that demonstrates how any combination of building blocks works. It uses a key building block of South Indian cuisine -

coconut, flavouring it the North Indian way, into a stew which is neither North nor South, but straddles both. South Indians would look at it as a kind of Masala kootu and North Indians would see it as a Dal korma.

The building blocks of a Kadappa are lentils, coconut and additives.

Its colour is usually white or golden yellow. The consistency is usually semi thick. It is usually paired with South Indian breakfast items (Idli, dosa etc), but goes equally well with North Indian flatbreads like chapatti/poori etc.

The traditional recipe starts with a tadka of Mughlai spices. Cooked dal mixed with water is then added, boiled vegetables are mixed in along with a blended paste of coconut, thickeners and spices. All are simmered together till done.

A tadka of Mughlai spices (cinnamon, cloves, fennel, bay leaves) can be used to inject another layer of flavour into this curry.

# Kurukku Kaalan

## Kerala condensed yogurt stew

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut with 1/2tsp each (cumin, turmeric powder) and 1tsp each (pepper powder, salt, coconut oil) to a paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped raw banana

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1C hung yogurt.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with your favourite starchy vegetables.
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix.
- Pepper with chilli powder

#### **Tips:**

1. To make hung yogurt, add whisked yogurt in a fine meshed filter and let water drain away.

Kurukku Kalan (Condensed Kaalan) is a curry made by simmering vegetables in a spiced yogurt- coconut base till thick. It is a part of the Harvest feast (Ona Sadhaya). It is unclear why this curry was named Kaalan.

All our pickles are just condensed curries. Many of our curries are actually mild pickles. The Kaalan is the missing link between a pickle and a curry. It is served as a curry, but it is stored like a pickle, for months, without refrigeration. It even tastes better with time, exactly like a pickle!

All rules of pickle making apply to the making of Kurukku Kaalan too.

1. The sourer it is, the longer it lasts.

Fresh yogurt is never used. Only very sour ones are used.

2. The less water it has, the longer it lasts.

All excess water in the yogurt is boiled away. The coconut is ground without any water. In many homes, coconut paste is mixed in with the stored spiced yogurt just before serving, to prolong the shelf life. The vegetables used are also cooked with little water, till very dry. Watery vegetables are not used. The starchy Yam/Banana/Colocasia are commonly used.

3. Anti microbial Spices are used as preservatives.

Turmeric, pepper and fenugreek powers are a part of the recipe.

4. Oil is mixed in as a sealant to prevent entry of microbes.

Some versions use both ghee and a coconut oil tadka.

In the traditional preparation, the chopped vegetables are usually simmered with turmeric powder, fenugreek powder, pepper and salt till the water dries out. The sour, whisked yogurt is added in and cooked with constant stirring till it all excess water evaporates. A paste of coconut, chillies and cumin is then mixed in and briefly simmered. A tadka is the usual garnish.

We can extend the theme by supplementing yogurt with other souring agents and other fermented plant/animal milks. A wide variety of vegetables can be used and the spice mix can be varied. Coconut can be supplemented with other nut pastes.

# Kuruma Base

## Nutty coconut mother sauce

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1/4C each (roasted gram, mint, curry leaves), 2tsp each (poppy seeds, salt, coconut oil), 1tsp each (fennel, garam masala, ginger-garlic paste) and 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1/4C oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped onions arranged in a ring, 2C deseeded tomatoes placed in the centre

Layer 3: 100g green chillies

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Blend to a paste with 1/2C coconut milk.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Oil with your favourite fat.
- Roasted gram with your favourite nuts.
- Coconut milk with milk/cream.

## **Tips:**

1. Ensure coconut does not touch the bottom of the cooker.
2. Mix in flashed vegetables/meat to make an instant kuruma.
3. Layer 1/2C of this base over 2C vegetables/meat and flash together to make a kuruma.
4. Mix in 1/2C water/milk and serve as plain kuruma.

# Mampazha Pulissery

## Malayali Mango sour stew

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1/2tsp each (cumin, salt) 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1 green chilli and 1tsp coconut oil to a smooth paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped ripe mango

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C yogurt.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango with other sour fruits.
- Coconut with coconut milk.
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix.
- Salt with jaggery.

### **Tips:**

1. Use sweet mangoes. Else mix in jaggery.
2. Pulissery is a semi pickle and gets better as it ages.
3. The sourer the yogurt, the longer the pulissery lasts.
4. Mix in water/yogurt to adjust the consistency to your liking.

The building blocks of a pulissery are the fruit/vegetable used, yogurt, coconut and additives. The colour of a pulissery varies from a golden yellow to a fiery orange depending on the chillies used.

### Fruit/Vegetables:

Unlike most Indian curries, fruits/fruit pulp are a common additive in a Pulissery. The holy trinity of Kerala fruits - Banana (Etha pazham), Mango (Naattu manga) and Jack fruit (Chakka) find their way into the pulissery.

Pineapple, introduced by the Portuguese 500 years back, is now a firm part of Kerala cuisine and is commonly used in the Pulissery. Native vegetables like Ash gourd, Papaya, Cucumber, Yam, Gourds, Taro are all popular.

#### Yogurt:

Sour yogurt/buttermilk lends the sour note to pulissery. The sourer it is, the better the pulissery tastes and the longer it lasts.

#### Coconut:

Coconut is usually blended with cumin and chillies. Garlic/shallots too are also blended with coconut in some versions.

#### Preparation:

The traditional recipe calls for cooking the fruit/vegetable, adding the coconut-spice paste and cooking them all together. Yogurt is added at the very end and a tadka completes the dish. In OPOS, we cook the fruit, coconut paste together, and mix in hung yogurt at the end, relying on the retained heat to cook the yogurt. Bottled tadka is then mixed in.

Cooking with fruits (and flowers, for that matter) is rare in Indian cuisine. The Jains have their fruit chutneys, Tamils have their Maangottai Sambar (the seed of the mango with a bit of pulp attached) and Apple MoreKulambu, Kannadigas have their Pineapple Gojju, Benarasis have their Aam kadhi and fruit raita, Moguls have their dry fruit curries and the Bengalis have their Aam kasundi. That's it. One or two recipes per cuisine seem to be the norm.

But the Malayalis boast of a range of fruit based recipes. Their Pazham Nurukku has plantains simmered in sugar syrup, the Pazham pori has slices of banana battered and fried, the Pazha pradhaman has fruits simmered with coconut milk and jaggery into a pudding and their Madhura pachadi has a medley of fruits in a coconut-yogurt sauce. They also have a range of Pulisseris cooked with Mango, Pineapple, Jack fruit and the ever present Nendram pazham, Kerala's favourite fruit.

The Pazham Puli Seri (Fruit Sour Mixture) has fruits cooked in a spiced coconut yogurt sauce. Numerous versions exist across Kerala with differing spice combinations, additives and cooking methods. Usually the fruit is simmered in a spiced coconut paste with a bit of water. Once cooked, yogurt is mixed in and gently simmered. A coconut oil tadka completes the curry. It

is a sweet and sour dish, with the sweetness of the fruits balanced by the tang of the yogurt.

It is a part of the Ona Sadhya feast and is commonly cooked across Kerala. It is usually served with rice and a dry vegetable curry/papad.

The colour of the pulissery can vary from pale yellow to dark orange depending on the turmeric - chilli combination you use.

The preparation has multiple steps.

1. Boil fruits in water spiced with turmeric, chilli and salt
2. Blend coconut, cumin and chilli to a paste. Add to fruits and simmer.
3. Add yogurt and simmer briefly
4. Add tadka

You can extend this theme with different fruits, yogurts and spice mixes. Though Pazham Pulissery uses only fruits, this theme can accommodate vegetables too. In Kerala, the vegetable pulissery is cooked with gourds or starchy vegetables (banana, yam, taro etc). Feel free to use the fruit/vegetables of your choice. This theme will gleefully accommodate them all!

# Maanga Pachadi

## Tamil five taste mango stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C peeled and chopped sour, raw mango

Layer 3: 1chopped green chillies, 5 crushed curry leaves

Layer 4: 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, fenugreek powder), 1tsp salt, 1tbsp jaggery

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mash all.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango with your favourite sour fruits.
- Jaggery with sugar.
- Fenugreek with neem flower/kasuri methi.

#### **Tips:**

1. Ensure sweet, salt, bitter, spicy and astringent tastes are present.

Many cultures across India share the New year with Tamils. The Tamil New year starts in Spring when trees are rich with flower and fruit. It is customary for people to wake up in the morning to the spring bounty, carefully arranged as piles of fruits, vegetables and valuables, all magnified by a mirror placed behind them.

The Tamil year is traditionally divided into six seasons

Ilavenil Kaalam: Apr-May-June >> Spring

Mudhuvenil Kaalam: June-July-Aug>> Summer

Kaar Kaalam: Aug-Sep-Oct>> Monsoon

Kulir Kaalam: Oct-Nov -Dec>> Autumn

Mun pani Kaalam: Dec-Jan-Feb>> Fall

Pin pani Kaalam: Feb -Mar-Apr>> Winter

All cultures across India share each others calendar and there is a large

overlap. Half the Tamil months even share the same Sanskrit names.

Chaitra >> Chithirai  
Vaisaka >> Vaikasi  
Asvayuja >> Aypasi  
Karthika >> Karthikai  
Margasisha >> Marghazi  
Phalguna >> Panguni

The Hindu calendar resets itself every 60 years, to coincide with the chief celestial bodies returning to the same position. Each of these 60 years has a name. The clock will reset in 2046 with the 60th year Akshaya, and begin anew.

The Western calendar is linear and all you need is the year and the day to define a point in time. But the Hindu calendar is cyclical and stretches across trillions of years, the only culture to have juggled such massive time periods, says Carl Sagan.

"The many billion year time-scale of Hindu cosmology is not the entire history of the universe, but just the day and night of Brahma, and there is the idea of an infinite cycle of births and deaths and an infinite number of universes, each with its own Gods. And this is a very grand idea. Whether it is true or not, is not yet clear. But it makes the pulse quicken..."

To grasp these immense time scales, the concept of relative time was introduced.

One human year is just a day for the Devas.

12000 Deva years was called a Maha Yuga

500 such Maha Yugas (4.32 billion human years) is but a day for Brahma. Brahma creates the universe afresh every single day of his life. He does so as long as he lives (100 Brahma years or 311 Trillion, 40 Billion Human years). After this time, the next Brahma takes over and the cycle continues.

Each day of Brahma is divided into 10,000 charanas. Each charana is around 4,32,000 human years. The major epochs or yugas are measured in charanas. Satya yuga was 4 charanas long. Tretha yuga was 3 charanas long, Dvapara yuga which came to a close with the end of Krishna Avatar was 2 charanas long. The present Kali yuga, which began in 3012 BC, will be exactly one charana long.

Carl Sagan again .." .. the time scales correspond, no doubt, by accident, to those of modern scientific cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day

and night to a day and night of Brahma 8.64 billion years long. Longer than the age of the earth or the sun and about half of the time since the big bang. And there are much longer time scales still".

When the Western world had trouble in grasping the fact that Earth may be more than a few thousand years old, Indians were speculating about multiverses and trillion year time spans!

Coming back to food, Tomato Thokku, Maanga pachadi and Kerala's Mambazha pulissery are usually cooked in many homes on this day, as they bring together all the basic tastes, symbolic of the mixed blessings the year has to offer.

# Maanga Thokku

## Tamil Mango Dip

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C peeled and chopped sour, raw mango

Layer 3: 2tbsp chilli powder, 1tsp each (salt, turmeric powder), 2tsp jaggery

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mash all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango with your favourite sour fruits.
- Jaggery with sugar.
- Turmeric powder with asafoetida, fenugreek powder/your favourite spice mix.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use grated mango and just mix everything, without cooking.
2. The sourer the mango, longer the shelf life.

**OPOS**  
Manga Thokku



# Mapillai Sodhi

## Tamil coconut milk stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 5 curry leaves

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (carrot, potato, beans, capsicum)

Layer 4: 2 slit chillies, 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, garam masala), 1/2tsp cumin powder, 1tsp salt.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C each (coconut milk, water). Optionally, mash coarsely to thicken.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Chillies with chilli paste.
- Coconut milk with nut paste/cream.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in 1tsp lemon juice.

Mapilla Sodhi (Son-in-law stew), Despite its name, and despite the fact that it originates from the violence prone rathaboomi (bloodied land), the Mapilla Sodhi is not made from Son-in-laws but from coconut milk.

The Sodhi is a mild coconut milk stew. The word 'Sodhi' means nothing in Tamil, which is always an indicator that it might be a borrowed theme. It is also a rare recipe, being confined to a couple of towns in Southern Tamilnadu - Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi.

Sodhi is mandatory in Tirunelveli's marriage feasts. The marriages of South Tamilnadu are still very elaborate two day affairs, with the bride and the groom's family honouring each other with feasts. The Sodhi is mandatory in the feast that the groom's family hosts for the bride's family, on the second day of marriage. This is why it is still called the Mapillai Sodhi (Son in law

sodhi). The sodhi then follows the son in law wherever he goes. Whenever the couple is invited for feasts, the sodhi is always served. When the son in law visits the bride's family on festive occasions, sodhi is mandatory.

Mapillai Sodhi indeed!

As the Sodhi usually uses a mix of vegetables it is called the Kaikari Sodhi (Mixed vegetable sodhi). It is so closely associated with the town, that it is also referred to as the Tirunelveli Sodhi.

An equivalent recipe exists in Srilanka called Hodhi. Hodhi is a generic name for Srilankan curries. Kiri Hodhi denotes white curries (based on milk/coconut milk). It is very likely that the name Sodhi might just be a morphed form of Hodhi.

This argument gains support from the fact that there is just one version of Sodhi in Tamilnadu, but innumerable versions of Hodhi in Srilanka. This is almost always the case with borrowed themes. Ala Kiri Hodhi (Potato Curry), Malu Hodhi (Fish curry), Egg Kiri Hodhi, Thambum Hodhi (Sour soup) are all classic Srilankan recipes.

Coconut milk based curries are rare in Tamil cuisine. The liberal use of coconut milk makes the sodhi very rich. In traditional recipes, each serving of this stew calls for the milk of one coconut. If you are feeding 100 guests, then you'd need 100 coconuts, just for the sodhi!

Srilankan Sodhis are always mildly sour, but the Tamil versions are not. The term Sodhi Kulambu is frequently used, but it is not correct if the sodhi is not sour. A Sodhi which is not sour belongs to the Kootu family and not to the Kulambu family. Sourness is mandatory in a Kulambu and not in a Kootu.

If the sodhi is not sour, then it becomes a variant of the Tamil paal kootu as coconut milk takes the place of coconut paste. The parent version cooked in Srilanka is always sour - it is either cooked with Fish tamarind/Malabar tamarind or mixed with lemon juice just before serving. The Tamil versions never use tamarind, though some versions call for tomato or for lemon juice to make the curry slightly tangy.

The building blocks of a Tamil Sodhi are coconut milk, additives and flavouring.

### **Coconut milk:**

The traditional preparation calls for the vegetables to be cooked in diluted coconut milk to avoid the thick coconut milk curdling. The coconut milk is mixed in at the very end to prevent curdling. Coconut milk can be replaced with animal milk or other plant/nut milks (Soy, almond milk etc) to extend this theme. Srilankan Sodhis use plain milk too, but the Hindu taboo against cooking milk into a savoury dish has prevented us from doing it. If you use milk, then the sodhi morphs into a version of the Mogul curry - the Korma.

### **Additives:**

A wide variety of 'English' vegetables are used in a Sodhi. Native vegetables are almost never used, which again points to the fact that this might be a borrowed recipe. The Mapillai sodhi comes from the Saiva Pillai cuisine. They are staunch vegetarians and so use only vegetables in their curries. But the parent theme, the Srilankan Hodhi, uses boiled eggs and a wide variety of fish and seafood.

Sour versions of Sodhi are common too. In some cases a chopped tomato is simmered in the curry or a dash of lemon is mixed at the end. Versions with tamarind are uncommon.

Mung dal/roasted gram powder are occasionally used in Sodhis as a thickener. They take the sodhi a step closer to being called a Paal kootu, a classic Tamil theme.

### **Flavouring:**

The classic Tamil tadka with mustard and curry leaves is used to flavour a Sodhi. In Srilanka, fenugreek is always a part of the tadka. In Tamilnadu, Garlic is occasionally used, but the Tamil Sodhi gets most of its flavour from the vegetables used and from coconut milk. The Srilankan versions use cinnamon and pandan leaves. The masi podi (Maldivian fish powder) is also occasionally used.

### **Serving Sodhi:**

The sodhi is usually served with hot rice accompanied by a spicy ginger dip, a spicy curry and rice papads. As the sodhi is very rich, it is usually paired with a ginger based dip, Inji thuvaliyal, to aid digestion. As the stew is very mild, it is usually served with a spicy dry curry, usually urulai kaara kari

(spicy potato curry). Sodhi is also served to accompany the breakfast dishes like aappam and idiyappam.

# Masolu

## Konkani mother sauce

Blend 1tbsp tamarind paste, 1/2C grated and roasted coconut , 2 dry red chillies and 1tsp salt with minimal water to a smooth, thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped vegetables

Layer 3 (Optional): 1/4tsp turmeric powder/4 crushed teppal (Sichuan pepper)/1/4tsp fenugreek powder/2tsp ginger- garlic paste/1tsp mustard powder

Layer 4 : Coconut paste (see above)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

Dilute with water as needed.

**LAYER, FLASH AND BLEND**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind with your favourite souring agent.
- Grated and roasted coconut with dessicated coconut/copra/Thenga Molaga Podi (Tamil spiced coconut powder).
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.

### **Tips:**

1. Dessicated coconut can be roasted and used.
2. A variety of Konkani curries can be made by just adding/deleting layers.

Masolu (Masala) plays a large part in Konkani cuisine. This basic masala of coconut, chillies and tamarind forms the backbone of most Konkani curries. The curries differ from each other in the spices used, consistency and other additives, as detailed below:

A variety of vegetables (raw jackfruit, mango, drum stick, tender cashewnuts, mushrooms and almost all native vegetables), sprouts, edible greens, meats and seafood are cooked in these bases. They are usually served with rice, roasted papad and a pickle.

You can cook up a huge range of Konkani curries with this masala base.

1. Randayi: Semi- thick spicy coconut curry

Mix 1C masolu with 1/2tsp chilli powder, 1/4 tsp turmeric powder and 1C water.

Randayi is the spicy version of the base masala.

Dudde randayi (Pumpkin), Muga mole randayi (Sprouted mung), Kadgi Randayi (Raw Jackfruit), Bagade Randayi (Sprouted Cow Peas), Keerlu Randayi (bamboo shoots) are all popular. Some versions have dal/legumes added for a protein punch.

2. Ambat: Semi-thick Onion- Coconut Curry

Mix 1/4C caramelised onions and 1C water with 1C base.

Ambat is the base masala enriched with onions. It is ground very smooth but is neither too thick nor too thin.

Dali Ambat has Dal (usually tuvar dal) mixed in with Ambat.

Teppal Ambat is flavoured with Tirphal (Sichuan Pepper) and this combination is normally used to cook fish/seafood.

Crabs (Kurle Ambat)/Clams (Tisre/Khubbe/Kalva ambat) are all popular Ambats.

Alle Kande Ambat has both ginger and onions and is a popular base for fish/seafood curries

Palak Ambat (Spinach), Batani Ambat (Peas), Gajbaje Ambat (Mixed Vegetables),

Almbe Ambat (Mushroom), Mooga Ambat (whole Mung), Kuvale Dhavain Ambat (Ash gourd), Vali Ambat (Malabar Spinach) are all popular.

3. Ghasi: Semi-thick Coconut based Protein Curry

Mix 2 tsp paruppu podi (spiced lentil powder), 1 tsp coriander powder and 1C water with 1C masala base.

Ghasi is the protein enriched, semi-thick version of the base masala. Roasted lentil (urad dal) powder is mixed in with a vegetable Ghasi. But when protein is added as in legumes/seafood, roasted lentil powder is not added. Benda ghashi (Okra) has lentil powder mixed in but in Sungata Ghasi (Shrimp) or Chane ghashi (Chickpeas), it is not added.

4. Bhuthi: Semi-dry stir-fry

Mix 1 tsp coriander powder and 1/4 tsp fenugreek powder, 1/8C water with 1/2C masala.

Bhuthi is the semi- stir-fried version of the base masala. Alambe Bhuthi (Mushroom), Tendle Bhuthi (Ivy gourd), Cabbage Bhuthi are all common.

5. Sukke: Dry stir-fry:

Stir-fry a Bhuthi till it dries out and it becomes a Sukke.

Sukke is the stir-fried version of the base masala.

6. Kodel: Garlic flavoured, semi thick coconut curry

Mix in 3 tsp chopped and stir-fried garlic and 1.5C water with masala base.

Kodel is the garlic flavoured version of the base masala.

Ash gourd (Kuvale Kodel), Plantain (Kele Kodel), Horse gram (Kulitha kodel) is popular. Some versions have a bit of jaggery added.

7. Sassam: Mustard - coconut curry

Mix 1/2tsp mustard powder, 1/4C water with 1/2C masala paste

Sassam is the mustard flavoured version of the base masala.

Sassam is almost a fruit salad with the masala used as a dressing.

Ananas-sasam (Pineapple), Mango Sassam, Mixed fruit Sassam are very popular. They come in both cooked and uncooked versions and come in both dry and gravy versions.

8. Sagle: Stuffed Curry

Mix in 1 tsp coriander powder and stuff as much masala paste as possible into slit/hollowed out vegetables. Flash for 2 whistles.

Sagle is the stuffed version of the base masala.

Gulla Sagle (Eggplant) and Bhenda Sagle (Okra) are common.

# Milagu Kulambu

## Tamil Iyengar pepper stew

<https://youtu.be/tpJ3hakJpOs>

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp tamarind paste, 1.5C water, 1tsp crushed pepper, 1/2tsp sambar powder, 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powders), 1tsp each (salt, jaggery, sesame oil), 6 curry leaves. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 2tsp freshly roasted and crushed pepper, 1tbsp spiced lentil powder (or OPOS Podi).

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind with other sour pulp.
- Jaggery with sugar.
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix.

### **Tips:**

1. Serve with hot rice and roasted papad.
2. Vary tamarind/pepper quantities to taste.
3. The color of the stew depends on the colour of tamarind.
4. Use old tamarind for a darker colour.

Milagu Kulambu (Pepper sour stew) is one of our ancient stews. It is seen as comfort food in many Brahmin homes. Tamarind, Pepper and Turmeric was always a part of ancient South Indian cuisine and it is very likely they were cooked together into a stew since times immemorial.

Two versions of this stew are commonly cooked across the South. In Brahmin homes, onions/garlic or fancy flavourings are avoided. The Chettinad version is much richer with elaborate flavourings.

The key building blocks are a souring agent, Pepper and a thickener.

The souring agent is usually tamarind, though a wide variety of sour fruit pulp can be used.

Pepper can be added in many ways - roasted and crushed pepper gives the

maximum flavour and bite. Ready made pepper powder can be added, though it would have lesser flavour. Soaked and ground pepper paste gives a different flavour and texture.

Though not common, green peppercorns can be used too! This theme can be extended with the use of long pepper/Szechuan pepper in place of black pepper.

#### Thickener:

Traditional versions call for roasting and grinding a variety of lentils (channa dal, tuvar dal, mung dal etc), which thicken the stew. Some versions add rice powder. The spices added (Coriander, cumin, chilli powder etc) also act as thickeners. You can add your own combination of roasted lentil and spice powder or any OPOS Podi.

The lentil powder also adds in a bit of protein, making this a nutritionally balanced meal when eaten with rice. In the Chettinadu version, the onion-garlic paste acts as the thickener.

#### Additives:

This is seen as a rainy day dish. During rainy days, getting fresh vegetables was not always possible. So it is very likely this is why fresh vegetables are almost never used in this stew. Some versions use fried sun dried vegetables instead.

Milagu Kulambu stores very well. It lasts days unrefrigerated and weeks in the fridge, getting better with time. Lack of fresh vegetables helps in extending the shelf life.

#### Preparation:

The traditional method starts with a tadka. Then tamarind water is added and simmered till it loses its raw smell. The flavourings are roasted and ground. They go into the curry and are simmered together.

We skip the elaborate roasting and grinding by using the ready made spiced lentil powder (paruppu podi).

#### Serving:

Milagu Kulambu is served with hot white rice and is always paired with protein rich dishes - paruppu thogayal/thick kootu/roasted urad dal papad. This combination makes it a balanced, light meal. It can also be served with idli/dosa.

Unlike the chillies which came in later, pepper is seen as medicine. So, this stew is prescribed when people suffer from coughs/cold/fever. As pepper is

seen as a warming spice, this stew would be on the menu during cold days/rainy days.

# Milagu Rasam concentrate

## Tamil pepper soup

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 4tsp crushed pepper, 2tsp crushed cumin, 2tsp tamarind paste, 1tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in water to the consistency you like.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Turmeric powder with rasam powder.
- Ghee with your favourite oil.

#### **Tips:**

1. Always use roasted spices.
2. Can bottle and refrigerate for months/freeze for ever.

The British start their meal with a soup. Indians had none. Some genius figured out that our rasams are actually soups in disguise and served our humble Milagu rasam to the English. It became an instant hit as the Mulligatawny soup.

Our Milagu rasam is as basic as a soup can get. A couple of pinches of spices transform water into a magical broth. It is infinitely flexible and can absorb anything you throw into it.

The English versions replace water with stock, add coconut/coconut milk, curry powder (whatever that is!), turmeric, even meat. This thick, meaty version, with no resemblance to our rasam still manages to remain comfort food, ideal on a rainy day.

The Anglo Indian cuisine calls it pepper water. It cooks numerous versions with horse gram (horse gram pepper water), bones (breastbone pepper water), seafood (shrimp pepper water), and even beef/pork broth. And these versions

are revered in their cuisines as much as milagu rasam is revered in Tamil cuisine. What better proof that themes transcend cuisines?

The delightful Hobson Jobson's dictionary has this to say:

"The name of this well-known soup is simply a corruption of the Tamil milagu-tanir, pepper- water ' showing the correctness of the popular belief which ascribes the origin of this excellent article to Madras.

It goes on to record mentions in colonial literature:

"In vain our hard fate we repine;  
In vain on our fortune we rail;  
On Milaghee-tawny we dine,  
Or Congee, in Bangalore Jail.

Song by an English Sailor languishing in Hyder Ali's jail, 1784.

" ....in a brasen pot was mulugu tanni, a hot vegetable soup, made chiefly from pepper and capsicums (most likely chillies). 1823 "

# Mirchi ka Salan

## Dakhni Muslim stuffed chilli stew

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1tbsp each (peanut, sesame), 1tsp each (coriander, cumin, salt), 1tsp oil, 1/2tsp garam masala, 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a thick paste. Stuff into slit, deseeded chillies (100g).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion arranged in a ring, 1C chopped deseeded tomato arranged in the centre.

Layer 3: Stuffed chillies.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Blend all except chillies.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH.**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chillies with your favourite vegetables.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Tomato with 2tsp tamarind paste.
- Peanut/sesame with other nuts/seeds.

#### **Tips:**

1. The bigger the chillies, lesser the bite.

It is fascinating to see a cuisine adapting itself to new lands, exactly like a language or a religion. The spirit remains, but the details vary from place to place. Classic Persian/Central Asian recipes gradually became Indianised as they moved deeper and deeper into India, taking on more and more Indian ingredients, spices and cooking techniques.

When Central Asian languages (Persian, Turkish, Arabic) bumped into the languages of India, they morphed, taking on more and more Indian words. The change happened not in the courts, but among commoners. This fusion produced a vibrant language, Urdu, enriched by the best of both worlds. Urdu arose among common soldiers, as their camp language. It did not have much

prestige to begin with. But when masters like Amir Khusrao started weaving magic with their dohas, riddles and poetry, it captured the public imagination and started gaining prestige, later ending up as the court language.

When the Central Asian recipes (Persian, Turkish, Arabic etc.) bumped into Indian recipes, they morphed, taking on more and more Indian ingredients. The change happened not in the royal kitchens, but among commoners. This fusion produced a vibrant cuisine, Mughlai, enriched by the best of both cuisines. Mughlai recipes first arose among commoners and did not have much prestige to begin with. But when master chefs started weaving magic with their fusion Kebabs, Kormas and Biryanis, it captured the public imagination and started gaining prestige, later ending up as royal food.

When Urdu moved North West into Pakistan, it morphed by absorbing words from Pakistani languages like Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi and Balti.

When Kormas and Shorbas moved down South, they absorbed ingredients from Deccani cuisine (Coconut, peanut, turmeric powder, mustard, tamarind, sesame oil).

The Saalan is what the mild Central Asian gravy morphed into when it dared to venture deep down South. The rich Central Asian gravies were built around milk/cream, almond paste and sweet spices (cinnamon, cloves, cardamom). The Deccani version replaced almond paste with peanuts, sesame seeds and roasted gram. Instead of milk and cream, it used coconut/coconut milk. Instead of the mild tang of the sumac/lemons, it took on tamarind. Along with the mild Mughlai spices, it took on the harder spices of the South. Instead of the choicest cuts of meat, it took on everything from vegetables to leftover bones.

You can look at a saalan as a korma on steroids. The word Saalan means just gravy in Urdu. This dish most likely arose in the South and is defined by the mixture of Mughlai and South Indian spices and ingredients. There is no mention of Saalan in Akbarnama which lists various dishes cooked in the royal kitchens. The first mentions are from the Deccan.

The Mirch ka saalan, a classic Hyderabadi dish, goes a step further by making chillies, normally avoided in Mogul cuisine, as a primary ingredient in this version! When Saalan moved further South into Tamilnadu, it became

even more Indianised into the salna.

The spirit of the recipe still remains in the fact that the saalan/salna are still paired with Mogul food (Biriyani/Parota/Pulao) and never with South Indian food (Idli/dosa/rice).

The colour can be varied from a deep red (By using grated tomatoes and Kashmiri chilli powder) to a pale brown (by using more onions and coconut powder). This theme supports any vegetable/meat. While using hard to cook vegetables/meat, cut them into small chunks to ensure complete cooking. Marinating meat adds another layer of flavour.

The consistency can vary from a thick rich gravy to a thin watery soup based on your preference. This version gives a medium thick gravy.

If you want a velvety gravy, blend the gravy after cooking with a dash of oil/butter, after removing the chillies.

# Molaga Thokku

## Tamil chilli dip

<https://youtu.be/uhFiTVftxGU>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 30 whole green chillies (200g)

Layer 3: 1/2C deseeded tamarind (60g)

Layer 4: 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 1tbsp each (salt, jaggery)

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Blend all.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

## **Replace/Supplement**

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Green chillies with soaked dry red chillies.
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix.

## **Tips:**

1. Add more oil/tamarind for longer shelf life.
2. Release pressure for a better colour.
3. A bit of jaggery rounds off the taste.
4. Wash the chillies in vinegar/mix in a dash of vinegar if you want a greater shelf life.
5. A dash of coconut oil is sometimes added after cooking for an extra bit of flavour.
6. Roasted urad dal can be blended along with chillies to give the thokku a body.
7. Ensure the spice powders do not seep to the bottom and get burnt.
8. You can replace fresh green chillies with dry red chillies which have been soaked in water/vinegar.



Thokku is a mashed pickle – a thick, smooth dip. Thokkus rely on a souring agent, spices and oil for a long shelf life.

They fall into many classes

1. Raw Thokku (Mango Thokku)
2. Simmered Thokku (Tomato Thokku)
3. Roasted thokku (Molaga Thokku, Kathirikka thokku)
4. Non Veg Thokku (Fish thokku, dried fish thokku, chicken thokku, prawn thokku)

Chillies and a souring agent are mandatory in a thokku. The molaga thokku is the most basic roasted thokku using just chillies, tamarind and basic spices. Elaborate versions can be built from this base using more additives. Let's cover them separately.

This thokku can accompany idly, dosa or even flatbreads. It can be mixed in with hot rice or be served as a pickle to accompany curd rice/Neer aagaram or paruppu sadham.

Making molaga thokku the traditional way calls for roasting chillies/chilli paste in oil. It is not a pleasant task due to the gagging chilli fumes. OPOS completely bypasses this troublesome step. The no water cooking recipe used here imparts a grilled flavour to the thokku, and prolongs the shelf life.

This thokku is almost a pickle. So treat it like a pickle (never touch it with hand, use only dry spoons for handling it, ensure there is enough oil to seal the surface) and it will last weeks unrefrigerated and months refrigerated.

A tiny bit of thokku is all that is needed to spice up a meal!

# More Kulambu

## Tamil Yogurt stew

<https://youtu.be/DEgdYSRZXz0>

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1 green chilli, 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin), 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1tbsp roasted channa dal and 1tsp coconut oil to a smooth paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped ash gourd

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C whisked yogurt .

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ashgourd with your favourite vegetables.
- Green chilli with dry red chilli.
- Coconut with soaked lentils (tuvar/channa dal)
- Yogurt with sour buttermilk.

### **Tips:**

1. Yogurt curdles and loses its fresh taste on boiling.
2. Yogurt cooks well in retained heat.
3. Skip turmeric powder if you want a white curry.

Kulambu is a sour stew, usually cooked with tamarind. In more kulambu (buttermilk sour stew), we use yogurt/buttermilk as a souring agent, instead of tamarind. It is a very simple stew and need not even be cooked, though it is normally briefly heated. Konkani Tambli is a version of uncooked More Kulambu.

The North Indian Kadi belongs to the more kulambu family and uses pakodi

(fried gram flour dumplings) in place of vegetables. Though not traditional, a variety of fermented milk products from across the world (Kefir, Viili, Kaymak, Sour cream etc) or other yogurts (goat, mare, camel) can also be used to cook up never before cooked, exotic more kulambu.

In the common variety, a mixture of coconut, cumin, green/red chillies are blended together with various combinations of roast and ground fenugreek, coriander, soaked/roasted lentils to form the base.

In an interesting variation, the Devasa More kulambu (cooked during death anniversaries) is ultra orthodox and uses black pepper (native to India) instead of chillies (the ‘foreign’ import).

A variety of fried spices like mustard, curry leaves, fenugreek, red chilli, asafoetida are used for additional flavouring. Here, it is replaced with bottled tadka.

This stew can be cooked with any of your favourite vegetables, but traditionally ash gourd, stir-fried okra and chow chow is most commonly used. Like the Kadi, More kulambu tastes great when cooked with pre cooked stuff (boiled lentil balls – paruppu urundai, pakodi or even torn papad). You can even use masala vada/bonda as a vegetable substitute.

# Moru Kari

## Kerala buttermilk stew

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1 green chilli, 1/2tsp each (cumin, salt), 1/8tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida) and 1tsp coconut oil to a thick, smooth paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/2C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 5 crushed curry leaves

Layer 3: 1C chopped raw banana, 1/2tsp salt

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2C each (yogurt, salt).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with your favourite vegetables.
- Green chilli with black pepper.
- Yogurt with sour buttermilk.
- Cumin with roasted fenugreek.

#### **Tips:**

1. Yogurt curdles and loses its fresh taste on boiling.
2. Yogurt cooks well in retained heat.
3. Can add shallots/garlic in layer 2 for more flavor.

Moru Curry (Butter Milk Curry) is a staple in many Malayali homes. It is usually paired with hot cooked rice.

Every cuisine in India has its own version of a yogurt stew. All are built from the yogurt base, flavouring and additives. The flavouring and additives vary with the region. Some cuisines beef up the stew with a protein rich paste, which also acts as a thickener.

Tamilnadu uses a paste of soaked and ground lentils to cook up the More Kulambu.

North India uses gram flour to thicken the stew into a Kadhi. Kerala uses coconut paste and cooks up the More Kari.

We take this theme one step further and pair it with a starch (raw banana) to turn the protein rich stew into a balanced meal. With starch from banana, protein from yogurt, coconut and fat from coconut oil, this stew becomes a full meal, and can be drunk like a soup even without pairing it with rice.

Variations of the same theme are cooked across Kerala with different ingredients being blended with coconut - onions, shallots, curry leaves, red chillies, garlic, pepper, coriander are all blended in. Some versions call for using raw yogurt, making this a kind of blended raita. Others call for minimal cooking without letting the yogurt boil. The OPOS version mixes yogurt with the cooked curry, relying on the residual heat to mildly cook the yogurt. You can cook it longer in an open pan, if you like yogurt well cooked.

# Mudda Pappu

## Telugu mashed lentils

In a 2L cooker add 1/2C tuvar dal, 1tsp ghee, 1C water, 1/4tsp turmeric powder. Mix. Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash with 1/2tsp salt.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar with mung/masoor dals.
- Raw dals with roasted dals for a nuttier taste.
- Ghee with oil.

### **Tips:**

1. Serve with hot rice and pickle.
2. Soak tuvar dal for faster cooking.
3. Oil/ghee minimises spewing.
4. Can add 1/4tsp asafoetida for more flavour.

Mudda Pappu (Lumpy lentils) is probably one of the simplest themes in Indian cuisine. Just boil lentils with water. Eat mixed with hot rice and ghee, accompanied by a pickle. That's it!

The Mudda Pappu/Gatti Pappu (Thick Dal) or/Chappati Pappu (Bland Dal) is revered in Telugu cuisine. No Andhra lunch/dinner is complete without a serving Mudda Pappu as the first course. It is also mandatory in festive feasts. It is the ultimate Telugu comfort food. Diners would mix it with the hot, steaming rice (Usually Sona masoori), some ghee and the fiery mango pickle, Avakkaya.

This theme is also echoed in the Tamil Kalathu paruppu (lentils for the plate). Dal and rice take roughly the same time to cook. In many homes, rice and dal get cooked in the same pressure cooker. The dal used is usually Tuavr dal and is not spiced or salted. It is then served with rice and eaten mixed with ghee. Some versions call for roasting the lentils before cooking them. This lends a

warm, nutty taste to the dish.

Though only Tuvar dal and Mung dal are usually used for this theme, a variety of thin lentils can be used to extend this theme. Similarly, replacing water with a variety of stocks can lend an additional layer of complexity to this dish. A majority of the Mudda Pappus are not spiced. But you can add your own flavourings to spice it up. Crushed cumin, chopped onion, garlic, herbs, chopped chillies etc are occasionally added.

The cooked lentils are usually mashed with a wooden mallet, the "pappu gutti".

Apart from pickles, Mudda pappu is also accompanied by tangy, spicy curries like pulusu/pachadis. The combination of pappu rice and ghee is so revered, that it is offered to Gods on festive occasions. It is one of the first solid meals given to children and forms a part of early childhood memories.

Pappu is the chief source of protein in the vegetarian Brahmin diet. It is so identified with the community that Andhra Brahmins get teased as Pappu (Lentil eaters) the same way Tamil Brahmins get called as Thayir Sadham (Curd rice eaters). The especially geeky ones get to be called Mudda Pappu! The colloquial Telugu term “Pappu suddi” also denotes a simpleton (one who knows nothing but his dal).

This recipe uses a dash of ghee to minimise foaming and omits the addition of salt which inhibits cooking. If you are using mung dal, then soaking is not required.

# Muga Mole Randayi

## Konkani sprouts stew

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1tsp each (pepper, salt, tamarind paste), 1/4tsp asafoetida and 1tsp coconut oil to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp coconut oil,

Layer 2: 5 curry leaves, 1/2C mung sprouts

Layer 3: 1C chopped raw banana

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung sprouts with your favourite sprouts.
- Banana with your favourite vegetables.
- Water with stock.
- Pepper with chillies.
- Coconut with coconut milk/coconut milk powder.

#### **Tips:**

1. Coarsely mash for a more even texture.
2. Use coconut milk for a creamy gravy.
3. Use new tamarind for a bright colour.
4. Use Bydaghi chillies for a bright red colour.
5. Vary the amount of coconut, tamarind and chillies to your taste.
6. Can blend in more flavouring of your choice - the basic randayi then becomes a masala randayi.
7. Use coconut oil for the tadka.

Muga Mole Randayi (Konkani Mung Sprout Gravy) is one of the most loved curries of the Konkani coast. It is mandatory in all celebrations, weddings

and temple festivals. Along with Dalitoy (Lentil stew) and Upkari (Dry vegetable curry) it forms the Holy Trinity of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin Cuisine.

The Gaud Saraswat Brahmins are a branch of the Saraswat Brahmins who lived on the banks of the lost river Saraswathi. The river originated from the Himalayan glaciers and flowed through North West India, into the Arabian sea. Hinduism was founded on the banks of Saraswathi.

It was not the mighty Ganges, but Saraswati which was held in high esteem in Vedic times. In the Rig Veda, the mother of all Vedas, Ganga is mentioned once, but Saraswati is mentioned at least 60 times. It is extolled as “ambitame, naditame, devitame Saraswati.” The, finest mother, finest river, finest goddess is Saraswati). It was so revered, that it is still worshipped, 5000 years after it disappeared.

When Saraswathi started drying up, agriculture failed. Saraswat Brahmins ended up eating fish to survive. Many of them still remain pesco-vegetarian. The failing river forced them to move. One branch trekked down the West coast, settling all over the Konkan coast. Their language, cuisine and customs slowly morphed, but they still remain one of the most orthodox sects in India, holding on to rituals and traditions dating back to over 3000 years.

This recipe is a classic example of one of such ancient tradition stretching back thousands of years. It has been cooked unchanged in Konkani temples, exactly the same way for millenia. You'll note that all ingredients used are native to Indian cuisine, as orthodox recipes/temple cuisines still frown on anything that has entered India 'recently'. It takes 500- 1000 years for a new ingredient to be accepted into the Temple cuisine. Since chillies came into India only around 450 years back, they are still avoided in many temple cuisines. Same is the case with potatoes and all other 'English' vegetables, which were introduced by the 'English' (Europeans). Till date, no temple cuisine uses them for ritualistic cooking.

Konkani cuisine is built on coconut, like the Keralite cuisine, due to the abundance of coconut trees on the West coast. In this curry, the classic Konkani triad of Coconut, Tamarind and Chillies is blended together, forming a thin paste which acts as a base for randayis. This randayi is the mother sauce, out of which innumerable Konkani curries flow

When the stew is thickened with more coconut, it is called a Ghasi.

When onions are used in the tadka, along with mustard and curry leaves, it is

called an Ambat.

When garlic is used in the tadka along with mustard and curry leaves, you get a Koddel.

When mustard is blended along with coconut, tamarind and chillies, it becomes a Sassam.

When roasted/stir-fried coriander are blended along with the basic paste you get the Sagle.

When stir-fried urd dhal is blended in and the curry is cooked almost dry, you get a Sukke.

All these dishes are prepared with native Indian vegetables like Vali Randayi (Spinach), Tingalavre Randayi (White beans), Kuvale Dhavi Randayi (Ash gourd), Kirla Randayi (Bamboo shoots), Beru halasu Randayi (Bread fruit), Chakko Chane Randayi (Jack fruit and Chickpeas), Navalkol Randayi (Kohlrabi), Gajbaje Randayi (Mixed vegetables), Gosale Randayi (Ridge gourd), Bhende Randayi (Okra), Chakke kadgi Randayi (Jack fruit), Magge Randayi (Yellow cucumber) and many more.

Later potatoes and even corn found their way into this curry. This theme need not be limited by the vegetable and legume combination listed here. You can use any combination of your favourite vegetables/sprouts/soaked legumes.

The building blocks of a Randayi are coconut, a souring agent, chillies and the additives. These building blocks vary from region to region. Tamarind gets replaced by Kokkum, chillies by pepper/sichuan pepper and some versions are cooked with Tuvar dal instead of sprouts. Some versions even replace the vegetable protein (dal) with prawns, cooking up Sungata Randayi (Shrimp curry). Randayi is usually served with string hoppers, rice, idli, dosa etc.

# Mushroom Kuruma

## Tamil mushroom coconut curry

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 3 cashews, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 4 mint leaves, 2 green chillies, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp each (fennel, garam masala), 1/4tsp turmeric powder and 1tsp oil to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped mushrooms

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mix in 1/4C coconut milk.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mushrooms with your favourite vegetables.
- Oil with butter/ghee.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Cashew with roasted gram/other nuts/seeds.
- Coconut milk with cream/milk.

### **Tips:**

1. Spiced coconut paste can be refrigerated for a month and frozen forever.

# Naadan Parippu Kari

## Malayali dal

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 2 green chillies, 1tsp cumin to a paste.

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C mung dal, 1.5C water, spiced coconut paste, 2tsp coconut oil, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 2 crushed garlic cloves.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 5 crushed curry leaves.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung with tuvar/masoor dals.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.
- Curry leaves with your favourite herbs.
- Chilli with crushed pepper.
- Garlic with asafoetida.

### **Tips:**

1. Presoak lentils for faster cooking.
2. Use roasted lentils for a nuttier taste.

Naadan Parippu Kari (Native Lentil Curry)/Naadan Katti parippu (Native thick lentils) is Kerala's answer to the pan Indian lentil curry.

Among the five southern states, Kerala uses the least amount of dals, probably because the place of dal is taken by coconut. Unlike the shopping list of other states where rice followed by dal would be the family's biggest expense, in Kerala it is likely to be rice followed by coconut. Some communities like the Namboodiris have a completely rice and coconut based diet, with dal being almost marginalised.

Just two varieties of lentil curries are popular in Kerala - the Kadala Kari and Parippu Kari. Kadala kari is Kerala's take on Channa masala and is cooked from the desi version of chickpeas. It is usually served with puttu.

The Parippu curry is Kerala's version of the common dal. Coconut finds its

way in here too, like it does with almost all Kerala curries. Unlike plain dals in other part of the country which omit garlic/onions, the Naadan parippu kari is most often cooked with both. Garlic is usually simmered in the curry and stir-fried shallots/onions are used as a garnish. The Brahmin versions skip garlic and onions.

Kerala follows the other southern states in serving lentils as the first course in a meal. The Parippu Kari is still the first course in the OnaSadhaya (harvest feast). In many homes it is a staple and is usually served with hot red rice, ghee and the Kerala papad, the Pappadam.

Cherupayar Parippu Curry using split and husked mung dal is most common, followed by the tuvar dal version. This theme can be extended with other lentil varieties and cooking options as described in the recipe.

# Pacha Thakkali Masala Kootu

## Tamil raw tomato curry

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1 green chilli and 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin, coconut oil, garam masala) to a smooth paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 4 slit green chillies, 2C chopped raw tomato

Layer 3: 1/4C fried/soaked mung dal

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato with your favourite vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.
- Fried dal with cooked dal/sprouts.

#### **Tips:**

1. Serve with rice/flatbreads.

This recipe demonstrates an easy way to add dal in flash cooked dishes.

Addition of protein to curries happens in numerous interesting ways, across cuisines.

In Indian cuisine, adding lentils is the most common method of adding protein. In South India, a lot of lentils is added to the tadka, to enrich dry curries. Marathis love adding gram flour/peanut powder/farsan (fried gram flour snacks) in their curries for a protein punch. In Tanjore cuisine, shallow fried and ground up lentils are added in to make Poricha Kootu. The same logic is used here with fried lentils to make the masala kootu

Masala kootu comes very close to being a korma, but for the addition of dal. The building blocks are the vegetables, the dal, coconut and flavourings.

**Vegetables:**

Any vegetable of your choice can be used.

**Dal:**

The usual kootu calls for boiled dal/fresh pulses/sprouts. Here, we use fried dals as a substitute. Regular dals do not cook to a mush in the time taken to flash cook vegetables. So boiled/pre roasted/fried dals need to be used.

Sprouts/fried gramflour snacks can also be used.

**Coconut:**

Coconut paste/grated coconut is a building block of a kootu. It can be replaced with coconut milk, for a milder version.

**Flavourings:**

Cumin, chillies, coconut oil and the vegetables themselves are responsible for the flavour,

**Lentils:**

Fresh lentils/sprouts/fried lentils/spiced lentil powder/cooked dal is preferred to raw dal as they can be layered and flashed along with the vegetables.

# Pachi Pulusu

## Telugu raw tamarind stew

Mix 4tsp tamarind paste, 1/2C finely chopped onion, 1tsp each (salt, chilli powder), 2C water and 1/4C chopped cilantro.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind paste with your favourite sour fruit pulp.
- Chilli powder with pepper powder/green chilli paste.
- Cilantro with your favourite fresh herbs.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in sugar/jaggery.
2. Can mix in coconut milk.

All South Indian curries are built from four bases: YTDC (Yogurt, Tamarind, Dal and Coconut). Different combinations of these give rise to different curries.

It is interesting that each of these building blocks can be converted into a curry with no further cooking.

Raw soaked dal is made into kosambaris in Udupi cuisine. Raw coconut is blended into chutneys all across the South. Raw yogurt becomes Thayir pachadi in Tamilnadu. Raw Tamarind is used to cook up the pachi pulusu, popular in coastal Andhra.

Andhra Pradesh, being one of the largest producers of chillies in the world, is famous for its tangy and spicy curries.

Andhra cuisine can be divided across three regions - The eastern Kosta (Coastal Andhra), the northern Telangana and southern Rayalaseema. Kosta is famous for its fiery tamarind curries and spicy sea food, Telungana for its Mogul influenced cuisine and Rayalaseema for its vegetable curries.

In coastal Andhra, tamarind is much loved and is added to just about anything. It is here you'll find tamarind eaten raw and even young tamarind

leaves being used in curries. Hardened by centuries on a spicy tamarind – chilli diet, the coastal cuisine seems to have been immunized against the relatively bland Muslim or Christian cuisines. This is probably why despite its proximity to the centre of the Muslim rule, coastal Andhra cuisine shows little signs of the Muslim influence. This is why Vijayawada cuisine is so very different from Hyderabadi cuisine.

The pachi pulusu, popular in this region is just spiced up raw tamarind water. It is eaten mixed with rice, exactly like a rasam. To compensate for the lack of lentils, mudda pappu (boiled tuvar dal) and papads usually accompany it. Pulusu in Telugu does not mean Tamarind, but denotes sourness. Though tamarind is the primary souring agent, this theme is all about spicing up any sour liquid. If the sour liquid is yogurt, this recipe becomes a raita. It works the other way too - echoes of this curry exist in the North Indian cuisine as the Imli raita where yogurt is replaced by tamarind. The Konkani cuisine has its famous Sol kadi which is nothing but a pachi pulusu where Kokkum replaces tamarind.

In the sour liquid base, salt, chilli powder (or roasted and crushed chillies) and chopped onions are added. Fresh herbs (usually cilantro) are also mixed in. In an interesting variation, roast and ground peanuts/sesame are also mixed in.

Try your own variations by varying the sour liquid, spices and additives!

# Pandu Mirpakkaya Pachadi

## Andhra's red chilli chutney

Blend 100g ripe red chillies, 40g tamarind, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 2tsp salt, 2tbsp sesame oil to a coarse paste. Bottle.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ripe red chillies with soaked dry red chillies.
- Turmeric powder with fenugreek powder/your favourite spice mix.
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Tamarind pulp with your favourite sour fruit pulp.

### **Tips:**

1. Use new tamarind for a brighter colour.
2. Select chillies which are bright and plump.
3. Dry chillies completely before using.
4. Prefer sea salt.
5. Mix in bottled tadka before serving.

Pandu Mirpakkaya Pachadi (Telugu: Ripe Chilli Pickle) is a part of the Holy Trinity of Telugu Pickles along with Avakkaya and Gongura. All these three are staples in many Telugu households, especially those from coastal Andhra (Kosta), which loves tamarind and chillies in any form. These pickles are staples, being served at every meal.

It is also called as Korivi kaaram (Fiercely Hot/Fierce Chilli). It is blended like a chutney, but is used like a pickle.

When chillies came into India 500 years back, we embraced them. Andhra, especially, fell head over heels for chillies - so much so that Guntur is today the world's largest chilli producer. This pickle lends support to the school of thought that Andhra cuisine is the hottest in India.

In the traditional method, ripe red chillies are washed, allowed to dry and have their stalks removed. They are then ground on a stone slab with salt

without any addition of water. Tamarind is deveined, deseeded, shaped into a ball and is buried in this paste. After a few days, the softened tamarind pulp is removed, ground into a paste and mixed in with the chilli paste.

There are two drawbacks in the traditional method.

1. Washing with water
2. Handling the paste

Even tiny amounts of water can dramatically shorten the life of the pickle. Even if the chillies are dried after washing, the chances of a few drops of water getting into the pickle exist. Instead, if chillies are washed in vinegar, they need not even be dried after washing.

In the traditional method, paste gets scooped up by hand many times, which shortens the life of the pickle. In this recipe, we blend everything at one shot in a blender, without ever touching them. This pickle will thus have a longer life than the traditional versions.

PMP is usually eaten mixed with these popular combinations:

- Hot rice and ghee
- Hot rice, mashed tuvar dal and ghee
- Hot rice, spiced lentil powder (podi) and sesame oil.

It is used as a dip for idlis, dosas and pesarattu. It is often paired with curd rice. In Kerala, a variant of this dip is eaten mixed with boiled Tapioca. In Maharashtra, another variant Kempu Karam, is paired with flatbreads.

In Andhra, this pickle is also used as a base to create more variants as and when needed.

Some households mix in roasted fenugreek powder and asafoetida into the pickle just before serving. In many places, tadka is mixed in. Chopped onion or crushed garlic is also mixed in before serving. In some recipes, the pickle is briefly cooked along with the tadka and diluted with water to the desired consistency. You can make it as simple or as elaborate as you wish!

Use a variety of ripe/raw chillies, souring agents, additives and spices to whip up your own variations. The ripe chillies of the hottest chilli variety Bhoot Jalokia is occasionally available, and you can shock your Telugu friends by presenting them their favourite Pachadi, in its fieriest possible avatar!

The souring agent and absence of water ensures this pickle stays fresh for months, without refrigeration. It can be refrigerated for a much longer life. Chilli 'cooks' in the sour tamarind juice and slowly mellows on storage, gradually losing its fierce bite.

PMP memories from a friend: "My grandfather used to preside over the rice harvest, deep inside Andhra. The labourers were always fed on the harvest day. A huge cauldron of fresh cooked, steaming hot rice would be made. A clean dhothi would be spread over grass/hay. Scoops of the steaming rice would be ladled on it as mounds.

A big bowl of Pandu Mirpakkaya Pachadi would be prepared. Each labourer would get a mound of steaming rice and a dollop of the pickle. That's it - it was a feast in itself ! The fresh cooked rice and this fiery pickle was all you needed after hours of toiling under the hot sun ."

He was salivating when telling me this story. Do try this delightfully fiery pickle from the Telugu cuisine!

# Parangikka Paal Kootu

## Tamil vegetable – lentil milk stew

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1 green chilli and 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin, coconut oil, garam masala) to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C (250g) chopped yellow pumpkin

Layer 3: 1/4C each (cooked mung dal, coconut- cumin- chilli paste), 1tsp jaggery

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C coconut milk.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

1. Squash with your favourite vegetables.
2. Coconut oil with your favourite oil.
3. Mung with tuvar/masoor dal.

#### **Tips:**

- Vary cut size of vegetables to vary texture.
- Ensure dal/coconut paste does not touch the base of the cooker.

Parangikai Paal Kootu (Foreign Vegetable Milk Medley) is a mild Tamil stew. The yellow pumpkin is not native to India. It was brought in by the Europeans who took it out of the New World. This explains the name of the vegetable. Parangi does not mean anything in Tamil. Very likely it comes from the Hindi word Firangi (Foreigner).

There are other 'parangi' terms in Tamil. St. Thomas Mount in Chennai is referred to as Parangi Malai (Foreign Mount) as it was once populated by the British. Parangipettai (Foreign Place) in Cuddalore district was a key colony for Portuguese, Dutch and English. In the movie Veera Pandiya Kattabomman, Sivaji insults the (Blond haired) British collector

(Lushington?) as Parangi Thalayan (Foreign Head). In Tamil literature, Parangiyar (Foreigners) is commonly used to denote Europeans.

Parangi Sambrani (Gum resin) and Parangi Chakkai (China root) are available in desi medicine shops. The Parangi prefix seems like an easy way to name anything new.

By the same logic, Potato could have been very well called Parangi Kizhangu (Foreign tuber)

The Pal Kootu is a milder version of a regular kootu. Like a regular kootu, the building blocks are coconut, lentils and vegetables. Instead of water, the vegetables are cooked with milk. Jaggery is often added for a sweet note. Many versions play down or even omit coconut and lentils and rely on rice flour for thickening.

#### Coconut:

This recipe includes coconut to ensure the kootu theme is followed. Many traditional recipes skip coconut paste, adding coconut milk instead. In some versions, even coconut milk is omitted, being replaced by milk. This is one of the very few instances of milk being used in a savoury South Indian curry.

#### Lentils:

Many versions minimise or even skip lentils altogether. When dal is used, it is most likely to be mung dal. In some versions, the only dal in the kootu comes from the tadka.

#### Vegetables:

Neutral vegetables (Snake gourd, ridge gourd, potato, bottle gourd etc) or those with a slight sweet taste (Tender Yellow pumpkin: Elankottai) are preferred. Tender vegetables are preferred in all versions. Vegetables that colour/are bitter/slimy are avoided. The vegetables can be cooked to a mush or cooked just enough so that they retain a bite.

#### Flavouring:

The flavour comes from the vegetables, coconut oil, curry leaves and cumin. Sambar powder is not used in traditional versions. Instead, a chilli - cumin paste is more common. The use of sambar powder and paruppu podi takes this version close to a varuthu araicha kootu (Roast and ground Kootu).

#### Serving:

Being mild, Paal kootu is usually paired with a spicy Kulambu/thogayal and served with rice. This kootu is actually a korma in disguise and so will pairs well with flatbreads too.

# Paruppu Urunda More Kulambu

Tamil yogurt stew with lentil dumplings

Crush roasted papads to have 1/2C papad powder. Mix in 1/4C water and shape into small balls.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 3 chopped chillies

Layer 3: 1C chopped coconut, 1tbsp soaked tuvar dal

Layer 4: 1/2tsp turmeric, 1/2tsp each (cumin, salt)

Layer 5: Papad balls.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Remove balls. Blend rest with 1C yogurt, 2tsp coconut oil. Mix all.

## **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Papad balls with soaked and ground spiced lentil balls.
- Green chillies with dry red chillies.
- Yogurt with sour butter milk/other sour liquids.
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix.

### **Tips:**

1. The softness of the papad balls varies with the brand of papad you use.

This is a signature dish of Tamil Brahmin cuisine. Tamilnadu, home to one of world's oldest culinary heritages, has four distinct cuisines. The pure vegetarian Cauvery delta Brahmin cuisine of central Tamilnadu uses just the basic spices. The agrarian Kongunad cuisine uses groundnut paste, shallots, copra, minor millets (Samai, Thinai) sorghum (jowar/cholam), red millet (ragi/kelvragu) and pearl millet (bajra/kambu). Mutton, chicken and freshwater fish is occasionally used. The non-vegetarian Chettinad trader cuisine of Karaikudi liberally uses meat and exotic spices like marathi mokku

(dried flower pods), anasipoo (star anise) and kalpasi (dried lichens).

The Muslim cuisine of Tamil speaking descendants of Arab traders (Maraikairs, Labbais and Rowtars) of coastal Tamilnadu, is a mixture of Arab, Indian and Mughlai cuisine. Though mutton and chicken are extensively used in Tamil Muslim cuisine, in deference to Hindu beliefs, beef is usually avoided.

Kulambu is a sour stew, usually cooked with tamarind. In more kulambu (buttermilk sour stew), we use yogurt/buttermilk as a souring agent, instead of tamarind. It is a very simple stew and need not even be cooked, though it is normally briefly heated. Konkani Tambli is a version of uncooked More Kulambu.

The North Indian Kadi belongs to the more kulambu family and uses pakodi (fried gram flour dumplings) in place of vegetables. Though not traditional, a variety of fermented milk products from across the world (Kefir, Viili, Kaymak, sour cream etc) or other yogurts (goat, mare, camel) can also be used to cook up never before cooked, exotic more kulambu variations.

In the common variety, a mixture of coconut, cumin, green/red chillies are blended together with various combinations of roast and ground fenugreek, coriander, soaked/roasted lentils to form the base. In an interesting variation, the Devasa More kulambu cooked on death anniversary rituals, is ultra orthodox and uses black pepper (native to India) instead of chillies (the ‘foreign’ import).

A variety of fried spices like mustard, curry leaves, fenugreek, red chilli, asafoetida are used for additional flavouring. Here, it is replaced with bottled tadka.

This stew can be cooked with any of your favourite vegetables, but traditionally Ash gourd, stir-fried okra and chow chow are most commonly used. Like the Kadi, More kulambu tastes great when cooked with pre cooked stuff (boiled lentil balls – paruppu urundai, pakodi or even torn papad). You can even use masala vada/bonda as a vegetable substitute. This recipe uses papad balls as an easy alternative to the laborious soaked, ground and steamed lentil balls.

# Paruppu Urundai Kuzambu

## Tamil sour stew with lentil dumplings

<https://youtu.be/4D2X7JZw4Ao>

Mix 1/2C crushed roasted papad powder, 1/4C finely chopped onions, 1tbsp each chopped (chilli, mint), 2tbsp water. Shape into small balls.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion arranged in a ring with 1C chopped, deseeded tomatoes at the centre

Layer 3: 1tsp sambar powder, 1tbsp tamarind paste, 1tsp salt, 6 curry leaves

Layer 4: Papad balls

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mash all except papad balls.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Papad with spiced lentil powder/soaked and ground lentils/nut powder/gram flour.
- Onions with shallots.
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix.
- Tamarind with your favourite souring agent.

### **Tips:**

1. Add more water and simmer if needed.
2. Shape loosely if the papad balls become hard.

# Pazham Pachadi

## Tamil fruit preserve

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2 crushed cardamoms

Layer 2: 1/2C each (seedless grapes, pomegranate pearls)

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (banana, apple)

Layer 4: 1/2C sugar.

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana/apples with your favourite fruits.
- Sugar with jaggery/honey.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in roasted nuts/dry fruits.
2. Use sour fruits and more sugar for longer shelf life.
3. Treat it like a pickle.
4. Vary the amount of sweetener to your taste.
5. Can mix in cream/icecream and serve as an instant fruit salad.
6. The pachadi would look watery but would thicken on cooling.

Pazham Pachadi (Fruit Curry) is just mixed fruits simmered in sugar syrup. This is mandatory in Tamil Brahmin weddings. A similar version exists in Kerala as the madhura pachadi, which uses yogurt and coconut, turning it into a semi curry.

This theme might have evolved as a way of using up the leftover fruits in a wedding, as it is rarely cooked at homes. It might have started off as a variant of the more common manga vella pachadi, where raw mango is simmered with jaggery and spices. Other variants cooked in houses (especially down South), use tomato, pineapple or even beetroot. Mixed fruit pachadis are common mostly in wedding feasts and in restaurants as a part of the Thali.

Cooking with fruits is very rare in South Indian cuisine. Apart from mango, virtually no fruit finds its way into Tamil curries. This theme is a notable exception. The high sugar content means this can be stored unrefrigerated for days. Refrigerated, it can last weeks.

The core building blocks of this theme are the fruits, sweetener, additives and flavouring. Change these to create your own versions.

# Pazham Pulissery

## Kerala's fruit and yogurt stew

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 2 green chillies, 1tsp each (cumin, coconut oil), 1/2tsp salt and 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C peeled and chopped ripe banana

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C yogurt.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with mango/pineapple/other fruits.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.

#### **Tips:**

1. Nendram pazham, a variety of banana grown in Kerala is ideal.
2. Can add sugar/jaggery.
3. Can add 1/4tsp roasted fenugreek powder for a hint of bitterness.

# Pavakka Thokku

## Tamil Bitter Gourd sour dip

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp each (water, sesame oil)

Layer 2: 250g chopped and deseeded bitter gourd

Layer 3: 10 dry red chillies (10g)

Layer 4: 4 garlic cloves, 3tsp each (tamarind paste, jaggery), 1tsp each (salt, sambar powder), 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powders)

Cook on high heat for 8 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Blend all.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Bittergourd with your favourite non watery vegetables.
- Tamarind with mango powder/your favourite souring agent.
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix chopped bittergourd with salt and squeeze out bitter juices.
2. No need to deseed if using tender gourds.

Pavakka Thokku (Bittergourd Reduction) belongs to the family of Thokkus where vegetables/herbs/spices/fruits are cooked with a souring agent and spices into a thick dip.

The building blocks of a Pavakka Thokku are Bitter gourd, a souring agent and spices. Most thokkus have a bitter spice (usually fenugreek) added. It is omitted here as the main vegetable itself is bitter. The same theme can be extended with your favourite vegetables, as long as they are not too watery.

The colour of this thokku can vary from light green to brown depending on the tamarind used and the spice powders. Use old tamarind (black tamarind) and Kashmiri chillies if you want a darker colour.

The chilli seeds do not blend well with a hand blender. If you want a really smooth thokku, you can soak the chillies in water, use fresh green chillies or use chilli powder instead.

You can reduce the bitterness of the bitter gourd by mixing the chopped vegetable with a bit of salt, letting it rest and then rinsing it. Salt draws the bitter juices out and reduces the bitterness of the vegetable.

This can be made smooth or chunky depending on your personal preference. If you like a chunky dip, chop the bitter gourd real fine, use chilli powder instead of whole chillies and just mix/coarsely mash all together after cooking instead of blending it. This thokku is usually eaten mixed with rice and can even double as a spicy, tangy poriyal.

Try out your variations with other vegetables!

# Pitla

## Marathi Gramflour Stew

In a small vessel, mix 1/4C roasted gram flour, 1.5C water, 1tsp each (chilli powder, salt) and 1/4 tsp each (turmeric, cumin powders).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion, 2 chopped garlic cloves and 10 curry leaves in a ring, leaving a space in the centre.

Layer 3: Place the vessel in the middle of the ring.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Mix all with 2tsp lemon juice.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Gram flour with roasted lentil powder.
- Cumin powder with your favourite spice mix.
- Water with buttermilk.
- Curry leaves with your favourite fresh herbs.

### **Tips:**

1. Can simmer longer to get a thicker stew.

# Podalanga Kootu

## Tamil snake gourd - lentil - coconut stew

<https://youtu.be/dGuJYYJ6iuw>

Blend 1/4C coconut, 1 green chilli, 1/2tsp each (cumin, salt), 1 tsp coconut oil and 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida) to a paste .

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped snake gourd

Layer 3: 1/4C each soaked (mung dal, channa dal)

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Snakegourd with your favourite vegetables.
- Mung dal with other cooked lentils.
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.

#### **Tips:**

1. Mix in 1/2tsp garam masala for masala kootu,
2. 1 tsp tamarind paste for puli kootu.
3. 2 tsp jaggery and 1/2C milk for pal kootu.
4. 1/4C yogurt for thayir kootu.

# Podi Kari

## Tamil vegetable curry with spiced lentil powder

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped eggplant (250g)

Layer 3: 1/4tsp each (chilli powder, salt)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C spiced lentil powder (OPOS Podi).

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggplant with other non-watery vegetables.
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.

### **Tips:**

1. Can use any spiced lentil powder (Paruppu podi (lentils), poondu podi (garlic), Thenga molaga podi.(Coconut) etc. See OPOS Podi for details.

Our pickles and podis are instant curries in disguise. Just add cooked vegetables to them and they transform them into an instant curry. Experiment with your favourite vegetables.

# Pongal Kuzambu

## Tamil winter harvest stew

[https://youtu.be/ql4ECVtll\\_8](https://youtu.be/ql4ECVtll_8)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (banana, broad beans, cluster beans, squash, eggplant)

Layer 4: 1/4C fresh green peas.

Layer 5: 1tsp each (salt, chilli powder, jaggery), 1/2tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with other starchy vegetables.
- Beans with your favourite vegetables.
- Green peas with fresh legumes.
- Tomato with tamarind paste.
- Chilli powder with sambar powder/other spice mixes.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can add more water if you want a thinner stew.
2. Ensure starchy vegetables do not touch the base.
3. Cut tough cooking vegetables into smaller chunks.
4. Can mix in cooked tuvar dal.

Many cultures have their winter harvest special dishes, when winter vegetables are abundant and at their freshest peak. The end of winter and the beginning of spring is celebrated with an array of dishes. The Gujaratis have their Undhiyu. Malayalis have their Aviyal. Tamils have their Thiruvadhirai kootu and Pongal Kulambu.

All these rely on a mix of winter vegetables for their flavour and taste. As a

rule, almost all are minimally spiced - letting the vegetables speak for themselves.

Though they are usually paired with a starch, they make a full balanced meal all by themselves, with a balance of starch, protein and fat.

Odd numbered vegetables are usually added (as even numbers signify an end in some cultures). Pongal Kulambu, also called as Pala kaai kootu, Kootu kai Kulambu, 5 kari Kulambu and Puli kari uses a mix of 5 country vegetables. These are cooked into a thick stew and served with both sweet pongal (chakkara pongal) and white pongal.

The building blocks are the mixed vegetables, a souring agent, a sweetener and basic spices (chilli powder and turmeric powder).

Vegetables:

- Starch (Banana, karunai kizhangu, colocasia, sweet potato, etc.);
- Protein (fresh green peas, cow peas, mochai, etc.);
- Micronutrients (shallots, bottle gourd, eggplant, broad beans, cluster beans, squash, drumsticks, etc.) are all used.
- The orthodox versions skip shallots/garlic and English vegetables.

Some versions have morphed to add tuvar dal/mung dal for the protein, when fresh pulses are not easily available. You can add your own mix of seasonal vegetables depending on where you live.

Souring agent:

A Kulambu is defined by sourness. So tamarind is commonly added. Some versions use tomatoes for the tang. This also lets the curry stay unrefrigerated for over a day. Coconut is usually avoided.

The sourness is balanced by a slight sweetness. This comes from jaggery or from vegetables like squash, which are mildly sweet.

Spices:

Chilli powder and turmeric powder are the only spices used in many versions. You can supplement it with spices of your choice.

In the conventional method, tamarind pulp is simmered and vegetables are cooked separately, mixed in with the tamarind pulp and simmered together.

We replace this multi step process with the layer and flash technique.

## Poondu Kulambu

### Chettinad Shallot Sour Stew

<https://youtu.be/kX-j4N1XXAg>

Blend 1/4 chopped coconut, 1tbsp tamarind paste, 2tsp each (coriander powder, sambar powder), 1 dry red chilli, 1tsp each (fennel, jaggery, salt) and 2tsp oil to a smooth paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 3tsp sesame oil.

Layer 2: 25 shallots (200g) and 15 garlic cloves (50g) placed in a ring, 1C chopped deseeded tomatoes placed in centre of the ring.

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Mix all with 1/2C water.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Shallots with onion.
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix.
- Jaggery with sugar.
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Coconut with other nut/seed powders (poppy seeds, cashew, almond etc).
- Can mix in water/coconut milk.
- Can use as a curry base.

#### **Tips:**

1. Sesame oil is an acquired taste. It tastes mildly bitter.
2. Ensure coconut paste is thick and does not touch the base of the cooker.
3. The more the onions caramelise, the tastier the stew.

Poondu Kulambu (Garlic sour stew) is a much loved Chettinad curry. Onion/Garlic are avoided in Brahmin cuisine and are taboo during religious feasts.

Chettinad on the other hand, adores garlic and played a large role in making garlic respectable in Tamil cuisine. It usually pairs garlic with another taboo spice - fennel. This combination of garlic and fennel appears repeatedly in Chettinad cuisine. In this theme, this pair appears along with shallots.

Chettinad takes its food seriously and always prefers the more flavourful shallots to onions, though shallots are much more expensive and take up a lot more time to peel and chop.

Various versions of this stew are cooked all over Tamilnadu. All of them have very similar building blocks.

Garlic, Onions, Tamarind, Flavouring and additives define this theme.

**Garlic:**

The more pungent, smaller cloves of the desi variety of garlic (Naatu Poondu) or the ones with bigger cloves (Mala Poondu/China Poondu) are both used. The smaller garlic cloves pack in more flavour, but are tough to peel!

**Onions:**

Both onions and shallots are used, though purists insist on the use of shallots alone. Both onions and garlic are caramelised by brief stir-frying for added flavour. In the OPOS version, this is duplicated by cooking them with minimal/no water.

**Tamarind:**

Tamarind converts this stew into a semi pickle. Any souring agent would work, but tamarind and tomatoes are most commonly used. The tanginess of the stew varies with the region. The sourer it is, the longer it lasts without refrigeration. In many places, the shelf life is prolonged by frequent boiling. This permits storage even without refrigeration. The longer it is stored, the better it gets!

**Flavouring:**

The flavouring comes from caramelised shallots/garlic themselves, with the

additional notes coming from fennel, coriander powder, sesame oil, curry leaves and chillies. More spices/herbs are added across regions. Pepper, ginger and coconut milk etc are commonly used.

**Additives:**

Coconut paste is added in some versions, converting it into a milder stew. Roasted and ground lentil powder is used as a thickener and adds some protein. Jaggery is usually added to round off the harsh sourness. The tadka of mustard, fenugreek and red chillies is common, with fenugreek supplying a mild bitter note.

**Serving:**

Poondu Kulambu is either paired with hot rice or with Idli/Dosa.

# Poondu Puli Thokku

## Chettinad Garlic Sour Dip

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 1/2C garlic cloves (100g), 2C chopped shallots (250 g)

Layer 3: 1tbsp tamarind paste, 2tsp sambar powder, 1/2tsp fennel powder,

1tsp each (salt, coriander powder, jaggery), 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Release pressure. Blend all.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Shallots with onions.
- Sambar powder with you favourite spice mix.
- Tamarind paste with sour fruit pulp.
- Fennel with cumin.
- Jaggery with sugar.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in fenugreek powder for a hint of bitterness.
2. Can stirfry on opening for a drier texture.
3. Lasts over a month refrigerated.
4. Can be served with both rice and tiffin items.

# Poori Masal

## Tamil potato curry

<https://youtu.be/yArWx5Gm81o>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 3 chopped green chillies, 5 curry leaves

Layer 3: 250g chopped potato

Layer 4: 1tsp each (salt, chopped ginger), 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash coarsely with 1/2C water.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with your favourite vegetables.
- Chilli with chilli powder.
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix.

### **Tips:**

1. Can add onions/tomatoes for a richer stew.
2. Cut potatoes smaller if you want to release pressure instantly.

If Central Asians had colonised the world, like the British did, all our gravies would probably be called Masala, instead of curries. Masala powder would have then lined the shelves of supermarkets abroad!

The word Masal came from Arabic via Persian and Urdu to become the Hindi Masala. It just meant ingredients/spices. It later came to mean a spice mix. It now denotes any curry cooked with spices. Tamil corrupted Masala to Masaal.

Technically, every one of our curries is a masala. But this term is only applied to a small set of dishes, which cannot be categorized in any other way. Dishes like Paneer Butter masala, Chicken Tikka masala are very popular North Indian restaurant dishes. The South Indians have only one masaal, the Potato masaal, commonly called just Masaal or Poori masaal.

Due to its North Indian origins, the potato masaal is usually paired with North Indian flatbreads (Poori, chappati) and is never eaten mixed with rice. A thicker version of it is used as stuffing inside dosa, converting a plain dosa to a masaal dosa. Unlike the North Indian masala, which use dairy products, the South Indian masaal skips them altogether and relies on the hardy turmeric for most of its flavour and chillies for its bite. The South Indian tadka of mustard, curry leaves, red chillies and asafoetida adds another layer of flavour.

Though almost all vegetables can be used in a masaal, Potato owns the theme. A South Indian masaal has actually come to mean only potato masal. If someone says they had Poori Masaal or Masaal Dosa, you don't need to ask them what was in it. It is almost always potatoes. Occasionally other vegetables like the eggplant and okra make a shy entrance.

One of the reasons that Potato Masaal is so popular is because it gives a thick gravy held together by the potato starch. If we use other vegetables, we will end up with unappetising solid and liquid portions. This recipe can be extended to other vegetables by using gram flour, which binds the gravy together. Gram flour is optional in potato masaal, where the gravy can be thickened by just mashing potatoes, but is essential if you use other vegetables. Add more spices, onion, tomato puree and this theme can even support meat/seafood, though they are not commonly cooked.

Try extending this basic theme with your favourite vegetables.



# Pooshinikka Sambar

Tamil sour lentil stew with winter melon

<https://youtu.be/CsDGmzgwL2s>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped winter melon

Layer 3: 1/2C cooked tuvar dal (thick)

Layer 4: 1tsp OPOS tamarind paste, 1.5tsp each (sambar powder, salt), 1/4tsp (asafoetida, turmeric powders)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C water.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind pulp with other sour fruit pulp.
- Sambar powder your favourite spice mix.
- Tuvar dal with mung/masoor dal.
- Cooked dal with soaked dal grits.
- Winter melon with your favourite vegetables.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix roasted coconut.
2. Use old tamarind for a darker colour.
3. Can use fresh/frozen vegetables.

The building blocks of a Sambar are the sour lentil base, the flavouring and the additives. The sourness comes usually from Tamarind/tomatoes and flavour from Sambar powder. A wide variety of goodies are simmered in this flavoured broth.

Sambars are versatile dishes and whole new families of them can be created by small variations of the basic building blocks.

Vary the souring agent and you have Tomato sambar, Mango sambar,

Coconut milk sambar, More Sambar etc.

Vary the lentil used and you have Pasi paruppu sambar, Iru paruppu sambar (mix of two lentils), masoor dal sambar etc.

Vary the flavouring and you have podi potta sambar, araichu vita sambar, pitlai, rasavangi, Gounder sambar, Udupi sambar, Milagu sambar etc.

Instead of sambar powder, use local spice mixes and you'll see sambar magically jumping cuisines. For example, mix in a pinch of powdered cinnamon with Tamil sambar you have the Konkani sambar.

Vary the goodies (or use none) and you have Kadamba sambar, paruppu sambar, keerai sambar, paruppu urundai sambar etc.

Sambars are probably the tastiest lentil stews on the planet. With the sour tang of tamarind balanced by lentils and spices, a good sambar can be slurped up like a soup. Sambars are uncomplicated curries, easily made when you understand the building blocks.

If you have learnt to make sour curries (kulambu), all you need to do is to add dal to turn it into a sambar. In fact, sambar is still called Paruppu Kulambu (Sour curry with lentils) in pockets of Tamilnadu.

The word 'Sambar' is most likely not a Tamil word. For ages, Kulambu was the traditional Tamil dish and not sambar. The prohibitive price of dal did not permit it to be used in daily cooking. The technique of cooking kulambu with dal was probably learned from the Marathas. Experts say the word 'Sambar' has been borrowed from Marathi. Tanjore was under the rule of Marathas in the 17th century. Legend has that Sambaji, son of Sivaji, modified a traditional Maharashtra recipe and created the first sambar. Probably apocryphal, but what is true is that the Marathas had a sambar like dish (the Amti) predating sambar.

Like any recipe, as the sambar moved into different regions, it changed form and moulded itself to accommodate local ingredients. When it moved into Tanjore from Maharashtra, it dropped kokkum and took on locally available tamarind as a souring agent.

Various regional variations of sambar exist within Tamilnadu. In Salem, we bump into garlic in sambar. Moving west across Tamilnadu, we have the

Gounder sambar which uses a pesto-like paste of cumin, black pepper, garlic and curry leaves as flavouring. Finely chopped tomato, onion and cilantro is added to the Gounder sambar just before serving.

Sambar moved further west, into Kerala through the Palghat pass, in the cook pots of the migrating Iyers. It morphed again to accommodate the easily available coconut and coconut oil. It morphed more to use yogurt as a souring agent instead of Tamarind.

Sambars in Andhra evolved into a thick stew called pappu pulusu (Lentil - Tamarind). The technique of cooking vegetables along with tuvar dal characterizes many Andhra sambars.

When sambar moved into Karnataka, Kannadigas found out a way to cook two dishes in one. They let the sambar rest after cooking. It then separates into a thin watery layer and a thick dal-rich bottom layer. They would use the watery top layer as rasam and the thick bottom layer as sambar - proving the point that rasam is nothing but a clear sambar. Karnataka also gives us the delicious, greenish, Rayar sambar. This is sambar in which dollops of blended cilantro puree has been added.

In Karnataka, we find a novel way of using onions. Onions are grilled on a open flame and the charred outer layers are removed. The grilled onion is pureed along with coconut and this paste is added to the sambar to give a unique flavour.

With easy availability of spices, it is not surprising we find cinnamon and clove in Konkani sambars, a combination which would raise the blood pressure of Tanjore Brahmins. Konkani sambars also substitute the locally abundant Kokum (*Garcinia Indica*/‘bhirnda’ or ‘bhinda’ in Konkani, ‘murugala hannu’ in Kannada) for tamarind. Moving North to Maharashtra, we bump into the ancestor of Sambar - the Amti. Amti-Bhaat-Bhaji (lentil, rice and vegetable) is the staple diet of Maharashtrians. Amti is very similar to Kannada sambars. Like them, it uses cinnamon and cloves for flavouring. Instead of Tamarind, it uses Kokum as a souring agent.

Further North, we meet another staple, the Tuver-ni-daal (Tuvar dal curry), one of the pillars of Gujarati diet. This is nothing but sambar with added ginger and green chilli paste. Like the Tamil rasavangis and pitlais, you’ll

find whole peanuts in Tuver – ni- daal.

Prepackaged Sambar powder has greatly simplified sambar making and has guaranteed uniformly flavoured sambar. Like any mass produced spice mix, the easy availability of prepackaged sambar powder is fast killing off many delightful regional spice mixes. Though it is a lot less flavourful than fresh ground spices, readymade sambar powder now dominates sambar preparation, with fresh ground spices being reserved for special occasions.

Understand the building blocks to create scores of your own sambars - it is easier than you think!



# Poriyal

## Tamil dry vegetable curry

<https://youtu.be/kxBvnuqYYz4>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 3C chopped broad beans

Layer 3: 1/4tsp each (chilli powder, salt)

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Broad beans with your favourite vegetables.
- Chilli powder with sambar powder.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in 1/4C cooked dal for a paruppu poriyal.
2. Increase cut size for a firmer texture.
3. Chop finer for a mushier texture.
4. Water is completely optional.

# Puli Inji

## Kerala's Tamarind Ginger sour dip

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped ginger (250g)

Layer 3: 1/2C thick tamarind pulp

Layer 4: 1/2C jaggery, 3tsp salt, 1/2tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida)

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Release pressure. Mash/blend.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can add chopped chillies.
2. Will thicken after cooling.

Puli Inji/Inji Puli/Inji Curry is a sweet, sour and pungent pickle/relish much loved in the Kerala cuisine. It is eaten before a feast as an appetiser, during the feast to accompany rice and after the feast as a digestive. Puli Inji is mandatory in the Keralite harvest feast (Ona Sadhya)

The traditional process involves stirfrying ginger, and patient cooking with tamarind and spices. We rely on the no water cooking technique to convert it into a single step. The building blocks of a Puli Inji are ginger, tamarind and additives.

### **Ginger:**

Fresh young ginger is ideal for this recipe. Contrary to popular belief, the skin of fresh young ginger is not poisonous and is perfectly edible. As ginger gets old, the skin becomes woody. If ginger is improperly stored, microorganisms start breeding on the surface, especially in the crevices, which are hard to notice with the naked eye. Hence, the skin is usually peeled before using old ginger.

The consistency of the puli-inji depends on the cut of the ginger. If you use chopped ginger, you get puli Inji with a texture and bite. If you use grated ginger/blend it after cooking, you get a spreadable consistency.

#### Tamarind:

The colour of puli Inji depends on the colour of tamarind you use. Old tamarind is darker (black tamarind) and has a deeper sourness. New tamarind is brown and is less sour. You can choose any variety/quantity according to your taste. The sourer the curry, the longer it lasts. Puli Inji can be eaten mixed with cooked rice and a dash of oil. Being travel friendly, it is usually packed on long trips.

If you blend all ingredients, replacing fresh green chillies with dry red chillies, you get Andhra's famous Allam Pachadi (Ginger chutney).

#### Additives:

##### 1. Oil:

Coconut oil is used for most versions. It acts as a sealant and prevents contamination. In some parts of Kerala, sesame oil is preferred.

##### 2. Spices:

Turmeric and asafoetida are commonly used across versions. Apart from lending flavour, they are anti bacterial and help in preservation.

##### 3. Jaggery:

Jaggery is used in most versions, converting a pickle into a relish. The amount of jaggery varies from being hardly perceptible to very sweet. You can vary the quantity as per your preference. The sweeter the pickle, the longer it lasts.

##### 4. Chillies:

Fresh green chillies give the bite. You can supplement them with chilli powder if you want to take this closer to a pickle.

##### 5. Others:

Some versions use shallots, curry leaves for added flavour. A tadka of mustard, curry leaves, red chillies is common.

# Paruppu Rasam Concentrate

## Tamil lentil stew base

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, rasam powder), 1/2 tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder), 10 curry leaves

Layer 4: 1/4C soaked mung dal

Layer 5: 1C chopped tomato

Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (6 minutes). Mash/blend and store. Dilute with water and use.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung with tuvar/masoor dal/other lentils.
- Water with stock.
- Rasam powder with your favourite spice mix.

#### **Tips:**

1. Use soaked dal for faster cooking.
2. Mix concentrate with as much water as you need to make instant rasam.

# Paruppu Rasam concentrate #2

## Tamil lentil stew base

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C soaked tuvar dal, 1C water, 1/2tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder), 1tsp ghee, 2 slit green chillies and 2tsp sambar powder. Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1tsp salt and mash coarsely. Use as a base for numerous rasams as listed below.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar dal with mung/masoor dal.
- Ghee with oil.
- Sambar powder with rasam powder.
- Can use roasted dal instead of raw dal.

### **Tips:**

1. Presoak dals for easier mashing.
2. Use solid asafoetida for better flavor.
3. Use freshly roasted and ground spice mix for better flavour.
4. Base can be refrigerated for over a month or frozen forever.
5. Same base can be used for sambar, with lesser dilution.

Rasam (Essence) has been covered in detail earlier. This theme converts it into a curry base and makes it as the base recipe for a huge variety of Rasams.

The building blocks of this theme are the lentils used, flavouring and additives.

#### Lentils used:

Tuvar dal is the most common but this theme can be extended with any lentil. Mung dal, Horse gram are commonly used. Masoor dal/channa dal are less common. However, lentils are not mandatory in a rasam and a large class of rasams without lentils exists in Tamil cuisine.

#### Flavouring:

The rasa podi (Mix of chilli, coriander, pepper, cumin powders) is the common spice mix used. Sambar powder uses roughly the same spice mix except cumin. It is used in many households in place of rasam powder.

#### Additives:

A huge number of additives can be simmered with this base to cook up a large variety of Rasams.

- Ginger, pepper, garlic, mint, Inji rasam: Base + grated ginger
- Milagu rasam: Base + crushed pepper
- Poondu rasam: Base + crushed garlic
- Mint rasam: Base + chopped Mint
- Vepampoo rasam: Base + fried Neem flowers
- Pineapple rasam: Base + Pineapple juice
- Mysore rasam: Base + jaggery + thenga molaga podi
- Lemon rasam: Base + lemon juice
- Maanga rasam: Base + Mango juice/grated sour mango
- Drumstick rasam: Base + drumstick flesh
- Jeera rasam: Base + roasted and crushed cumin
- Buttermilk rasam: Base + sour buttermilk
- Orange rasam: Base + orange juice and orange zest
- Apple rasam: Base + sour apple juice
- Apple rasam: Base + apple juice
- Kandanthipili rasam: Base + long pepper

It is that simple. You just can't go wrong with rasam - just add your favourite additives/spices and simmer to create your very own rasams!

# Paruppu Thogayal

## Tamil spiced lentil dip

Blend 1/4C roasted tuvar dal, 1 dry red chilli, 1/2tsp salt, 1tsp oil and 1/4C water to a thick paste.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar with mung/masoor/channa dal
- Oil with ghee
- Dry red chilli with fresh green chilli/black pepper

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in coconut/fresh herbs/ginger/garlic.
2. Eat mixed with rice.
3. Serve as a dip with idli/dosa.

Some themes are breathtaking in their simplicity. When roasted lentils are ground into a powder with dry red chillies, we get a podi. When they are blended with water into a thick dip, we get paruppu thogayal. Mung dal, Tuvar dal and Chana Dal are most commonly used dals for traditional paruppu thogayals. But a variety of other dals can be used to cook up delicious thogayals.

Unlike a podi, a paruppu thogayal cannot be stored for long. Refrigerated, they last for a week. They can be eaten mixed with rice and ghee/sesame oil. They also serve as an excellent side dish for Milagu rasam/Milagu kulambu/Vatral Kulambu/Kaara Kulambu and Kootu. Rasam, Parupu Thogayal and sutta appalam (roasted papad) is a very popular combination. After roasting lentils, soak in water for 10 minutes before blending for a softer thogayal.

Add tadka for an extra burst of flavour. Ver Kadalai/Uppu Kadalai/Pattani are available in shops selling puffed rice. These roasted groundnuts/chickpeas/peas are ready to eat and so can be used to create

instant thogayals.

If you make paruppu thogayal without coconut/tamarind/garlic/other strong flavourings, it becomes a pathiya thogayal, and can be served to those recovering from an illness.

Instead of roasting lentils, you can also stir-fry them with a bit of oil to create thogayals with a different taste. Fried mung dal/Chana dal/Peanuts are available as snacks and you can use them to make instant thogayals.

More Thogayals:

Instead of mixing with water, the spiced lentil powder can be blended with other edibles to create a never ending variety of dips.

Blend with some grated coconut and you get Thenga Thogayal.

Blend with herbs like mint/cilantro/curry leaves to get pudina/malli/kariveppilai thogayal.

Blend with stir-fried skins (orange, ridge gourd, banana etc) to make Thol Thogayal.

Blend with cooked vegetables (squash, banana stem, capsicum etc) to make parangikkai thogayal, vazhaithandu Thogayal, capsicum thogayal etc.

Blend with ginger/garlic/shallots/green chillies to make inji thogayal, poondu thogayal, vengaya thogayal, milaga thogayal and many more.

Blend with raw vegetables (carrot, cucumber etc) to make carrot thogayal/velliri thogayal.

Blend with fruits to get Pineapple thogayal/Mango thogayal etc

The varieties are infinite and limited only by your imagination!

# Pulikaichal

## Tamil spiced tamarind sauce

<https://youtu.be/FDAciwur4oo>

Blend 1/4C each roasted (urad dal, coriander, channa dal) and 1/2C roasted dry red chillies. (OR) Mix 3/4C Paruppu podi (spiced lentil powder) with 1tbsp each (coriander, chilli powders) and 1/2tsp salt.

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C sesame oil, 5 curry leaves, 1C OPOS tamarind pulp, 2C water, 1/2C spice powder (see above), 1/4C roasted peanuts, 2tbsp jaggery, 1.5tbsp salt, 1/2tsp turmeric powder and 1/4tsp asafoetida. Mix well without lumps.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/4C roasted sesame powder, 1/4tsp roasted fenugreek powder, 2tbsp bottled tadka.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind with other sour fruit pulp.
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Jaggery with sugar/other sweeteners.
- Paruppu podi with your favourite roasted lentil powder.
- Tamarind paste with deseeded and cleaned tamarind pulp.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can simmer in open pan to thicken further.
2. Paruppu podi is readily available in South Indian stores.

Puli Kaichal (Tamarind boiled) is a revered Tamil Brahmin recipe. The Iyengars have perfected cooking pulikaichal to an art. Some of the best puli kaichals and puliodharais still come from Iyengar kitchens. No wonder they are served as prasad in Perumal (Lord Vishnu) temples.

Puli kaichal is nothing but Tamarind pulp simmered with spices into a semi

pickle. But unlike a pickle, it is designed to be a complete meal. It is packed with protein (lentils and peanuts) and is usually served mixed with rice. The carbohydrates from rice, the protein from lentils/peanuts and the fat from oil make this a nutritionally balanced meal. It is also served with papad/vadaam, for an extra protein punch.

Like a pickle, a pulikaichal can stay unrefrigerated for weeks or refrigerated for months. The sourness from tamarind and the spices inhibit the microbial activity. Like a pickle, it gets better with age.

Traditional pulikaichal making is laborious. The spices, lentils and chillies are roasted separately and ground. The tadka is done in a stone pot (kalchatti) and tamarind water is added. It is simmered till it is reduced (simmering tamarind is no fun - it spits as it thickens and can burn you!). Then the roasted spice powders and peanuts are added. All are simmered into a thick sauce. This laborious preparation is why it is disappearing from home kitchens.

This recipe uses paruppu podi (spiced lentil powder), chilli powder and fenugreek powder to make the recipe OPOS and makes possible a 15 minute version. If you use OPOS tamarind puree, the preparation time can be halved.

#### Using Pulikaichal:

Puli kaichal is used as a pickle and is served with curd rice or with idli/dosas. It is commonly mixed with hot rice to make Puyliyodharai (Tamil), Pulihora (Telugu), Hulianna/Puliogarae (Kannada).

The word puliyodharai does not mean anything in Tamil. I believe this recipe probably comes to us from the Hebbar Iyengars. Their dialect is a quaint mix of Tamil and Kannada. The Tamil word Puliyodharai might be a corruption of Huli Ogarae (Tamarind Tempered). The best puliyodharai recipes are still believed to come from Kannadiga kitchens!

Pulikaichal mixed with rice is perfect travel food, as this mixture behaves like a semi pickle and lasts days unrefrigerated. If you use all the precautions you use with pickles, the shelf life can be extended even further.

#### Tips:

1. The best pulikaichal is made from old tamarind (Karuppu puli).
2. Tamarind's sourness gets mellowed on cooking.
3. A bit of jaggery accentuates the sourness of tamarind and improves its shelf life.
4. Avoid touching pulikaichal or the rice with your hands while mixing, for a

longer shelf life.

5. Use dry spoons for spooning out Pulikaichal.
6. Ensure there is a layer of oil floating on top to seal the surface.
7. The tadka can use any combination of mustard, dry red chillies, channa dal, urad dal, curry leaves, asafoetida, crushed pepper, fenugreek and shredded coconut.



Opoos pulikachal

# Rasvangi

## Tanjore Marathi eggplant sour stew

<https://youtu.be/Bp9ggGfkCG0>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped eggplant

Layer 3: 4tsp each (spiced lentil powder, spiced coconut powder), 2tsp each (tamarind paste, jaggery), 1/2tsp each (sambar powder, garam masala, pepper, salt), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida)

Layer 4: 1/2C cooked tuvar dal (thick).

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C water.

### LAYER AND FLASH

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Tuvar dal with mung dal.
- Eggplant with other vegetables.
- Sambar powder/Garam masala with your favourite spiced mixes.

#### Tips:

1. Spiced lentil powder (paruppu podi), spiced coconut powder (Thenga molaga podi) are readily available.
2. Can use lentil grits for faster cooking. The lentils should completely lose their shape and become a mush.
3. Remember Paruppu podi and Thenga molaga podi already contain salt.

Rasavangi is touted as one of the most traditional and authentic Tamil Brahmin recipes. It is usually made with white pumpkin/eggplant. It is very popular in the Cauvery delta, the spiritual homeland of Tamil Brahmins. The word Rasavangi does not mean anything in Tamil. The closest equivalent is in the Marathi cuisine as the Vangyachi Rassa or Ras Vangi (Curried

Eggplant).

The Marathis still call their stews as Ras (gravy). They still have an egg plant stew, the Vangyachi Rassa. Ras/Rassa denote a gravy/liquid in Marathi and Vangi denotes eggplant. It is this Vangayachi Rassa that the Tamil Brahmin cuisine internalised and called Rasa vangi. It is very likely this dish entered Tamil cuisine during the Maratha rule of Tanjore.

It is interesting to note that the theme remains intact, with just a few Maratha ingredients being replaced by Tamil equivalents. The building blocks of the Marathi Vangyachi Rassa are eggplants, flavouring (Goda masala/garam masala), a lentil paste (peanut powder), an optional souring agent (tamarind/lemon juice) and jaggery. All are simmered together into a rich stew.

The Tamil cuisine replaced peanuts with dal, added coconut and claimed this dish as their own - and the Rasavangi was born. Faint echoes of the original version still exist. Some Rasavangis use a bit of cinnamon powder or garam masala and some use roasted and powdered sesame seeds (as a replacement for peanut powder). Some versions even use whole peanuts.

Brahmins should have renamed it better. Saying Kathirikka Rasavangi is like saying Naan Bread or Chai Tea. Calling a dish Poosinikka Rasavangi is downright misleading as it actually means a pumpkin - eggplant stew, not just a pumpkin stew.

This theme just concentrates on the base (Rassa), delinking it from the Vangi (eggplant), thus turning it into a sambar base variant (An arachu vitta sambar base, to be specific).

The building blocks of a Tamil Brahmin Rasavangi are the vegetable, souring agent, flavouring, coconut and the additives.

**Vegetable:**

White pumpkin and eggplant are the most common vegetables, though bitter gourd is occasionally used. However, you can safely extend this theme with any of your favourite vegetables.

**Souring agent:**

Tamarind is the only souring agent used, though the amount used is much

less than what you would use for sambar. It can even be skipped altogether and replaced by a dash of lemon juice at the very end. Else OPOS tamarind puree can be mixed in after the curry is cooked.

#### Lentils:

Lentils get added in two ways - as spiced lentil powder and as soaked/boiled lentils. In the traditional version, boiled tuvar dal and a roast and ground mixture of spiced channa dal is usually added.

#### Additives:

Coconut: Roast and ground coconut powder lends a nutty taste to the stew. Coconut seems to have taken the place of peanut in the Maratha version. In the OPOS version, Coconut is replaced with Thenga Molaga podi, which is nothing but spiced coconut powder.

Jaggery: The jaggery in the original version is still retained in many versions

#### Flavouring:

Pepper: As this recipe predates chillies, pepper was used for the bite, and it still remains, along with chilli powder.

Sambar powder replaces the Goda masala/garam masala in the original recipe. Many versions skip sambar powder, replacing it with chilli - coriander powder.

#### Hing and Turmeric:

In almost all curries using lentils, hing and turmeric are mandatory. As sambar powder already contains both these, they can be omitted if you like.

#### Garam masala:

A faint whiff of the original recipe is found in the use of garam masala (some versions just use cinnamon powder). As garam masala is almost never used in a Tamil stew (But is common in Kannada/Marathi stews), its presence just supports the fact that this is a borrowed recipe.

#### Serving:

Rasvangi is served with hot rice, accompanied by papad and a dry curry. It is never served with flatbreads, though leftovers are eaten with tiffin items like idli/dosa/upma.

# Room Freshener Rasam

## Tamil thin curry

<https://youtu.be/XRKs6yIudQk>

In a 2L cooker, add 1tsp ghee, a marble sized ball of tamarind (5g), 10 curry leaves, 1tbsp each chopped (cilantro roots, mint) 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder), 1tsp each (crushed cumin, pepper, chopped ginger, salt) and 2C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Let pressure settle. Filter out solids. Add 1/4C chopped cilantro.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cumin with your favourite spice mix.
- Pepper with Rasam powder.
- Ginger with garlic.
- Mint with your favourite herbs.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in cooked lentils.
2. Can serve as a soup.
3. Cilantro roots have more flavor than leaves.

Room freshener rasam



# Saagu

## Karnataka's coconut stew

<https://youtu.be/GZuMdDvQISM>

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut with 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 5 cashews, 2 green chillies, 1tsp coconut oil, 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin, coriander powder, garam masala), 5 mint leaves to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1C each chopped (beans, carrots)

Layer 3: Spiced coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Mix in 1/2C coconut milk.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Beans/carrots with your favourite vegetables.
- Cashew with other nuts.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Coconut milk with milk.

#### **Tips:**

1. Coconut milk curdles on prolonged cooking.
2. Can use caramelised onions as layer 4.

Karnataka cuisine can be broadly split into the North Karnataka cuisine, South Karnataka cuisine and Coastal cuisine. The ultra orthodox Udupi cuisine, the still evolving Hebbar Iyengar cuisine, the unique Kodava cuisine, the coconut based Konkani cuisine, the Portuguese influenced Mangalore Catholic cuisine, the native Malenadu (hilly land) cuisine, the Persian influenced Navayath cuisine have all come together to create the present day Karnataka cuisine.

Food does not respect man made boundaries. In areas that overlap cuisines, there is an interesting fusion! North Karnataka cuisine resembles Maharashtrian cuisine, with its use of millet flatbreads in place of rice. Coastal Karnataka cuisine resembles Kerala cuisine, heavily using coconut and preferring red rice. South Karnataka cuisine overlaps and resembles Tamilnadu cuisine. In general, Karnataka curries use fewer chillies than Andhra curries and use more lentils and coconut than Tamil curries. Specialty vegetables like tender bamboo shoots, turmeric leaves and raw jackfruit are used in the mountains (malenadu). Like most tribal cuisines, use of very little oil and steaming are hallmarks of Malenadu cuisine. Parts of Karnataka use pearl millet, finger millet and sorghum in addition to or in place of rice. An elaborate Kannadiga meal (oota) would have soaked lentil salads (Kosambari), lentil curry (Tovve), pickles, dry vegetable curry (Palya), rice, ghee, variety rice (Chitranna), sour curry (Gojju/huli), thin lentil curry (saaru), a yogurt curry (Tambli/Majjigae huli), fries (Ambode), and desserts (Paaysa). The serving order varies across regions. Salt is usually the very first thing to be served.

Saagu is a classic Kannadiga curry. It can be looked at as a flavoured coconut stew . It is the closest equivalent to the kuruma of Tamilnadu and kormas of North India. Saagu is eaten mixed with rice, flatbreads (poori/chappati), rava idli or set dosa.

Like any curry cooked with coconut/coconut milk, cooking saagu for long splits into solid and liquid portions. As the goal is to have a creamy saagu, it is traditionally cooked on low heat with constant stirring..

#### Naming Saagu:

Saagus can take their name from either the base used (eg: Baadami saagu if Almonds are used), from the flavouring used (eg: Masala saagu, if Garam

masala is used) or from the additives used (eg: Batani Saagu, if peas are used).

They are also named after the dish it is eaten with (eg: Rava Idli saagu), after a region (eg: Malenadu saagu) or after a combination of all the above (eg: Baadami masala potato saagu).

Saagu has the consistency of a thick, chunky soup. This version produces a very thick saagu. You can thin it with water/milk/coconut milk to your liking.

Though traditionally eaten with rotis or rice, a saagu goes equally well as a sauce with pasta or noodles. Being very mild, it serves an excellent introduction to South Indian cuisine.

The base:

Saagus are cooked with a variety of bases, though a blended mixture of coconut, poppy seeds, chillies are found in most saagus. This base can be supplemented with tomato puree/onion paste, milk, cream, tamarind paste, nut/seed pastes/stock etc to create infinite combinations.

The flavouring:

The common South Indian flavouring of fried mustard, curry leaves and asafoetida is used in most saagus. They can be replaced by the bottled tadka, as in all OPOS dishes. Sweet spices like cinnamon, cloves, bayleaf, star anise, nutmeg, mace etc are also commonly used. Feel free to experiment with your favourite spices/herbs.

Additives used:

Almost all vegetables or a mixture of them are used in a saagu. The most common ones are Carrot, Potato, Beans, Sprouts, Cabbage, Chayote, Peas and Cauliflower. Though meat/seafood is almost never used, there is no reason why you cannot!

Easy Saagu powder:

Take 1tbsp cumin, a clove, a small bit of cinnamon, 1tsp peppercorns, 1/2C dry coconut flakes, two dry red chillies, 1/2 tsp poppy seeds, 2tsp cashew powder and 1tsp salt. Blend all to a powder. For instant saagu, just layer the powder over vegetables, flash and mix in milk/water.

# Salna

## Tamil Dakhni Muslim curry

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/4C roasted peanuts, 1tsp each (salt, coriander, fennel), 2 dry red chillies, 1/2tsp garam masala & 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1 chopped onion arranged in a ring with 1C chopped, deseeded tomatoes at the centre.

Layer 3: 1C each chopped (beans, carrots)

Layer 4: Spiced coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/4C coconut milk, 1C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

## **Replace/Supplement**

- Onions with shallots.
- Tomato with tamarind.
- Cashew with other nuts.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Vegetables with mushroom/ soya chunks/ chicken

## **Tips:**

1. Use Kashmiri chilli powder for a deep colour.
2. If undercooked, cut chicken into smaller pieces/cook longer.

The Salna/Salan (Urdu: Curry/Gravy) is most likely a corruption of a Turkish word. This dish predates the Mogul era and has probably come into India with the Turkic Sultans, 800 years back.

The Akbarnama records in detail several recipes cooked in the Mogul kitchens 500 years back. It is here we find first mentions of several dishes that would later take over the country. Salna/Salan is noticeably absent.

The recipe for saalan exists only in two regions - Pakistan and Hyderabad. A morphed version - the salna exists only in Tamilnadu, especially in Madurai. True to its northern origins, a Salna is not usually served with native foods but only with foods which came into Tamilnadu from the North (Biryani, Parotta, Chappati etc).

This recipe probably came to us with the Turkish conquerors. 800 years back, Delhi fell to the Turkish Sultans. They rule over most of North India for the next 300 years, and slowly start spreading South, establishing the Deccan Sultanate. It is in this region, especially in the region of the old Golconda sultanate (Today's Hyderabad), that the Saalan still survives.

Soon, Tamilnadu fell to the Delhi sultans, who rule for 50 years from Madurai. This period is probably when the Saalan entered Madurai cuisine as the Salna. Madurai salna is still considered the gold standard among Tamil salnas.

The closest equivalent of the salna might be the "Sulu" (Gravy/Curry), which still exists in the Turkish cuisine. This might very well be the ancestor of our Salna/Salan. Echoes of it still exist in the Pakistani Salan.

Aloo Gosht Ka Salan (Meat and Potato curry) and Murghi ka Saalan (Chicken curry) are commonly cooked in Pakistan to this date.

The building blocks of a salna are roasted onions, a souring agent (usually tomatoes, occasionally supplemented with tamarind), a thickener (nut paste, coconut paste) and spices. The spices and thickener vary with the region. The South Indian versions use the South Indian spices/herbs (turmeric, curry leaves) and are thickened by roasted gram and coconut paste.

The consistency of a salna is usually thin, unlike a Salan which is thick and creamy. Salna, being strongly associated with the Sultans/Muslims is still

perceived as a non-vegetarian curry, and is usually made with meat.

The traditional recipe calls for roasting onions, tomatoes, and simmering them with spices, nut paste and meat/vegetables into a thin stew.

# Sambar base

## Tamil sour lentil stew mother sauce

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C soaked tuvar dal, 1C water, 1 chopped tomato, 5 curry leaves, 1tbsp each (sambar powder, salt), 2tbsp caramelised onions, 1/2tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 2tsp tamarind paste, 1tsp sesame oil. Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mash all and bottle.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar with mung/masoor dal.
- Onions with shallots.
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.
- Curry leaves with your favourite herbs.

### **Tips:**

1. Mix with flashed vegetables for an instant sambar.
2. Can layer over flashed vegetables and flash together.
3. Lasts over a month refrigerated.

We have already covered sambar in detail earlier. This recipe offers an easier version with a different texture.

1. Tamarind inhibits cooking of dal and vegetables. So in traditional recipes, uncooked dal is never added with tamarind. Only cooked dal is used.
2. Vegetables cook faster than tuvar dal. If you cook dal and vegetables together, you risk vegetables overcooking and turning into mush.
3. Dal needs to cook into a mush with no texture at all.

We tried to address this issue with roasted lentil powder/lentil grits, but many seemed to have trouble with both options. Using roasted lentil powder makes the sambar soulishly thick and some do not like the texture. Some found

using lentil grits unwieldy as they are not readily available. The solution is to isolate the vegetables from sambar, creating just the base. The base can be used as a sambar ofcourse, but can also be simmered with vegetables if you like. The long cooking time ensures dal is cooked to a mush, even in the presence of Tamarind. The vegetables added by default (shallots/tomatoes) are a part of almost all sambars and it does not matter much even if they become mushy.

This sambar base gives you a concentrated sambar. Due to the presence of tamarind, spices and salt, this has a much longer shelf life than plain dal and can be used in place of dal for most recipes. It can be refrigerated for weeks and frozen for months. You can use it as it is, or use it as a base to simmer stir fried/boiled/raw vegetables. You can use this paste as a layer over vegetables and flash everything together, to create an instant sambar.

# South Indian Masala

## South Indian Onion-Tomato sauce

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C finely chopped onions arranged in a ring with 1C chopped, deseeded tomatoes at the centre

Layer 3: 2 dry red chillies, 5 chopped green chillies

Layer 4: 1/2 tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 10 curry leaves, 1tsp sambar powder and 1.5tsp salt.

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onions with shallots
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Turmeric/asafoetida with your favourite spices.

### **Tips:**

1. Mix in flashed vegetables for an instant curry.
2. Cook longer for more caramelisation.

# Sundal

## Tamil spiced legume salad

<https://youtu.be/jQRR8bp3qlw>

Soak 1C channa dal overnight. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: Channa dal

Layer 3: 1/2C grated coconut,

Layer 4: 1 chopped chilli, 1/2tsp asafoetida

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in chopped cilantro.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Channa dal with your favourite pulses
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in bottled tadka, chopped mango, lemon juice, chopped chillies.

Legumes (Peas, beans and lentils) are the chief source of protein for the mostly vegetarian Indians. Some of the most innovative recipes to use legumes have originated here.

In the North, legumes are roasted/fried and consumed as a snack. They are also boiled and mixed into Chaats. Across India, they are cooked into curries. But it is the South (especially Tamilnadu and Andhra) which have really innovated by converting legumes into powders (Podis), dips (paruppu thogayal), garnishes (tadka) and into spiced legume salads - the Sundal (Tamil), Guggillu (Telugu) and Kosambir (Kannada).

All edible beans, peas and whole lentils can be cooked into Sundals. Usually, whole legumes are preferred. Thin, split lentils are rarely used as they do not retain their shape, but cook into a mush. Sundals are favourite beach food,

with Thenga Maanga Pattani Sundal (Green pea sundal with slivers of coconut and raw mango) being the favourite in Chennai beaches. These are a must during Navratri celebrations, with a different sundal being cooked on each of the nine days.

The word Sundal probably comes from the Tamil word Sundal (dehydrating). This refers to the cooking process where all the cooking water is allowed to evaporate to give us a dry, boiled snack.

Kabuli Channa, Desi Channa, whole mung dal, peas, peanuts, black eyed beans, horse gram and field beans are all commonly cooked into a sundal.

In the traditional method, the dried legumes are soaked overnight, boiled and seasoned with a tadka to make a sundal. This recipe converts them to a single step process by optimising the water quantity to ensure all water is absorbed.

The bigger the legume, the longer the cooking time. You can easily vary the cooking time depending on the legume used. If still uncooked, you just need to add more water, and cook again.

Legumes swell to over twice their volume on soaking. Soaking is essential for most legumes as it starts the germination process and leaches out the toxins. The soaked water is to be discarded (especially for Kidney beans (Rajma), which has the highest toxin content).

Try out this simple foolproof recipe for a delightful, healthy, oil free protein snack!

# Soya Kuruma

## Tamil nutty soya chunks stew

Soaked 100g soya chunks for 30 minutes. Drain and squeeze dry. Mix in 1/2tsp each (garam masala, salt, chilli powder), 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 6 curry leaves and 5tsp yogurt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped deseeded tomato

Layer 3: Spiced soya (see above)

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/4C coconut milk.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Soya with paneer/tofu/mushroom/marinated meats.
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Coconut milk with cream/milk/coconut paste/nut paste.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can add chopped vegetables with soya.
2. Soak and squeeze dry soya nuggets before using
3. Soya is all texture and no taste - like paneer.
4. If soya is overcooked, chop them smaller.

The Moguls used milk to cook their curries, shocking Indian cuisine, which saw milk as holy and fit only for sweet dishes. We never use milk to cook savoury dishes due to the fear of milk splitting, which is still viewed as inauspicious.

But after 1000 years of the Sultan/Mogul rule, North India has embraced the use of milk and cream in their curries. The South is still holding out!

Though the South has borrowed the Korma theme from the Moguls, we have tweaked it to fit into our beliefs. Milk/cream is replaced by coconut/coconut

milk. This also makes the recipe vegan. We have also added our own twists:

1. Roasted gram dal used in place of cashew
2. Curry leaves make an appearance
3. The tadka uses mustard.
4. Turmeric powder, not preferred by the Moghuls, reappears in many Tamil versions.

This is a good example to demonstrate the myth of 'authentic' or 'traditional' recipes. Each culture/cuisine borrows heavily from others and tweaks them. Over a period of time, these tweaked recipes become standards themselves and purists try locking them down!

This is another full meal recipe with balanced carbohydrate, protein and fat. It can be eaten all by itself or accompany pulao/idiyappam/flatbreads.

The No water, layering and flash cooking techniques are all employed to convert this recipe into OPOS.

The building blocks are the carbohydrates (from potatoes), protein (from soya) and fat (from coconut milk/oil) and micro-nutrients from onions, tomatoes.

Vary the building blocks to generate an array of your own recipes.

# Tambli

## Konkani yogurt dip

[https://youtu.be/8\\_TxKk7DGi8](https://youtu.be/8_TxKk7DGi8)

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1 green chilli, 1/4tsp salt, 1tsp each (cumin, coconut oil), 5 mint leaves to a paste. Mix in 1C yogurt.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cumin with your favourite spices.
- Mint with your favourite fresh herbs.

### **Tips:**

1. Blend in short bursts to avoid heating up the dip.
2. Can use ice while blending.
3. Blending in oil makes it creamier.

The Tambli is a much loved, uncooked, blended sour curry revered in Karnataka/Konkani/Udupi cuisine. All Tambolis are served cold and eaten mixed with cooked rice, at the very beginning of a meal. The name literally translates to Cold and Sour (Tampu Huli). It is believed to cool the body. So in many homes, Sambar/Rasam would be replaced by Tambli during summer.

Tambli can be looked at as a combination of two classic themes – the raita and the coconut chutney.

Almost anything blended in with coconut tastes good and almost anything mixed with yogurt tastes good. So, it is no wonder that almost anything blended into a Tambli turns out to be delicious. The list of possible Tambolis is endless.

A Tambli is always uncooked, served cold, is sour, and has coconut. Apart from these basic guidelines, it is so versatile that you can create scores of variations.

The building blocks:

1. Additives (Cooked/raw);
2. A sour base (Usually Yogurt);
3. Coconut.

All these are blended together into a cold soup.

Almost anything edible can be blended into a Tambli. Nuts, zest, peels, fruits, flowers are all used. Depending on what is blended in, the name of the Tambli changes.

Dodda patre Tambli (Karpooravalli leaves), Jeerage Tambli (Cumin), Mente Tambli (Fenugreek), Kottambari Tambli (Coriander), Shunti Tambli (Ginger), Yellu Tambli (Sesame seeds), Teppal Tambli (Sichuan Pepper), Gasgase tambli (Poppy seeds), Karivebina Tambli (Curry leaves), Southeekayi Tambli (Yellow cucumber), Eerulli Tambli (Onion), Kottambari soppu Tambli (Cilantro), Soppina Tambli (Spinach), Kodi ere Tambli (Tender leaves of mango, cashew, lemon/pomegranate etc.), Saute Bith Tambli (Cucumber seeds), Nelli Tambli (Gooseberry), Thimare Tambli(Brahmi leaves), Heerakayi Tambli (Tender Ridge gourd), Koodi Tambli (Tender Guava leaves) are all commonly cooked..

Those that can't be eaten raw are partially or fully cooked before being blended in.

Bondi Tambli/Baale Hu Tambli (Banana flower), Kotte Tambli (Jackfruit seeds), Kukku Tambli (Pickled mangoes), Nellindi Tambli (Pickled gooseberry) fall into this category.

Some additives need not even be blended. They can be finely chopped up/grated and mixed in.

Daasavala Poo Tambli (Hibiscus flower),

Alla Kande Tambli (Ginger - onion) are some non-blended Tamblis.

Souring agent:

We can use other souring agents in place of yogurt to create new classes of Tamblis. They are rare in traditional cuisine and only one variation, the Kokum Tambli is usually prepared.

**Coconut:**

If you do not have a blender, use finely grated coconut or coconut milk instead.

Though not traditional, try replacing coconut with other nuts to create your own fusion Tamblis!

**Fusion:**

A Tambli can become a full meal if starch is blended in. Traditionally, only cooked jackfruit seeds are used. However you can blend in bread/cooked rice/poha and create various Indian Gazpachos!

The Tambli is usually garnished with a tempering of any combination of the following: Mustard, cumin, curry leaves, asafoetida, urad dal, fenugreek, red chilli. But you can safely omit tadka for a low-fat version.

A Kannada saying captures it all:

“Tambli antha ootavilla  
kambali antha hodikeyilla”  
(No food without Tambli  
No warmth without a blanket!)

Try out this delightful cold soup/curry. Takes 5 minutes to prepare. Can be drunk as a soup or can be eaten mixed in with rice/can accompany flatbreads.

# Thakkali Kuruma

## Tamil Nutty Tomato Stew

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1tsp each (sambar powder, salt, ginger-garlic paste), 1/2tsp garam masala and 1/4tsp turmeric powder to a paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: Spiced coconut mix.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mash/blend.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.
- Grated coconut with coconut paste/other nuts/seeds.
- Tomato with mango/pineapple/your favourite vegetables.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in milk/coconut milk after opening.
2. Cook longer for greater caramelisation.

# Thakkali Thokku

## Tamil tomato dip

<https://youtu.be/-kXoBR4RJ6g>

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 1/2Kg chopped, deseeded tomatoes

Layer 3: 1tsp each (chilli powder, salt, sugar), 1/2tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 1/4tsp fenugreek powder

Cook on high heat for 20 whistles (10 minutes) or till you smell faint burning . Let pressure settle. Mash.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Sugar with jaggery
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can add garlic, onion for more flavour
2. Mix in 2tsp vinegar if tomatoes are not sour
3. Cook longer for a thicker consistency
4. Cooking time varies with the moisture content of the tomatoes.



OPOS  
TOMATO THOKKU

# Thakkali Rasam

## Tamil thin tomato soup

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp ghee, 3 curry leaves

Layer 2: 2C chopped tomato, 1 slit chilli

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, cumin, pepper powder), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida)

Layer 4: 1/4C soaked mung dal

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove chilli. Blend all with 3C water. Mix in 1/4C chopped cilantro.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung with tuvar/masoor dal.
- Cumin powder with rasam powder.
- Water with stock.

### **Tips:**

1. Do not mix in water if you want to store as a Rasam concentrate.
2. Mix in water as and when needed.

Rasam meaning ‘extract/essence, is a clear, thin South Indian curry. Though normally eaten mixed with hot cooked rice, It can be and is usually drunk as a soup. It is usually made from lentil stock (the water in which tuvar dal has been boiled) and tamarind paste. The famous Mulligatawny soup of the Western world is actually a rasam (Mulligatawny is Milagu Thanni or Pepper water).

Called Chaaru in Telugu and Saaru in Karnataka, Rasams are cooked all over South India, with minor variations across regions.

Tamilnadu and Karnataka take their rasams seriously and serve them at every meal. Some of the most innovative Rasams come from Karnataka. It is here you'll find chopped onions, green beans, spinach and coconut in Rasams. It is

in Karnataka we see vegetable stock (water in which vegetables have been boiled) being used for making the delicious Rasam called Bus saaru.

Rasam is nothing but a clear sambar/kulambu. The most basic rasam is just flavoured stock. In fact, the early rasams were nothing more than boiled tamarind water served with a pinch of salt and pepper. Rasams are still known as Puli Charu (tamarind juice) in pockets of Tamilnadu. Later, mashed lentils or lentil stock (the water in which lentils have been boiled) was added to fortify the rasam, thus creating the rasam we know and love today.

The defining characteristics of a Rasam are sourness, flavouring and its clear, watery consistency. The sourness comes usually from Tamarind, flavour from rasam podi/sambar podi. By varying the sourness, flavouring and the ingredients added, we can cook up scores of rasams.

#### Change Souring agent:

Change the souring agent and new families of rasams appear. Replace tamarind with tomato and you have Thakkali rasam. Use Mango and you have Manga rasam. Use buttermilk and you have more rasam and so on. Tamarind juice can be mixed with other juices to make more rasams. Mix in orange juice with tamarind and you have Orange rasam. Feel free to experiment with a variety of sour juices.

#### Change lentils:

Change the lentils used and you have the tuvaram paruppu rasam, pasi paruppu rasam, chana dal rasam, horse gram rasam or masoor dal rasam.

#### Change flavouring:

Change the flavouring style and new classes of rasams like thalithu kottiya rasam, podi potta rasam, poricha rasam, seeraka rasam, milagu rasam etc., spring up.

#### Change additives:

Change additives used and more rasams appear. Use garlic and you have poondi rasam. Use rose petals and you have paneer rasam, use lentil balls and you have paruppu urundai rasam, use coconut milk and you have thenga pal rasam and so on.

A staggering array of rasams can be cooked with minor variations of the basic building blocks.

As rasam is a thin clear soup, all rules of soup making apply. The Western

world has a range of soups and you can borrow techniques from these soups to make rasam tastier.

**Tip 1: Using stock.**

Instead of using plain water, you can use vegetable stock (the water in which vegetables have been boiled). This would give rasam a depth of flavor. For a clear rasam, use a fine mesh filter and filter out the solids just before serving. Add garnish to this clear rasam and serve. Non vegetarians can experiment with a range of meat stocks.

**Tip 2: Using bouquet garni.**

A popular flavouring technique is to tie herbs/spices in a cheesecloth bundle which is steeped in the cooking liquid to flavor it. This technique is ideally suited for Rasams. Experiment with a variety of herbs/spices to cook up a range of exotic rasams.

**Tip 3: Garnish and Presentation.**

The techniques of garnishing and presenting a Western clear soup work great for all rasams.

# Thalagam

## Tamil winter stew

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1tbsp each (roasted gram, tamarind paste), 1tsp each (jaggery, sambar powder, salt, coconut oil), 1/2tsp turmeric powder to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (eggplant, winter melon, broad beans, yam, banana, squash), 1/4C fresh green peas

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Roast gram with cooked dal

### **Tips:**

1. Can use any mix of seasonal vegetables.
2. Cut tough vegetables into small chunks.
3. Cut quick cooking vegetables into big chunks.

The Ezhu Kari Kootu (7 vegetable stew), also called Thirivadhirai kootu/Thiruvadhirai Kali Kulambu/Thalaagam, is a special dish. It is South India's answer to the Navrathan Korma. It is also one of the rare curries designed to be eaten with a sweet dish - the Tiruvadhirai Kali.

The kali is nothing but a mix of rice and mung dal grits cooked with jaggery into a porridge. This 7 kari kootu is the only accompaniment to this sweet porridge.

Thirivadhirai is the biggest festival in Siva temples in Tamilnadu and Kerala. It falls on the full moon day in the Tamil month of Margazhi (December –

January), on the longest night of the year. It has various significances. Some believe it is the birthday of Lord Shiva. Some believe it was the day the Lord danced his cosmic dance and some believe it was the day the Lord appeared before his devotees.

The Thiruvadhirai Kali (Porridge) and Thirivadhirai Kootu (Stew) are cooked as offering to the Lord on this day. Their preparation varies with the region.

The 7 vegetable stew is an interesting recipe. It is not a kulambu, kootu or sambar; but straddles all three themes. Being an ancient recipe, it uses only vegetables native to India and not 'English' vegetables, which were introduced by the Europeans 500 years back.

Though chillies have become common in this stew, orthodox recipes still call for the native pepper and not the introduced chilli. Being a winter dish, a bounty of fresh winter vegetables are used.

The recipes across Tamilnadu and Kerala follow a similar preparation method, but for the masala mix.

In both states, a mix of 7 native vegetables is cooked with spices. Tamarind and jaggery is added in some versions. A masala paste is then added and simmered, which thickens the curry. This masala paste varies from place to place. Kerala recipes emphasize the use of coconut paste and coconut oil. Tamil recipes use roast and blended rice and lentil powders to thicken up the stew.

Various combinations of red chillies, lentils, fenugreek, sesame, rice and coconut are roasted and blended together into a paste and get mixed in with the simmering curry. Some Keralite versions use just a paste of coconut, green chillies and cumin, making it almost a kootu!

This recipe uses rice powder and paruppu podi to convert this recipe to OPOS. The vegetables are also cut into different sizes - the quick cooking ones are cut into big chunks and the slow cooking ones are cut into small chunks, to ensure all cook well at the same time.

Vary the building blocks as shown in the recipe and create your own versions!

# Thikka Pilchar

## Tamil Sourashtrian Rasam

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomato, 1tsp cumin, 1 slit green chilli, 5 curry leaves, 2 crushed garlic cloves

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, rasam powder).

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash with 2C water. Strain if you want a thin curry.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Green chilli with dry red chilli
- Rasam powder with pilchar bhurkho/your favourite spice mix
- Water with lentil stock/vegetable stock
- Oil with ghee

### **Tips:**

1. Can add cooked lentils.

You will never understand a cuisine through recipes. It soon gets very confusing because the common thread that unites the recipes is not easily visible. History and geography are much easier routes to understand a cuisine. And far more interesting!

The Tamil Sourashtra cuisine is unique as it involves people who migrated from their homeland, lost all contact with it and were assailed by 'strange' ingredients and cooking techniques. It is fascinating to see how they coped with it and how their cuisine evolved.

Saurashtrians refer to the community from silk workers from Kathiawar region of Gujarat who settled in the South, chiefly in Madurai, 500 years back.

Not many of us are aware of a short but bloody chapter in the history of Madurai. In 1300's a Pandya dynasty prince from Madurai appeals to Delhi's Allaudin Khilji to intercede in a succession dispute. Khilji sends Malik Kafur, who invades and sacks Madurai. Tiruchy, Arcot and Madurai remain under Delhi Sultans for the next 50 years. They traumatised Tamilnadu.

One of the Sultans, Ghiyas-ud-Din Muhammad Damghani seems to have been especially brutal. Ibn Batuta, the great Islamic traveller records:

“...the Hindu prisoners were divided into four sections and taken to each of the four gates. There, on the stakes they had carried, the prisoners were impaled. Afterwards their wives were killed and tied by their hair to these poles. Children were massacred on the bosoms of their mothers. This is shameful conduct such as I have not known any other sovereign guilty of. It is for this that God hastened the Sultan's death ”.

Madhura Vijayam, a 14th century Sanskrit poem by poetess Gangadevi also records the brutality:

“ I very much lament for what has happened to the groves in Madhura. The coconut trees have all been cut and in their place are to be seen rows of iron spikes with human skulls dangling at the points”

“The waters of Tamraparni which were once white with sandal paste rubbed away from the breasts of charming girls are now flowing red with the blood of cows slaughtered by the miscreants.”

Fortunately, this chapter ends with the Sultans being driven out by the Vijayanagara empire. The empire appoints Nayaks or governors to administer Madurai. In 1550's, with the decline of the Vijayanagara empire, the Nayaks became sole rulers and rule from Madurai for the next 200 years. The Nayaks adored silk. Saurashtra in Gujarat was the home to some of the most skillful silk weavers. The Nayaks, now Madurai rulers, invite them to come and settle in Madurai as Royal weavers.

The Bahulwas - a ritualistic question and answer session during a Saurashtrian marriage narrates the migration of Sourashtrians from their homeland to Madhirapuri (Madurai). Under the Southern influence, their customs, food habits and language change and they morph into today's half a million strong Sourashtrian community, centered in Madurai. They integrated

well with the locals, and are still referred to as Pattunuli (Silk thread worker).

Like their cuisine, their language too changed, in exactly the same way! The Sourashtrians spoke Palkar, a Sanskrit based language predating Gujarati/Marathi. It soon absorbed numerous Telugu, Kannada and Tamil words. It is now the only Sanskrit based language that uses Tamil script for writing.

Similarly, Saurashtrian cuisine was heavily influenced by South India. Many Saurashtrian recipes today are variations of classic South Indian recipes. For example, their Alla Chutney comes from Telugu Allam (ginger). Pilchar is nothing but Tamil Puli charu (Rasam). Unlike later day Gujaratis, most of who became vegetarian, Sourashtrians still relish meat.

# Thoran

## Kerala's vegetable curry with coconut

[https://youtu.be/Ni\\_kq70j65w](https://youtu.be/Ni_kq70j65w)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tbsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 4C skinned & chopped baby jack fruit

Layer 3: 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp salt

Layer 4: 1/4C coconut blended with 2 green chillies to a paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Coconut oil with your favourite oil
- Baby jackfruit with your favourite vegetables
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Curry leaves with fresh/dried herbs

### **Tip**

1. Native vegetables are usually preferred
2. Can mix in coconut after opening for a fresher taste.

Thoran is the Keralite version of a stir-fried dry vegetable curry with coconut. It accompanies rice and is a part of Sadhya - the traditional harvest feast.

The building blocks of a Thoran are the stir-fried base, coconut and the flavouring used. Coconut differentiates a Thoran from other Keralite dry curries like Upperi/Poduthuval/Mezhuguperatti. In all these curries, coconut is optional, but in Thoran, it is mandatory.

The base:

Finely diced native vegetables/greens (Bitter gourd, spinach, raw jackfruit, whole lentils, yardlong beans, cluster beans, saber beans, raw banana, yam) are all commonly used. Vegetables with too much water content are avoided.

Thorans from cabbage, beetroot, French beans, carrot have all become common.

Non vegetarian versions using chicken, fish, fish eggs, prawns, mussels are also cooked.

Coconut is always a part of the thoran. It is stir-fried along with the base or used as a garnish.

#### Flavouring:

Coconut oil, turmeric powder, chilli, asafoetida and curry leaves are common across most vegetable thorans. The standard South Indian tadka with mustard/red chillies/curry leaves is also used in most versions.

In addition to the above, the non-veg thorans are more elaborately flavoured with ginger, garlic, shallots, garam masala and pepper powder.

#### Additives:

Combinations of starch and protein can convert the thoran into a balanced meal. Pairing yam with whole mung dal is common (ex: Chena- Cherupayar Thoran). Most non Veg thorans can be paired with tapioca to convert them into balanced meals.

#### Preparation:

In the traditional method, the vegetables/meat are either boiled or stir-fried with frequent sprinkling of water. They are then mixed with the flavouring, coconut and cooked together.

The stirring is essential in stir-frying to prevent burning. In the OPOS version, stirring is not needed because the saturated steam inside the pressure cooker prevents burning. So the ingredients can be added together at one shot, sealed and cooked together. The no water cooking and layering techniques can be employed to make a wide variety of Thorans. When a mix of vegetables is used, their thickness can be varied by altering the cut size so that they all cook at the same time. Quick release of steam immediately after the whistle prevents overcooking and ensures the crunchiness is maintained.

# Tiffin Sambar

## Tamil sour lentil stew

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 2tbsp roasted gram, 1 dry red chilli, 2tsp each (sambar powder, salt) and 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder, roasted fenugreek powder) to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped shallots arranged in a ring with 2C chopped tomatoes at the centre.

Layer 3: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash all.

Bottle. Mix in water to dilute as and when needed & serve.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Shallots with onions
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Paruppu podi with your favourite spiced lentil powder

### **Tips:**

1. Dilute with water and serve.
2. Mix in flash cooked vegetables and serve.
3. Can refrigerate for weeks or freeze for months.
4. Cook longer for greater caramelisation.

Tiffin sambar is a version of sambar which is designed to accompany not rice, but 'tiffin' items (Idli/dosa/Upma/Pongal/Paniyaram,...). There are infinite versions of tiffin sambars, using a variety of bases and lentils.

The building blocks of most versions of tiffin sambar are the onion tomato base, the lentils used, the souring agent and the flavouring.

This version uses a semi caramelised onion and roasted tomato base. Some recipes use boiled lentils (usually mung) and some use roast and powdered lentils (channa/mung). It has been replaced here with paruppu podi (spiced lentil powder). Tamarind is avoided in tiffin sambars, with tomato serving as the souring agent. You can add in some tamarind paste if your tomatoes are not sour enough. The flavour comes chiefly from sambar powder.

Coconut supplements the flavour and also bulks up the body. The same purpose can be achieved with the addition of carrots - one of the rare cases where coconut can be replaced by carrots!

This version produces very thick gravy. It can be bottled and stored for weeks. When desired, a small amount can be mixed with water, tadka added and simmered briefly to make a small quantity of tiffin sambar whenever you like. Addition of vegetables is also optional.

# Tiruvadhirai Puzhukku

## Kerala's grain free meal

<https://youtu.be/LTyQhS-IwMo>

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 2 green chillies, 1tsp each (cumin, salt), 1/4tsp turmeric powder and 1tsp coconut oil to a paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C mung sprouts

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (yam, sweet potato, raw banana)

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH.**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Yam/banana with your favourite starchy vegetables
- Mung sprouts with other sprouts/fresh pulses
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can add chopped shallots/garlic.
2. Vary cut size of vegetables to balance cooking time.

Puzhukku (steamed) generally denotes boiled tubers/whole legumes. Both tubers and whole legumes come together in this Thiruvadhirai Puzhukku. It is so named as it is mandatory during the Thiruvadhirai festival. It is also called Ettangadi Puzhukku (Eight store Puzhukku, as it calls for many ingredients). It is a specialty dish cooked during the winter months, with tubers harvested in winter.

It uses a mix of native tubers and starchy vegetables like Asiatic yam (Kachil/Ratalu), Sweet potato, Raw Banana, Chinese potato (Koorkka), Yam (Chena) and Chembu (Colocasia). Kaachil is considered to be a key

ingredient and more of it is used than other tubers. Unlike other tubers, it is available only in the winter months. Tapioca and Potato are usually avoided as they came into India much later. Squash, though a non starchy vegetable is also called for in some versions.

This starch from tubers is cooked with protein, usually cowpeas (Vanpayaru), though I've substituted them with sprouted mung sprouts in this recipe. The vegetables and the soaked whole legumes are cooked in a coconut- chilli-cumin paste, Kerala's favourite mother sauce.

The building blocks of a Tiruvadhirai Puzhukku are the starchy vegetables, whole legumes and coconut. The versions cooked in Brahmin homes and for temple festivals do not use shallots/garlic.

Flavouring the curry by crushed curry leaves and extra virgin coconut oil is a typically Keralite technique.

The Puzhukku can be eaten by itself as a grain free balanced meal or served with cooked rice, rice/wheat porridge (kanji), along with papad and a spicy dip - a chamanthi or a pickle.

This combination of starch, protein and fat makes it yet another full meal disguised as a curry. Use your favourite starchy vegetables, plant protein and spices to create your own versions.

# Tomato Pappu

## Telugu lentil- vegetable mash

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C soaked tuvar dal, 1C water, 1/2tsp each (chopped chilli, ginger-garlic paste), 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp ghee, 1/2C chopped tomato.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2tsp salt and mash coarsely.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar dal with mung/masoor dal.
- Tomato with your favourite vegetable.
- Ghee with oil.

### **Tips:**

1. Can add caramelised onion for flavour.
2. Can use roasted dal instead of raw dal.

# Tomato Pappu #2

## Telugu lentil- vegetable mash

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1/2C soaked tuvar dal

Layer 4: 1tsp each (chopped chilli, ginger-garlic paste), 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2tsp salt and mash coarsely.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

Though lentils are cooked across the country into a stew, certain regions have evolved their own styles of cooking it. Punjab mastered the art of cooking the slimy urad dal, ignored by other cuisines, into Maa ki Dal. Udupi taught us how to make a salad out of uncooked dal (Kosambari). And Andhra demonstrates how a huge variety of vegetables and greens can be cooked with lentils into infinite stews.

The pappu is a thick lentil stew, revered in Andhra. Served with hot rice, ghee and Avakkaya pickle, it is a heavenly way to start a meal.

Though Tuvar dal is most common, Andhra uses a variety of dals and combines it with an array of vegetables and greens, cooking innumerable pappu.

Mudda pappu (Tuvar dal), Pesara pappu (mung dal), Misore Pappu (Mysore pappu/Masoor dal) are commonly cooked lentil stews . Senaga pappu (Bengal gram/chana dal) is usually cooked with sour spinach (gongura) into the Gongura pappu.

A combination of different lentils is used to cook the Mukkula pappu, a theme echoed across the west (Panchmela dal). Any lentil available across the world can be cooked into a great pappu.

The lentils can be fresh, soaked, roasted, blended into grits or even powdered. Each method changes the taste and texture of the pappu.

A pappu need not have any additives. Plain boiled dal with a bit of salt and

turmeric is a staple across the country. In Andhra it is eaten as the Mudda Pappu.

Raw Mango (Mamdikkaya pappu), Spinach varieties (Aakukoora Pappu/Thota koora pappu/Gongura pappu,..), the much loved dosakka (Dosakka Pappu), tender Tamarind leaves (Chinta chiguru pappu), Squash (Gummadikaya Pappu), Ridge gourd (Beerakkaya pappu),Bottle gourd (Sorakkaya Pappu) are all common.

Pappu is a simple stew and does not need elaborate flavouring. Usually a simple garnish of fried mustard, red chilli and curry leaves is sufficient. The tadka can even be omitted, making this oil free.

# Ulli Theeyal

## Kerala roasted onion-coconut curry

Blend 1/2C grated and roasted coconut, 2 dry red chillies, 1tbsp tamarind paste, 2tsp coriander, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp each (cumin, pepper) and 1/4tsp fenugreek powder to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tbsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped shallots (250g)

Layer 3: Spiced coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Shallots with Onions/your favourite vegetables
- Turmeric/fenugreek powder with your favourite spice mix
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use as a dip/dilute and use as a curry base.
2. Use Kashmiri chilli powder for a redder gravy.
3. Cook longer for more caramelisation.
4. Can blend curry without added water for a longer shelf life.
5. Seafood can also be cooked using the same base.
6. Cook longer for greater caramelisation.

Ulli Theeyal (Onions burnt) is Kerala's answer to dopiaza. It is famous in parts of Kerala, where it even appears in the harvest feast (Sadaya).

Unlike the mild Dopiazza, the Ulli theeyal is packed with South Indian spices. In the traditional preparation, small onions (shallots) are roasted till brown. Grated coconut is roasted till it browns too. Both are blended to a thick paste. This caramelisation fills the dish with its characteristic mildly burnt,

caramelised flavour. Tamarind paste is then added, followed by spices. Vegetables like eggplant, yam, okra are added. Some versions even call for the addition of prawns/fish. Everything is simmered together.

The building blocks of an Ulli theeyal are roasted shallots, roasted coconut, souring agent, spices and additives. Each of these can be varied to create numerous versions.

# Urulai Milagu Kari

## Tamil pepper potatoes

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 10 curry leaves

Layer 3: 250g chopped potato

Layer 4: 2 tsp each (crushed pepper and cumin), 1 tsp salt, 1/2tsp each (sambar, turmeric) powders.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Curry leaves with your favourite fresh herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Can stir and shallow fry for a crisper curry.
2. If undercooked, cut potatoes smaller/cook longer.
3. If overcooked, release pressure manually.

# Usili

## Tanjore Brahmin Vegetable - lentil crumble

[https://youtu.be/ZI\\_RikhCto](https://youtu.be/ZI_RikhCto)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped beans (250g),

Layer 3: Masal vadas blended to a coarse powder (2C) (or) 1/2C OPOS podi mixed with 1tbsp water

Layer 4: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida).

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

## Usili #2

Soak 1/2C channa dal in water overnight. Drain. Blend to a paste with 2 dry red chillies, 1/2tsp salt and 1/[U2]4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida).

Shape into small balls.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped beans (250g)

Layer 3: Dal balls

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Remove balls. Crush/blend them to a powder. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Beans with your favourite non watery vegetables
- Paruppu podi with crumbled masal vada/pakodi/papad powder/Thenga molaga podi
- Chilli powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Mix in a carbohydrate (puffed rice/rice flakes) to make this a full meal.
2. Use peanut/other nut powder in place of lentil powder.
3. Freeze and store excess spiced channa dal paste for making vadakari/paruppu urundai kulambu and usilis in an instant.



The Usili is a much revered curry in Tamil Iyengar cuisine. The word 'Usili' means nothing in Tamil. This is always a reliable indicator that it might be a borrowed recipe. The closest equivalent I could find is the Marathi Usal (lentil curry). It is likely Usal entered Tamil cuisine as the Usili during the Tanjore Maratha rule.

The building blocks of this theme are the vegetables used, the starch and the lentil crumble.

All kinds of beans (French beans, cluster beans, broad beans, long beans..), cabbage and banana flower are commonly used for an Usili. Watery vegetables are avoided because they clump up the usili and destroy its prized crumbly texture.

The lentil crumble can be crushed masal vada, steamed and spiced lentil paste, roasted lentil powder, crushed papad or even pakoda. The idea is to let the crumble absorb excess water from the vegetable used and give a grainy

texture. So we cannot use Medu Vada (made from urad dal) in place of masal vada (made from chana/tuvar dals). These recipes list two of the above variants. You can refer to the paruppu urundai kulambu recipe to learn more easy ways of making the lentil crumble. The flavouring comes from the vegetables and the spiced lentils.

Because of sealed cooking, the OPOS Usili would look a bit mushy when you open the cooker, as compared to the pan cooked version. Don't worry. Let it cool. Remove lentil patties, blend/crush and mix all. It will become nice and crumbly.

The Usili is considered to be a very complicated recipe and has almost disappeared from most homes. OPOS makes it painless!

# Vada Kari

## Tamil lentil fritter curry

<https://youtu.be/5js1nQdkbD8>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion arranged in a ring, 2 chopped deseeded tomatoes arranged in the centre of the ring

Layer 3: Three chopped green chillies, 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, coriander powder, salt), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, fennel, turmeric powder)

Layer 4: 2C crushed masal vada.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Mash coarsely.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onions with shallots
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Vada with falafel/pakodi/soaked and ground spiced dal

### **Tips:**

1. Can dilute with coconut milk/water.
2. Can mix in coconut paste.
3. Use Kashmiri chilli powder if you want a redder curry.
4. You can enrich the curry by mixing in seed paste (Khus khus etc), nut paste or even dairy (milk, cream, coconut milk etc).
5. Can mix in leftover kuruma/salna.

Vada denotes lentil batter based fried patties in Tamil. Two major types of vadas are cooked here - the soft Medu Vada made from urad dal batter and the chewy masal vada/paruppu vada made from channa dal batter.

The medu vada is best eaten fresh. It becomes soggy and limp within an hour. In restaurants, the leftover medu vadas get soaked in sambar/rasam/curd and are served throughout the day as sambar vada/rasa vada/curd vada.

The masal vada retains its crunch much longer and is usually served throughout the day. Those vadas that get leftover by the end of the day get cooked into a curry the next day morning - the vada kari.

The Vada Kari is not a recipe which arose from homes, but emerged out of restaurants as a way of using up the leftover vadas. The best vada karis are still the ones cooked in restaurants and not at homes.

Many cuisines have recipes designed to use up leftovers. The Italian Panzanella chops up leftover bread and mixes it into a salad. The Tamil Kothu parota chops up leftover flatbread (parota) and stir fries it with spices. The Idli upma does the same with idlis. The English trifle used leftover cake trimmings and layers it with other ingredients into a dessert.

The spirit of a Vada kari is not understood by many authors who call for making the vada from scratch.

Fresh vadas are not ideal for this recipe. Old ones work much better. This is why panzanella calls for old bread, idli upma calls for old idlis, kothu parota calls for old parotas and trifle calls for old cakes. So, cooking up a fresh batch of vadas for vada kari is a strict no-no!

If you use fresh bread in a panzanella or a fresh idli in a idli upma, fresh parota in a kothu parota or fresh cake in a trifle, you will end up with a gooey mess. By the same logic, leftover vadas, which are dried out, work much better in a vada kari than fresh ones. Recipes which call for fresh vadas go against the spirit of this theme.

Many vada kari recipes start with a paste of channa dal and spices. This paste shaped and steamed. This steamed batter is simmered with spices into the Vada kari. The Vada kari calls for fried vadas. When you use steamed batter, you are actually cooking up paruppu urundai kari and not vada kari.

The OPOS recipe stays true to the spirit of the theme by using leftover masal vadas.

Use of lentil batter as a vegetable substitute is echoed in the pakodi kadhi, dhoklis, paruppu urundai kozhambu, masala wadi etc. All these lentil batter based dishes can be easily accommodated into the Vada Kari theme.

Serve vadakari with aappam, idli, dosa or even with flatbreads. The vada kari

can be seen as a variant of the dal korma and can be paired well with flatbreads.

# Vatha Kulambu

## Tamil tamarind stew

<https://youtu.be/UViSuM4jllg>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C deseeded tamarind pulp, 2C water, 1tsp salt, 4tsp jaggery, 1/4C sun dried vegetables, 1tbsp each (paruppu podi, sambar powder, sesame oil), 6 curry leaves.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1tbsp bottled tadka.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind with other sour fruit pulp
- Jaggery with sugar
- Paruppu podi with your favourite roasted lentil powder
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Sundried vegetables with fresh vegetables

### **Tips:**

1. Can use fried sun dried vegetables.

Across India, each region has its favourite souring agent. Up North it is Amchoor. In the West coast, it is Kokkum. Further down South, Tamarind rules. Raw tamarind is used in the Andhra Pachi pulusu and raw tamarind lends the tangy bite in the Tamil Thenga thogayal.

But it is the Vatha Kulambu which truly showcases the magical taste of cooked tamarind. Tamil Brahmin fantasies when holidaying abroad revolve around coming back home to Vatha Kulambu, hot rice and sutta appalam (roasted papad).

A Vatha Kulambu is designed to be cooked with almost nothing. No cutting, no elaborate spice mixes, no fancy preparation. Just tamarind pulp simmered with chilli and coriander powder into a tangy, spicy stew.

The name probably comes from the process of simmering away the water

(Vatha vekkaradhu) or from using sun dried vegetables (Vathal), which is the most common additive. The terms Vatha Kulambu (reduced curry) or Vatral Kulambu (Stew with sun dried vegetables) are both used.

The traditional method starts with a tadka in lots of oil. A kalchatti (stoneware) is preferred by the purists. The sun dried vegetables then go in, followed by the freshly ground spice powder (some versions use roasted lentils instead of the powder) followed by the tamarind pulp. After a long simmer, the gravy thickens. The preparatory work is labourious and easily takes over an hour.

This recipe bypasses the tadka with readymade tadka and fresh ground lentil powder with paruppu podi. Vathals need not be fried as they cook well under pressure.

Let us now extend this theme:

**The Base:**

Any sour fruit pulp can fit into this theme. Gooseberry, the Kerala kudampuli, kokum syrup/puree, sour mango pulp can all be used as a base instead of tamarind. You can experiment with your favourite sour fruits.

**Flavouring:**

Chilli powder, coriander powder and asafoetida are the chief flavouring agents. Lentils are used both as a thickener and as a flavouring agent. Some versions use fried dal, some versions use soaked and ground dal. The most common versions use roast and ground dals. You can experiment with your favourite spice mixes/podis.

**Additives:**

Any sun dried vegetable neatly fits into this theme. Cluster beans (Kothavaranga), Turkey berry (Sundakka) and Black nightshade berries (Manathakkali) are commonly used, though there is no reason why we cannot use the sangria/kair/gunda, (all sun dried vegetables from Rajasthan) into this theme.

Fresh vegetables are also used, with shallots and drumstick being the most popular. You can safely use any of your favourite fresh vegetables.

The sour tang of the Kulambu is balanced with jaggery, which can be replaced with sugar/your favourite sweeteners.

**The colour:**

You can vary the colour from a deep, glossy brown to a rich, shiny red by

choosing the appropriate tamarind and chilli powder combination. Use old tamarind (pazham puli/karuppu puli) for a chocolate coloured stew or the new tamarind for a reddish version. Kashmiri chilli powder/addition of tomato pulp can also brighten up the colour.

#### The consistency

Some versions use rice flour as a thickener. Gram flour is also stirred into the simmering stew to thicken it. This recipe relies on the spiced lentil powder to double as a thickener.

A vatha Kulambu is actually a semi pickle. It lasts without refrigeration for a couple of days and for over a month when refrigerated. Like a pickle, a Vatha Kulambu tastes better, the longer it is stored.

Experience the magic of Tamilnadu with this stew!

# Vazhakka Thuruval

## Tamil grated banana stir-fry

Add 250g peeled and grated cooking banana in an small vessel. Mix in 2tsp coconut oil, 1/2tsp each (salt, sambar powder, pepper powder), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida).

In a 2L cooker, add 1C water. Place inner vessel.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with other starchy vegetables
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Can shape into tight balls and make into koftas
2. Grate into long strips using a big holed grater
3. Will firm up when cooled.
4. Serve as it is or as a side dish with rice/rotis.
5. Mash and shape into tight balls and simmer in curry as kola urundai/kofta.
6. Flatten koftas, shallow fry both sides and serve as a Tikki

Grating starchy vegetables, spicing them up and cooking them in various ways is a popular theme across cultures. The Swiss national dish Rösti is made from grated potatoes shaped into rounds and shallow fried. The French Rösti Bernois is cooked the same way. The Americans mix grated potato with flour and seasoning, extrude them into small cylinders and deep fry them into Tatter Tots. The Jewish Latke is made from grated potatoes mixed with flour, egg and seasoning, shallow fried into pancakes. In Tamilnadu, raw Banana is grated, mixed with spices and stir-fried into the Thuruval.

The traditional process calls for steaming the banana, grating it and then stir-frying it with a lot of oil and spices, with constant stirring.

The building blocks of this theme are a starchy vegetable, spices and oil.

Starchy vegetables:

All tubers like potato, sweet potato, colocasia, yam etc can fit into this theme. When using itchy vegetables, a bit of souring agent is usually mixed in. Non starchy vegetables like carrot/radish can also be used in this theme, if the excess water is squeezed out.

Spices:

This is a popular Tamil Brahmin dish and uses basic spices like chilli, turmeric and asafoetida. However, this theme can support elaborate spicing with ginger-garlic paste and an array of other spices.

Oil:

Coconut oil is commonly used. The traditional method uses a lot of oil because starchy vegetables burn if enough oil is not used. The OPOS version calls for a fraction of the oil used in the traditional version.

# Vazhakka Podimas

## Tamil Banana Mash

<https://youtu.be/mkVbooO0P9M>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1tsp chopped ginger, 1 chopped green chilli

Layer 3: 2C chopped raw banana

Layer 4: 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1/2tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash and mix in 1/4C grated coconut.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with potato/sweet potato/yam
- Green chilli with dry red chilli
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil

### **Tips:**

1. Can shape into patties and shallow fry into cutlets.
2. Can mix in chopped herbs.

Podimas is a staple in many Tamil Brahmin households. Ritualised feeding of departed ancestors is assiduously practised in most orthodox households. The simple banana mash invariably forms a part of these feasts, especially during Pitru Paksham, The fortnight of the ancestors.

Celestial events are always associated with rituals in all ancient cultures. In June we have the longest day and in December we have the longest night. These are Solstices (Sun Stopped). They signify the beginning of summer and winter.

Once in March and once in September, the day and night are exactly equal.

These are called Equinoxes (Equal Night). They signify the beginning of spring and autumn.

In India, the first fortnight of the autumn equinox is ritualised into Pitru Paksham (Fortnight of the Ancestors) or Mahalaya Paksham/Malaya Paksham (Homecoming fortnight). Departed ancestors are believed to visit their homes during this fortnight. Ritualised feeding of those departed souls plays a major part in these ceremonies.

These rituals become a part of public memory by being woven into mythology. In Mahabharatha, after Karna dies, his soul reaches heaven. Thirsty and hungry, he asks for food and water, but is given gold and jewels. Surprised, he complains to Indra, who says " You donated gold and jewels all your life, but never fed your ancestors. So you don't get anything to eat or drink". "But I never knew my ancestors" protests Karna.

"Now you do" says Indra. "You are permitted to return to earth for a fortnight to complete your obligations by feeding your ancestors". Karna does so during the Pitrupaksha and dies happily ever after.

Food is tightly governed during these rituals. Fasting, avoiding meat/onion/garlic/wheat/rice are all common. It is not uncommon for each household to follow a different set of rules!

These elaborate rituals have remained unchanged for thousands of years and throw much light on the spirit of a cuisine. In all these rituals, native Pepper is preferred to the foreign chilli.

Mung dal is preferred to Tuvar dal, which suggests Tuvar dal was not always a part of Tamil cuisine.

Coriander are avoided.

All 'English vegetables' (carrot, beans, cabbage, cauliflower etc) are avoided as they came only a few centuries back. Native vegetables like Bitter gourd, banana, cluster beans, snake gourd, mango, colocasia, yam are used.

Jaggery is preferred to sugar.

Sambar is not a part of these rituals lending further evidence to the fact sambar might be a later introduction.

# Vella Poondu Ooruga

## Chettinad garlic pickle

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp vinegar, 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 500g crushed garlic cloves

Layer 3: 2tbsp each (salt, chilli powder, jaggery), 1/4C coriander powder, 1tsp fenugreek powder.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C lemon juice.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garlic with ginger/your favourite vegetables
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Coriander powder with your favourite spice mix
- Jaggery with sugar
- Lemon juice with vinegar/tamarind paste

### **Tips:**

1. Can simmer briefly after adding lemon juice.
2. Rock salt is preferred for pickles.
3. Mix in more oil if needed.

# Vendakka Kulambu

## Tamil okra sour stew

<https://youtu.be/ssnQ3Bhjmwk>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C (250g) chopped okra

Layer 3: 1/4C OPOS tamarind pulp, 1tsp each (sambar powder, salt, coriander powder), 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powders), 2tsp jaggery. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C water.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tamarind pulp with other sour fruit pulp
- Sambar powder your favourite spice mix
- Okra with your favourite vegetables
- Water with yogurt/coconut milk

### **Tips:**

1. Use old tamarind for a darker colour.
2. Chop okra big, to make it less slimy.
3. Can use whole baby okras.



# Vendakka Masal

## Chettinad's Spiced Okra

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped Okra

Layer 3: 3tbsp each caramelised (onion, tomato), 1tsp each (sambar powder, salt), 2tsp coriander powder , 1/4tsp each (turmeric, cumin powders) and 4tsp yogurt.

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Okra with your favourite vegetables
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Yogurt with 1tsp tamarind paste
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil

#### **Tips:**

1. Mix in spiced lentil powder (paruppu podi) for a drier texture.
2. Add more tomatoes for a mushier texture.

This is an unusual curry from the Chettinad cuisine. In Tamil homes, okra (and most vegetables) are usually cooked with a simple tadka of mustard and urad dal into a dry curry.

Only in the North do we see the common use of onion- tomato as a curry base for both dry curries and gravies. In this theme, we use the onion-tomato curry base, but spice it up with South Indian spice mixes. Just change the spice mix and it becomes Bhindi masala - the North Indian curry.

We use the VLM (very long marination) technique, controlled caramelisation technique and no water cooking technique to convert this curry into OPOS

The resulting curry is neither too dry nor too watery. It can be used to accompany rice and curry or can be mixed and eaten with rice. It goes

equally well with flatbreads.

The building blocks of this theme are the onion-tomato base, the vegetable used and the flavouring. Vary them to cook up your own variations!



# Vengaya Thokku

## Tamil Onion sour dip

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 2C (250g) chopped onion

Layer 3: 10 dry red chillies (10g), 1tbsp each (tamarind paste, jaggery)

Layer 4: 1tsp each (salt, sambar powder)

Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Blend to a paste.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onion with shallots
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mixes
- Dry red chillies with chilli powder
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.

### **Tips:**

1. Can add more jaggery to taste.

**OPOS**  
Vengaya thokku



# South Indian Curries – Non-Vegetarian

# Aasari Varuval

## Erode's Infused Oil chicken curry

Mix 2tsp salt with 500g finely chopped boneless chicken. Squeeze dry to remove moisture.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C coconut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped shallots, 1/2C curry leaves

Layer 3: 1/2C coconut chopped into tiny bits, 1/4C dry red chillies broken into bits

Layer 4: Chicken

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Stir-fry to dry up if needed.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Shallots with onion
- Chicken with other meats/soya chunks/paneer/tofu
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil
- Curry leaves with your favourite herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use up to 50g dry red chillies.
2. Can use up to 1/2C coconut oil.

Aasari varuval comes to us from the Kongunadu cuisine. Ancient Tamilnadu was divided into Chera Nadu (South west), Chola Nadu (Centre), Pandiya Nadu (South east), Kongunadu (North west) and Thondai nadu (North east) . Cheras ruled from around Thrissur, Pandiyas from Madurai and Cholas from Tanjore.

Kongunadu (The land of honey) belonged to one or other of these dynasties over time. The districts of Coimbatore, Erode, Salem and Tiruchi belonged to Kongunadu. Later it came briefly under the rule of Delhi Sultans,

Vijayanagara empire, Madurai Nayaks, Deccani Sultans and finally the British. Surrounded by mountains, Kongunadu was able to maintain its identity and cuisine over time. The land is partly lush (with Bhavani, Noyyal, Amaravathi and Cauvery rivers) and partly dry, when these rivers fail.

Kongunadu cuisine reflects both the richness and aridity of its land. Use of copra (dried coconut), millets (samai, thinai, kambu and ragi) and roasted groundnut paste are hall marks of Kongu cuisine. Use of coconut shell as a meat tenderizer, use of drumstick leaves to clarify ghee and Panchamirtham (uncooked banana jam) are some of Kongunadu's culinary innovations. A basic Kongunadu meal consists of Rice, a lentil stew, a dry curry, a thin curry, a pickle and yogurt served with a glass of buttermilk.

Recipe names honouring a particular community/region are always interesting. Iyengar Puliyodarai, Gounder Rasam, Muslim Biriyani, Saidapet Vadakari, Chicken Chettinad are all ultra popular, much sought after recipes!

Kongunadu has two such famous chicken recipes - Aasari Varuval (Coimbatore) and Pallipaalayam chicken (Erode). Cock fighting is a popular pastime in this region and it is possible these curries arose as a way to use up the defeated/injured birds.

The Aasari varuval calls for boneless chicken and the Pallipalayam chicken calls for meat with bones, together ensuring no part of the chicken is wasted! It is also possible that these curries were made with minimal spices as they were prepared in the arena, and were made super spicy to appeal to the tipsy patrons!

Aasari Varuval (Carpenter fry) is a very interesting curry. It relies on very few ingredients and an unusual cooking technique to make a dynamite curry. It is considered to be a delicacy and is super spicy, using insane amounts of dry red chillies. It is eaten mixed with hot cooked rice. Frying spices in hot oil (tadka) is a favourite Indian technique for extracting flavours. The hot oil absorbs the volatile flavour compounds from the spices and distributes it throughout the dish, infusing the dish with the complex flavour of spices.

This tadka magic alone is sufficient to turn a simple, bland curry into an intensely flavourful version. No wonder almost all Indian recipes start (and even end) with a tadka.

In OPOS, tadka is optional as the sealed cooking itself intensifies flavours. In cases where it is desired, we use bottled tadka, which is nothing but infused oil. This infused oil is the secret ingredient in this theme and the main flavouring agent.

# Chemeen Achaar

## Kerala's prawn pickle

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp vinegar, 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 250g cleaned prawns

Layer 3: 1tbsp ginger-garlic paste

Layer 4: 1tsp each (salt, chilli powder), 1/4tsp each (fenugreek powder, turmeric powder, asafoetida)

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Let cool.

Bottle and refrigerate.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Prawns with fish/other seafood
- Fenugreek/turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Vinegar with tamarind paste

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use shallow/deep fried prawns.
2. The sourer the pickle, the longer it lasts.
3. Mix in more oil if needed.

Pickles are ultra long life foods designed to be preserved without refrigeration. Microorganisms attack food from outside and its own enzymes attacks food from inside. The goal of all pickling is to retard the microbial/enzyme actions. This is usually done by the following techniques.

#### **Pickling with acids:**

Foodstuffs are steeped in acids like soy sauce/wine/vinegar/lemon juice/tamarind/miso, which slow down microbial/enzyme actions (Most western pickles, Japanese shouyu-zuke and most Indian pickles follow this technique).

In Indian pickles, the acid usually comes from sour juices of the item pickled

(Mango, lemon). This is why mango and lemon are the most common pickles across the country. For pickling non-sour foods, we need to add a sour medium, as in this case.

#### Pickling by fermentation:

Foodstuffs are mixed with salt, which draws out liquids. This liquid is allowed to ferment under controlled conditions, the fermented liquid becomes sour and acts as a preservative as in Sauerkraut, Kimchi and Japanese Nukazuke. South East Asians have elevated this kind of pickling to an art form.

#### Pickling in oil:

Oil seals out air and prevents the entry of micro organisms. But, there is a class of microorganisms which thrive in the absence of air and cause food poisoning. Their action can be slowed drastically by using a souring agent and by using anti microbial powders like mustard/fenugreek/turmeric. The Middle East Labneh is a prime example of pickling in oil.

Sugar/Honey/alcohol also serve as preservatives -(Gulhkand: Rose petals pickled in honey, Jams, Chundo)

Various combinations of these methods are used across the world for pickling.

By following a few simple rules listed below, you can easily prepare fool-proof pickles.

- Use fresh, unblemished vegetables.
- Wash and completely dry vegetables, bottles and spoons before using.
- Never use a wet spoon or your bare hands to touch the pickle. Even a tiny bit of water can spoil it.
- The goal of all pickling is to reduce the water content as microorganisms can only thrive in the presence of water.
- Aluminum, plastic or brass vessels react with the acid in pickles and should be avoided.
- Use glass/stainless steel/porcelain jars.
- All spices are to be roasted and powdered, to minimize moisture content.

- Salt is to be sun dried/roasted as it absorbs water.
- Prefer sea salt as iodized table salt can make the pickle cloudy.
- Sterilize the bottles before filling them with pickles. (See below)
- Fill the bottles almost to the top to reduce the amount of air sealed inside.
- Ensure there is always a layer of oil on top of pickle.
- Once pickles are ready, refrigerate them to make them last much longer.

The more rules you break, the less time your pickles will last.

Following all of them would result in a pickle which stores well.

Sterilising bottles: Half fill a 2L cooker with cold water. Immerse the bottle and heat for 1 whistle. Let pressure settle. Keep bottles inverted till they are completely dry. Fill to the brim with pickles and seal with a layer of oil.

# Chicken Chettinad

## Chettinad chicken curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 1C finely chopped onion arranged in a ring with 1C chopped deseeded tomato at the centre.

Layer 3: 250g chopped chicken mixed with 1/2tsp each (garam masala, chilli, fennel, coriander powders), 1 tsp salt, 2tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, chopped mint), 2 chopped green chillies.

Layer 4: 1/4C coconut paste.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mash/blend all except chicken.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chicken with other protein (Soya chunks/Paneer/ Mutton mince)
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil.

#### **Tips:**

1. Use marinated chicken for deeper flavor.
2. Sear chicken before adding for more flavour.



The tiny

Chettinadu (The land of Chettiars) boasts of some of the most aromatic curries of India. In this theme, we use the Dum, layering and No water cooking techniques to pack the curry with even more flavour.

Chettinad is a small region in southern Tamilnadu consisting of Karaikudi and 74 other villages. It is not a geographic entity and so does not have a clear-cut boundary. This is the homeland of the Nattukottai Chettiars (Nagarathar). Being one of the driest areas of Tamilnadu, it is not conducive to agriculture. Unable to farm, its people instead became successful traders, bankers and businessmen, going as far as Southeast Asia to trade. Their enormous success and legendary wealth are reflected in their palatial houses and the expensive spices used in their cuisine.

Chettinadu curries are built from the same four basic building blocks as all South Indian curries – lentils, yogurt, tamarind and coconut. What makes them unique are the flavouring and the cooking techniques used.

Usually Chettinad curries are richer, thicker and more flavourful than their counterparts in Tamil cuisine. Garlic and fennel are extensively used. Exotic spices like Marathi mokku (dried flower pods), anasipoo (star anise), kalpasi (dried lichens), cinnamon, cloves and bay leaf are common. Using readymade masalas is frowned upon. Most spice mixes are roasted and freshly ground.

Marinated chicken (though not common in Chettinad cuisine) adds another layer of flavour. Marinated and browned chicken packs in even more flavour.

# Chicken Salna

## Tamil nutty chicken curry

Mix 250g chicken with 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli, fennel, coriander, cumin, garam masala, turmeric powders).

Blend 1/4C each (chopped coconut, roasted peanuts), 2 dry red chillies, 1/4tsp salt, 1tsp oil to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 3tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion

Layer 3: Spiced chicken

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chicken with other protein (Paneer/soya/mushroom, mutton mince)
- Peanuts with roasted gram/other roasted nuts/seeds
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix.

#### **Tips:**

1. Dilute with more water/stock if needed.
2. Can mix in bottled tadka.



# Gongura Kodi

## Telugu sour chicken curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped chicken

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger- garlic paste, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp each (garam masala, chilli, turmeric powders)

Layer 4: 1/4C gongura pickle (sour spinach dip)

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Chicken with your favourite meats/seafood/paneer/soya chunks/mushroom
- Garam masala with chicken masala/your favourite spice mix
- Gongura with your favourite pickle

### **Tips:**

1. Use small chunks of chicken.
2. Can marinate chicken and refrigerate overnight for deeper flavours.

Gongura Kodi (Sorrel leaf Chicken) is a Telugu specialty. Cooking meat with a souring agent is a common South Indian theme. Tamarind/Fish tamarind/tomatoes are usually the souring agents of choice in South Indian meat based curries. In Andhra, we bump into another souring agent - Sorrel leaves, called Gongura in Telugu.

This leafy plant yields some really sour leaves and the Telugu cuisine has incorporated it as a souring agent in many of its themes. Across India, only Telugu and Marathi cuisines use these leaves. Marathis call it Ambadi and use it to cook up sweet and sour lentils (Ambadichi Amti) and a basic curry - the Ambadi Bhaji.

Tamilnadu does not even dignify it with a name, instead calling it Pulicha keerai (sour greens). Its usage is rare in other Indian cuisines

Andhra produces some of the sourest sorrel leaves and uses it to create many interesting themes. They are cooked into a pickle - the Gongura pachadi, into a sour dal - the Gongura pappu and are used as a souring agent in meat/seafood based curries.

The Gongura Mamsam (Gongura Mutton), Gongura Kodi Kura (Gongura chicken curry), Gongura Royyalu (Gongura shrimp) are all classic Telugu curries.

The traditional preparation of Gongura Kodi is a multi step process

1. Boil and blend gongura
2. Caramelize onions
3. Stir in ginger garlic paste
4. Add chicken and simmer till cooked
5. Add spice powders
6. Add gongura paste and cook till done.

This recipe uses gongura pickle to convert this theme to OPOS. The concept of using pickles as curry bases is not very prevalent in the South. A pickle is nothing but a concentrated curry base. The North Indian cuisine uses pickles as a curry base in its Achari curries. The Pickle Pulao uses pickle as a curry base to cook rice.

This theme can be extended with other pickles, meats or veg protein to produce a range of Achari Curries. Vegetarians can replace meat with soya chunks/seitan/paneer/tofu or even paruppu urundai (spiced lentil balls). Play with the building blocks listed in the recipe to create your own variants.

Tips:

1. The colour of the curry will depend on the colour of the pickle and spice powders used.
2. Mixing chicken with the pickle and letting it marinate for an hour (or even overnight, in a fridge) packs in even more flavour.

# Kozhi Kulambu

## Tamil chicken sour stew

[https://youtu.be/p8\\_tZxkiEdI](https://youtu.be/p8_tZxkiEdI)

Mix 250g chopped chicken with 1tbsp ginger- garlic paste, 1tsp each (salt, fennel, chilli, coriander powders), 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C finely chopped onion arranged in a ring with 1C chopped deseeded tomato at the centre

Layer 3: Spiced chicken

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash/blend all except chicken.

**LAYER, FLASHAND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chicken with soya chunks/paneer/tofu/mushroom/lentil balls
- Chicken with other meats/seafood
- Tomato with tamarind paste
- Fennel powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can refrigerate spiced chicken for a week or freeze for ever.
2. Frozen chicken need not be thawed before using.

The basic chicken Kulambu in villages is very unpretentious. It is just chicken simmered with coriander powder, chilli powder and turmeric powder. Even ginger/garlic is considered too fancy. These three powders form the basic flavouring for most rustic curries. The chicken supplies all the flavour as free range chicken (nattu kozhi) and not broilers are usually used. Mass produced battery chickens are sneered at. We have to beef up the curry with more flavouring if we use broilers.

This classic template works for all kinds of protein stews, with minor tweaks.



# Meen Kolambu

## Tamil sour fish stew

<https://youtu.be/KEmXwpLcIvs>

Mix 250g fish with 1tbsp tamarind paste, 2tsp coriander powder, 1tsp each (salt, chilli, sambar, fennel powders) and 1/2tsp each (turmeric, fenugreek powder). Add to a small vessel.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 4tsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped shallots arranged in a ring, 1/2C chopped deseeded tomato at the centre

Layer 3: Place vessel with fish

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Blend all except fish. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Fish with other protein (Paneer/soya/mushroom, prawn, meatballs)
- Sambar powder with your favourite spice mix
- Tamarind with other souring agents

#### **Tips:**

1. Dilute with more water/stock if needed.
2. Let fish marinate for an hour.
3. If fish is undercooked, cook longer/use smaller chunks.
4. If overcooked, release pressure the next time.
5. Tastes better after a few hours of cooking.
6. Store and reheat in mud pots for greater flavour.

# Meen Moilee

## Kerala coconut milk fish stew

Mix 250g fish cubes with 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp each (salt, pepper), 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion

Layer 3: Spiced fish.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Add 1/2C coconut milk, 2tsp lemon juice and blend all except fish to a smooth sauce.

### **LAYER FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Fish with other seafood/delicate vegetables
- Onion with shallots.

#### **Tips:**

1. Let fish marinate for a deeper flavor.
2. Can blend in water/stock for thinner gravy.

Meen Moilee (Fish stew) is a Kerala Christian delicacy. The word Moilee/Molee (MOH- lay) means nothing in Malayalam/Tamil, always a sure pointer that this is a borrowed recipe from another culture.

Long long time ago, 500 years back to be precise, two European nations sailed out to explore new worlds. The Spaniards sailed West and ended up conquering the Americas. The Portuguese sailed east and ended up conquering East Asia. Though both inflicted untold brutalities on the natives, they also ended up enriching world cuisine.

The Spaniards found the natives of Central America making a stew called Molli/Mole. This Mole is still Mexico's national dish. Mole is to Mexico what Curry is to India. It is not a recipe, but denotes a vast range of stews. Oaxaca is still known as The Land of the Seven Moles.

The Aztec word molli just means a stew/sauce. The Spaniards called it mole, a word the Portuguese borrowed. Spaniards and Portuguese replaced meat with seafood, added olive oil, garlic, European herbs and spices into their versions of the Mole. When the Portuguese colonised parts of the Malabar Coast, this recipe found its way into India. Keralites Indianised it by adding coconut milk, turmeric, pepper, chillies, curry leaves and ginger. The flexible theme became frozen into a recipe, as it often happens with borrowed themes. The version with fish/seafood became very popular and the meat/vegetable based versions are rarely cooked. The South East Asian colonies of the Portuguese also share this dish and have their own versions of the Mole.

The building blocks of a Malabar Meen Mole are fresh fish/seafood, coconut milk and local flavouring agents (curry leaves, ginger, pepper, turmeric). Some versions even use cardamom, cinnamon, and fennel as additional flavourings. Virgin coconut oil is added at the very end for an intense aroma. A tadka of curry leaves, shallots, mustard is also common.

The bite comes from chillies and the tang from tomatoes/vinegar/lemon juice. When tomatoes are used, they are usually not cooked into a mush like it happens with most Indian curries, but are semi cooked. Some versions call for almost raw tomatoes.

Any fleshy fish can be used in a mole. The fish is usually lightly fried before being added to the curry to prevent it from breaking up. This step is optional in OPOS.

Like all fish curries, Mole tastes best when it is cooked in a mud pot and when the flavouring agents are freshly ground. The Mexicans use molcajete (mortar and pestle) to grind the ingredients into a paste - a practice followed in many Indian homes too. Purists swear that the patiently ground up masalas in a mortar and pestle are tastier than the ones blended in a high speed blender.

Mole is traditionally served for breakfast as an accompaniment to aappam/idiyappam/toast/pathiri or even puttu. It goes equally well with white bread/rice or flatbreads.

The traditional recipe calls for addition of diluted coconut milk first and thicker versions later to prevent curdling. In OPOS we avoid it by cooking

thick coconut milk in retained heat.

You can use this sauce not just to cook fish, but about anything. It goes well as a pasta sauce or as a dipping sauce too!

# Meen Molagittadhu

## Kerala peppery fish stew

Mix 250g fish with 3tsp tamarind paste, 1tsp each (chilli powder, pepper, salt, ginger-garlic paste), 1/4tsp each (fenugreek, turmeric powders). Add to a small vessel.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped shallots arranged in a ring, 1C chopped deseeded tomatoes arranged in the centre.

Layer 3: Place inner vessel with spiced fish.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Blend all except fish with 1C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Fish with other protein (Paneer/soya/mushroom, prawn, meatballs)
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Tamarind with fish tamarind/other souring agents

### **Tips:**

1. Dilute with more water/stock if needed.
2. Do not use over 1" thick whole/chopped fish

Meen Molagittathu (Fish with pepper added) is how one of the most commonly cooked fish curries in Malabar is called, though it does not use any pepper. It is likely that it was indeed cooked with pepper before chillies came in, 500 years back.

Use of tamarind as a souring agent is rare in Keralite seafood curries and is prevalent only in Malabar. The easier availability of Tamarind/the cheaper cost or a combination of both factors probably led to the preference of Tamarind over Kudampuli in this region.

The same version of this curry is cooked in South Kerala and is called Meen Vevichadhu. The key difference is that it uses Fish tamarind in place of tamarind. Across Kerala, the use of Tamarind is confined to vegetarian recipes. Fish/seafood curries invariably use other souring agents. This theme is a lone exception.

This theme belongs to the class of Keralite fish/seafood curries which use just a souring agent and spices (Vevichathu/Pattichathu/Mulagitathu).

This curry is built to last. Tamarind and the spice powders act as a preservative. It can be stored for days without refrigeration. It is heated a couple of times each day, to minimise the change of spoilage. With every heating, it gets thicker, hence the name Patichathu (thickened). It gets tastier as it ages.

Like all fish curries, this recipe is usually cooked in a claypot (meen chatti) and tastes best the next day.

As this curry is easily made and uses inexpensive ingredients, it is common in the toddy shops popular among the labourers. Hence this curry is also called Kallushap meen curry (Toddy shop fish curry) or simply 'Shappile meen curry'.

It is usually served with Kappa Puzhukku (steamed and mashed tapioca) or with cooked rice/puttu. Sardines (Mathi/Chaala) is the most commonly used fish.

The key building blocks are tamarind, chilli powder and spices used. Turmeric, shallots, garlic, fenugreek and curry leaves are all used in the Malabar version, but shallots and garlic disappear down South and coriander powder makes an appearance.

Vary these building blocks and use additives of your choice to extend this theme to cook up your own versions!

# Nandu Masala

## Chettinad crab curry

Take 250g cleaned crab. Ensure very thick bits (claws/body) are crushed/split open. Mix in 1tsp each (salt, coriander, chilli powders), 1/4tsp each (turmeric, fennel, garam masala powders).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 5 curry leaves, 1/2C chopped onion arranged in a ring with 1/2C chopped deseeded tomato in the centre

Layer 3: Spiced crab

Layer 4: 1/4C coconut blended to a paste with 1tsp ginger garlic paste, 4 cashews

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1/4C coconut milk.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Crab with prawns/fish/other seafood
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Cashew with roasted gram/other nut powders/pastes
- Onion with shallots

### **Tips:**

1. Over 1" thick bits do not cook well. Crush them/split them open.
2. Crack/remove shells for deeper flavor penetration.
3. Marinated crab can be refrigerated for days.
4. Use Kashmiri red chilli powder for a deeper colour.
5. Use OPOS ginger-garlic paste and caramelised onions for greater flavour.
6. Let crab soak in gravy for an hour before serving.
7. Prefer live, frozen crabs.

This recipe is designed to showcase the flash cooking technique to cook seafood and the plug and play technique to translate one theme across cuisines. The logic is simple. Almost all seafood can be cooked in their own juices and need minimal cooking. So, they are ideally suited for flash cooking.

We can layer a variety of seafood with spices and flash them to convert them into a curry. The building blocks of this theme are the crab, flavouring and additives.

**Crab:**

Crabs caught during no moon day are preferred as they are fleshier. Medium sized crabs are ideal for this curry. You can use fresh/seawater crabs but remember you cannot flash cook very thick pieces. So, ensure your crab is not over 1" thick. Thicker pieces should be crushed and flattened to ensure even cooking.

Crabs, like most seafood, release water on cooking and need no added water. Their shells turn a bright pink/orange on cooking. Processed crab meat is available and can be used to replace whole crabs. If using whole crabs, ensure they are cleaned well. Breaking them into two/removing their shell lets the masala seep in deeper.

In Tamilnadu, crab is considered to be a 'heating' food and is very popular during cold/rainy days or when one is suffering from a cold/fever.

**Flavouring:**

Chettinad's favourite trio of fennel, garlic and chillies along with turmeric powder and garam masala supplies most of the flavour. You can add more flavouring of your choice. This spice paste can be replaced with any curry base/thokku/pickle to cook up more combinations

**Additives:**

Coconut/cashew powder are used as thickening agents. The base masala of onion, tomato supply the body of the curry. If you want more gravy, you can use more of onion/tomato/coconut. Else just mix in more coconut milk on opening.

**Plug and Play:**

As the core recipe relies on perfectly cooked crab, you can translate the recipe into any cuisine by just varying the other building blocks.

1. Kanyakumari Nandu Masala:  
Use more tomatoes, add freshly ground pepper.
2. Kerala Kallu Shappu Njandu Curry  
Replace sesame oil with coconut oil, add more coconut and green chillies.
3. Bengali Kakrar jhaal  
Replace sesame oil with mustard oil, Omit coconut, replace onions with caramelised onions.
4. Konkani Kurle Ambat.  
Use fresh water crabs, replace tomatoes with 2tsp tamarind, add more coconut and omit garam masala.
5. Telugu Peethala Iguru  
Replace cashew powder with poppy seed paste, skip tomatoes.
6. Marathi Kekda Masala  
Replace spice mix with a roasted paste of red chillies, coriander, jeera, cinnamon, pepper and copra.
7. Srilankan Crab Curry  
Replace spice mix with Jaffna curry powder, curry leaves with drumstick leaves, replace fresh coconut with roasted coconut-cumin-pepper paste.
8. Brazilian Arroz de Caranguejo.  
Add capsicum along with onions and tomatoes, skip all spice powders, cashew powder, ginger-garlic paste and coconut, mix in lemon juice and serve with rice.
9. New Orleans Crab Gumbo.  
Add capsicum and celery along with onions and tomatoes, skip all spice powders, cashew powder and coconut, replace ginger-garlic paste with chopped garlic, curry leaves with a bay leaf, thyme and oregano, chilli powder with pepper powder and coconut paste with a mixture of roux and shrimp stock.

In Chettinad, this curry is paired with hot cooked rice. You can serve this curry with rice/flatbreads/any starch of your choice.

# Pallipalayam Chicken Curry

## Tamil spicy chicken curry

<https://youtu.be/rFZHijLklSQ>

Mix 250g chopped chicken, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp coriander powder, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 2tsp salt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1/4C coconut oil, 10 (ten) dry red chillies torn to bits.

Layer 2: 1C chopped shallots arranged in a ring with 1/2C chopped deseeded tomatoes at the centre

Layer 3: 1/2C sliced coconut

Layer 4: Spiced chicken.

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Shallots with onions
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil
- Chicken with soaked soy chunks/paneer/mushroom

#### **Tips:**

1. Stir-fry on opening if you want a dry curry.
2. Use marinated/browned chicken for greater flavour

Pallipalayam is a twin city of Erode, famous for its yarn based business. It is on one side of the river Cauvery, while Erode is on the other side. Its curry, the Pallipalayam chicken curry is a twin of the Aasari Varuval, famous in the nearby towns, especially Coimbatore. It is clear that these curries started as working class curries. They carry a big flavour punch but use the simplest of spices and cooking methods. Unlike the Aasari varuval, which is always served dry, this curry comes in both dry and gravy versions. Unlike the Aasari varuval, which is designed to be paired with hot rice, this curry is

served as a side dish. The building blocks of this curry are the onion tomato base, flavourings and the additives. The flavouring comes from red chillies, ginger-garlic, curry leaves, coconut and spice powders. The coconut oil which is preferred for this curry adds flavour. The additive is usually bite sized country chicken, with bones.

The spirit of this recipe lies in the Spartan simplicity. Simple spices and simple preparation are hallmarks of this curry and point to the working class origins of the recipe. Recipes that call for roasting/grinding go against the spirit of this theme. The workers had no time for elaborate preparation!

In the traditional method, the onion is stir-fried, tomatoes and spices are added and cooked till dry. Later, chicken is added and the whole curry is simmered together. We use the No water cooking, layering and caramelisation techniques to convert the recipe to OPOS.

# Pepper Chicken

<https://youtu.be/SEd8MI8Tk44>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp sesame oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion, 10 crushed curry leaves

Layer 3: 250g chicken (with bone) chopped into bite sized pieces mixed with 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp each (garam masala, turmeric, chilli, fennel powders), 2tsp each (pepper powder, coriander powder)

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6min). Mix in 1tsp crushed pepper.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

## **Replace/Supplement**

- Chicken with other meats/soya chunks/mushroom/paneer
- Pepper with ginger/garlic
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Onion with shallots

## **Tips:**

1. Mix in tomato sauce/lemon juice before serving.
2. Can stir-fry in an open pan for a drier curry.
3. Fresh ground pepper is the key to a well flavoured pepper chicken.
4. Roasting and grinding pepper gives the maximum flavour.
5. A tadka with any combination of mustard, curry leaves, dry red chillies, onions, garlic can be used for an extra flavour punch.
6. Mix salt with chicken, rest briefly and squeeze to remove excess water.

Pepper Chicken is very likely an ancient Indian recipe. Chicken, pepper and most of the spices that go into this theme originated in India. It is more prevalent in the South, the land of pepper, and uses South Indian spices (turmeric powder, curry leaves and pepper).

The Andhra Miriyala Kodi Vepudu/Miriyala Kodi Kura, Tamil Milagu Kozhi

Kari, Kerala Kurumulaku Kozhi are all variants of this theme.

Each region inserts its favourite oils, spices and additives into this theme, creating its own variants. Tamilnadu prefers sesame oil and its most famous version, the Chettinad pepper chicken uses Kalpasi (dried lichens) and fennel.

Kerala uses coconut oil and mixes in grated coconut. Andhra uses peanut oil in cooking up this theme.

The traditional preparation calls for cooking the ginger garlic paste, caramelizing onions and then adding chicken and spices, which is stir-fried till it is cooked.

In this recipe onions are caramelised by using the no water technique. In the absence of water, onions and ginger garlic paste get browned in the oil used. By this time, the steam generated builds up pressure and ensures chicken gets cooked very fast. The absence of water also concentrates flavours and makes possible a thick gravy. The chicken comes out juicier and more flavourful than the one cooked in an open pan.

Chicken releases its juices on cooking. So, no added liquid is essential. Dry meats like mutton need a minimal amount of added liquid to build up steam.

This theme can be extended with a variety of meats. Vegetarian versions can be cooked with soaked and drained soya chunks/paneer/seitan/tofu/mushroom. Both gravy and dry versions exist. The dry versions are served as an appetiser/bar snack and the gravy versions accompany rice/flatbreads.

# Sura Puttu

## Tamil fish scramble

Mix 250g shark slices, 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp each (chilli powder, pepper powder, garam masala), 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 6 curry leaves, 1/2C chopped onion

Layer 3: Spiced fish (see above)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove fish. Peel off skin. Remove hard bits and flake fish with a fork/your fingers.

Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Shark with your favourite fish
- Coconut oil with your favourite oil
- Onion with shallots
- Garam masala with your favourite spice powder
- Curry leaves with your favourite herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked, cut smaller/cook longer.
2. Can mix in 1/4C grated coconut.
3. Use very fresh fish.
4. If possible, get the fish deskinned.
5. Let fish marinate in spices for a stronger flavour.

Sura Puttu is a Tamil delicacy. It is much loved by kids as it is mildly spiced has no bones. It is also frequently recommended to nursing mothers. It can be eaten with rice or used as a filling in sandwiches/rolls.

The traditional recipe calls for boiling fish in water, flaking it and stir-frying it with onions and spices. We use flash cooking to convert it into OPOS.

The building blocks of a sura puttu are the fish used, the flavouring and additives.

Fish:

Shark is the most commonly used fish, though any fish can be used in the recipe. Even bony fish can be used as they flake easily after cooking.

Flavouring:

This recipe calls for minimal flavouring but you can spice it up any way you like with spice mixes of your choice. Even a simple scramble with just turmeric powder, salt and chilli powder tastes fine.

Additives:

Onions are added to bulk up the scramble. Grated coconut is commonly added for the same purpose, though both add another layer of taste and flavouring. A tadka with mustard, curry leaves and dry red chillies is common too, and can be replaced with OPOS bottled tadka.

# Thenga Aracha Meen Curry

Kerala's fish in spiced coconut curry

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1/4C chopped sour mango, 1tsp each (chilli powder, salt, chopped ginger), 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp coconut oil

Layer 2: 2 chopped green chillies, 1/2C chopped shallots

Layer 3: 250g cleaned fish

Layer 4: Spice paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Mix in 1C water.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH.**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Fish with other protein (Paneer/soya/mushroom, prawn, meatballs)
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix
- Mango with other souring agents

## **Tips:**

1. Dilute with more water/stock if needed.
2. Marinate fish for greater flavor.

Thenga Aracha meen Kari (Fish in blended coconut sauce) is one of the chief styles of cooking fish/seafood curries in Kerala.

Tamarind, Tuvar dal, Yogurt and Coconut are the building blocks of all South Indian curries. These building blocks change marginally in Kerala. Tamarind virtually disappears, to be replaced by other souring agents, Tuvar dal is overshadowed by Mung dal or desi channa (kadala), yogurt and coconut get heavily emphasised. Even rice, the undisputed South Indian staple, gets competition from Tapioca.

Thus, the fish curries of Kerala differ from their South Indian counterparts.

Tamarind is the souring agent of choice in South Indian Fish curries. Kerala has a choice of many more souring agents, depending on what is easily available in the region.

1. Averrhoa Bilimbi, also called Irumban Puli/Ilimbi/Ilumbanpuli/Chemmeen puli/Keerichakka/Pulinjakka is widely used in South Kerala. The fruit is used just like sour mango and is blended into the curry.
2. Garcinia gummi-gutta also called Kudampuli/Malabar tamarind/Kodum puli/Pot tamarind/Fish tamarind/Gorikapuli is popular all over Kerala. This sour fruit looks like mangosteen. The rind is sun dried, smoked and stored in mud pots (from where it gets its name). While using, the rind is soaked in water and the soaked water plus the rind is added to the curry. Unlike tamarind, the rind does not dissolve and is discarded while eating.
3. Raw mango/sour buttermilk/sour yogurt/vinegar/tomato/brined mango/dried mango/gooseberry are all used as souring agents in parts of Kerala.
4. In the regions where Tamarind is grown, Tamarind pulp and even the leaves get used as souring agents.
5. As you go up North, Garcinia Indica (Kokum) becomes the souring agent of choice in the Konkan region, right up to Gujarat. The kokkum trees grow well in the North east and Kokum is prevalent in the Assamese cuisine too!

Any of these souring agents can go into Keralite fish curries depending on where they are cooked.

Keralites take their fish curries seriously, like the Bengalis. “Enna meen kitti? (What's the fish today?”) is a form of greeting both in Kerala and in Bengal. As with any loved dish, Purists form elaborate, often self contradictory rules to govern how these curries should be cooked.

We will ignore these rules and recreate the curries from the core building blocks.

Keralite fish/seafood curries can be split into three major groups:

1. Fish curries with coconut paste, souring agent and spices (Thenga aracha meen Kari).

2. Fish curries with coconut milk, souring agent and spices (Moilee/Mappas).
3. Fish curries with just a souring agent and spices (Vevichathu/pattichathu/Mulagitathu).

As long as you take a theme based approach, you can safely ignore the myriad rules listed below:

1. Kerala fish curries do not use Tamarind.
2. South Kerala curries use only Kodampuli.
3. North Kerala curries use only mango, buttermilk, bilimbi
4. Garlic cannot be used with coconut in fish curries.
5. Garlic is never used in fish curries.
6. Ginger paste is never used in fish curries.
7. Tamarind can never be used in coconut based fish curries.

Though I've tried to incorporate these rules into the core theme, please note that in most cases they are just personal preferences and vary widely across regions. But all these curries across regions do have several things in common.

1. They all taste better when cooked in a mud pot. Meen Chatti (Fish pot) is still found in many Keralite homes, reserved exclusively for fish curries.
2. They all taste better the next day, when the flavours come together.
3. They all are served with a starch (Usually Tapioca/Puttu/Kerala rice).
4. They all use a similar mix of spices (Ginger, garlic, turmeric powder, chilli powder, coriander powder).
5. They all use a tadka of mustard, curry leaves and fenugreek.
6. They all are cooked with coconut oil.

In the traditional version of the thenga aracha meen kari, tadka is done, shallots are added and stir fried, followed by ginger and garlic. Coconut paste is then added and sautéed. The souring agent is added, followed by water and spices. The curry is simmered till it loses the raw taste. The OPOS version replaces these steps with the layer and flash technique.

Feel free to play around with the core building blocks to cook up your own versions. None of these rules are sacred - you can break them at will, as long as you remain true to the spirit of the theme.

# Uppukari

## Tamil salted meat dry curry

[https://youtu.be/Swlk\\_kvcrFk](https://youtu.be/Swlk_kvcrFk)

Mix 250g boneless mutton chopped small, 1/2tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp each (salt, cumin, chilli, pepper powders).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped shallots, 10 curry leaves

Layer 3: Spiced mutton

Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (8 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mutton with other red meats/soaked soya chunks
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. If undercooked, cook longer/cut smaller/marinate with a meat tenderizer.
2. If overcooked, reduce cooking time.
3. Go by the intense smell of cooked mutton, as different meats have different cooking times.

Uppukari is a dry curry, which calls for prolonged cooking of red meat with an overdose of spices and salt. Such a cooking style converts the meat into a semi pickle by greatly reducing water content. This dry curry, flavoured with South Indian spices can be eaten as a snack or served with rice and curry.



# North Indian Curries

# North Indian Curries

## A Primer

<https://youtu.be/wOR7rBzsgJk>

For the sake of convenience, all regions North of the Deccan plateau are referred to as ‘North’. However, you will see that Indian cuisine neatly splits itself into five major groups - North, South, East, West and North-East.

The building blocks of North Indian curries are Dairy products, Onion-tomato paste, Nut paste, Dal and Spinach puree. These are flavored with Cumin, Ginger, Garlic, Chillies, Mint, Coriander and Garam masala (a blend of cloves, cardamom, bay leaves, cinnamon and other spices).

A variety of fats are used: Butter, Ghee, Mustard oil and Peanut oil are common. Refined vegetable oils have now become popular.

Plant protein sources are dals (Mung dal, Channa Dal, Tuvar dal, Masoor dal, Whole urad dal), Green peas, Chickpeas, Kidney beans and many other regional legumes.

Chicken, Mutton and Eggs are common animal protein sources. Beef/Pork are uncommon. Fish/seafood are less prevalent in landlocked regions. Paneer is extensively used.

A variety of fresh, seasonal vegetables and edible greens are used to meet the micro nutrient needs.

Dried mango powder is the preferred souring agent. Green mangoes, yogurt, tomatoes and dried pomegranate seeds are also used.

**Universal Tadka:** Almost all North Indian curries start/end with frying cumin seeds in oil, the same way almost all South Indian curries start/end with frying mustard seeds in oil.

The key building blocks - Dairy products (butter, milk, cream, yogurt), onion- tomato paste, nut paste, dal and spinach puree can be combined in any way, in any proportion, with a variety of edibles to create innumerable curries. The following are the major North Indian curry families:

- Onion is cooked into the Dopyaza.
- Onion and Tomato caramelise to become the Masala.
- Tomato caramelised with butter creates the Makhni.
- Caramelised Onion and Tomato combine with Dairy to form the Korma.
- A variety of lentils are cooked into dals.
- A huge variety of Spinach is cooked and mashed into the Saag.
- Yogurt is cooked into the Kadhi.
- Raw yogurt becomes the base for Raita.

The key flavourings are cumin, ginger - garlic paste and garam masala (as opposed to the stronger spices of ancient India - mustard, turmeric and asafoetida). Coriander powder is common to both South and North. Note that Tamarind of South India gets replaced by tomato and milk replaces coconut milk.

Cooking with milk/cream is a Mogul legacy. Since most of North India was under Central Asian dynasties for over 1000 years, use of milk, cream and nut paste has become common in their curries. In pockets untouched by the Mogul domination (parts of Rajasthan, Kashmir, Assam, Gujarat, Nepal and hilly regions), traces of ancient Indian cuisine still exist. If you draw a map of Mogul dominated regions and place it over a map of regions where use of mustard, turmeric, tamarind, and asafoetida are not prevalent, you'll see an almost perfect overlap. Food habits change very slowly!

In the epicentre of Mogul rule, in and around Delhi, ancient Indian cuisine has almost disappeared, to be replaced by Mogul cuisine. What passes off as traditional and authentic North Indian cuisine abroad is this Mogul cuisine.



# Achari Aloo Paneer

## Potato paneer spicy curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion arranged in a ring

Layer 3: 1/2C chopped deseeded tomatoes arranged in the centre of the ring

Layer 4: 2C potatoes chopped small, 1/4tsp each (salt, chilli powder)

Layer 5: An inner vessel with 1C chopped paneer, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste and 2tbsp mango pickle.

Cook on high heat for four whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potatoes with other starchy vegetables
- Paneer with mushroom/soya chunks/sprouts
- Mango pickle with your favourite pickle

### **Tips:**

1. Omit tomatoes for a dry version.
2. Cook longer for a caramelised version.



AAP or PPP (Pickled Potato Paneer) is a balanced meal dressed up as a curry. Like the popular Aloo Matar (Potato with green peas), it is a variant of the Rice with Beans theme. Potato provides the starch, Paneer gives the protein and other vegetables provide the micronutrients. So, this curry can be eaten as it is without being accompanied by roti/rice. If you want more starch, you can mix in a handful of flattened rice for a filling, instant meal.

The building blocks are the starchy base, the protein additive and the flavouring used. The idea of using pickles as concentrated curry bases has been explored in other themes like Pickle Pulao and Achari chicken.

Both dry and gravy versions of this curry are cooked up. Here we use more tomatoes to make a gravy version. Skip this step and you would get a dry curry.

Interpret this theme with differing bases, additives and pickles to fit into any cuisine!

# Achari Bhindi Kofta

## Stuffed okra curry

Mix 1/4C roasted besan with 1tbsp mango pickle. Slit 250g okra on one side to form a pocket. Stuff the mixture tightly into okra. Wipe the surface clean.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tbsp oil

Layer 2: Stuffed okra

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango pickle with your favourite pickle
- Roasted besan with peanut/cashewnut powder
- Okra with big chillies/ baby bottle gourd/ ivy gourd

#### **Tips:**

1. Use tender okra.
2. Ensure spice powders do not touch the base of the cooker.

Achari Bhindi kofta (Stuffed Okra dumplings) is okra stuffed with spices and cooked into a dry curry. In this recipe, we use a pickle in place of spice powders. This pickle is mixed with lentil powder and stuffed into the okra. The lentil powder acts as a binder and becomes a kofta on cooking.

# Aloo Bhortho

## Bengali mashed potatoes

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 2C potatoes chopped small (250g)

Layer 3: 1/2tsp salt

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mash coarsely. Mix in 1/4C finely chopped onion, 2tsp chopped green chilli, 1tsp roasted poppy seeds and 1tsp mustard oil.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with non-watery vegetables
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Onion with shallots

#### **Tips:**

1. Can add grated ginger/garlic.
2. Do not chop potatoes too big/too small.

Aloo Bhortha (Potato Mash) is soul food for Bengalis. This simple spiced mash, served with rice (Bhortha Bath) is one of Bengal's comfort foods. A variety of vegetables, boiled egg and fish are mashed into Bhorthas. The building blocks of a Bhortha are a cooked edible, mustard oil and additives, all mashed together.

#### **Edibles:**

Potato is the most common vegetable used, followed by eggplant (Begun Bhortha). Starchy vegetables make the best bhorthas. Potato is almost always boiled and mashed smooth. An eggplant is grilled and mashed into a chunky paste. Tomatoes, raw banana, sweet potato, boiled eggs, boiled lentils, stir-fried fish, roasted dried fish are all mashed into Bhorthas with the very same ingredients. Any non-watery vegetable can be cooked and mashed into a

bhortha.

#### Mustard Oil:

The mash is not very spiced and gets its flavour from the mustard oil used. Bengalis would be horrified at substituting this with any other oil. However mustard oil is an acquired taste and so you can mix in any oil of your choice.

#### Additives:

Onions and chillies are common in all Bhorthas. They may be added raw or stir fried. Chilli flakes (made from roasted dry red chillies) are popular. Stir fried/raw ginger/garlic is also added. A tadka with Panchphoran (Bengal's five spice mix) can be added too. A dash of lemon juice and even a dash of ghee is occasionally mixed in. Fresh herbs (cilantro, spring onions) are usually added. Aloo Bhortha lacks protein. So, this recipe mixes in another Bengali favourite - Poppy seeds, turning this Bhortha into a full meal.

#### Serving:

- Serve with white rice and dal (Usually masoor dal).
- Can eat as a snack/full meal.
- Can use to stuff pani pooris.
- Can shape into discs and shallow fry into tikkis.
- Can pair with flatbreads.
- Can use as filling for sandwiches/rolls.

# Achari Subji

Vegetables cooked with pickle gravy

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C each chopped (beans, potato, carrot)

Layer 3: 1/4tsp salt, 2tbsp mango pickle

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/Beans/Potato with your favourite vegetables
- Mango pickle with your favourite pickle

### **Tips:**

1. Cut quick cooking vegetables thicker and tough cooking vegetables thinner to balance cooking time.

# Aloo Channa

## Potato chickpea curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1C overnight soaked and drained chickpeas

Layer 4: 2C potatoes chopped big

Layer 5: 2tbsp caramelised onion

Layer 6: 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2 tsp each (salt, chilli, coriander, cumin, garam masala powders)

Cook on high heat for 12 whistles (10 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Chickpeas with kidney beans/other legumes/sprouts/fresh lentils
- Caramelised onion with fried onion

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in water/stock/cream/yogurt to make a gravy version.

Aloo Chole/Aloo Channa (Potatoes and chickpeas) is a balanced full meal though it is usually served with flatbreads. Chole by itself is a very popular recipe, and is always paired with flatbreads. Cooking potatoes with it converts it into a full meal. Aloo channa can be dry or can be cooked with gravy. The building blocks for all these versions are potato (or any other starchy vegetable), Chickpeas (or a protein source) and the flavouring.

The carbohydrates come from potatoes, protein from chickpeas, fat from the oil used and micronutrients from additives. A souring agent is usually present, though not mandatory. Anardana, amchoor, tomatoes are all commonly used as souring agents.

Aloo channa is usually flavoured with Punjabi garam masala, but can

accommodate any flavouring. And though potato is usually paired with chickpeas or green peas, any combination of a starchy tuber and a whole legume/lentil/peas/beans would work here.

Punjabis usually pair the thick version of Aloo channa for breakfast with pooris. The gravy versions are usually served with bhaturas/rotis/other flatbreads. The dry version is served as a chaat.

Add a dash of tamarind chutney, a sprinkle of chaat masala and black salt, a squeeze of lemon, garnish with some chopped onions, bhujia and coriander - and the curry becomes a snack (chaat)!

# Aloo Gobhi

## Potato cauliflower curry

<https://youtu.be/m7YJPDUgBQs>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped, deseeded tomatoes

Layer 3: 1C potato (chopped small)

Layer 4: 1C cauliflower florets (chopped big)

Layer 5: 2tbsp caramelised onion, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2 tsp each (salt, kasuri methi), 1/2tsp each (chilli, coriander, cumin, garam masala) powders, 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Cauliflower with your favourite vegetables
- Caramelised onion with fried onion
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Kasuri methi with your favourite herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Cut quick cooking vegetables big and tough vegetables small to match cooking times.
2. Layer tough cooking ingredients at the bottom and quick cooking ones on top.



Aloo Gobhi (Potato - cauliflower) from the Punjabi cuisine is a very popular combination across the North. It is cooked in both dry and gravy versions. It is especially popular during winters when cauliflowers are at their freshest best. Every Punjabi household and Punjabi dhaba has their versions of this classic theme.

Any recipe with potato in it can be converted to a balanced meal recipe with the addition of protein. Though the traditional recipe of Aloo Gobhi does not call for added protein, you can add fresh peas/sprouts, thereby converting a simple curry into a nutritionally balanced, grain free meal. People worried about their carbohydrate intake/gluten can just have the curry without pairing it with rotis/rice.

This theme also showcases how OPOS can handle vegetables which have different cooking times. Almost any vegetable or a combination of them can be cooked together if you understand a few core principles:

1. In pressure cooking, it is only the thickness that matters - a big floret of cauliflower and a small piece of potato will cook at the same time.
2. You can inhibit cooking by mixing in yogurt/tamarind/sugar/salt/jaggery. If cauliflower overcooks, you can slow down its cooking by marinating it in a yogurt mixture.

3. You can control the texture by varying the cooking time. Remember cooking continues in the trapped steam even after you switch off heat. Releasing steam and transferring contents to a cooler vessel minimises further cooking.
4. You can control heat transfer by using an inner pot. If you face the problem of cauliflower becoming mushy, add it to a small cup and place it over potatoes.

The building blocks of this theme are the vegetables, flavouring and additives.

#### Vegetables:

The classic combination of potatoes and cauliflower can be extended with other starchy vegetables (sweet potato, yam, colocasia etc) in place of potato and broccoli in place of cauliflower.

#### Flavouring:

The traditional recipe calls for the classic Punjabi flavouring (garam masala, coriander, kasuri methi). You can use your own spice mix combination to fit this theme into any cuisine. A variety of packaged spice mixes can be used. As always, freshly roast and ground spices add the best flavour.

#### Additives:

Soya/green peas/tofu/paneer/mushroom can all be added in for a protein punch. A South Indian version can have coconuts. A tadka is mandatory in the traditional recipe. It can be a basic tadka of cumin and chilli powder or a more elaborate one with cumin, onions, garlic, green chillies and garlic.

Adding more onions/whole tomato (which can be mashed after cooking) can give a gravy. Else you can also add water/stock after opening and briefly simmer. Mashing a few potatoes will thicken the gravy.

#### Serving:

Serve with flatbreads (Pooris, rotis, naan, paratha) or with jeera rice/pulaos.

# Aloo Jeera

## Cumin spiced Potatoes

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 3tsp oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped potato

Layer 3: 1/2 tsp each (chilli powder, salt), 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Layer 4: 2tsp roasted and crushed cumin.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1tsp roasted/ fried cumin.

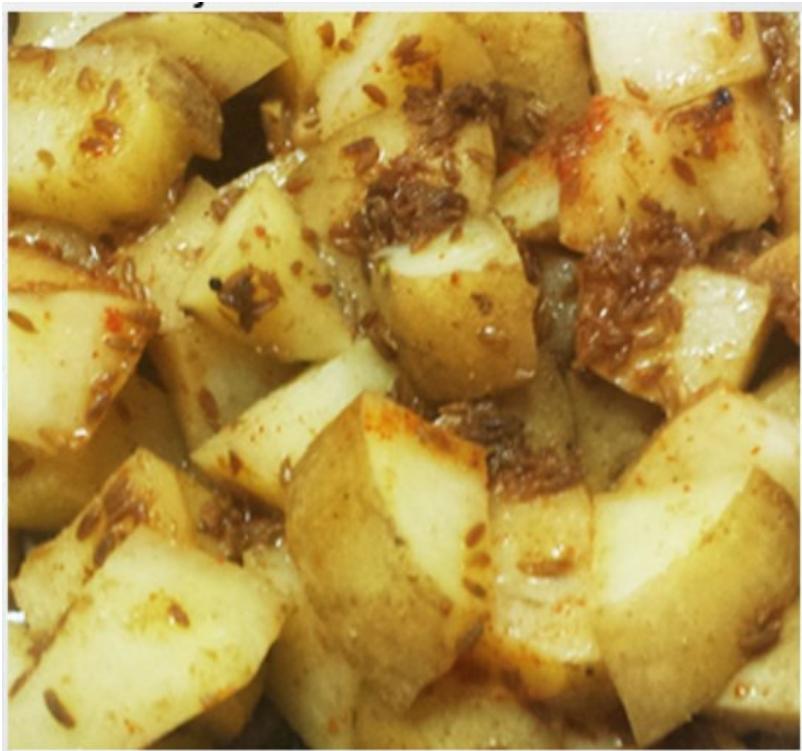
### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables (raw banana, yam)
- Chilli powder with pepper powder/chilli paste

#### **Tips:**

1. Stir and shallow fry for a crispy shell.
2. If undercooked, cut smaller/cook longer.
3. If overcooked, cut into larger chunks/release pressure.



# Aloo Mirchi

## Potato capsicum curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C potato chopped small

Layer 3: 2C coloured capsicums chopped large and mixed with 1/2tsp lemon juice

Layer 4: 2tbsp caramelised onion, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, kasuri methi, chilli, coriander, cumin powders, garam masala).

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Capsicum with your favourite vegetables
- Caramelised onion with fried onion
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Kasuri methi with your favourite herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. Can add tomatoes as a buffer layer if you want more gravy.
2. Lemon juice prevents capsicum from turning mushy.

Aloo Mirchi (potato- capsicum curry) is a very popular combination up North. Both dry and gravy versions are prepared to go with a variety of flat breads. Potato cooked with a variety of vegetables is a common North Indian theme. The South prefers plain potatoes and does not usually pair it with other vegetables.

In traditional cooking, potatoes are boiled, a tadka is made and the vegetables are sautéed along with flavouring till they are cooked. Potato is then mixed in and the whole mass is simmered together. We use the no water cooking technique to cook vegetables in their own juices. The vegetables get slightly

caramelised in the bottom layer, adding another layer of flavour to the curry.



# Aloo Matar

## Potato green peas curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C fresh green peas

Layer 3: 2C potato chopped small

Layer 4: 2tbsp caramelised onion, 1/2 tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt, kasuri methi, chilli, coriander, cumin, garam masala powders).

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Fresh green peas with sprouts/fresh lentils
- Caramelised onion with fried onion
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Kasuri methi with your favourite herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use frozen peas without defrosting.



Aloo Matar (Potato- Peas) is a much loved combination in Punjabi cuisine. It is a winter specialty, cooked when fresh green peas are just harvested. It is made both as a dry curry and as a gravy. It is usually served along with flatbreads.

Aloo Matar is another nutritionally balanced, grain free meal disguised as a curry. The carbohydrates come from potatoes, protein from the peas, fat from oil and micronutrients from other additives. You don't even need a flatbread - this curry alone will fill you up!

In the traditional recipe, onions, ginger garlic paste are first sautéed. Spices are then added, boiled potatoes and green peas are then mixed in. The mixture is cooked dry or with some water as desired. By using OPOS ginger-garlic paste, caramelised onions, potatoes chopped small, we can condense this recipe into OPOS.

This recipe produces a semi dry curry. You can add in more water and simmer to produce a gravy.

This theme can be extended with other starchy vegetables and other fresh pulses to create an array of variants.

# Aloo Palak Matar

## Potato spinach green peas curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped spinach

Layer 3: 1/2C fresh green peas

Layer 4: 1C potatoes chopped small

Layer 5: 2tbsp caramelised onion

Layer 6: 1/2tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt, chilli, coriander, cumin powders, garam masala)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Spinach with your favourite edible greens
- Caramelised onion with fried onion
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Spinach shrinks on heating.
2. You can safely pack your cooker completely with spinach.



Adding spinach to the classic potato- peas combination packs it with more nutrition. Though this combination is commonly used in the Punjabi cuisine, the building blocks can be freely changed to fit this curry into any cuisine.

Use sesame oil, sambar powder in place of garam masala, garnish with grated coconut and mustard tadka - and this curry becomes a South Indian poriyal.

Use olive oil, rosemary, thyme in place of garam masala, garnish with grated cheese and it becomes continental.

Use coconut oil, cumin- coconut paste instead of garam masala, garnish with roasted coconut and mustard tadka, and it can pass off as a Keralite curry.

This is a highly flexible theme and can fit into any cuisine. Experiment with your own variations. It can be served on its own as a salad or with rotis/rice as a subji.

# Aloo Posto

## Bengali Potato poppy seed curry

<https://youtu.be/YK9oYsn0-9M>

Blend 2tbsp poppy seeds, 1 chopped green chilli, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp mustard oil to a thick paste with minimum water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 2C potatoes chopped small (250g)

Layer 3: Poppy seed paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other non- watery vegetables/meat/seafood
- Poppy seeds with other seeds/nuts
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Chilli with pepper/chilli powder

#### **Tips:**

1. Ensure poppy paste is thick to prevent it from flowing to the bottom and burning.
2. Blending with oil emulsifies the paste, making it extra creamy.

The starch and protein combination is universally revered across cuisines. It takes various forms. The Latin America's Rice and beans, US Hamburgers, British Shepherd's pie, Irish Colcannon, Spanish Paella, Italian Pizza, Central Asian Falafel pita, Indian Biryani, Pongal, Roti and dal, Tibetan Meaty Momos, Chinese Dimsums, Korean Bibimpap etc, are all built around a Starch and Protein combination. Starch and protein supplement each other well and make possible a rounded meal. They are the world's favourite foods.

There is no doubt that these combinations were discovered by accident and then polished by centuries of use. The combinations vary from country to

country depending on its favourite starch and protein. However, only very few countries treat non grain sources as starch. The Irish use potatoes as Indians use rice. The Latin Americans do the same with green bananas. Whether starch comes from rice/wheat/maize or from sago, millets/tapioca/yam/potato/bananas, starch is starch. This starch needs to be paired with protein, fat and fiber to make it a nutritionally balanced meal.

The Bengalis discovered that potatoes can be paired with poppy seeds. This combination, the Aloo Posto, has captured the Bengali hearts. Potatoes are a good source of starch and poppy seeds are packed with fiber, fat and protein. So, their combination yields a nutritionally balanced meal.

How did poppy seeds enter Bengali cuisine? That's a tragic story. In all likelihood, it entered the cuisine as famine food. The Aloo Posto is now glorified in Bengali cuisine, with strict rules governing how it should look and taste, but its origins are much humbler. It probably was what people were forced to eat in sheer desperation, to survive.

Posto (from Urdu:Post for poppy seed) was never a part of Bengali cuisine, till around 200 years back. One species of the Poppy plant, the Opium Poppy, is native to Central Asia. When the unripe seed pods are pricked, it secretes a milky white resin. A slew of powerful drugs are synthesized from this resin. After the pod dries up, people learnt that the seeds can be used as food. Soon, poppy seeds started appearing in bread. They were also ground up and used in Central Asian stews, very similar to the way other nuts/seeds were used. The dried seeds only retain a faint whiff of the powerful drug, but still can make you test positive in drug tests. They are still banned in many countries.

Poppy cultivation and opium consumption were widespread in Central Asia. When alcohol was banned in Islam, a section took to opium, believing the prohibition did not extend to it. When the Central Asians took over India, they encouraged opium cultivation. High quality poppies grew well in the Himalayan foot hills. They still do, which is why India is still the world's largest legal producer of opium.

The European traders bought Opium from India and took it to China, where it was much sought after. The biggest drug cartel the world has ever seen, the East India Company, took the game to a whole new level, by capturing a

country to grow it (India) and defeating another to market it (China).

Earlier, British ships laden with opium would sail from Hooghly, across Bay of Bengal, through the Malacca straits into South China sea to reach China. There was one tiny problem. Opium was illegal in China. So the British ships would be moored in the open sea. Smugglers would unload the opium into smaller boats and take it inland. The ships would come back to Bengal filled with tea, amassing a vast fortune either way.

When the British won the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and became the rulers of Bengal, they secured their opium supply. They had little use for food crops and forced peasants to grow opium poppy. This was one of the causes of the Great Bengali famine (1769 - 1773), which killed over ten million people (one third of the population), devastating Bengal.

With poppy seeds available in plenty and other food being scarce, it is possible people started eating the dried out left over poppy seeds, a byproduct of the opium harvest, as food. The first dated mention of Posto roughly coincides with this period. There is no recorded mention of Posto over 300 years old in Bengali literature.

Nature was kind. With a pleasant surprise, Bengalis discovered that poppy seed paste livened up anything it was mixed with. It also was completely useless as a drug, else the British would not have left it lying around!

Soon, the poppy seed took over the Bengali cuisine. They ground up the dry leftover seed into a paste (posto bata). This paste was used as a raw dip. It could be eaten mixed with rice, used as raw salad dressing (kaancha posto bata), as a cooked dip and as a curry base for cooking up a wide variety of curries. It was even fried into fritters (Posto Bora). Like any Indian dip, chillies found its way into a posto and the easily available mustard oil was incorporated. Soon authorities stepped in, with their rule book, specifying how a Posto should look or be cooked. All these rules, as usual, can be safely violated. Anything mixed with this magical paste, cooked or uncooked, mushy or firm, vegetables or meat is by definition, a Posto.

Any cuisine always evolves around what is easily available to it. When something new comes in, it is first viewed with suspicion, tried out tentatively, and occasionally embraced wholeheartedly. What was once

strange soon becomes the hallmark of a cuisine. Elaborate rules and rituals governing its use then emerge, with people arguing endlessly on the 'authentic' or 'traditional' versions, conveniently forgetting the fact the foundation itself may not be ' authentic' or 'traditional'. As you dig deep, you'll discover these flimsy rules have no basis whatsoever.

Purists frame elaborate rules about how an Aloo Posto should look, or be cooked. But the first Aloo Posto was probably cooked by accident. I was visualising a scene from the Amitav Ghosh's 'Sea of poppies', which is set just around the time Posto had started entering Bengali cuisine. This is how I see it:

Hukum Singh is getting ready for work. Ghazipur Opium Factory has slashed salaries due to the slack in the Chinese market and he has not bought provisions for almost a week. He's grateful for Deeti, his wife, who somehow manages to fix a tasty meal from almost nothing.

A neighbour has gifted Deeti a sack of dried poppy seeds, leftover from the bumper harvest last year. "I use them as fuel, but people have even started eating these", she had remarked scornfully. Deeti has heard rumours too, but never imagined she'd be reduced to eating the dry shriveled pods. She has no option. An empty larder with a few miserable potatoes stares at her.

With a sigh, she soaks the poppy seeds and crushes them to a silky paste. The rhythmic motion is therapeutic, transporting her to a meditative world where her troubles vanish. The jingle of cow bells snaps her back to reality. Kalua is walking his oxen to the market, daring a shy smile.

"I'm already late" mutters Deeti, as she quickly gathers twigs and lights up a fire. With deft, smooth movements, she washes and chops potatoes on the boti. They go into the korai with a bit of water, a pinch of salt and turmeric, just as her mom had taught her. The water starts bubbling and soon starts drying out. In a single fluid motion, honed by years of daily practice, she scoops the paste from the sil nora and mixes it with the potatoes. A few stirs with the hatha and she's pleasantly surprised by the mild nutty aroma and the creamy colour. "Can't be too bad after all" she thinks and packs it in a dry lotus leaf, saving a tiny bit for herself.

"Things will get better and we'll eat real food soon", she mutters, mostly to

herself, while handing over the first 'authentic Aloo Posto' packet to her husband.

Most foods we revere today probably had similar humble origins. We complicate these simple dishes with elaborate rules and rituals, governing how they are made and how they should look.

I'm constantly reminded of the Big Endians and Little Endians. "The differences between Big-Endians (those who broke their eggs at the larger end) and Little-Endians had given rise to "six rebellions... wherein one Emperor lost his life, and another his crown". We see it happening all around us.

We love complications and rules, when things can be much simpler and easier!

# Aloor Dum

## Bengali sealed and cooked baby potato curry

<https://youtu.be/tUYPoQkHlnM>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tbsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 1C finely chopped onion arranged in a ring, 1/2C finely chopped, deseeded tomato arranged in the centre of the ring

Layer 3: 250g baby potatoes pricked all over with a fork

Layer 4: 1tsp ginger garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, sugar, chilli, garam masala, cumin, coriander powders), 2tsp Kasuri methi, 2tbsp cashew powder  
Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Raw potatoes with deep fried potatoes/other tubers
- Tomato with dry mango powder
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Oil with mustard oil/butter/ghee
- Cashew with your favourite nuts/seeds

### **Tips:**

1. Potatoes need to be small. Else cut them/crush them.
2. Can marinate potatoes with spices for greater flavor.
3. Can use caramelised onions for a deeper colour.
4. The longer the potatoes steep in the curry, the greater the flavor penetration.
5. Prick potatoes to let flavor seep in.
6. Serve with Luchis/Pooris/Flatbreads.
7. Increase/decrease onions/tomatoes depending on the consistency you like.
8. Cook longer for more caramelisation.
9. Use Kashmiri chilli powder for a bright red colour.



ଠେରଙ୍ଗ ପେଟଲ ବୋଠନ

Aloor Dom/Alur Dum is Bengal's favourite way to cook Potatoes, next only to Aloo Posto. This is a relatively new dish, less than 2 centuries old.

Portuguese brought Potato to India 400 years back. The British loved it and had it planted in Calcutta, their capital. The Bengali aristocracy started using it. Commoners soon followed. It has since become Bengal's favourite vegetable. But the Potato had to wait for a century and a twist in history to morph into Aloor Dom.

900 kms away, a sad story was unfolding in Lucknow. In 1783, 11 million people perished across India in the Chalisa famine. The Kingdom of Oudh was hit hard. The king starts a food for work program to feed the poor, ordering the construction of the Barra Immambara, a grand hall for Shia Muharram ceremonies. Parts of the structure would be built during the day and demolished at night, to keep people busy! Two centuries later, John Maynard Keynes, the greatest economist of his time, would advocate the same thing—"To create jobs, the government can pay people to dig holes and fill them up!"

The Nawab was particular that hot, fresh food be fed to the starving laborers. To make this possible, his 'Nanabis'(cooks) adopted the Dum cooking techniques of the Moghuls who cooked huge quantities of meat and rice in sealed vessels. But meat was scarce and so his cooks substituted it with turnips. The technique caught on. It would lead to the Aloor Dom, 100 years later.

The Nawab insisting on serving hot food even during famine relief is really striking. Contrast this with the famine management under the 'efficient and benevolent' British rule.

The British, with their disastrous agricultural and revenue policies aggravated even periodic food scarcities into full blown famines, wiping out millions. Their response in most cases has been callous. When over 3 million people perished in the 1943 Bengal famine, Winston Churchill refused to release aid, remarking "If food is so scarce, why hasn't Gandhi died yet?". He had a good reason though - "I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion. The famine was their own fault, for breeding like rabbits."

Oudh eventually fell to the British. The King was reduced to a puppet. Freed

of ruling, the King Waji Ali Shah was able to spend more time on his two passions - cooking and construction. This charade was soon over, with the British taking over completely and banishing the King to Calcutta.

The King pined for his native land and spent time on his passions - building and cooking. His cooks encountered the strange vegetable, the Potato, and soon started cooking it using the old Dum cooking techniques- and Aloor Dum was born.

Like all Dum dishes, the cooking pot was sealed and opened only at the serving table, releasing a burst of flavor - the Dum or breath. This dish was so loved that Potatoes soon started appearing even in Calcutta's Dum biriyans. The recipes passed down by the Nawabs still decree Potato to be added to a biriyani - the only place in India where it is done.

This technique moved North into Kashmir, absorbing Kashmir's favourite spices - fennel and ginger powder, morphing into the richer Dum Alu. To make it even richer, the Potatoes were pierced and deep fried. Other versions also called for roasted Potatoes or Potatoes hollowed out, stuffed and fried.

Contrary to popular belief, this theme does not depend on fried Potatoes, but on the sealed cooking technique – the Dum. Aloo Dum derives its flavor from Dum cooking. It is packed with carbohydrates from Potatoes, protein from cashew and micro nutrients from onions and tomatoes.

The flash cooking, layering and controlled caramelisation techniques make this six minute magic possible.

Serving:

Luchi (Maida Poori) with Alur Dom is an all time Bengali favourite, being cooked for both breakfast and dinner. They are a part of all festive celebrations.

# Ambol

## Bengali sweet and sour curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped sour mango, 1 slit green chilli

Layer 3: 1/4C sugar, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all. Mix in 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango with other sour fruits
- Green chilli with chilli powder
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix
- Sugar with jaggery

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in tamarind pulp/vinegar if mango is not sour enough.

Trust the sweet toothed Bengalis to invent a dessert masquerading as a curry. The Bengali Ambol, packed with sugar and fruits is consumed both like a dessert and a curry. It is a thin, chunky curry, which is either eaten mixed with rice/flatbread at the very end of a meal. It is even eaten on its own, like a dessert.

In many Bengali homes, the sweetener used is sugar syrup, left over from the making of Rosagollas. The ambol is very light and is like a sweet and sour soup. The amount of sweetness and sourness is adjusted according to the individual preference.

It is a distant cousin of the Tamil Kulambu and the Kannadiga Gojju, but with a more pronounced sweetness. It is one of the rare recipes in Indian cuisine which uses fruits in a curry, a concept loved by the Moghuls.

Traditionally, Wood apple (Chaltar Ambol), Pineapple (Anaras Ambol), Sour mango (Kancha Aamer Ambol) and ripe mango (Paka Aamer Ambol) are all commonly cooked. Even seafood (Hilsa/fish roe fritters) is cooked into an Ambol. When seafood is added, the quantity of sugar is greatly reduced and sourness is increased, usually with the addition of tamarind.

This theme can be extended to cover many fruits. Any sour fruit can be cooked into an Ambol. Non-sour fruits can be fortified with an added souring agent. Dried fruits, Grapes, Kokum, Gooseberries, Green tomatoes etc can all become Ambols.

The Bengali/Oriya/Bihari five spice mix Panch Phoran (Equal quantities of cumin, black cumin, mustard seed, fennel and fenugreek) fried in (mustard) oil adds a burst of flavor. You can use any bottled tadka to make this fully OPOS.

# Amti

## Marathi sour lentil stew

Blend 1/4C each (chopped coconut, yogurt), 1tbsp each (roasted, gram, roasted peanuts), 2 green chillies, 1tsp each (cumin, salt) to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped squash

Layer 3: 1/2C cooked tuvar dal

Layer 4: Spice paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Squash with other vegetables
- Peanut with other nuts
- Yogurt with tamarind/kokum/other sour fruit pulp
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix
- Roasted gram with gram flour
- Tuvar dal with mung/masoor dal

#### **Tips:**

1. While cooking dal with vegetables, use cooked dal to avoid overcooking vegetables.

The Amti is a pillar of the Marathi cuisine. Amti-Bhaat-Bhaji (Amti - Rice - spiced vegetables) is what generations of Marathis grew up on. For such a popular curry, the Amti defies description. There are innumerable variants of this theme. It is commonly defined as a sweet and sour lentil stew, but there are many variations of Amti which are neither sweet nor sour or have lentils.

The Varan- Bhat-Bhaji (Lentils - Rice - Spiced vegetables) is the basic meal in many Marathi homes. Occasionally Varan gets replaced/supplemented by

the Amti.

A typical Maharashtrian lunch or dinner begins with flatbreads, one or two bhaajis (spiced dry vegetables), a koshimbir (salad), varan, amti and rice, accompanied by a pickle and papad. The varan is just mildly spiced dal. It is usually served with a slice of lemon. It is possible that a spicier version of this dal emerged, with a souring agent and more spices mixed in, to cater to those who craved more bite. This could be the origin of Amti.

Strong Marathi spice mixes (Kala masala/Goda Masala) might have found their way into the Varan, converting it into an Amti. It also took on souring agents like Amsool (Kokkum)/Tamarind/Mango. Jaggery and coconut, much loved by the Marathis, marched in next. The Daleecha Amti (Curry with Dal) we know today might have emerged - a sweet and spicy, flavor packed protein stew. A version without dal also emerged. Marathis boil channa dal to make stuffings for Pooran Poli. This water (lentil stock) was spiced up and cooked the same way into the Katachi Amti (Sour Amti).

Interestingly, the Daleecha Amti is also called as Daleecha Sambaraa. It is very possible that it is this Daleecha Sambaraa which became the South Indian Sambar. 400 years back, Marathas ruled parts of Tamilnadu from Tanjore. The Tanjore Sambar is still hailed as the gold standard of sambars. There is no mention of sambar in Tamil literature before the Maratha rule. The word sambar means nothing in Tamil. For ages, kulambu (spiced tamarind stew) was the traditional Tamil dish and not sambar. Sambar is not even dignified with a separate name, being called a Paruppu Kulambu in some pockets.

Legend has that Sambaji, son of Sivaji, cooked up a version of Amti and named it after himself, which later became the Tamil Sambar. It is a cute story but for the fact that Sambaji never came close to Tanjore.

I think it is likely that the Marathi cooks attempted a version of Daleecha Sambaraa with Tamarind and Tamil spices. This dish could have become today's Sambar. The Karnataka versions of Sambar, being closer to Maratha land, still retain jaggery, and use cinnamon and cloves, like its ancestor, the Amti.

Innumerable versions of Amtis are cooked across Maharashtra. The names

may vary depending on the place it is cooked as in Puneri Amti (Pune Amti), Kohlapuri Amti (Kohlapur Amti) etc.

The amti name changes based on the lentil used. Masoorachi Aamti (Masoor dal), Toor dal amti (Tuvar dal) Chawlichi Amti (Black eyed peas), Matar dal Amti (Green peas), Danyachi amti (Peanut), Matki Amti (Moth beans) are all common. Any pea/bean/lentil/sprout can go into the Amti.

The souring agent varies across regions. Kairichi Amti uses raw mango, Ambadichi Amti uses sour spinach (Gongura), and Taktali Amti uses yogurt. Kokkum and Tamarind are commonly used.

The additives change too. When garlic is added, you get the Lasnaachi Aamti. When Tamarind and coconut are added, it becomes the Chinch-Gulachi Amti. When lentil balls are added, you have the Vadyachi Amti/Golyachi Amti. When koftas are added, it becomes the Modakachi Amti. Kandyachi Amti (cooked with onions), Methi Amti (cooked with Fenugreek leaves), Vangyachi Amti (cooked with Egg plant) and Shenganchi amti (cooked with Drumsticks) are all popular.

The consistency remains that of a soup. Amti is never too thin or too thick. It is designed to be sipped from small bowls like a soup.

Amti is generally eaten with rice, poli or a huge variety of bhakris (millet flatbread). It is seen more as a side dish to flatbreads than as a curry to rice. Marathis use it for dunking in their flatbreads.

The traditional method to prepare Amti involves many steps

1. Cook dal.
2. Dissolve tamarind/kokkum in water.
3. Do a tadka.
4. Add vegetables and stir-fry.
5. Add tamarind water and simmer.
6. Add masalas.
7. Add dal.
8. Garnish.

We can replace all these with the layer and flash technique.

The Maharashtrian Amti masala is used very much like our sambar powder.

It is easy to grind a big batch by roasting and powdering spices.

Amti Masala: Roast 1/2C coriander seeds, 1/4C cumin seeds, 1/4C grated copra, 8 dry red chillies, 2tsp black cumin, 10 cloves, 1" bit of cinnamon, 2tsp pepper. Let cool and blend to a powder.

Extend this theme by changing the legumes used, by replacing water with other liquids like stock/buttermilk, by varying the spice mix, vegetables used, by varying the souring agent and sweetener. Each change would give you a brand new Amti.

# Arbi Masala

## Colocasia curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, ginger-garlic paste, cumin, chilli, garam masala powders), 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Layer 4: In an inner vessel, add 250g unpeeled, whole colocasia and 1/2C water

Cook on high heat for 8 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Drain water from inner vessel. Peel colocasia. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Colocasia with your favourite tubers
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Green peas with soya chunks/mushroom

#### **Tips:**

1. Mix in yogurt/cream/milk/coconut milk if you want a gravy.
2. Let arbi steep in gravy before serving.
3. If arbi is too big, cut it up.

# Babycorn Hara Masala

## Baby corn green curry

Blend 1/2C each (mint, cilantro), 3 green chillies, 1tsp oil, 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin, coriander, garam masala powders), 1tsp ginger- garlic paste, 1/4C roasted peanuts to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped baby corn (250 gms)

Layer 3: Spiced paste (see above)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all with 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Baby corn with other vegetables
- Mint/cilantro with your favourite herbs.
- Peanut with your favourite nuts
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Ensure baby corn is not over 1" thick. If so, split in half.
2. Thick chunks cannot be flashed.
3. Herbs need not be chopped. They can be added whole or torn by hand.
4. Baby corn need not be chopped too. It can be easily broken manually. Thicker ones need to be smashed flat before being broken.

Hara masala refers to a spiced green curry usually made from a base of herbs like mint/cilantro, the most popular Indian herbs. The building blocks of this theme are herbs, additives and flavoring. You can look at this theme as an Indian cooked pesto variant.

**Herbs:**

Mint, cilantro, fenugreek leaves are commonly used as curry bases in Indian cuisine. You can use your favourite herbs/edible greens in their place.

**Additives:**

Anything that needs no chopping and can be flash cooked can fit into this theme. A variety of mushrooms/baby vegetables/sprouts/fresh legumes/chicken/fish/seafood/processed meats can all be converted into hara masalas.

**Flavoring:**

Traditional Indian spices and chillies are used here for a punch. You can replace a part/all of them with spics of your choice.

**Fat:**

Oil has been used for a creamy mouth feel but can be skipped/replaced with your favourite fat.

# Baingan Bhartha

## Eggplant mash

<https://youtu.be/r8N52v5S008>

In a 2l cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 250gm peeled and chopped eggplant

Layer 3: 1/2 tsp each (salt, garam masala), 1 chopped green chilli

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash and mix in 1/4C each finely chopped (onion, tomato) and 1tsp lemon juice.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggplant with your favourite fleshy vegetables
- Chillies with chilli powder
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Cook longer to char the brinjals if you desire a smoky flavor



North Indian Bharthas are mashed curries. Baingan Bhartha, (Grilled and mashed eggplant) is by far India's favourite mash, though a variety of vegetables, lentils and protein can be cooked into mashes. The conventional recipe calls for charring the eggplant over coals and then mashing it. We can replicate the very same effect by flashing it.

Starchy tubers (Potato, Yam, Sweet Potato, Sweet tapioca), Okra, Tomato, Sweet corn, Cooking banana, Paneer, Minced meat and fresh lentils can be easily cooked using the same theme. Even fish chunks and other seafood can be cooked the same way by tweaking the cooking time.

Bihari Chokka, Orissa Chakata, Bengali Sheddo, Assamese Pitika or Tamil Podimas are all Bharthas at heart. The theme remains the same. Cook edibles (Grill/Boil/Bake); Mix in chopped onions, chopped tomatoes, finely chopped green chilli, salt, lemon juice, fresh herbs and the region's favourite oil – and your Bhartha is done!

Indian Bharthas can be used as dips, spreads or curries. They can be eaten mixed with rice, pasta or with a variety of flatbreads. They can be spread over toast, or used as a sandwich spread.

Unlike Indian cuisine which boasts of a huge variety of mashed curries, only mashed Potatoes are popular in other cuisines. They are used chiefly as starch replacement.

In the West, Potatoes are either boiled or baked before being mashed with milk/cream/butter, salt and pepper and are served alongside meat. Mashed Potatoes served with sausages as Bangers and Mash or served with minced beef pie as ' Pie and Mash' are very popular working class dishes in London.

Potatoes mashed with spring onions, butter and milk are eaten in Ireland as 'Champ/Poundies'. Mix chopped kale/cabbage into poundies and you get another Irish dish, the Colcannon.

Mashed Potato served with stir-fried minced beef as 'Mince and tatties' is a famous Scottish dish. In France, melted cheese is mixed in with mashed Potatoes to make 'Aligot'.

In West and central Africa, starchy vegetables like cassava, yam, maize, plantains etc are boiled and pounded into a mash called 'Fufu'. Fufu is eaten

accompanied by a soup to make a complete meal.

All these can be seen as variants of the Indian Bhartha.

# Baingan Borani

## Afghan eggplant yogurt curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 250g eggplant into thick fingers

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, ginger- garlic paste, chilli powder), 1/2tsp cumin powder, 1/4tsp each (garam masala, turmeric powders).

Cook on high heat for 1 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix 1/2C yogurt, 1tsp each chopped (garlic and mint).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggplant with other fleshy vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Chilli with pepper powder, Cumin with fennel
- Yogurt with cream/coconut paste/sour cream

#### **Tips:**

1. Cut eggplant into thicker chunks if you want a firmer texture.
2. Do not release pressure if you want a mushier texture.

# Bandhakopir Ghonto

## Bengali cabbage and mixed vegetable stir-fry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 2C cabbage chopped big

Layer 3: 1C potatoes chopped small

Layer 4: 1/4C fresh green peas

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (grated ginger, salt, sugar, chilli, coriander powders),  
1/4tsp garam masala

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Cabbage with your favourite vegetables
- Fresh green peas with sprouts/fresh lentils
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil

#### **Tips:**

1. Cut easy cooking vegetables into big chunks and tough to cook vegetables into small chunks to balance cooking time.

Bandhakopir Ghonto (Cabbage Mixure) can be seen as a grain free balanced meal. Bengal cooks its vegetables in numerous ways - Charchari (charred), Bhortha (mashed), Posto (Cooked with poppy seed paste) and Shukto (Bitter vegetable medley) are all Bengali delicacies

Like a Shukto, a Ghonto uses a medley of vegetables. But, it is not bitter and does not use mustard paste as a base. A Ghonto is very mildly spiced and relies on the inherent flavor of vegetables.

If Shukto is similar to the Kerala Aviyal, a Ghonto closely resembles a Tamil Kootu. It shares many characteristics of a Kootu.

1. The consistency can vary from dry to liquid.
2. The vegetable mix is cooked till soft and mushy.
3. It is mildly spiced.

Lentil based Ghontos, with a variety of vegetables and spinach, cooked into a stew are popular in rural areas. In villages, Bengalis make Ghonto out of bits and pieces of everything they find around their homes. Spinach, small fishes/crabs/prawns, vegetables like colocasia, banana, Potatoes are all cooked with lentils into a ghonto and served with rice.

The building blocks of a Ghonto are the mix of vegetables, greens, additives and flavoring.

#### Vegetables:

Any mix of cabbage, potatoes, colocasia, pumpkin, brinjal, radish, spinach, bottle gourd, ridge gourd and other country vegetables are commonly used. Bengal loves the banana tree and uses the banana blossom, raw banana, banana pith and even banana peel in the ghonto. Starchy vegetables are usually shallow fried.

#### Additives:

Plant/animal protein is almost always added. Green peas, lentils, boris (sun dried lentil paste dumplings), shrimp, crab, small fish/fish heads are common. Coconut, boiled lentils (masoor dal) are also popular.

#### Flavoring:

The use of Panchphoran, coriander powder, cumin powder, ginger is popular. Elaborate spicing is not usual. Ghee is occasionally added. Onion/garlic are absent in most Ghontos, though garam masala is commonly used.

#### Serving:

1. Serve as a dry curry with rice.
2. Mix in cooked dal, simmer and serve as a stew.
3. Use as sandwich filling/use for stuffing rolls.

# Bharwa Karela

## Stuffed bitter gourd curry

<https://youtu.be/zcVid4IPu9E>

Take 400g baby bitter gourds. Slit to form a pocket. Remove seeds.

Mix 1C grated paneer, 1tsp each (ginger- garlic paste, salt, jaggery, chilli, coriander, cumin, amchoor powders), 1/2tsp garam masala, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1/4C roasted peanut powder . Stuff tightly into baby gourds. Wipe surface clean.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: Stuffed bitter gourds

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Slice and serve.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Bitter gourd with Ivy gourd/baby tomatoes/parwal
- Peanut with other nuts
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Carrot with your favourite salad vegetables/paneer/tofu.

#### **Tips:**

1. Rub salt inside bitter gourd, let soak and wash after an hour to make it less bitter.
2. Thickness determines time of cooking. The thicker it is, the longer it takes to cook.

Bharwa Karela falls into a class of recipes that can become a dry curry, a starter or even a kofta.

Stuffing edibles into hollowed out vegetables is popular across the country.

Almost all cuisines have their stuffed curry. The Telugu cuisine has Gutti Vankaya Kura. The Rajasthanis have the Athani Mirchi pickle; the Gujaratis have their Bharva Bhindi.

The stuffing used changes with the culture. Tamil Muslim cuisine stuffs spiced minced meat into hollowed out snake gourd. The Mogul cuisine did the reverse - It stuffed minced vegetables into a whole bird/animal to create classic dishes like Murg Musallam.

The building blocks of this theme are the hollowed out vegetable, the stuffing and additives.

#### The Vegetable:

Bitter gourd offers a convenient pocket to hold in stuffing. Other gourds like snake gourd, ridge gourd can also be used. Vegetables with natural hollows (Tomato, capsicum - even onions) can be used. Vegetables without a natural hollow can still be used by scooping out their insides.

#### The Stuffing:

The stuffing here is designed to make the curry nutritionally balanced. It has a mix of protein (peanut powder), starch (Potato) and fat. You can vary the choice of stuffing with different starches and fat.

#### The additives:

Any mix of spice powders can be used. Fresh herbs are used for a burst of flavor. You can add more additives for flavor, texture or variety.!

#### Serving:

1. Slice and serve as an appetiser.
2. Serve along with rice/flatbreads as a dry curry.
3. Simmer in curry base as a kofta.

By varying the building blocks you can translate this theme into any cuisine. Use vegetables, stuffing and additives familiar to a cuisine and you have a brand new dish ready for any cuisine you care to cook!

# Bharwa Kundru

## Stuffed ivy gourd

Mix 1tsp each (chilli, coriander, cumin powders, salt), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, amchoor), 1/4tsp each (turmeric, fennel powders). Stuff into 250g slit ivy gourds (20 nos.). Wipe surface clean.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: Ivy gourds

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ivy gourd with other vegetables (Okra, parwal)
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Amchoor with your favourite souring agent

#### **Tips:**

1. Choose similar sized gourds.
2. Release pressure manually if you like a firmer texture.



There are innumerable versions of this basic theme using a variety of

hollowed out fruits or vegetables, a variety of stuffing and multiple combinations of spices.

Almost all of them can be served as an appetiser or simmered in curry as a kofta curry. They can just be mashed together into a bhurji and served as a dry curry/sandwich fillings. You can also stuff them into flatbread rolls.

Naturally hollow vegetables (snake gourd, bitter gourd etc, bell pepper, other big chilli varieties) are easy to stuff. Other vegetables like artichokes, onions, large mushrooms can also be hollowed out easily. You slit and scoop out Eggplants, Zucchini, Pineapple, Potato, banana to create a space for filling.

Almost anything can be used as filling. Paneer, soaked soya, marinated minced meat, soaked rice, soaked lentils/sprouts are all used. The combinations are endless.

A pickle is the easiest way to spice up the stuffing. Look at a pickle as an instant, cooked curry paste. Most Indian pickles can be used as a quick seasoning. You can also mix the stuffing with any combination of spices.

Though this OPOS recipe calls for pressure cooking, the same theme can baked or microwaved. Open pan cooking is best avoided as it is highly labour intensive, needs constant attention and frequent turning - causing a loss of shape.

# Bharwa Tamatar

## Stuffed tomato

Mix 100g crumbled paneer with 1/2tsp (salt, chilli, coriander, cumin, garam masala powders).

Slice tops off 5 tomatoes. Scoop out insides. Fill with spiced paneer.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tbsp butter

Layer 2: Stuffed tomatoes.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Paneer with tofu/sausages
- Tomato with capsicum or other hollowed out vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Use medium/small tomatoes.
2. Serve as starter/simmer in curry.



Tomatoes and cheese pair well together. Italians like them fresh, as a salad with fresh tomatoes and fresh mozzarella, mildly flavored with fresh basil and seasoned with salt and olive oil - the Insalata Caprese. They love the same combination as tomato sauce and melted cheese on a flatbread, as a pizza.

The same combination gets an Indian twist in this theme, where hollowed out tomatoes are filled with India's only cheese, the paneer, spiced up with a variety of masala and cooked together.

#### More Tips:

1. Hollow out the eyes of the tomato while keeping the ribs intact. The ribs of the tomato help in keeping the shape well. If you scoop out the innards of the tomato completely, your stuffing might burst on cooking due to lack of support.
2. While using stuffing that swells (rice, for example), ensure it is not packed too tight. Else it expands and will burst the casing.
3. The removed tomato seeds can be mixed back into the stuffing, for a tangier flavor.
4. You will see around half a cup of highly flavored water when you open the cooker. This is concentrated, spiced tomato juice. You can thicken it and use it as a sauce to accompany the stuffed tomato/or serve it as a thin soup.
5. All the water that is needed for cooking this curry comes from the tomatoes and the butter used.
6. The skin of the tomato gets charred, imparting a barbecued flavor. Though the skin is well flavored and perfectly edible, you can remove it if you like. It slips right off.
7. The stuffed tomatoes firm up really well on cooling and become a lot firmer on refrigerating. They can then be simmered in any of the OPOS curry bases to make it a Kofta Curry.

# Bharwan Bhindi

## Stuffed okra curry

<https://youtu.be/cLRTTHirAcos>

Mix 1/4C roasted besan with 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, garam masala). Slit 250g okra and stuff the mixture. Wipe the surface clean.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 3tsp oil

Layer 2: Stuffed okra

Layer 3: Spread remaining stuffing over the top.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Besan with your favourite OPOS podi (spiced lentil powder)//coconut paste
- Okra with eggplant/zucchini
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Use tender okra.
2. Ensure spice powders do not touch the base of the cooker.



Stuffing anything makes it extra delicious. Be it stuffed parathas, stuffed pooris or stuffed vegetables.

Gujarat has an array of them. Okra is the most popular and is cooked into Bharwan (filled/stuffed) Bhindi (okra). It also goes by the name of Bharwa Bhindi, Bharela Bhindi or Bhindi Sambhariya.

Though the stuffed okra can be fried or even baked without changing the spirit of the recipe, they are usually pan fried carefully, with gentle tending. It is a lengthy process and takes skill to master.

This OPOS version is fool proof and is ready in minutes.

Any vegetable you can hollow out and stuff or slit and stuff can be cooked the same way! Gujaratis have extended this theme to make a pickle too, the Bharwa Mirchi/Athana Mirchi.

# Bharwan Mirchi

## Stuffed chilli pickle

<https://youtu.be/3RvjlyzvXI0>

Mix 2tbsp mustard powder, 1tbsp each (salt, mango powder), 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric). Slit 250g fresh green chillies on one side to form a pocket. Stuff spice mixture into slit chillies. Wipe surface clean.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tbsp oil

Layer 2: Stuffed chillies

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Bottle and refrigerate.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Green chillies with red chillies or other chilli varieties
- Mango powder with tamarind powder/sumac/your favourite souring agents.

### **Tips:**

1. Ensure spice powders do not touch the base of the cooker.
2. Use plump and bright, blemish free chillies.
3. When releasing pressure you might find the chilli flavor to be overpowering. Skip it if you do not mind a dull colour.



This pickle, relished by the Marwaris of Western India uses the fleshy Athana variety of green chillies. This is one of the very few non-sour pickles of India and so has a short shelf life compared to sour pickles. The preservatives here are the anti microbial spice powders and salt. The pickle is completely covered with oil (usually mustard/peanut oil) to seal it from contamination. As a certain class of bacteria thrive in the absence of oxygen, it is very important to add a souring agent, to minimise risk of Botulism. Some traditional methods omit the souring agent. Consuming them is a health risk, especially after long storage.

These pickles are traditionally sun cooked and pack a bigger bite than pressure cooked pickles. In some regions they are cooked like a curry by stuffing them with roasted gram flour and are eaten as a spicy snack!

# Bhaathe

## Bengali mashed vegetables

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 2C potatoes chopped small (250g)

Layer 3: 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash.

Mix in 1/4C finely chopped onions, 2 chopped green chillies, 1/2tsp cumin powder, 1tsp mustard oil.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other non- watery vegetables (Bitter gourd, taro, squash, okra are common)
- Green chilli with chilli flakes
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Chilli with pepper/chilli powder
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in grated coconut/Kasundi.
2. The mash may be rolled into small balls and dusted with grated coconut for visual appeal.

Bhaate is the Bengali version of the general theme Mash. Bhaate has a deep emotional connect for Bengalis. Bhat, Dal and Bhaate (Rice, dal and mash) is the ultimate Bengali comfort food. It is what many homesick Bengalis dream about!

Bhaate (Bengali: In Rice) is so named because the vegetables would be usually cooked along with rice in the same vessel. It is also called Makhaa (Mashed) or Sheddo (Boiled), but the name Bhaate is the one most commonly used. In the neighbouring Bihar and Orissa, this goes by the name

Chokha and Chakata.

It is an incredibly simple dish to make. Just mash the cooked vegetable with a dash of mustard oil/ghee and serve!

In the pre-cooker days, the dal (usually Masoor dal) would be bundled in a cloth and dropped in with the rice. The vegetables (even eggs) would go into the same container and get cooked along with rice. Rice swells on cooking and the vegetables would be buried in the cooked rice, which is how this dish gets its name, as it is literally cooked 'in rice'. The dal bundle would be fished out, the vegetables mashed with seasonings and all would be served with hot rice and ghee.

The rice would be eaten mixed with dal and ghee, accompanied by the vegetable/egg mash. The vegetable would usually be the much loved potato, but squash, bitter gourd, potol (pointed gourd) are also common. A full meal for a small family would be ready in the time it takes to cook rice!

The West cannot imagine mashed potatoes without butter. The Bengalis cannot imagine it without virgin mustard oil or ghee. Unlike the Western mashed potatoes which take their name seriously and mash potatoes to a silky puree, the Bengali version is just coarsely mashed. Mustard oil, though revered by Bengalis, is an acquired taste.

# Bhindi Subji

## Okra dry curry

Wash 250g whole okra. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp oil

Layer 2: Okra

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, amchoor, chilli powder)

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Remove okra.

Let cool. Chop. Mix all. Stir fry further (optional).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Okra with your favourite vegetables
- Amchoor with lemon juice/tamarind paste

### **Tips:**

1. The smaller you slice okra, the slimier it gets.
2. The more water you use to cook okra, the slimier it gets.
3. Prefer whole, baby okras.
4. Do not overcrowd the cooking vessel with too much okra.
5. Can use frozen okra.
6. Ensure your knife/cutting board is dry.

Okra is a tough vegetable to cook as it easily becomes slimy on improper cooking. The traditional way is either to deep fry it or shallow fry it for long to dry out the slime.

The mucilage inside okra, the okra gum, is a natural thickener and is used for thickening African stews. It is also the thickener used in the Creole Gumbo, popular in the southern United States. It has some interesting properties, which need to be addressed.

1. When it comes into contact with water, okra becomes slimy.

Ensure Okra is completely dry when it is added. Use minimal/no water while

cooking.

2. Prolonged low temperature heating makes okra slimy and gooey.

Cook at high heat for a very short time.

3. Larger pods are slimier.

Prefer small, finger sized ones. Use tender pods. Snap off the end to see if it is young and tender. The tip should snap right off if okra is tender.

4. The larger the surface area that is exposed, the slimier it tends to become. Do not slice thin. Use whole/cut into big chunks.

Adding an acid (yogurt/mango powder/tamarind) reduces the sliminess. We also need to ensure the cooker is not overcrowded as that will promote steaming and aggravate sliminess. Mixing in dry spice powders/coconut/roasted besan/nut powder after cooking binds the slime and helps us cook a non-slimy dish.

# Channa Masala

## Punjabi Chickpea curry

[https://youtu.be/i\\_BwyHxxJsM](https://youtu.be/i_BwyHxxJsM)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: 1C overnight soaked and drained chickpeas

Layer 4: 1/4C caramelised onions

Layer 5: 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, chilli powder), 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin, garam masala, coriander powder)

Cook on high heat for 12 whistles (10 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chickpeas with other legumes/sprouts/fresh lentils
- Caramelised onion with fried onion
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use cooked chickpeas for faster cooking.
2. Soak chickpeas in salted water for better flavor.
3. Undercooked? Add 1/4C water and cook for 5 more minutes.



What do Kerala and Punjab have in common? Chickpeas! The combination of starch with chickpea curry is revered in both Punjabi and Malayali cuisines as Channa masala and Kadala kari.

Both curries are just chickpeas cooked in an onion-tomato base, with pan Indian flavourings (Ginger, garlic, chilli powder and coriander powder) along with regional spices.

Punjab prefers the larger Kabuli Channa, a later introduction to Indian cuisine, which came in around 200 years back. Kerala prefers the desi channa, a darker, smaller version, which has been a part of Indian cuisine for over a thousand years.

The core preparation, however is identical, but for the spices. Interestingly, the Channa masala is deliberately blackened in the North, by addition of tea or by adding almost burnt spices. I wonder if it is to recreate the colour of the ancient version which was once prevalent!

Chickpeas are a staple in India, Middle East and parts of Africa. India still produces the bulk of the world's chickpeas.

The channa masala can be cooked dry, becoming a snack. For tang, a bit of amchoor (dry mango powder) or anar dhana (dried sour pomegranate seeds) is added in the North. Or you can just mix in a dash of lemon juice.

# Chatni

## Bengal's sweet and sour dip

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: 1/2C chopped dates

Layer 4: 1/4C mango leather (dried mango pulp)

Layer 5: 1/2tsp chilli powder, 1/8tsp salt, 1tsp chopped ginger, 1tbsp sugar

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash/blend all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato with mango/pineapple/other sour fruits
- Mango leather with pineapple leather/other fruit leather
- Dates with raisins/other dry fruits
- Sugar with jaggery.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can blend with 2tsp oil to emulsify into a creamy dip.
2. Blending dulls colour. Heating again restores it.

The Bengali Chatni is a whole new beast. Unlike regular Indian chutneys which are almost always spicy, a Bengali Chatni is almost a dessert. It is served as the last course in a meal, to ease diners into the battery of heavy duty desserts which follow. No Bengali meal/feast is considered complete unless a Chatni is served at the end.

The Chatni is just a sweet and tangy fruit relish. The closest equivalent is the Manga Vella pachadi of Tamilnadu where mango is cooked with jaggery and spices into a semi sweet relish. The Malabar dates chutney also belongs to the same family.

This theme can be made with any fruit/dry fruits. Some versions even use vegetables. Mangoes, Tomato, Dates, Pineapple, Papaya, Tamarind are all commonly used. Dry fruits like raisins, dates or fruit leather are used too. These are usually cooked with a lot of sugar/jaggery into a kind of jam.

But the twist here is that is that chillies, ginger etc are added to spice it up like a curry. Finally, a tadka of the Bengali five spice mix, Panch Phoran, is mixed in to flavour the chatni.

The building blocks of a Chatni are the fruits, sweetener and flavouring. Each of these can be varied to mine infinite recipes from this theme.

This version would look watery when you open, but after you mash the fruits and let it cool, it will dramatically thicken.

# Charchari

## Bengali charred stir-fry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped cabbage (250g)

Layer 3: 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1/2tsp each (salt, sugar), 1 chopped green chilli.

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Cabbage with your favourite vegetables/small fish/prawns
- Mustard powder with mustard paste
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix
- Green chilli with chilli powder

### **Tips:**

1. If overcooked, chop bigger.
2. If undercooked, cook longer/do not release pressure.
3. The Bengali Charchari/Chachchari/Chorchori is a dry curry, very similar to the North Indian sukhi sabji/South Indian poriyal, but for the flavouring.
4. The unique flavour of a Charchari comes from the use of mustard oil, panch phoran (Five spice mix) and the slight charring.
5. Like many Bengali curries, a bit of sugar is added for a faint hint of sweetness.
6. Increase heat if you want charring.

The Charchari may have a single vegetable or a mix of vegetables, leafy greens, lentil dumplings, fish or prawns.

In the traditional method, the vegetables are cooked with little water. All water is allowed to evaporate and the dish is removed when the bottom starts

to sizzle and burn. The slight burning is sought after. In this recipe, we do not use any water and achieve a slight burning by adjusting the cooking time and temperature.

Being ardent sea food lovers,(It is only in Bengal that fish is reclassified as a vegetable!), the Bengalis add small fish/prawns to this curry. The vegetarian versions use fried sun dried lentil dumplings as a protein source.

Many rules govern the traditional version:

The cut:

The vegetables are normally cut into long strips.

Ingredients:

A wide variety of vegetables are used. Potato (Alu Charchari), Eggplant (Begun Charchari), Greens (Saag Chorchori), Cabbage (Bandhkopir Charchari), Fish (Maach Charchari) are all common. The thrifty Bengalis waste nothing. Even the cauliflower stalk (Kopir Dantar Charchari), fish bones and skin (Kanta chachchari), vegetable peels (Potato, Ridge gourd, Bottle gourd, Pumpkin peels) are cooked into Charcharis.

The order:

When a mix of vegetables is used, the harder ones are added first so that they cook the longest.

The mix:

When a mix of vegetables is used, a balance of flavours and textures is sought. Watery vegetables, sweet vegetables, starchy vegetables and mushy vegetables are all cooked together. Two of the same kind is usually avoided (sweet potato and potato, for instance). Some combinations are preferred. Potato - cauliflower (Alu-Fulkopi Charchari) or the Panchmishali Charchari (with 5 different vegetables) are popular.

Mustard oil is used for flavouring. But it is an acquired taste. The East Indian Five Spice mix (Panch Phoran) fried in mustard oil adds another layer of flavour.

You can use the same recipe with vegetables of your choice to make your own charcharis. Vary the cut of vegetable and the cooking time to vary the texture. 2 cups of almost all vegetables cook in 4 minutes (1 whistle).

# Choler Dal

## Bengal's sweet lentil curry

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C soaked and drained channa dal, 1.5 C water, 1/4tsp turmeric, 1tsp ghee, 1/4C raisins, 1/2tsp chopped ginger, 1/4tsp each (chilli, coriander, cumin, garam masala powders), 1tsp each (mustard oil, ghee). Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1tsp each (salt, sugar), 1/4C grated coconut.

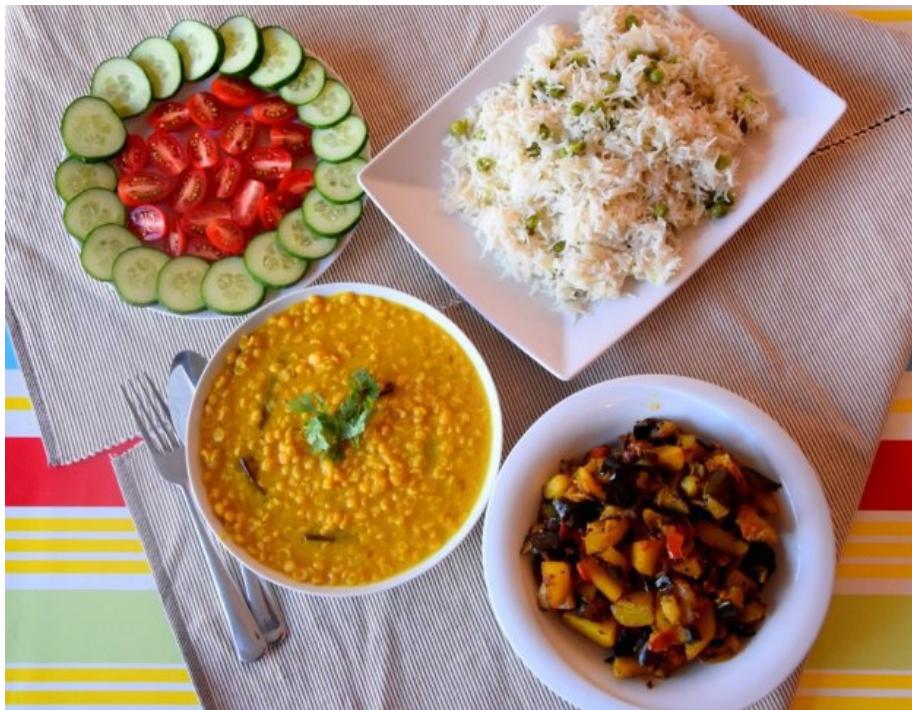
### PRESSURE COOK

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Raw channa dal with roasted channa dal
- Channa dal with mung/masoor/tuvar dal
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Chilli powder with fresh green chillies
- Raisins with dates/other dry fruits
- Coconut with roasted coconut

#### **Tips:**

1. Adding oil minimizes foaming.



Choler Dal (Channa dal) is a Bengali dal cooked on special occasions, especially in wedding feasts and during Durga Pooja celebrations. It is usually served with Luchis (Maida pooris), Kochuris (Stuffed pooris), pulao or rice.

It is not your everyday dal, but reserved for feasts, religious festivals and special days. This is probably the only dal in India to be commonly sold in sweet shops. It is a specialty in the Dakshineshwar temple, with Bengalis swearing that the best Choler dal is the one sold by vendors all around the temple.

This Kali temple is very special to Bengalis. It is here the Bengali mystic Ramakrishna Paramhansa attained enlightenment. It is here that the aristocratic Narendra Nath Datta renounced worldly pleasures to become Swami Vivekananda. Most Bengalis will fondly remember a visit to the temple, followed by a feast of Choler dal, Luchis, and sweets from the vendors lining the street, all washed down with tea sipped from mud cups.

The West of India prefers Mung/Tuvar and the East prefers Channa dal. Bengalis love channa dal so much so that it is even called as Bengal gram.

Both in the East and the West of India, dal is sweetened up a bit. Both the Bengali Choler dal and the Oriya Mitha dali are sweetish, like their

counterparts cooked in the West, especially Gujarat.

Echoing the paruppu payasam of the South, the Choler dal uses fried coconut bits as garnish and even boasts of dry fruits (usually raisins).

The building blocks are the lentils, flavouring, sweetener and additives.

Though Bengalis would find it sacrilegious, this theme can be extended, like all others, by changing the core building blocks, producing innumerable variants as detailed in the recipe.

# Chundo

## Gujarathi spiced jam

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped raw mango

Layer 3: 1C jaggery (200g)

Layer 4: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli, turmeric, cumin powders).

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango with your favourite sour fruits
- Jaggery with sugar
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. If too watery, stir-fry on opening to thicken.
2. Skip salt and spices for a sweet version.
3. The sourer the fruit, the longer the life.
4. Treat it like a pickle. No wet spoons, no touching with bare hands.
5. Use branded, packed jaggery which does not have sand grits. Else use sugar.

The Chunda/Chundo (shredded) or Khaman (Grated) could have come only from Gujarat. The Gujaratis love the sweet-spice combination. Many Gujarathi curries have a tinge of sweetness. In the Chundo, the concept is extended to a pickle too - by sweetening it!

Sugar is as good a preservative as salt. Indian cuisine excels in using salt and spices to create a range of sour fruit pickles. The western cuisine uses sugar to create a range of jams. The basic pickling principle in both these cases is the same. Jams can be looked at as sweet pickles or pickles can be looked at as spicy jams.

So, you can look at Chundo as a regular sour fruit Indian pickle steeped in

sugar instead of salt. Raw mango is the most common fruit used for a Chundo, though this theme can support any sour fruit.

In the traditional method, raw mango is grated and mixed with sugar/jaggery and spices in a large pot. Its mouth is covered with cloth. The pot is sunned for anywhere from a few days to almost a month. The sun cooking continues till the sugar melts into a syrup and brings the pickle together.

The OPOS version uses heat to cook the pickle at one shot. The proportions are adjusted to eliminate burning and to ensure it does not dry out and burn inside the cooker. This means the Chundo will have excess liquid when you open the cooker. You can either bottle it as it is, or strain the pulp alone and bottle. Else you can cook stirring in an open pan till it thickens to the consistency you like.

Versions of Chundo without spices exist (usually meant for kids), but then it becomes almost a murabba.

Chundo is used as a dip/spread and is eaten with Gujarathi flatbreads (Thepla, Rotli, Bhakhri, etc). It can be served as a spread with bread or even used as a curry/pickle. As with all pickles, ceramic/glass jars are preferred to plastic/metal ones for storage.

The OPOS version would not last as long as the traditional version because of the shortened cooking time. You can however refrigerate it and use it for months. Unrefrigerated, it should be consumed within a couple of weeks. A dash of vinegar mixed in would dramatically increase the Chundo's life!

The building blocks are the sour fruit, a sweetener and spices. Combine them anyway you like and cook up infinite combinations of this spicy jam!



# Dahi Baingan

## Kashmiri eggplant in yogurt

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped eggplants

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, ginger-garlic paste, coriander powders), 1/4tsp each (garam masala, chilli, amchoor, fennel, turmeric powders)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C whisked yogurt, 1tbsp chopped mint.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggplant with your favourite vegetables
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Yogurt with cream/coconut milk
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Always cook eggplant with a souring agent to minimize a pungent after taste.



Kashmir's eggplant in yogurt is a hot regional favourite. This curry does not require elaborate preparation. Most Indian curries start with a tadka and patient stir-frying of onions and tomatoes. We can minimise this elaborate preparatory work by following a few key principles:

**1. Choose ingredients that do not need much cutting:**

Soya/Paneer/Mushroom/Tofu/soaked legumes/sprouts/fresh peas/baby corn need no cutting.

Vegetables like Potato/carrots/Okra/Eggplant/Tomato/Cabbage need minimal chopping.

Chicken/Mutton/seafood come pre cut.

**2. Layer and flash:**

Layer them with a variety of spice powders/marinades. Flash them for 4 to 6 minutes.

**3. Mix in a base to create a gravy:**

Mix in coconut paste/coconut milk/soya milk/nut milk/yogurt/milk/cream/nut paste. These cook in the retained heat, combining with the cooked spices and form a thick creamy gravy.

This recipe showcases the technique above. Chopped eggplant is layered with a variety of spices and flashed. Yogurt is mixed in to create gravy.

The building blocks are the eggplant, spice mix and the yogurt used.

### Eggplants:

The long and slender, tender purple eggplants are preferred. The eggplant maybe mixed with salt, rested a few minutes and washed to remove bitterness. In many versions, the eggplants are deep fried before being added to the curry. The eggplants can be cut into thick slices/thick fingers. Avoid cutting them thin as they will not retain their shape if cut too thin. You can use any of your favourite non-watery vegetables to extend this theme.

### Spice Mix:

Fennel powder, ginger powder and cardamom powder appear repeatedly in Kashmiri curries. The Kashmiri Pandit curries use asafoetida extensively whereas the Kashmiri Muslim curries prefer ginger garlic paste. Eggplant loses its sting when paired with a souring agent. South India combined eggplant with tamarind and North India prefers amchoor (dried mango powder). Garam masala/a mix of sweet spices is usually added. The fiery red Kashmiri chilli powder is preferred for its deep colour and mustard oil for its flavour.

### Yogurt:

Yogurt curdles on heating. To ensure a creamy sauce, it needs to be strained, whisked well and mixed into the curry. Yogurt can be replaced by sour cream/thick milk/a variety of nut pastes. The amount of yogurt can be varied to make it into a dry curry or gravy.

Serve with rice/rotis.

# Dal

## Lentil mash

<https://youtu.be/ISXjLyE0rfU>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C mung dal, 1C water, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/4tsp turmeric, 1 slit green chilli, 1/4tsp cumin, 1tsp ghee. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash . Mix in 1/2tsp salt and 1/2C water.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung with tuvar/masoor dal
- Raw dal with roasted dal
- Cumin with your favourite spice/spice mix
- Ghee with oil

### **Tips:**

1. Can add 1/4tsp asafoetida.

No cuisine comes close to Indian cuisine in cooking dal. Thousands of variants exist across the country. It is easily the most cooked curry in India. Dal refers to skinned and split legumes (lentils, peas or beans). It also refers to the curries made from cooked pulses. Here, the term is used loosely, to cover all pulses, split or whole. Over 50 types of legumes are commonly cooked across India. These are the main source of protein for a mostly vegetarian population.

The basic preparation of dal is the same across India. Boil it with a pinch of turmeric and salt. That's it! Dals like tuvar dal, mung dal and masoor dal are thin and cook fast, with little or no soaking. It is primarily for this reason they are among the most cooked dals. The larger the dal is, the more it needs to soak. Chick peas and Rajma (Kidney beans) need the longest soaking and cooking time.

Each region has its favourite dal. The quick cooking tuvar dal and mung dal

are very popular in the South. In Tamilnadu, just plain, unflavoured, boiled tuvar dal is eaten mixed with cooked rice and ghee (Kalathu Paruppu). It is mashed, mixed with a tadka and becomes the paruppu masiyal/paruppu kadayal. Cooked with edible greens it becomes the Keerai Paruppu.

Tuvar dal/Mung dal is boiled with a variety of vegetables and eaten as the Pappu in Andhra. Kerala prefers Mung dal, which is cooked with coconut into the Nadan Paruppu Kari. Plain tuvar dal boiled with minimal flavouring is cooked into the Konkani Tovve/Dalitoy. Maharashtra cannot imagine a meal without plain boiled Tuvar dal - The Varan. Varan bhat or cooked tuvar dal and rice is even served as an offering to Maharashtra's favourite God - Ganesh.

As we move up North, larger legumes are increasingly used. Whole chickpeas, kidney beans and unhusked legumes get cooked into curries like Channa masala and Rajma. Punjab excels in cooking whole legumes. It is the one of the few cuisines which managed to convert the slimy whole urad dal into its signature dish - Maa Ki Daal.

Gujarat loves its dals slightly sweet. The Tuver-ni-daal (Tuvar dal curry) is one of the pillars of Gujarati diet. A mixture of 5 dals cooked together, the Panchmela dal, is a popular Rajasthani/Gujarati theme. Two dals cooked together (usually Mung and Channa dal) is loved in the Kashmiri cuisine.

Uttaranchal has several innovative ways to cook dals. It is here you'll find dals being roast and ground before being cooked into chainsoo or bhatwani. It is here you'll see dals soaked and ground to a coarse paste and then cooked into phanoo. A faint echo of this theme exists in the Tanjore usili and Tamil paruppu urundai kulambu.

In the kitchens of the Nawabs of Oudh, the humble dal was cooked with expensive spices and nuts into Shahi dal and Sultani dal.

East India prefers Channa dal. In Bengal and Orissa it is cooked into the Choler Dal and Dali. A special variety of Dali, the Mitha Dali is cooked in the Puri Jagannath temple. Channa dal cooked with Jaggery, coconut and sweet spices into a semi sweet curry is distributed as a prasad.

The pairing of dals and grains is India's gift to the culinary world. Something magical happens when dal is paired with rice or rotis. Simple dishes turn into

comfort foods and leave a warm glow in your heart.

# Dal Makhni

Punjabi buttery whole urad dal curry

<https://youtu.be/2XKMpZrTeh4>

Soak 1/2C whole urad dal, 10 nos kidney beans (rajma) overnight. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomatoes

Layer 3: Soaked dals, 1/4C caramelised onion

Layer 4: 1 tsp each (salt, ginger-garlic paste, chilli, garam masala, cumin, coriander powders).

Layer 5: 1C chopped tomato

Cook on high heat for 20 whistles+ (10 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2C cream.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Whole urad with Rajma/Chickpeas to make Rajma/Channa masala..
- Butter with ghee/your favourite oil
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Onion with shallots
- Cream with sour cream/strained yogurt
- Rajma with channa dal.

### **Tips:**

1. Omit butter/cream and Rajma to convert this into Kali Dal/Maa Ki Dal.
2. Undercooked? Add 1/2C water along the sides and cook again for 5 minutes.
3. Repeat if necessary.

4. Prefer pale variety of rajma, which cooks faster.
5. Can presoak rajma in hot water for faster cooking.
6. Can add 1/2tsp baking powder for mushier rajma.
7. This recipe is an updated version of the video recipe.



# Dalma

## Oriya vegetable- lentil stew

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut with 1/2tsp each (chilli, cumin, garam masala powders), 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powders), 1tsp salt with minimal water to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomatoes, 1tsp chopped ginger,

Layer 3: 1/4C each chopped (potato, yam, eggplant, broad beans, radish),

Layer 4: 1/2C cooked mung dal

Layer 5: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

## **Replace/Supplement**

- Mung with Masoor/Tuvar dals
- Soaked dal with cooked dals/sprouts
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Potato/yam with your favourite starchy vegetables
- Tomato with mango/tamarind

## **Tips:**

1. Reduce dal for a thinner version.
2. Use presoaked dals for faster cooking.

Dalma is probably the most loved curry in Oriya cuisine. Long, long ago, 2600 years to be precise, a race of fierce warriors ruled a small nation, Kalinga, in the East of India (Today's Odisha). I always think of Sparta when I read about Kalinga. Like Sparta, Kalinga was a Republic. Like Spartans, Kalingans were held in awe by their neighbours and were fiercely proud of their heritage.

Kalingans were among the first Indians to trade with and colonise coastal

South East Asia. The Buddhist/Hindu culture you see all across South East Asia was mostly due to the Kalingan influence. No wonder Indians are still called Keling (after Kalinga) in SE Asia, in the very same way Tamils are called Pandis (after Pandyas) in Kerala. Now, these terms are considered racist and offensive, for reasons unknown!

The tiny, fierce Kalinga was feared by its much larger neighbours. Completely surrounded by the huge Mauryan Empire, Kalinga managed to remain independent. Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the largest Kingdom India has ever known, was unable to conquer this nation right outside his capital! His son Bindusara did not even try!

Chandra Gupta's grandson Asokha, the Terrible (as he was then called) could not accept this. Eight years after he came to power, he goes to war. Kalinga puts up such a fight, leading to such slaughter, that Asokha renounces war forever, embraces non violence, and comes to be known as Asokha the Great.

A century later, Kalinga rises again under the Jain king Kharavela to conquer almost half of India. Various dynasties rule Orissa for the next 1500 years. The beginning of the end started 500 years back, when Orissa fell to Moghuls. 200 years of Mogul rule, 70 years of Maratha rule and 150 years of gross British mismanagement decimated this proud nation.

Under the 'efficient' British administration, a million starve to death in the 1865 famine. This lush land, a regional superpower, which held its head high for 1500 years, was destroyed in the last 500 years. It is now among the poorest states of India. Those who once terrorized empires now pull rickshaws, completely oblivious of their glorious heritage.

The Odiya cuisine is among the oldest Indian cuisines. Like all coastal regions, fish and other seafood (crab, shrimp) are very popular. Chicken and mutton are popular in the interior regions. Ambula (Dried mangoes), Amchoor (mango powder) are preferred souring agents. Use of mustard paste as a curry base and panch phoran is common in Northern Orissa. Southern Orissa has an overlap with Andhra cuisine with the use of tamarind and curry leaves. Like many temple towns, Puri's huge temple kitchen has served as the fountainhead for numerous recipes and cooking techniques.

A typical Odiya meal would be rice, dalma (coconut- lentil stew), dry curries,

fries and a khatta (Sour curry). Dessert is mandatory. Meetha dahi/Kheer/milk cheese based sweets are usually served.

Dalma is an ancient Indian recipe, revered in the Odiya cuisine. It is considered so special, that it is one of the 56 items offered daily as Mahaprasad (Divine offering) at the Puri Jagannath temple, to this day. It is a staple of the Oriya cuisine and is seen as a comfort food.

Cooking lentils with vegetables is popular in the South, but is not too common in the North. Sambar and Kootu are staples in most South Indian households. But sambar uses a souring agent and Kootu uses coconut. A pure lentil- vegetable combination is not too common, but in Andhra. The Telugu cuisine boasts of a huge range of pappu, where a variety of vegetables are cooked with lentils without added tamarind/coconut.

The Pappu usually has one vegetable/leafy green. Oriya cuisine goes one step ahead and uses a mix of many vegetables and lentils in cooking the Dalma.

The building blocks of a Dalma are the vegetable mix, the lentils and the flavouring.

#### Vegetables:

A mix of native vegetables is usually preferred. Raw papaya, banana, eggplant, pumpkin, gourds, spinach, radish, drumsticks, yam potato and beans are commonly used. Like the aviyal, you can use any vegetable mix of your choice. The more, the better!

#### Lentils:

Tuvar dal is usually preferred. Roasted dals are often used to provide a nutty flavour. Mung, masoor or channa dal or a mix of all of them is also common. Cooked dal is used to ensure vegetables to retain their colour and shape.

#### Flavouring:

Ghee/mustard oil, ginger, asafoetida and turmeric appear in almost all versions. Use of Mughlai spices/garam masala is also common. Like all East Indian curries, a tadka of panch phoran (five spice mix consisting of equal quantities of fenugreek seed, nigella, cumin seed, black mustard seed and fennel) is used.

#### Garnish:

Roasted cumin- chilli powder is very popular in Oriya cuisine and is used as a garnish. Grated coconut/fresh herbs and tadka of panch-phoran can also be used.

**Preparation:**

In the traditional preparation, dal is cooked and the vegetables are later added along with flavouring. Here, we vary the cut sizes of vegetables so that all get cooked, along with dal, without becoming mushy. This technique, along with the use of bottled tadka makes it OPOS.



# Dopiaza

## Mogul double onion mother sauce

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 1C each chopped (onion, shallots)

Layer 3: 5 green chillies, 1tsp each (garam masala, salt, ginger-garlic paste),  
1/2tsp each (cumin, coriander powder), 5 mint leaves

Cook on high heat for 8 to 15 whistles (5 to 10 minutes) or till you detect a burnt smell. Release pressure. Mash/blend. Stir-fry if you need more caramelisation. Mix in 1tsp lemon juice. Bottle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ghee with butter/oil
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Mint with other fresh herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. Moisture content of onions determines caramelisation time.
2. Switch off when you start getting a burnt smell.



Dopiaza/Dopyaza is an onion lovers curry. It literally means double onion curry. (Hindi Do: Two, Pyaz: Onion). What does the 'two' represent? There are many theories.

1. The amount of onions used is twice the amount of the meat/vegetables used.
2. Two different kinds of onions are used.
3. Onions are cooked in two different ways and combined together.
4. Two different cuts of onions are used.

No one knows which of these defines the curry, but what is beyond dispute is that this curry is built around an overload of onions.

The royal cooks used caramelised onion paste mildly spiced with expensive spices as a base to cook choicest cuts of meat/expensive vegetables into a curry fit for a king. This Mogul curry is usually cooked with a variety of meats. The traditional method calls for patient caramelisation of onions with constant stirring. This recipe converts it into a single step process.

The building blocks:

Onions:

Caramelised onion paste gives the curry its body, colour and flavour. Many different versions are common - some use two varieties of onion, some use onions in two stages (half caramelised and the other half not caramelised).

#### Souring agent:

The sweetness of the onions is balanced by the tang of a souring agent. Usually tomatoes, yogurt, mango powder, anardhana (dried pomegranate seeds) are all used. Raw mango Dopiazza (Kachi Kairi ka do pyaza) using mangoes as a souring agent is very popular in the Hyderabadi cuisine. This recipe relies on lemon juice as a souring agent.

#### Flavouring:

A variety of mild and sweet spices loved by the Moghuls is commonly used. Sweet spices like cinnamon, cardamom, cloves are common. Mild spices like coriander and cumin are preferred. Harsh Indian spices like turmeric/asafoetida are generally avoided.

#### Additives:

The curry base is simmered with a wide variety of meats/seafood/vegetables.

Aloo Dopiazza (Potatoes), Khumb Dopiazza (Mushrooms), Bhindi Dopiazza (Okra), Paneer Dopiazza are commonly cooked vegetarian versions. Chicken dopiazza, Mutton dopiazza, Kheema dopiazza, Crab/Fish/Prawn dopiazza are more common. These can be layered over the in the recipe and flashed at one shot. Else the additives can be flashed separately and mixed in with the base.

#### Garnish:

Cream, chopped herbs, slivered nuts are commonly used.

#### Cooking with the curry base:

This base can last weeks in a refrigerator.

Layer this paste while flashing meats/vegetables to make a 5 minute dopyaza. This curry base can also serve as a pasta sauce or used as is to accompany flatbreads/rice as a dip.

# Gatte Ki Sabji

## Rajasthan's gram flour pasta curry

Mix 1/2C besan with 2tbsp each (oil, yogurt) and 1/4tsp each (salt, turmeric powder, ajwain). Knead and shape into finger-thick cylinders. Slice into discs.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C finely chopped onion arranged as a ring.

Layer 3: 1C chopped deseeded tomato added in the centre of the ring

Layer 4: Gram flour discs

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (cumin, garam masala, chilli powder, salt)

Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C yogurt.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ajwain with cumin
- Ghee with your favourite oil
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Shape kneaded gram flour into cylinders and slice into discs.
2. Do not make the discs too thick.

# Green Chutney

## Indian Pesto

Blend 2C chopped cilantro, 1C chopped mint, 1tsp cumin, 1/2tsp salt, 1 green chilli, 1/4C roasted peanuts, 1 garlic clove, 1tsp lemon juice, 2tsp oil to a coarse/smooth paste.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mint with your favourite herbs
- Peanuts with other nuts
- Garlic with ginger

### **Tips:**

1. Blend in short bursts to avoid heating up the dip.
2. Oil helps in making the dip creamy.

Indians are really spoiled for choice. The rest of the world has one or two dips as their national favourites. India has thousands - too numerous even to name, that we often call them by their colour. There are hundreds of green chutneys. And scores more of white, brown, red and many more.

The logic behind all Indian fresh chutneys is the same: Blend fresh ingredients with salt, chilli and additives into a dip. They are one of the easiest dips to make – just throw everything together and blend to a paste – how much simpler can it get?

South India is the India's chutney capital, with each household whipping up a huge array of chutneys.

The equivalents of Indian chutneys exist in many cuisines. Many foreign ‘chutneys’ omit the chillies and use vinegar/lemon as a souring agent. Toasted sesame seeds blended with olive oil, lemon and salt give the famous Tahini or Sesame chutney. Mustard seeds blended with turmeric, salt and vinegar/wine becomes the delicious mustard dip, so popular in the West.

We'd probably call it mustard chutney. If Avocados had been known in India, we'd certainly have had Avocado chutney by pureeing its flesh with salt, chilli and lime juice. But now, we only know it as Guacamole. Walnut chutney or Muhammara is made by blending walnuts, chilli, garlic, lemon juice, salt and olive oil. If basil was not considered too holy to cook, we would have had a Tulsi chutney, which we now only know as pesto.

Chutneys can be sweet or sour, spicy or mild, thin or thick, chunky or smooth, cooked or uncooked. They can be made with fruits, salad vegetables, cooked vegetables, roast lentils, nuts or seeds. Mango, apple, pear, tamarind, onions, tomato, raisins, groundnut, chana dal, coconut, garlic, ginger, mint, cilantro, chillies - are all used across the country as a chutney base. This base is usually blended with a souring agent (lemon/tamarind), chillies (fresh green/dry red) and salt into a thick paste.

Chutneys traveled with the British to their colonies and to Britain, where they have become increasingly popular. The fresh chutney, with its short shelf life was not ideal for mass production. Hence most western supermarket chutneys are now a kind of spicy jam/pickle, being cooked with sugar and vinegar. Fruit chutneys (Mangoes, apples, onions, raisins) are simmered with vinegar, sugar, spices and bottled, giving rise to a 'chutney' which is almost never eaten in India, but fills the supermarket shelves abroad.

These spicy fruit jams masquerading as chutneys are also popular in the Caribbean, South Africa and in US. Taste a freshly blended coconut chutney/cilantro chutney and you'll see how little effort is needed to create this delicious dip and how much more flavourful they are compared to the packed versions.

# Hari Mirch ka Achaar

## Gujarati Bohra chilli pickle

<https://youtu.be/z6nRnBnQYpQ>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp vinegar, 1/4C oil

Layer 2: 500g slit green chillies

Layer 3: 1tbsp each (ginger- garlic paste, cumin powder, salt, jaggery), 1/2tsp turmeric powder

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1/4C vinegar. Let cool and bottle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ginger garlic paste with chopped garlic cloves
- Jaggery with sugar
- Vinegar with tamarind paste

### **Tips:**

1. Do not cook with vinegar in aluminium cookers. Aluminium reacts with strong acids.
2. Can use chopped chillies in place of slit chillies.
3. Can mash/blend into a dip.
4. Can slit chillies and stuff them with the spice mixture.

Hari Mirch ka Achaar comes to us from the Gujarati Bohra cuisine. Gujarati Bohras are a unique community and exemplify fusion! Immediately after Prophet Muhammad's death 1400 years ago, Muslims split into Sunnis and Shias. A century later Shias split into Twelvers and Ismailis. 300 years later, Ismailis establish the Fatimid Caliphate, centered at Cairo, wresting territories from the Sunni Abbasid caliphate centered at Baghdad. In the declining days of the Fatimid Caliphate, another succession dispute splits Ismailis into Tayyibis and Nizaris. Persecution by the rising Sunni powers

gradually forces Tayyibis to flee Yemen and establish themselves in coastal Gujarat. Later, their descendants and native converts came to be called Bohras (from Gujarati word meaning trader).

400 years back, the Tayyabis split again into Dawoodi Bohra, Sulaimani Bohra, Alavi Bohra and later into Hebtiah Bohras. However, all still stand united in their cuisine and in their persecution by the Sunni powers.

The Bohra cuisine is a fusion of Arab, Gujarati and Mughlai cuisines. The Arab style of communal eating from a single large plate (Thal) is still followed. The meal starts with a pinch of salt, which is used as a palate cleanser. Desserts are served both at the beginning and end of the meal. Though the cuisine is meat based, in deference to Hindu beliefs, beef is avoided. Indian spices, green chillies, coconut and ginger are all used along with Central Asian ingredients and spices.

Innovative dishes emerged from this fusion. Khaloli (meatball kadhi), Mutton Chikoli (a meaty version of dal-dhokli), patrel biriyani (Mutton patra) showcase the Bohra love for mutton.

The building blocks of this pickle are the chillies, spices and vinegar. Like many Gujarati dishes, even this pickle gets its dose of sugar. Use your favourite chilli varieties, spice mixes and souring agents to create your own variations.

#### Chillies:

Any chilli variety can fit into this theme - even dried ones, if soaked in vinegar and drained.

#### Spices:

This theme can accommodate any mix of your favourite spices. The common pickling spices - mustard, fenugreek can be used. Rock salt is preferred to powdered salt.

#### Souring agent:

Vinegar entered the Gujarati cuisine probably from the Portuguese cuisine. It can be replaced by any souring agent of your choice.

# Hmarcha Rawt

## Mizoram chilli chutney

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 100g whole green chillies with stalks removed

Layer 3: 1tsp each (chopped ginger, salt).

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Blend/mash.

Mix in finely 1/4C chopped onion.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH.**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Green chilli with other chilli varieties

### **Tips:**

1. Blending dulls colour.
2. Mix in 1tbsp vinegar for a longer shelf life.
3. Letting pressure settle dulls colour.
4. If you want a bright green dip, release pressure and mash.

Connected to India by a thin strip of land, the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura are referred to as the North East. These cuisines (barring Assam) are very different from the rest of India. They use very little oil, chillies or spices. These cuisines have been influenced heavily by Thai and Chinese cuisines. The use of fermented soya beans, fermented fish, heavy use of pork and beef, the use of an alkaline liquid made from ashes of banana bark in cooking are found nowhere else in India.

A typical meal would be cooked, fat-grained sticky rice served with a meat or fish curry, a spicy chutney and a vegetable stew. Dessert would more likely be a fresh fruit than a sweet.

Bamboo shoots, small round red raja chillies, green repchi chillies, Tangmo - the powdered bark of a tree used as a souring agent, the parkia fruit, black

bamboo mushrooms, basil-like lengmaser flowers used for flavouring and the herb Mizo Anthur are all unique to this region.

For a region which does not use too many spices, it is ironic that the world's hottest chilli, the Ghost Chilli, grows here. Though the cuisine is bland compared to the rest of India, it is spiced up with chutneys with a punch like this one. These are served as condiments along with rice, roti, noodles or even momos.

# Kachumber

## Side salad

Mix 1/2C each finely chopped (onion, tomato, cucumber, cilantro), 1 finely chopped green chilli, 1/4tsp salt and 1tsp each (lemon juice, oil).

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato/cucumber with your favourite salad vegetables
- Chilli with pepper
- Cilantro with your favourite fresh herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Mix in salt just before serving to avoid watering down the salad.
2. Lasts weeks refrigerated, if stored air-tight without adding salt

Westerners miss three things when they come to India - Cheese, Leavened breads and Salads. We seem to be getting along just fine with one cheese (cheddar), one leavened bread (sliced white bread) and one salad (Kachumber).

Kachumber (minced) is a lone salad in the Indian cuisine which boasts of a million curries and flatbreads. It is not even graced by a separate name, being called just 'minced raw stuff'. One salad for the whole of India!

You wouldn't be able to order a salad in most Indian restaurants, as they don't carry one on their menu. Even if you are lucky to spot the 'Veg Salad', you'll get a plate with slices of cucumber, onion and tomato.

Sliced vegetables are the closest most Indians have come to a salad. Green leafy salads are non-existent and salad dressing is unknown. The Punjabi Dilkhush which has sliced onion, tomatoes and radish, dressed with lemon juice and the South Indian Kosambari are lone exceptions. The Gujarati Sambharo straddles both themes, being neither a cooked curry nor a fresh salad. Our Raitas and Thayir pachadis come close to being called fresh salads, but for the excessive amount of dressing.

Kachumber is popular across the North. The Moghuls served it with Pulaos, Biriyani, Haleem and Kebabs. It is ideal to be scooped up with flatbreads and serves as a palate cleanser. The South Indian version is not eaten mixed with rice, but as a palate cleanser or as a salad/snack. The Parsi cuisine uses tamarind as a souring agent in Kachumber and adds jaggery, making Gor Amli Nu Kachumber. It also uses yogurt as a souring agent, creating the Dahi Kachumber, almost a raita.

Our cuisine, like all other cuisines across the world, has much to learn. We are extremely good with certain themes and have totally bypassed other themes. Leavening, baking, grilling, steaming, probiotic pickling, wine making, cheese making, and salad dressings are some techniques we have completely bypassed.

The tropical climate and our fear of food poisoning is probably why fresh salads are not a part of our cuisine. With water being unsafe and infectious diseases being rampant, we devised elaborate rules to ensure food safety. This is probably why very few raw foods are used in our cuisine. Even after advances in food storage and processing, even after the arrival of refrigerators, our fear is still strong. We'd rather overcook than undercook.

Indian cuisine however, has probably the biggest range of cooked salads. Most of our chaats (Bhel poori, Jhaal mudi etc) are actually cooked salads. So are our million dry curries. But there is a gaping hole in our cuisine in the fresh salads section. We can extend the Kachumber theme to try fill that void.

#### Kachumber base:

It is usually a mix of finely chopped tomatoes, and onions, with a bit of salt. Fancier ones have cucumbers, cilantro, radish and chillies. This theme supports all crunchy salad vegetables like cabbage, capsicum, carrots, lettuce etc.

#### Dressing:

Though only lemon juice is used, we can mix in a dash of oil or a wide variety of salad dressings to convert it into a classic salad. Occasionally yogurt is mixed in, converting it into a raita variant.

#### Additives:

A variety of fresh herbs, roasted nuts and seeds can be mixed in. Mix in

toasted pita pieces, olive oil and this becomes the Middle East fattoush. Mix in crusty bread pieces, olive oil and it becomes Italian panzanella.

Indian labourers and traders took this salad to British colonies across the world. At the same time the British Empire was running a drug cartel, it also was engaged in the highly profitable body shopping trade, stopping just short of slave trade. It gleefully ferried tens of thousands of Indians to East Africa for the great African land grab.

In 1870, 10% of Africa, mostly coastal regions, was under European control. Within 30 years, 90% of Africa was grabbed by the colonial powers.

Desmond Tutu's quote summarises the African land grab. "When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land".

A vast amount of labour was needed to lay railroads, harvest rubber, cotton and sugarcane in these new lands. The indentured labourers (coolies) recruited for this work were marginally better than slaves.

The British began shipping Indians to their colonies around the world as labourers. They were recruited from villages of India, mostly from the Indo-Gangetic plain, where the famines caused by disastrous British policies and exploitation left a large section of people jobless. Many were promised 'a better life abroad', some kidnapped and some were actually sold like slaves. Close to 30,000 people were shipped to East Africa. It was among these 'coolies' that Mahatma Gandhi would polish his weapons of non-violence that he'd later deploy so successfully in India.

Kachumber went with these Indian workers and traders to East Africa. Called Kachumbari, it is now popular throughout East Africa (Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda). It has even entered the language of this region, as the Swahili word Kachumbari. It has become a part of the East African cuisine, being eaten with rice, meats, porridge or just as a salad. Onions, tomatoes and chillies are loved across the world and many other cuisines have their own versions of this basic salad. The Mexican salsa fresca (Fresh Salsa) and the Latin American Pico de gallo are Kachumbers at heart.

# Kadhi

## Chickpea flour – yogurt stew

<https://youtu.be/c6hQE9W4fzQ>

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp oil, 2C water, 2tbsp chickpea flour, 1tsp each (chilli powder, salt), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, cumin powder), 1/4C sour yogurt,. Mix well without lumps. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2C whisked yogurt.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chickpea flour with roasted lentil powder/OPOS Podi
- Chilli powder with chilli paste
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Yogurt with your favourite souring agents (tamarind paste/mango pulp/mango powder etc.)

### **Tips:**

1. Add more chickpea flour for a thicker kadhi.
2. Mix in Pakodi/Boondhi/Bhujiya/Vada after opening as vegetable substitutes.
3. Add 1/4tsp turmeric for a coloured kadhi.

Kadhi is a curry designed to be cooked without anything. It is just gram flour and yogurt cooked with spices. A huge variety of kadhis is cooked across the North, thick or thin, with minimal changes in the key building blocks.

Gujarati Kadhi has a paste of ginger and chilli mixed in. Jaggery/sugar is also added, as with most Gujarati curries. The Rajasthani kadhi is flavoured with cinnamon, cloves and fennel. The Punjabi version uses onions. Kashmiri Kadhi has fennel powder, mint and chilli powder and uses a bit of sugar like the Gujarati version. The Maharashtrian version replaces the cumin with mustard and adds in garlic and a bit of sugar.

As we come down South, we see the building blocks gradually morph to South Indian building blocks. The Sindhi Kadhi replaces yogurt with Tamarind and uses a wide mix of vegetables, cooking up something like a Kulambu!

The Konkani Jeeri- Miri kadhi does the same, replacing yogurt with tamarind and blends in cumin and pepper to create another Kulambu look alike.

Further down South, besan is omitted in favour of soaked and ground lentils. Coconut gets added and the Tamil More Kulambu appears!

Though besan is most common in Kadhis, other lentils/peas are also used. Mung dal ki kadhi uses mung dal flour, Mangodi kadhi uses ground sun dried lentil dumplings and the Hara chana kadhi uses mashed peas.

Almost anything can be cooked in a Kadhi. In the deserts of Rajasthan where fresh vegetables are rare, Sev ki kadhi and Boondhi ki kadhi are common. Punjab prefers Pakodi as a vegetable substitute. A variety of vegetables or greens can also be used. Even fruit pulp gets added as in Aamras ki kadhi. Other flours are also occasionally used to replace gram flour, as in Kuttu ki kadhi which uses Buckwheat flour.

It is easy to create your own versions of this flexible theme.

# Kadai Paneer

## Stir-fried cottage cheese

[https://youtu.be/KV\\_uxWNZtMw](https://youtu.be/KV_uxWNZtMw)

In a 2L cooker, layer as shown:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion

Layer 3: 1C each (carrot, deseeded tomato, capsicum) chopped into coin sized pieces

Layer 4: 125g (1C) chopped paneer

Layer 5: 1tsp each (salt, chilli powder, kasuri methi), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, cumin, coriander) powders.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Paneer with mushroom/soaked soya chunks/marinated chicken
- Carrot/Capsicum with your favourite vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can stir-fry briefly after opening, if needed.
2. Mix yogurt/cream/coconut milk for a gravy version.
3. Skewer with toothpicks and serve as starters.
4. Adding ginger-garlic paste optional



Kadai is the Indian cast iron wok. It is used across Indian cuisines for a variety of stir fries. Kadai Paneer is a very popular restaurant dish where paneer cubes are stir-fried with a medley of brightly coloured vegetables. The dish is defined by the cooked yet crunchy, colourful vegetables.

In the traditional method, oil is heated and spices are fried. Vegetables are added one by one and stir-fried on high heat. Usually a bit of water is added to prevent burning. Paneer is added at the very end. Both dry and gravy versions are common. This protein rich dish is usually paired with a carbohydrate to make it a full meal.

We simulate stir-frying with flash cooking to cut down the multi step, supervised cooking into OPOS. We need to cook on high heat to fill up the cooker with steam as fast as possible. In this time, the bottom layer of the vegetables/paneer gets slightly caramelised. After the cooker fills with steam in the first two minutes or so, burning is prevented by the steam which maintains the temperature at around 120 degrees.

The steam also cooks the food evenly, eliminating the need to stir or fry. At the end of the cooking process, steam is released to prevent overcooking of vegetables.

Tips:

1. Use crunchy vegetables. Mushy vegetables like brinjal/okra are not preferred, especially in the dry versions.
2. Make and serve fresh. Some paneer varieties can become tough on cooling, especially if cut into small chunks.
3. Marinated meats might take longer to cook depending on the meat used, marination time and the size of the pieces. Minced meat cooks the fastest. You can also use processed meats (Sausages/salami) in place of paneer.
4. Mix in 1/2C well whisked yogurt/cream/coconut milk for a gravy version.
5. Use marinated paneer/herbed paneer for a greater flavour.
6. Add potatoes along with other vegetables to turn this into a full meal.

Serving:

1. Serve as a side dish with flatbreads/rice.
2. Use as filling for rolls/sandwiches
3. Stick in toothpicks and serve as appetizers.
4. Skewer paneer- capsicum- tomato on a toothpick and serve as mini bites.
5. Use as pizza topping.

# Kaddu ki Sabji

## Squash Curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as shown:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 250g chopped squash.

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (sugar, chilli, cumin, amchoor, garam masala) powders

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Squash with your favourite vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Sugar with jaggery/your favourite sweetener.
- Mango powder with tamarind paste/other souring agents.

#### **Tips:**

1. Use rock salt for a Falhari (fasting) version.
2. Mix in 1/2C yogurt/cream/coconut milk for a gravy version.
3. If undercooked, cut into smaller chunks.

# Kasundi

## Bengali spiced mustard

In a blender, add 1/4C each (black mustard seeds, chopped garlic, chopped green chillies), 1C grated raw mango, 1/2C water, 1/2tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp salt, 2tsp mustard oil. Blend to a smooth/coarse paste.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Black mustard with brown/yellow mustard
- Mango with your favourite sour fruit pulp
- Water with other liquids

### **Tips:**

1. Can use soaked/roasted mustard
2. Let rest 2-3 days for it to mellow.

The Kasundi is one of the most loved dips in Bengali cuisine. It is used as a dip, a spread, as a marinade and even as a batter for batter fries. But most Bengalis never make it at home, believing it is too complicated! I see parallels to the Avakka making in South, which was considered equally complicated in the pre-OPOS days.

Kasundi is extremely easy to make. Think of it as mustard chutney. Mustard is one of the strongest antibacterial spices known to man. You just blend mustard with a liquid and your indestructible dip is ready in an instant.

The West has been making mustard dips for over 2000 years. They usually blend mustard with an acidic liquid. The ancient Romans used young wine (must), which gives mustard its name. The French use wine, vinegar, verjus (juice of unripe grapes) or even beer. The combination of the anti bacterial spice and a souring agent preserved the dip indefinitely, without refrigeration. But the Bengalis treat the Kasundi like a chutney, blending it with green chillies, ginger, garlic and water. In many versions, there is not enough mustard and not enough souring agent to preserve the dip. The answer is to

add more mustard, less water and stronger souring agents. That's it! The dip then becomes immortal.

Mustard by itself is extremely resistant to spoilage. When mixed with a souring agent and salt, it becomes even more powerful. It is almost impossible for a mustard dip to go bad.

This has made mustard one of the most popular condiments in the west, rivaling ketchup. For a very long time, mustard was the only spice the west used for 'heat' before the introduction of pepper and chillies. Romans used it very much like pepper - crushing it right on their plates. People also sprinkled whole mustard seeds and chewed it with food!

Mustard probably came to India from China, very likely through the East, which might explain the prevalence of mustard oil and mustard paste based dishes in Bengal, Orissa and to a lesser extent in Bihar/Jharkhand. Even after 3000 years, for some strange reason, Indian cuisine still has not embraced mustard paste or has learnt to use it. The use of mustard paste is very rare in our cuisine. The South uses it only in pickles and the Malayalis use it in a few pachadis. Other regions have steered clear of it!

Before we can OPOS the theme, and extend it, we need to understand how mustard works. Mustard has no heat in its dry form. Only when the seeds are crushed and mixed with a liquid, does it become 'hot'. The small black Indian mustard has the strongest bite, followed by the brown and yellow ones.

Heat/acids reduce the bite of mustard. Cold water gives the maximum bite. Freshly prepared mustard is most pungent but its bite starts fading away if left to stand or if heated. Mustard paste grows gradually milder over time. When it reaches the desired level of mildness, you can refrigerate it, which slows down further mellowing.

Let's now use these to extend the Kasundi theme. The building blocks of a Kasundi are the souring agent (raw mangoes), the spice (turmeric, garlic, chillies) and a liquid (water) which are all blended with the mustard into a paste. We can change each of these building blocks as detailed in the recipe and cook up innumerable variants of this theme without fear. The added oil emulsifies the dip and makes it creamy.

The Bengalis prefer a sil-bati (a flat stone slab) to crush the seeds. It produces a more flavourful dip as it does not heat up the ingredients like a high speed blender. But this process needs a lot of skill and manual labour, which is one reason why mustard making has disappeared from most homes. The flavour

loss in a blender can be minimised by using ice cold water and by blending in short bursts, which minimise heating.

Once you have understood the theme, you will see that making a range of Kasundis is no more "Khub shokto", (Very Difficult).

# Khatta Meetha Aloo

## Sour and sweet potato

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped deseeded tomato

Layer 3: 2C potato chopped small

Layer 4: 1tsp each (garam masala, jaggery), 1/2tsp each (chilli, cumin, coriander powders, salt). Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes).

Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with your favourite starchy vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Jaggery with sugar/other sweeteners.

### **Tips:**

1. If potato is undercooked cut smaller/cook longer.
2. Can add protein (paneer/soya chunks/meat/eggs)

Khatta Meeta Aloo (Sour and sweet potatoes) is a much loved curry in the Gujarati cuisine. It is paired with both rice (Khichdi, Pulao,...) and with flatbreads (Phulkhas, Poori, Rotlas, Bhakris and Theplas)

The sweet and sour theme is a favourite Chinese theme. It is not common in Indian cuisine but for a very few recipes. Did Gujarat embrace this theme from the early trade contact with Chinese would be an interesting question to answer!

Chinese extensively employ the sweet and sour theme to cook a variety of meats/noodles/soups. It is also prevalent in the western world - especially in cooking meats.

In India, sweet and sour chutney made from tamarind and dates/jaggery is extensively used in various street foods. This theme is echoed in the South

Indian Manga Vella Pachadi, some versions of the North Indian Chivda, some drinks like the Aam panna, and preserves like the Gujarati Chundo. The famous Tamil Brahmin curries, the Pulikaichal and Vatha Kulambu, are sweet and sour curries, with many versions using both tamarind and jaggery.

This version pairs potato with protein (sprouts) making possible a grain free balanced meal. The building blocks of this theme are the vegetables, the protein additives, spices, sweetener and souring agents. Varying these leads to a huge array of recipes!

Eggplant, Squash and Bitter gourd are some of the popular vegetables that repeatedly appear in this theme. Chickpea curry is occasionally cooked in a sweet and sour base. Tamarind/mango powder/raw mango are common souring agents used. Jaggery/sugar are popular sweeteners. The spices vary with the region. Change these blocks to explore your own variations!

# Korma Curry base

## Nutty dairy based mother sauce

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 2C onion arranged as a ring with 2C chopped deseeded tomato at centre

Layer 3: 2tbsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/4C chopped mint, 2tsp each (poppy seeds, salt), 10 chopped cashews, 1tsp each (fennel, garam masala).

Cook on high heat for 8 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend with 1/2C milk/yogurt/cream.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Oil with ghee/butter
- Cashew with peanuts/other nuts

#### **Tips:**

1. Mix with flashed vegetables/meats for an instant curry.
2. *Add as a layer over vegetables/meat and flash together.*

# Kumbh Dopyaza

## Mushroom onion curry

<https://youtu.be/7ci43szRKh0>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 3C (200g) chopped button mushrooms

Layer 3: 1tsp each (ginger - garlic paste, chilli paste, garam masala, salt),

1/2tsp each (cumin, coriander powders), 1/4C caramelised onion

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Mix all with 1/4C cream.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with ghee/oil
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Slice mushrooms into two/crush or separate stalk and head.

# Mag ni Dal

## Gujarati dry lentil curry

Soak 1C mung dal in water for 30 minutes. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C finely chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp cumin powder, 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida, garam masala), 2 slit green chillies

Layer 4: Soaked mung dal

Layer 5: 1C chopped tomato

Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1/2tsp each (sugar, salt).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung with tuvar/masoor dal
- Raw dal with roasted dal
- Sugar with jaggery
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Vary the texture by varying cooking time and amount of liquid added.

Dry lentil curries are rare in North Indian cuisine. They are more common in South Indian cuisine, where they go by the name sundal and are eaten as a snack.

This recipe however is designed to be served with flatbreads, accompanied usually by Kadhi. The defining feature of this recipe is that the lentils ought to hold their shape and retain bit of a bite. Like most Gujarati curries, this is a sweet, sour and mildly hot curry.

# Makhni

## Mughlai buttery tomato mother sauce

<https://youtu.be/PHs86LWL7Fg>

Scoop out seeds from one tomato and fill with 2tsp each (ginger- garlic paste, Kashmiri chilli powder), 1tsp each (salt, sugar, garam masala).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 500g whole tomatoes , slit halfway through.

Layer 3: The spice filled tomato (see above)

Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (9 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend all with 1/4C cream.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Cream with milk/sour cream/thick yogurt

### **Tips:**

1. Do not use very big tomatoes.
2. If using large tomatoes, split into two or four.
3. Can remove skin/seeds of tomatoes before blending
4. Mix with flash cooked vegetables/meats for an instant curry
5. Cook longer for more caramelisation. Watch out for a burnt smell

Makhni (Buttery) is a buttery curry, cooked up from tomatoes. Tomato roasted with butter and spices is cooked into a mild curry in which a variety of edibles are simmered.

Onions, tomatoes, dairy and lentils are the building blocks of North Indian curries, in contrast to Tamarind, coconut, yogurt and lentils, which make up the South Indian curries.

The North Indian mother sauces are easy to make.

1. Makhni is built around tomatoes and butter.
2. Dopiazza built from onions.
3. Masala is built with both onions and tomatoes.
4. Dal made from lentils.
5. Korma is made from dairy
6. Kadhi is made from yogurt

Most North Indian restaurant gravies are a mix and match of these mother sauces. Mix them with flashed vegetables or layer and flash them to create a huge range of North Indian curries.

The traditional recipe calls for cooking chopped tomatoes or tomato puree with constant stirring. This recipe uses whole tomatoes and the No-Water cooking technique to produce a flavourful base. Garam masala powder is added after cooking to ensure it does not burn. You can use whole spices of your choice to replace garam masala. The curry base thickens on cooling.

Paneer Makhni, Dal Makhni (using whole, unskinned urad dal), Chicken makhni are commonly cooked. All meats/vegetables can be easily turned into makhnis by just flashing them with this curry base.

# Malai Kofta

Cottage cheese dumplings with cream

<https://youtu.be/sDZrzZD-P2o>

Blend 250g chopped paneer, 1/4tsp each (garam masala, salt) to a paste. Shape into smooth marble sized balls. In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tbsp butter

Layer 2: 2C chopped onion

Layer 3: 2tsp chilli paste, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2 tsp salt, 1/4tsp garam masala

Layer 4: 1/4C cashew powder, paneer balls.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend all but paneer with 1/2C milk.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Paneer with non melting cheese/tofu
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Milk with cream/sour cream/coconut milk
- Cashew with other seeds/nuts

### **Tips:**

1. Let balls soak in gravy for an hour. Else simmer briefly.
2. Knead the paneer well to a smooth paste to get a smooth paste.
3. The longer the koftas soak in gravy, the juicier they turn out.



Malai Kofta (Creamy dumplings) is one of the signature dishes of Mogul cuisine. Mild, creamy and rich, it has staked out its place in most restaurant menus.

The theme is simple - cook cheese dumplings in a rich, mildly spiced base. But there are numerous contradictory rules surrounding this theme.

1. The dumplings should remain white.
2. The gravy should be pure white.
3. The dumplings should not be simmered in gravy.
4. The onions should not get caramelised.
5. Boiled and ground cashews alone should be used.
6. Garam masala should be avoided and replaced with fried whole spices, which should then be filtered out.
7. The cooked gravy should be filtered to make it silky smooth.

Chefs take elaborate precautions to ensure these rules are not broken, but none of them define this theme. As long as the koftas are cooked in a mildly spiced, rich, and creamy base, any dish will fit into this theme.

Most traditional recipes are elaborate and laborious. We use flash cooking, layering and controlled caramelisation techniques to cook the curry at one shot.

The blending step at the end can be done using a hand blender or it can be

avoided by using grated cashew. If you desire a very smooth gravy, you can use a regular mixie for blending the gravy.

# Masala

## Onion- Tomato mother sauce

<https://youtu.be/Qtwopj6GBAU>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 2C chopped onions arranged in a ring

Layer 3: 250g whole tomatoes arranged in the centre of the ring

Layer 4: 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (sugar, garam masala, salt), 2tsp Kashmiri chilli powder

Cook on high heat for 8 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend to a paste.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with oil/ghee
- Onion with shallots
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Blend with oil/butter to emulsify the sauce and make it creamy.
2. Cook longer till you smell burning, for a more caramelised version.



In most OPOS recipes, we have been focussing on fresh, healthy, light food, with minimal oil and spices. This makes OPOS food very light and easily digestible.

If you want to indulge in 'restaurant style' dishes at home, we can do so, by increasing oil, salt and spices.

This recipe details the basic onion-tomato masala which forms the base for innumerable restaurant style curries. In commercial kitchens, this masala is made in bulk once a week/month and frozen. A variety of cooked meats/vegetables are briefly stir-fried and simmered in this masala.

This recipe relies on the absence of water to caramelise onions, grill tomatoes and produce a rich, caramelised gravy. Stirring is completely eliminated as the steam saturated atmosphere prevents burning. This masala can be refrigerated for a month or frozen for ever.

The building blocks:

Onions:

Caramelised onion paste lends a warm sweetness and a rich mouth feel. Shallots give an even more intense flavour.

Tomatoes:

Grilled whole tomatoes give the tang and colour to the curry. They are used whole so that excess moisture is not released while grilling, which will prevent the onions from getting caramelised. Addition of a bit of tamarind/vinegar/other souring agents makes the curry tangier and prolongs its shelf life.

Spices:

Ginger, garlic and garam masala fill up the curry with flavour. Other whole spices/spice mixes can also be added in, based on your personal preference.

Chillies:

Dry red chillies (especially Kashmiri chillies) are used for both the bite and colour. The initial cooking mellows their bite.

Fat:

This lends the richness to the curry. A variety of your favourite oils can be used, though butter/ghee are traditionally preferred.

Garnish:

Chopped herbs/fresh cream are common garnishes.

Vary these building blocks and mix in your favourite vegetables/meats to churn out a range of masalas.

# Methi Matar Malai

## Creamy peas-fenugreek leaves curry

<https://youtu.be/JGZJrC616Kc>

In a 2L cooker, layer as shown:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1C chopped fenugreek leaves, 2C fresh green peas

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1 slit chilli, 1tsp salt, 1/4tsp garam masala

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C thick cream.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Butter with your favourite fat
- Peas with other fresh lentils/sprouts
- Fresh fenugreek leaves with 1tsp Kasuri methi
- Fenugreek leaves with other edible greens
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Cream with sour cream/thick yogurt

### **Tips:**

1. Use tender leaves.
2. If using dried fenugreek leaves, soak them in water.

Rich cuisines offer numerous simple, flexible themes, that rely on the fresh seasonal bounty. The Methi Matar Malai is a winter delicacy as winter brings in the richest cream, freshest green peas and greenest methi.

As with all OPOS recipes, we don't aim to pump in taste by long laborious cooking and by the use of spices and fat. Instead we just cook this rich bounty minimally and let nature speak for itself. That gives you a divine dish in less than 5 minutes, with virtually no preparation!

# Methi Matar Masala

## Fenugreek – peas stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped deseeded tomato

Layer 3: 1C chopped fresh fenugreek leaves

Layer 4: 1C fresh green peas

Layer 5: 2tbsp caramelised onion, 1tbsp kasuri methi, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli, coriander, garam masala, cumin powders)

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Peas with sprouts/fresh lentils
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Kasuri methi with your favourite herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in 1/4C milk/cream for more gravy.

Methi matar masala is a popular curry usually made from a base of onions and tomatoes. You can skip onion, garlic to convert this into a Jain version. The masala is a flexible theme and can be easily translated into any cuisine by changing the flavouring.

The building blocks of this theme are whole tomatoes, additives and flavouring.

#### Whole tomatoes:

The addition of whole tomatoes while flash cooking is an easy way to convert a dry curry into a gravy. Ensure the tomatoes you use are small, as they need to cook completely in this short time. If you are using big tomatoes, scoop them out, the core would be uncooked. Use of chopped tomatoes/tomato puree is not recommended as it waters down the gravy and prevents

caramelised flavours from developing. Whole tomatoes hold in their juices and promote caramelisation.

#### Additives:

Anything that can be flash-cooked can fit into this theme. A variety of vegetables/sprouts/fresh legumes/chicken/fish/seafood/processed meats can all be converted into Masalas.

#### Flavouring:

The spices used here determine the parentage of the recipe. If you replace Indian spices with spices from other cuisines, the recipe can fit into any cuisine. For example, skip ginger, garam masala, coriander, cumin powder, replace chilli with pepper, kasuri methi with rosemary/oregano and this would fit into European cuisine. It can be served as a pasta sauce or even can accompany bread. Play around with different spices to change cuisines.

#### Fat:

Butter has been used for a creamy mouth-feel but can be skipped/replaced with your favourite oil.

# Misal

## Marathi starchy sprouts stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion

Layer 3: 1C each (mung sprouts, chopped potato)

Layer 4: 1tsp each (salt, jaggery, chilli, coriander powders), 1/2tsp each (sesame, pepper, garam masala, turmeric powders), 1tsp each (tamarind paste, ginger-garlic paste).

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mix in 2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

## Replace/Supplement

- Mung with your favourite lentil sprouts
- Potato with starchy vegetables
- Garam masala with Goda masala/your favourite spice mix

## Tips:

1. Can simmer briefly after adding water.
2. Can mix in yogurt for Dahi misal.
3. Can mix in poha/serve with pav.

Misal is a grain free nutritionally balanced meal masquerading as a snack. Unlike its counterpart Usal, which has to be paired with bread, a Misal is a full, balanced meal by itself. It is in fact a multi course meal - just that all courses are mixed together!

The Tarri (a thin soup) is the first course, the spiced lentil - potato combination is the main course. The chopped onion- tomato - cilantro mixture dressed with lemon juice is the salad - another course. The starter is the sev/farsan and the dessert is the bowl of yogurt. No wonder Marathis eat it for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

It is one of the most popular street foods in Maharashtra and varies from mild to ultra spicy depending on the spice mix that goes in.

Misal (Marathi for mixture) is usually served by layering various ingredients cooked separately. Spiced sprouts (usually moth beans), boiled potatoes and fried snacks (bhujia/sev, chivda) are layered and topped with chopped onion, tomato, chopped herbs and fried snacks. Some versions mix in poha (pressed rice) and yogurt.

Marathis start lining up in the morning in front of the popular neighbourhood misal tupris (shacks), where the Misal wallah serves them a bowl of Misal accompanied by the thin spicy Tarri and Pav (bread). Unlimited refills of Tarri are usually served. Patrons scoop a bit of the Misal with the Pav, dip it in Tarri and savour the bliss, usually with watery eyes, because of the spicy Tarri.

The two most popular versions are the mild Puneri Misal (from Pune) and the ultra hot Kolhapuri Misal. Furious debates erupt over which is the tastiest and the most authentic.

The traditional preparation calls for the sprouts to be cooked separately, potatoes to be cooked separately and the Tarri to be cooked separately. This recipe cooks them all together and filters out the extra liquid to be served as the Tarri.

The key building blocks of the misal are the sprouts, the Tarri, the starch and the spice mix. We can extend this theme by varying these building blocks.

The Base (Protein):

Moth bean sprouts are usually used in the Misal. But you can use any legume sprouts or even unsprouted legumes. Vatana (Dried white peas) take place of sprouts in many variants. As long as it is protein rich, the Misal theme supports it.

The Filler (Starch):

Potato is the most popular filler. You can replace potatoes with the starch of your choice (Tapioca, colocasia, green banana).

The Misal is also served with bread (Usually Pav), which can be replaced by any bread of your choice.

The Pune versions are paired with poha (Pressed rice). This can be replaced with a variety of flaked/rolled/pressed cereals.

You can pair the misal with any starch - pasta, sago, noodles, grits, puffed rice etc., - they all work!

The spice mix:

Though each region in Maharashtra swears that their regional spice mix defines the Misal, you can safely substitute your favourite spice mixes without compromising the spirit of the theme. The tadka, though not mandatory in Misal, can add another layer of flavour.

Experiment with your favourite combinations.

# Mix Veg Jalfrezi

## Spicy vegetable stir-fry

<https://youtu.be/rMB-Hv1NL8o>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (onion, deseeded tomato)

Layer 3: 1C each chopped (carrot, beans)

Layer 4: 1tsp each (salt, ginger - garlic paste, chilli, coriander powders),  
1/2tsp each (cumin, garam masala powders), 1/4C chopped mint.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C cream.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/beans with your favourite non watery vegetables
- Vegetables with leftover cooked meats
- Tomato with tomato puree
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Mint with your favourite fresh herbs
- Oil with ghee/butter
- Onion with shallots.
- Cream with milk/strained yogurt/coconut milk.

### **Tips:**

1. Can stir-fry briefly after opening.



OPOS

JALFREZI

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Corn  
Bell  
Pepper

# Navratan Korma

## Mogul gem bowl

<https://youtu.be/Xi8jokMILiw>

Blend 10 cashews, 1tsp salt, 2 green chillies, 5 mint leaves, 1/2tsp garam masala, 2 tbsp caramelised onion, 1tsp ghee to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1/4C each chopped (beans, carrots, paneer, mushroom, potato, capsicum, pineapple)

Layer 3: 1/4C each (fresh green peas, raisins)

Layer 4: Cashew paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C milk, 1/4C pomegranate pearls.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Milk with cream/thick yogurt/coconut milk
- Beans/carrots with your favourite vegetables
- Raisins with other dry fruits

### **Tips:**

1. Use different cuts of vegetables for contrast.
2. Use bright coloured vegetables.



# Nawabi Curry Base

## Royal mother sauce

Blend 10 nos each chopped (almonds, cashew), 1/4C raisins, 20 mint leaves, 4 green chillies, 2tsp poppy seeds, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste and 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin, garam masala powders) to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 2C chopped onions arranged in a ring

Layer 3: 1C chopped, deseeded tomato arranged in the centre of the ring.

Layer 4: Spice paste (see above)

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash. Mix in 6 strands saffron, 1/4C cream.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ghee with butter
- Cashew/almonds with other nuts
- Poppy seed with sesame/pumpkin/melon seeds
- Mint with your favourite herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix with flashed vegetables for an instant curry.
2. Place a bit of live charcoal over a slice of onion. Keep on top of the curry, pour a drop of ghee and keep covered. This infuses a smoked flavor, desired in this curry base.

The Nawabi cuisine has gifted India some of the richest, mildest and most aromatic curries. It is a result of over ten centuries of fusion.

1000 years back, the rise of Islam united and energized Middle East and Central Asia. Soon, the Muslim empire expands West till the European border and East till Bengal. Early Turkic/Afghan raiders poured into North

West India, taking back enormous loot. Later warlords came to stay.

Soon, the whole of North India come under the control of the Afghan/Turkic Sultans. They rule for around 3 centuries. By this time, the Mongols ransack Baghdad, get converted to Islam and come to be called the Moghuls (Persian for Mongol).

Babur leads the Mongol Muslim armies into India. The early Sultans are swept away. The Mogul empire appoints governors (Nawabs) to manage their newly conquered provinces. Later, when the Mogul Empire started weakening, some Nawabs declare themselves as rulers. New kingdoms emerge. The British actively supported many, ruling by proxy. In most cases, they annexed these kingdoms under some pretext or other.

Awadh (Oudh) was one such British-controlled and later, British-annexed kingdom. Today's Lucknow and surrounding regions was a province of the ancient Hindu Kosala kingdom. After Lord Rama's coronation, it is believed they were gifted by Him to Lakshmana and was called Lakshmanpur. It fell to the Muslim armies in the 1100's and came to be called Awad/Oudh (probably from Ayodhya, the Kosala capital). It was administered by a series of Nawabs (governors). It later became a separate kingdom with the support of the British and was ruled by a succession of Kings (Haiders and Shahs).

Many of these Nawabs, freed from having to run their kingdoms, instead became connoisseurs of arts and literature. It is under these Nawabs that the Nawabi style of cooking emerged to become high art. The princely Awadhi cuisine is characterized by the use of expensive spices (cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and saffron), nuts, dried fruits, milk, cream and the choicest cuts of meat. These are used to cook up rich, mild, slow cooked curries. The presentation is equally flamboyant, with the use of wafer thin, edible varq (silver and gold leaf). Use of deep fried onion and fried onion paste, prolonged slow and gentle cooking in sealed clay pots, extensive use of grilling, infusing a smoky flavour are all hallmarks of Awadhi cuisine.

Flavouring by asafoetida, turmeric and fried black mustard, common in Indian cuisine is completely avoided. Butter/ghee and matured mustard oil are preferred for cooking. Layering and cooking rice with meat/vegetables (Biriyani) and making rich layered parathas are techniques perfected by

Bawarchis (Royal cooks) who served these at the Dastarkhwan (Awadhi feast).

The building blocks of this Nawabi curry are the onion- tomato base, nuts and dry fruits. In traditional cooking, the onions are patiently sautéed/fried, boiled tomatoes are then added and both are cooked till they reduce. The nut paste and spices are then mixed in, meats/vegetables added and the curry is simmered together.

We use the layer and flash and controlled caramelisation techniques to convert the traditional recipe to OPOS. The layered onions get caramelised, the deseeded tomatoes get roasted and the quantities are balanced so that the steam buildup happens before the caramelisation turns to burning.

The Nawabs excelled in the use of sealed covered cooking (Dum) to extract maximum flavour from the ingredients used. This dum technique becomes supercharged inside a pressure cooker with its much better seal. Thus the curry that emerges is intensely flavourful and mild.

The use of fruits, nut paste and milk/cream in cooking curries is a Mogul technique. The addition of raisins here imparts a sweetish tinge to the curry and the nut paste gives it a body. Mild spices and the addition of cream and saffron at the very end adds to the richness.

You can use this curry base as is or dilute it and use it as a base to cook vegetables or meat. It can be paired with both Mogul rice/flatbreads. Being a rich curry, expensive vegetables/cuts of meats are traditionally used.

You can take it a step above by infusing it with a smoky flavour, which the Nawabi cuisine made popular:

Place a betel leaf/onion slice on the curry. Place a small live charcoal on it. Pour 1/2tsp ghee over charcoal. Keep the curry covered for 10 minutes.

# Padwal Bhaji

## Marathi Snake gourd curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp peanut oil,

Layer 2: 2C chopped snake gourd (250g)

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, goda masala, sugar), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1tbsp roasted peanut powder, 1/4C grated coconut.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Snake gourd with your favourite vegetables
- Peanut oil with your favourite oil
- Goda masala with your favourite spice mix
- Asafoetida with ginger-garlic paste
- Peanut powder with roasted gram flour/other nut powders
- Sugar with jaggery
- Coconut with cooked dal

#### **Tips:**

1. Can peel the skin if the vegetable is old.

The snake gourd is a much loved vegetable in the South and South West India. In South it is relished in lentil based dishes (Kootu/pappu). In the South West, dry curries are more common. This is considered a tough vegetable to cook, but flashing makes it effortless.

Note the key features we employ in this theme:

1. The snake gourd is sliced thin (Thick slices do not cook well).
2. Peeling skin is optional. If the vegetable is not tender, peeling is advised.
3. The gourd is sliced into rings - as chopping them into cubes is more time

- consuming. This means we can use a slicer and avoid the use of knife
4. The inner pith and seeds are retained as much as possible - only the mature, tough seeds are removed.
  5. The Marathi Goda masala is the key flavouring agent. It can be replaced by your own spice mix.
  6. The addition of sugar is a typical Marathi technique and in this case, it offsets the slight bitter taste of the vegetable.
  7. Snake gourd releases water on cooking. The addition of peanut powder and grated coconut/cooked dal is to absorb this water.

# Panchmela Dal

## Rajasthani five lentil stew

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C each split (mung, channa, tuvar, urad and masoor dals), 2C water, 1tbsp each (ghee, kasuri methi), 1/2tsp each (cumin, coriander, mango, garam masala powders), 1/4tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric). Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1tsp salt, 1/2C water. Mash coarsely.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Raw lentils with roasted lentils
- Dry lentils with sprouts
- Mango powder with tamarind/kokkum

#### **Tips:**

1. Presoak dals for faster cooking.
2. Add 1/2tsp baking powder for mushier lentils.

Unlike other parts of the country where a single lentil dominates the curry, it is in Rajasthan we see five lentils appearing together. Panchmela Dal/Panchkuti dal/Panchratna dal (Five lentil curry) arises from the arid regions of Rajasthan.

The ancient Aravalli hills split the state from North to South. The West of the hills, comprising nearly half of the state, is the land of Death – The barren, arid and inhospitable Thar Desert. The colourful and historically significant Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner all lie in this hostile land dotted with stunted trees and sparse vegetation. In contrast, the East has large lakes, forests and lush land.

The West was once as lush, when the river Saraswati was in full flow. It is here that the Rig Veda was composed and Hinduism took shape. When the river disappeared 5000 years ago, the epicentre of Hinduism shifted east to Varanasi, on the banks of Ganges. Western Rajasthan became a desert. It is

this arid West that has given birth to the famous Rajasthani desert cuisine.

All desert/arid cuisines face the same problems - lack of fuel, water, fresh vegetables and fresh herbs. Lack of fresh vegetables forced Rajasthan to build its curries around dried lentils, dried vegetables and scrawny desert beans (sangriya, ker).

In regions lacking even these, gram flour dumplings (Gatta, Pitode), papad and even the roti came to be used as vegetable substitutes in curries.

Over and above this, the religious restrictions of Jains forbade the use of onion, garlic, root vegetables or most leafy greens. So the pillars of most cuisines – onion, garlic, tomato, fresh vegetables and fresh herbs were knocked off. But the Rajasthani cuisine not only stood, it thrived.

Onion – garlic was replaced by asafoetida, tomatoes by mango powder, fresh vegetables by dried vegetables and fresh herbs by dry herbs.

Recipes calling for tomatoes/onions/fresh herbs/green chillies do not remain true to the spirit of this theme, as they just were not available.

This is a power packed dish, full of protein and usually cooked in winters. The traditional preparation is laborious and so Panchmel dal was reserved for special occasions or festive feasts. This recipe converts it to a one step process, enabling you to cook the curry in the same time you'd take to cook plain dal.

Urad dal turns slimy on cooking, especially the skinned variety. In this recipe we use split and unskinned urad to minimise sliminess. Urad is not used in many Indian curries, because of its sliminess, except in the Punjabi Maa Ki Dal. You can replace it with other lentils of your choice.

#### Serving:

Panchmela dal is usually served with Batis, another specialty of this desert cuisine. This bread is built to last and fuelled the journeys of Marwari traders and the campaigns of Rajput warriors. Batis are crumbled and mixed in with the dal with dollops of ghee, making it an one pot meal. It can also be served with thick bhakhri (Millet flatbread)/missi roti/other flatbreads/Pulaos or just plain rice.

A bowl of panchmela dal, a couple of batis dripping with ghee, a roasted papad, a glass of butter-milk, a pickle and some churma - that's it, you have a

mini Rajasthani thali ready!

The key building blocks are the lentil mix, dry flavourings and souring agent.  
Vary these to cook up your own versions.

# Palak Paneer

## Cheese and spinach curry

<https://youtu.be/Awcl5Fv8Q6I>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (onions, deseeded tomato)

Layer 3: 4C chopped spinach

Layer 4: 1tsp ginger- garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder, garam masala, cumin powder), 2tsp kasuri methi

Layer 5: 1C paneer cubes.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mash/blend all except paneer.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Spinach with your favourite edible greens
- Tomato with mango powder
- Paneer with marinated paneer

### **Tips:**

1. Can garnish with cream.
2. Blending dulls colours. Mashing does not.
3. Spinach need not even be chopped. Just wash well, chop off roots and add.
4. You can safely pack your cooker to the brim with spinach as it shrinks dramatically on cooking!



Spinach is the cheapest vegetable available in India. It grows year round and is a staple in many households. Spinach is very flexible and is cooked with almost everything - vegetables, lentils, paneer, even meat.

Cooked with coconut and lentils, it becomes the Palakkad molagoottal. Cooked with lentils, it becomes the Tamil paruppu kootu or the North Indian dal paalak. Cooked with minimal flavourings, it becomes the Tamil Keera masiyal, the closest equivalent of the North Indian saag. Cooked with the mildly bitter mustard greens, it becomes the Punjabi delicacy Sarson Ka saag. Cooked with paneer, it becomes the well known paalak paneer or Saag paneer

Almost all edible greens can be, and are turned into saag. South India uses turmeric and asafoetida as key flavourings whereas North India uses garam masala. Tamarind is used as a souring agent in South India to make the Tamil Keera puli, where as North India relies on tomato or mango powder for sourness. By minor changes of the flavourings and additives, you can change the parentage of this theme.

Though this recipe is oil free, a dash of butter/ghee can be mixed in for richness. As in all OPOS recipes, a tadka (fried mustard in South and fried cumin in the North) is optional.

# Paneer Aloo Bhurji

## Potato paneer scramble

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion

Layer 3: 2C potatoes chopped small

Layer 4: 1/2C paneer chopped big

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli, pepper powders), 1/4tsp garam masala

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash coarsely.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Paneer with tofu/shredded soya chunks/minced meat
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Can be eaten by itself as a balanced meat/be served with roti/rice.
2. Can be used as sandwich filling/burrito filling.
3. Can be shaped into patties and shallow fried into tikkis/cutlets.
4. Avoid adding watery vegetables like tomato, capsicum as they will release water on cooking.
5. If your potatoes are over cooked, cut them into bigger chunks. If they are undercooked, cut them into smaller chunks.
6. Do not slice onions. If onions are too thinly sliced, they will burn.



Technically, Bhurji denotes a scramble. But it has come to mean a stir-fry, where a variety of finely chopped edibles are stir-fried with spices.

The classic Bhurji is anda bhurji, which is nothing but spiced up scrambled eggs. This remains the most popular bhurji.

The vegetarian equivalent is the paneer bhurji where crumbled paneer is mixed with spices and stir fried. The same logic is extended with mincemeat to cook chicken bhurji.

It is likely that boiled vegetables were mixed into this scramble, to make it more filling. Potato remains the most common additive in a bhurji, converting a protein rich bhurji into a grain free, balanced meal.

Here, we use the potato- paneer- onion combination to make a full meal bhurji. With potatoes supplying the starch, paneer giving the protein, fat from oil and micro-nutrients from vegetables, this becomes a nutritionally balanced meal. Mix it with chopped onions, tomatoes and fresh herbs after cooking and it becomes even healthier.

Traditionally, the process involves stir-frying onions, adding spices, crumbled paneer and stir-frying them together. Potatoes are boiled separately and mixed in once paneer is done. All are then stir-fried together.

This can be converted to OPOS by using the layer and flash technique. Chopped onions are layered with oil in the bottom of a pressure cooker. Chopped potatoes are layered over it and crumbled paneer mixed with spices

forms the top layer.

When heated, the onions release water, which fills the cooker with steam. With the loss of water and the heating, the onions start getting caramelised. By balancing the potato and onion quantity, we can ensure the potatoes get cooked before the onions start burning.

Thus, we can achieve the same stir-fried consistency, in just one step, without being tied to a stove.

You can eat the bhurji as a snack, as a full meal or use it as a sandwich filling. Stuff them into rolls or serve them as a dry curry with rotis or rice.

# Paneer Butter Masala

Punjabi fresh cheese curry

<https://youtu.be/xnfEgkn9afc>

Mix 1C chopped paneer, 1/2tsp each (sugar, garam masala, salt), 1tsp Kashmiri chilli powder, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 1C chopped onions arranged in a ring. 1C chopped deseeded tomatoes arranged in the centre of the ring

Layer 3: Small inner vessel with paneer mixture.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mash/blend all except paneer.

Mix all.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with oil/ghee
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Onion with shallots

### **Tips:**

1. Soak paneer in warm water/milk, if you want it softer.
2. Replace paneer with vegetables/meats for more variations.



# Paneer Korma

Mughlai fresh cheese, creamy curry

Mix 1C crumbled paneer, 1tsp each (chilli powder, salt, ginger-garlic paste), 1/2 tsp each (garam masala, pepper, cumin, coriander powders) and 1tbsp each (chopped mint, cashew powder).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 2C chopped, deseeded tomatoes

Layer 3: Paneer mixture

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Mash all and mix in 1/2C cream.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Paneer with any non-melting cheese
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Cream with any curry base/yogurt/milk/coconut milk
- Ghee with butter/your favourite fat.

### **Tips:**

1. Cook longer (up to 8 minutes) for more caramelisation.

# Paneer Makhani

Buttery cheese curry

<https://youtu.be/uXOudCzjUmY>

In a small vessel, mix 1C paneer cubes with 1tsp each (ginger- garlic paste, Kashmiri chilli powder, salt, sugar) and 1/2tsp garam masala.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 2C chopped, deseeded tomato

Layer 3: Vessel with paneer mixture

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Mash tomatoes. Mix in 1/4C cream.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Cream with sour cream/thick yogurt

## **Tips:**

1. Soak paneer in warm water to soften.
2. Can use whole tomatoes instead of chopped ones.



# Pao Bhaji

## Indo - Portuguese Bread and Curry

<https://youtu.be/okeebTyiWWU>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tbsp butter

Layer 2: Arrange 1C chopped onion in a ring. Place 1/2C chopped deseeded tomato in the centre of the ring.

Layer 3: 1C chopped potato

Layer 4: 1/2C chopped capsicum, 1/2C fresh peas

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (salt, garam masala, cumin, chilli powders)

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mash all.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with pav bhaji masala or your favourite spice mix
- Capsicum with your favourite vegetables
- Peas with sprouts/other fresh lentils
- Potato with banana/sweet potato/other starchy vegetables

### **Tips:**

1. Skip mashing and serve as Kada Pav Bhaji.
2. Mix in cooked and cooled rice to make Tava Pulao.
3. Add chopped beetroot for a bright coloured bhaji.



### OPOS PAV BHAJI

The Pav Bhaji is a variant of the North Indian staple roti and curry, where the Indian unleavened flatbread is replaced by the Portuguese bread, the Pao.

India was never comfortable with yeast, which is why cheese, wine or leavened bread is still not a part of our cuisine. 500 years ago, the Portuguese taught us to work with yeast and gave us the Pao. It entered our cuisine as the Pav. We treated it as a roti, pairing it with our curry, the Bhaji.

The Bhaji gradually morphed, from a simple curry to a buttery vegetable mash especially designed for the Pav. It took its final shape in Mumbai (a short hop from the epicentre of the Portuguese rule), where Pav Bhaji is still one of the most widely consumed street foods.

All Indian unleavened breads need to be eaten fresh. However, making fresh breads for a crowd is a tough job. So, it is likely that the street vendors replaced the Indian flatbread by the Pav. Their main clients were the mill workers in Mumbai, who had a very short break for lunch. If the bread is ready and needs no cooking, it could feed a lot of people in a very short time, with a readymade curry, the Bhaji.

Huge quantities of Bhaji could be prepared ahead of time and served with the Pav instantly. It is this feature which made Pav bhaji such a hit. The Pav has a shelf life of over a week, unlike an Indian flatbread which is best consumed

within minutes.

The Pav Bhaji was eagerly adopted first by the roti-eating belt, with each region introducing its own masalas to flavour the curry. Gujarat invented the Kathiyawadi Pav Bhaji, using its own spice mix and paired it with buttermilk. Punjab cooked up the Punjabi Pav Bhaji with loads of butter and paired it with lassi. There are infinite versions of the Bhaji, cooked to suit local tastes. This is a very flexible theme and you can safely add your favourite vegetable/spice mix to the Bhaji. It supports them all.

However, the core building blocks remain unchanged. All bhajis are built around potatoes, tomatoes and chillies (all introduced by the Portuguese). They are all garnished with chopped cilantro, chopped onions and a lemon wedge. These remain common across the country. Some versions have added protein (Peas/paneer/legumes/cheese/minced meat), making the bhaji a full meal, all by itself, even without the Pav.

Various versions of the Bhaji are popular:

- Cheese Pav Bhaji has grated cheddar cheese;
- Paneer Pav Bhaji is fortified with cottage cheese;
- Mushroom Pav Bhaji has added mushrooms;
- Jain Pav Bhaji replaces potatoes with plantains and omits onions, garlic and ginger;
- Kada Pav Bhaji where the vegetables are not mashed;
- Dry Fruit Pav Bhaji with added dry fruits;
- Kheema Pav Bhaji with minced meat;
- Anda Pav Bhaji cooked with egg are all common variants.

Indian cinemas depicting heroes as Pav Bhaji vendors added to the lure of the dish. In the traditional version, the flavouring, onions and tomatoes are shallow fried on a huge flat metal tava in loads of butter. A mix of boiled vegetables is then added. Spice powders go in and these are mashed and cooked together.

This recipe eliminates these steps and makes possible a flavourful, fool-proof bhaji in minutes. This version tastes good even without any added fat, though butter makes it sinfully delicious!

# Pasanda

## Mogul mother sauce

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 2C (250g) chopped onion, 2tsp ginger-garlic paste

Layer 3: 3 slit chillies, 2tsp poppy seeds, 1/4C cashews, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp garam masala.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Blend with 1/4C cream, 1tbsp raisins.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Butter with your favourite fat
- Poppy seeds with other seeds
- Cream with yogurt/milk
- Cashew with your favourite nuts
- Raisins with your favourite dry fruits

### **Tips:**

1. Place a live charcoal over an onion slice in the curry. Add a drop of ghee and seal the pot to infuse a smoked flavour.

# Pindi Channa

## Rawalpindi's dry chickpea curry

Mix 1C overnight soaked and drained chickpeas, 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp each (Kashmiri chilli, coriander powders), 1/2 tsp each (salt, garam masala, amchoor, pepper) and 2tbsp caramelised onion.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 1C deseeded chopped tomato

Layer 3: Spiced chickpeas

Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (9 minutes). Mix in 1tsp each (chopped cilantro, lemon juice).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Chickpeas with desi channa/other whole legumes
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Amchoor with tamarind paste/your favourite souring agent
- Chopped tomato with scooped out tomato (whole tomato sliced at the top and has its seeds removed, leaving a shell)

#### **Tips:**

1. Soak channa in hot water for faster cooking.
2. Add 1/2tsp baking powder for mushier chickpeas.

# Raita

## Indian yogurt dip

Mix 1C yogurt, 1/2C grated carrot, 1/2tsp salt, 1/4tsp cumin powder.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot with your favourite salad vegetables (cucumber, radish, onion)
- Carrot with cooked vegetables (Potato, okra, eggplant)
- Carrot with boondi/bhujia/pickle/spiced lentil powder

### **Tips:**

1. Can add a bit of sugar for a hint of sweetness.
2. Can vary consistency from very thick to soupy.
3. Use hung yogurt for a thick dip.

Anything edible mixed with yogurt would taste good seems to be the logic behind raitas. Raitas can be prepared in a snap and can be used as curry, sauce, dip or salad.

The custom of using fried spices (usually mustard in South India and cumin in North India) for flavouring is unique to Indian Raitas. Skip this flavouring and the raita goes international. It can now be safely served to anyone across the world as Yogurt dip and is popular in almost all cuisines (barring SE Asians, who are mostly lactose intolerant).

Though Indian raitas use plain yogurt, our access to world cuisine and advances in food processing have now expanded our choice of raitas.

Thick, strained yogurt, (also called yogurt cheese), not normally used in Indian cuisine is used as the base for many delicious yogurt dips across the world such as the Turkish Haydari/Greek Tzatziki.

A variety of processed yogurt products like low fat yogurt, flavoured yogurt,

custard yogurt, soy yogurt and yogurt made from goat/camel/mare milk are now found in many supermarket shelves. All these can be used to cook up raitas.

The humble raita can go International with a few tweaks.

- Mix in grated garlic, mint, olive oil and lemon juice with cucumber raita and you have the Greek Tzatziki.
- Mix in grated garlic and black pepper with mint raita and you have mint- yogurt dip popular in Middle East and Central Asia.
- Mix in grated garlic, and lemon juice with mint raita and you have the Lebanese yogurt dip.
- Mix in grated garlic, olive oil and crumbled feta cheese with onion raita and you have Turkey's Feta yogurt dip.
- Mix in grated garlic, lemon juice, tahini and salt with yogurt and you have the famous African 'raita' Zaabaadi bil tahin.

It will be easier to create a variety of raitas if we understand its building blocks.

The base:

A variety of yogurt made from cow/buffalo/mare/yak/goat/camel milk is consumed across the world. All these can form the base for Raitas. All these milks are fermented with a variety of bacteria into fermented milk products. Most of these can be used to make Raitas. Russian Kefir, Finnish Viili, Turkish Kaymak, Central Asian Kumis, Swedish Filmjölk, South African Amasi, Irani Doogh, Georgian Matsoni etc, can all be turned into Raitas.

The flavouring:

An yogurt dip needs no additional flavouring. However, cuisines across the world use their favourite flavourings. South Indians mix in fried mustard, as they do with all their curries. North Indians mix in cumin powder. Greeks mix in chopped garlic. Kashmiris mix in fennel powder. Arabs mix in dried mint. Persians mix in dried rose petals. In the Mediterranean region, olive oil is mixed in. You can experiment by adding your favourite flavourings.

The additives:

Salad vegetables like onion, carrot, cucumber, onion etc., are chopped fine and mixed with yogurt to make basic raitas. Vegetables that can't be eaten

raw are boiled/grilled/fried and mixed with yogurt. Almost anything edible can be and usually is mixed with yogurt to make an endless variety of raitas. Many cuisines add interesting additives.

- Dessert cuisines like Rajasthan mix in boondi (fried gram flour droplets) due to lack of fresh vegetables.
- Tanjore Maratha cuisine mixes in lentil powder to make Dangar pachadi.
- Tamils mix in chopped tender banana stem, neem flower, stir-fried okra to make Thayir pachadis.
- Andhra mixes in boiled bottle gourd (Sorakaya perugu pachadi), grilled and mashed eggplant (Vankaya perugu pachadi) and round yellow cucumber (Dosakkaya perugu pachadi).
- Kerala mixes in blended pickles or mashed vegetables to make Arachu kalakki.
- Konkan mixes in coconut paste to make the Tambli.
- Kashmir mixes in nuts and honey.
- The North mixes in chopped spinach to make Palak raita, fruits and even pickle to make Achari raita.
- Persians mix in cucumber and dried rose petals to make Mast-o-khiar.
- Americans mix in mayo and mustard to make Ranch dressing.
- In the Balkans, cucumber, oil, nuts and herbs are mixed in to make Tarator.
- Greeks mix in walnuts and honey.
- Lebanese mix in roasted zucchini and garlic to make Mutawam.

In short, anything can go in, according to your taste preferences! Do explore and cook up your variations. You just can't go wrong with this theme!

# Rasedar Subji

## Vegetable stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion arranged in a ring, 1/2C chopped deseeded tomato arranged in the centre of the ring

Layer 3: 2C potato chopped small

Layer 4: 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt, chilli, coriander, cumin powders), 1/2tsp garam masala

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all with 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Onion with caramelised onion
- Water with milk/yogurt
- Chilli powder with chopped green chillies

#### **Tips:**

1. Coarsely mash potatoes to thicken the stew.



Rasedar Subji is a popular accompaniment to all flatbreads. It is nothing but vegetables cooked in a spiced gravy. The liquid may be onion puree (Dopyaza), onion-tomato puree (Masala), milk/yogurt/cream (Korma), spinach puree (saag), lentil puree (Dal) or any liquid.

All you need to do to convert a sukhi subji (dry curry) to a rasedar subji is to add liquid. You would also add additional spices to spice up the added liquid. The gravy is usually thickened with nut paste, gram flour or by coarsely mashing the vegetables.

This theme is echoed across the country, with various liquids. Pureed lentils, spinach, onion, tomato are used across the country. Use of milk in curries was brought in by the Moghuls and it is still practiced in the North. The South uses coconut milk/coconut paste instead. Tamarind water as a base liquid is used almost exclusively in the South. Similarly, kokkum water is used in the West and mustard paste is used in the East. In parts of India, even fruit puree is used. Interpret this theme with the liquid of your choice, and cook up a million variations!

# Rogani Kumbh

## Spiced Mushroom Curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 200g chopped button mushrooms

Layer 3: 1tsp each (Kashmiri chilli powder, coriander powder, mustard oil, salt), 1/2tsp (cumin, garam masala, fennel, ginger powders).

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Button mushrooms with your favourite mushrooms
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Chopped mushrooms with crushed mushrooms

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in cream/thick whisked yogurt for gravy.

# Saag

## Spinach mash

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil,

Layer 2: 1bunch cleaned spinach (no need to cut)

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt, chilli, cumin powders, garam masala)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mash/blend.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Spinach with your favourite edible greens
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Blending spinach dulls its colour. Mashing does not.
2. Can layer vegetables/paneer/cooked dal/fresh lentils/sprouts/fried lentil dumplings over spinach to make a range of curries.

# Sai Bhaji

## Sindhi spinach - lentil mash

[https://youtu.be/TbP\\_8\\_n635w](https://youtu.be/TbP_8_n635w)

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2 tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion arranged as a ring with 1/2C chopped deseeded tomato at the centre

Layer 3: 3C chopped spinach

Layer 4: 1/4C 30 minutes soaked and drained channa dal

Layer 5: 1C each chopped (potato, eggplant)

Layer 6: 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, chilli, coriander powders), 1tbsp kasuri methi.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mash coarsely.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Eggplant with your favourite vegetables
- Channa dal with Tuvar/Masoor/Mung dals/sprouts
- Paalak with your favourite spinach varieties.
- Turmeric, Coriander powders with your favourite spice mix
- Tomato with sour spinach/your favourite souring agents

### **Tips:**

1. Fenugreek leaves, sour spinach, dill leaves are commonly used.
2. Usually served with Sindhi biriyani (Bhuga Chawara).
3. Mash coarsely. Some texture is desired.
4. Do not wash spinach/vegetables in chlorinated water. The chlorine smell will be intensified in a pressure cooker.
5. Serve with rice/rotis and Sindhi papad.

Sai Bhaji (green curry) is a pillar of the Sindhi cuisine. It is easily the best loved dish and soul food for Sindhis. It is mandatory at all Sindhi weddings and festive feasts.

The Sindhis belong to one of the oldest living civilisations in human history. They hail from the Sindh region in Pakistan and trace their roots back to the early Indus Valley civilisation. The river Sindhu is the lifeline of this region. The melt of Himalayan glaciers rushed down, creating the Saptha Sindhu river system. Sindhu and Saraswati were the mightiest rivers of this seven river system. It is on the banks of these rivers that the Indian civilisation arose.

Sindhu is extolled in the Rig Veda as the mightiest river of them all, even bigger than Saraswati.

"Sindhu in might surpasses all the streams that flow.  
Varuna cut the channels for thy forward course,  
O Sindhu, when thou rannest on to win the race.  
Thou speedest over precipitous ridges of the earth,  
when thou art Lord and Leader of these moving floods."

#### Book 10, Hymn LXXV

Varuna, who 'cut channels for the Sindhu' is still the chief God of the Sindhis, who worship him as the avatar Jhulelal. The most important Sindhi festival is Cheti Chand, the birthday of Lord Jhulelal.

The words Sindhi, Hindu, Hindi and Hindusthan originate from the river Sindhu. Persian replaces 'S' with 'H' in many Sanskrit words. Thus, 'Sindu' became Hindu. The regions around Sindhu were Sindhu- Sthan, which became Hindhusthan.

Sindh finds mention in the great Indian epics. Ramayana records Sindh was a part of King Dasaratha's dominions and was later gifted by Lord Rama to Bharatha.

Gandhari, the mother of Kauravas, was a Sindhi princess. Her son in law, Jayadratha, was a king of Sindh and fought against the Pandavas.

In Mahabharata, Arjuna vows, "Jayadratha, who has been brought up on ksheer (Milk) and kshirni (Phirni: Pudding), will be cut to pieces by my

arrows before the sun sets".

Sindh changed hands often, coming under Hindu, Persian, Greek and Muslim rule over its long history. Their cuisine preserves traces of all these empires. It is due to this influence, especially that of the Sultans and Moghuls, that meat forms a large part of Sindhi cuisine. It is not uncommon to see meat served for breakfast, lunch and dinner, a practice unusual among other Hindus. Some Sindhis still remain totally vegetarian, avoiding even onion and garlic. The Punjabi influence resulted in parathas and dals becoming a part of Sindhi cuisine.

After partition, a large section of Hindu Sindhis moved to India, settling in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Many emigrated to the West and Australia.

Sindhiyat, the Sindhi culture, weathered the onslaught of numerous empires, surviving even when their homeland was lost. Though Sindhis may be Muslim, Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist, their food and culture still remain common.

Sai bhaji, served with Bhuga Chawal (Caramelised Onion Rice) remains the soul food and a traditional lunch for Sindhis.

The building blocks of a Sai Bhaji are the mix of spinach, lentils, vegetables and flavouring.

#### Spinach:

A mix of spinach varieties is usually used. Sour spinach and bitter spinach (usually Methi) is combined with other spinach varieties to form the backbone of this dish. The sour spinach is replaced with other souring agents (tomatoes, tamarind), when it is not available.

#### Lentils:

Channa dal is the lentil of choice. The lentils need to retain their shape in the curry. It is this reason channa dal is preferred over mung, tuvar or masoor dals, which disintegrate on prolonged cooking.

#### Vegetables:

A starchy vegetable is always a part of the curry along with other vegetables. Potato, eggplant and okra are most commonly used. The addition of non-

grain starch (from potatoes/bananas/tubers) and lentils makes this curry into a nutritionally balanced grain-free meal, even when served without rice.

Flavouring:

Ginger, onions, turmeric powder, coriander, cumin are all used, but the curry is not defined by the flavouring and can support any flavouring mix.

# Sambharo

## Gujarati spiced salad

Mix 1/2C each (cabbage, carrot, capsicum) cut into matchsticks, 1 chopped green chilli, 1tsp salt, 1/2tsp sugar, 1/8tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 1tsp lemon juice. Rest 15 minutes. Squeeze out excess liquid. Mix in 2tbsp toasted sesame seeds.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cabbage with your favourite salad vegetables
- Raw papaya, cucumber, beets, raw mango, radish are commonly used
- Sesame seeds with pumkin/melon seeds/roasted and crushed nuts
- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix
- Lemon juice with vinegar/salad dressing

### **Tips:**

1. Can briefly stir-fry/flash vegetables .
2. Can mix in fresh/dry fruits.

Crunchy fresh salads are rare in Indian cuisine. We prefer everything well cooked. The lone Indian salad, Kachumber, has company in the Gujarati theme Sambharo. Gujaratis use it as a side dish for their rotis and fafdas/ganthia (Chickpea crispies). They even use it as a paratha stuffing.

A variety of crunchy salad vegetables are lightly spiced with turmeric (which also gives them a golden colour) and served raw or lightly dressed with lemon juice and the tadka. However, our love for cooking everything is so strong that even the Sambharo, which is perfectly edible raw, is most often than not, cooked, though not as much as a regular dry curry. The crunchiness is preserved, else it becomes another subji.

This recipe replaces cooking by heat with cooking by acid. The 'cooking by

'acid' theme is most visible in Indian pickles like the Avakka, where even the hardy channa dal or fenugreek seeds are well cooked by being steeped in the sour mango juices. The Latin American Ceviche 'cooks' seafood with acid. Acid cooking retains the fresh taste of the ingredients but removes the raw smell that Indians so detest.

A variety of vegetables is briefly dehydrated by mixing them with salt. Sugar is also added, as the Gujaratis love it in almost all their dishes. The salt/sugar combination draws out the juices, making the vegetables extra crispy. Turmeric and asafoetida, in combination with lemon juice take care of the raw smell by gently spicing the mixture up. The green chillies add a bite. After a brief mix and resting, the excess moisture can be squeezed out and the Sambharo is ready to eat. Bottled tadka can be mixed in for added flavour. Many versions call for a brief stir-frying to completely eliminate the raw smell, but this step is not mandatory.

#### The base:

Cabbage is the most commonly used vegetable in the Sambharo. It is interesting to note that crunchy onion is rarely added, probably due to the Jain influence. Jains avoid root vegetables as pulling them out kills the plant and injures tiny lifeforms. The Kobi no sambharo (cabbage sambharo), Gajar no sambharo (carrot sambharo), Kachi-Kari no sambharo (green mango sambharo), Popaya No Sambharo (raw papaya sambharo) or any combination of these are popular in the Gujarati cuisine.

Tindora (Ivy gourd) is occasionally used. Cucumber, beets, zucchini etc., can be easily accommodated. Crunchy vegetables/fruits that can be eaten raw fit in well with this theme. Anything that cannot be eaten raw can be flashed and added.

#### Flavouring:

Turmeric powder, apart from acting as a disinfectant, colours the salad a golden yellow. You can supplement it with spices of your choice for colour and taste. The tadka adds another layer of flavour. Usually, mustard, asafoetida, curry leaves and dry red chilli fried in oil is the basic tadka used. To make the theme OPOS, we replace it with the bottled tadka. The tadka mixed with lemon juice in the Sambharo acts as a kind of vinaigrette and dresses up this salad.

### Additives:

Roasted sesame seeds, crushed peanuts, melon seeds etc., can be added to provide a textural contrast. Fresh fruits/chopped dry fruits add colour and texture.

Serve it with rotis as a curry, eat plain as a salad, use it as a sandwich filling, stuff it into parathas or pair it with snacks as a relish. Though usually served at room temperature, it can be served warm or cold and lasts for over a week when refrigerated.

# Shahi Bhindi

## Royal okra curry

Blend 10 cashews with 2tbsp yogurt, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli, cumin, coriander powders) to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp butter

Layer 2: 250g whole okra

Layer 3: Spiced cashew paste, 1tsp kasuri methi

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C cream.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Okra with your favourite vegetables
- Cashew with your favourite nuts/seeds
- Cream with milk/yogurt/coconut milk

### **Tips:**

1. Ensure spice paste does not touch the bottom of the cooker.
2. Let okra steep in gravy/simmer briefly.

Shahi Bhindi or Royal Okra is a Mogul favourite. Many Mogul curries are prefixed with royal titles like Shahi, Nawabi, Shahjahani, Akbari, Nizamiand Sultani. They all come to us from Persia, with the Sultans and the Moghuls. They all use rich ingredients, choicest cuts of meat, expensive spices and are mildly spiced. They all avoid harsh Indian flavourings (Mustard, asafoetida, turmeric) and tolerate only the addition of cumin, coriander and cinnamon - the spices commonly used in Persian cuisine.

The Persian technique of using dairy and nut paste is also followed and some of these are mildly sweet, from added dry fruits. The Persians loved cooking

meat with vegetables, but that practice tapered off in the Indian versions.

Shah is Persian for King. Old Persian and old Sanskrit have many common root words, indicating a common ancestry. The root word for Persian Shah and Sanskrit Ksha-triya (warrior- king) still indicate this link.

Shah was a preferred title of the Shia Muslim dynasties of India. Shah-en-shah (King of Kings), Padi-shah (Great King), Shah-banu (King Lady/Empress), Shah-zada (King son/prince) were all commonly used. The Nawabi/Nizami/Shahi curries were more prevalent in the Deccani regions and in Awadh/Bengal, which were ruled by Shia dynasties.

The building blocks of this theme are the vegetable used, the flavouring and the nut paste.

#### Vegetable:

Okra is commonly used in Persian cuisine and is very often paired with meat. A variety of Okra stews (Khoresh) are still cooked with onion, tomato and mild spices. You can use any of your favourite vegetable to replace/supplement: okra.

#### Flavouring:

Garlic, cumin, cinnamon are common in Persian cuisine. The Indianised versions use more spices. You can use your favourite spice mix to personalise the curry to your taste. Dried mint is commonly used, which has been replaced here by the more common dry fenugreek leaves.

#### Nut paste:

This gives the body for the stew. You can use your favourite nut paste and mix in dairy at the end to create a mild, rich stew.

# Shorshe Dharosh

## Bengali okra in mustard sauce

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1tbsp mustard, 1tsp salt, 2 green chillies to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 250g whole okra

Layer 3: Spiced coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 1whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Okra with your favourite vegetables/fish/prawns
- Coconut with poppy seed paste/nut paste

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in yogurt for Doi Dharosh.
2. Ensure coconut paste does not touch the bottom of the cooker.

Shorshe (Mustard) is much loved in the East, especially in Bengal. Most Bengali cooking is done with mustard oil. Mustard paste is used as a dip (Kasundi) and as a curry base (Shorshe).

A variety of edibles are simmered alongwith mustard paste. Shorshe Maach (Fish), Begun Shorshe (Eggplant), Paneer Shorshe (Cottage Cheese), Shorshe Dharosh (Okra), Shorshe potol (Pointed gourd) are all commonly cooked. Shorshe forms a base for a huge variety of seafood dishes like Shorshe Chingri (Prawns), Shorshe kankra (Crab) and Shorshe Maach (Fish), Shorshe Murgi (Chicken) and Shorshe dim (Boiled egg). In the traditional method, mustard seeds are soaked and ground with chillies, salt and turmeric into a paste. The grinding is done on a flat stone (Sil batta/Sheel Nora) and usually

takes a very long time.

A tadka is made with mustard oil and the Bengali five spice mix (panchphoran) The edibles (vegetables/meat/fish/seafood) are added and stir fried. The ground mustard paste is mixed in and the curry is simmered till done.

It is usually served both with hot cooked rice, but can also accompany flat breads.

Extending the theme:

The building blocks of this theme are the mustard paste, chilli paste, spices and additives.

Any variety of mustard (black/brown/yellow) or a combination of them can be used for the mustard paste. A variety of chillies (fresh/dry) or even pepper can be used for the bite. A huge range of your favourite vegetables/meats can be cooked in this tangy sauce. The traditional tadka of panch phoran fried in mustard oil can be replaced by your favourite tadka.

To reduce the bite of the mustard, coconut/poppy seeds are also occasionally blended in. You can blend in a wide variety of nut/seeds for the same purpose.

Some versions mix in yogurt for an added tang. You can mix in your favourite souring agents or just squeeze in a dash of lemon while serving.

# Shukto

## Bengali vegetable medley

<https://youtu.be/ts5rsDq6kLs>

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1tbsp each (mustard, poppy seeds), 1tsp each (chopped ginger, salt), 1/2tsp each (cumin, sugar) to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each (bitter gourd, potato, banana, radish, beans) cut into matchsticks

Layer 3: Spiced coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C milk.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Radish/Potato with your favourite vegetables
- Poppy seeds with your favourite seed/nut powder
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Black mustard with brown/yellow mustard
- Milk with coconut milk

#### **Tips:**

1. Can garnish with bottled tadka/roasted Panchphoran powder.
2. Chop vegetables into different shapes for appeal.
3. Ensure the coconut paste is thick and does not touch bottom of the cooker.
4. Skip milk and poppy seeds if you are cooking up a Ghoti version.

Shukto defines Bengali cuisine. Generations of Bengali cooks were judged

based on their skill in cooking up a shukto.

A traditional Bengali lunch starts with a shukto. True to the saying “Teto diye shuru, mishti diye shesh,” (Start with bitter and end with sweet), Bengalis take both bitter and sweet very seriously. A shukto is almost always bitter and a meal is almost always completed with an array of sweets.



Like any well-loved dish, each household has an elaborate set of Shukto rules.

- Bitter gourd should always be fried first and then added.
- All other vegetables should be fried/stir-fried before being added.
- Radhuni (wild celery seed) is absolutely essential.
- Poppy seeds/coconut/other nuts should always be/should never be ground up with mustard.
- Bori (Fried, sun dried lentil dumplings) should always be used.
- Chillies should never be added.
- Only a select combination of native vegetables can be used.
- The consistency should be thick/semi thick/thin.
- Only odd number of vegetables can be used.
- Dry spice powder is mandatory as a garnish.

It is easy to get lost in these rules. Instead let us take the building blocks route. You can then tweak them as you like, choosing to follow all/no rules.

The building blocks of a shukto are the mixed vegetables, the base, flavouring and additives.

Mixed vegetables:

Almost all 'desi' vegetables can go into a Shukto. 'English' vegetables are usually avoided.

Green banana, drumsticks, raw papaya, red/white radish, potato, sweet potato, eggplant, pointed gourd, broad beans, ridge gourd, yard long beans are all commonly used. A bitter vegetable, usually bitter gourd, is mandatory. It is interesting that potatoes have become a firm part of Bengali cuisine, but other 'English' vegetables are still viewed with suspicion. Carrots, for example, are almost never used in traditional shuktos! You can however use any vegetable combination that you like.

The base:

Mustard paste forms the basis of all Shuktos. The Bengali love for mustard is legendary. The mustard paste is either used on its own or tempered with a variety of spices and additives to enhance/reduce its bite. Poppy seed/coconut/peanut/cashew/rice/wheat flour are blended with mustard to reduce its bite and thicken the curry.

Coriander/Radhuni/fennel/ginger/cumin are blended in to spice it up. Chillies are blended for a bite.

You can choose the combination that best appeals to you. In this recipe I've chosen the combination that will be closest to the South Indian palate (Coconut, chillies, ginger, and cumin). Onions/garlic are rarely used in a Shukto. Sugar is usually added for a bitter-sweet taste.

Flavouring:

The flavour comes from mustard oil, the base, vegetables used, the tempering and the finishing spices. As mustard oil is an acquired taste, you can use a neutral oil to start with. The tempering is usually a tadka of panch-phoran (Bengal's five spice mix). Bay leaves are added for extra flavour. The finishing spices (roasted cumin-fennel-fenugreek powder/roasted panch-phoran powder) is sprinkled as a garnish. The flavour imparted by Radhuni

(Trachyspermum roxburghianum seeds, Hindi: Ajmod, English: Wild Celery) is prized in a shukto, but as it is not widely available, most shuktos end up not using it. Flavour also comes from ghee, which is commonly used as a garnish.

Additives:

The name of the shukto depends on its consistency and additives.

- Add milk and it becomes a Dudhi Shukto.
- Add boris (Fried sun dried lentil dumplings) and it becomes Bori Shukto.
- Add more liquid to have a runny consistency and it becomes Patla shukto.
- Replace bitter gourd with neem leaves and it becomes Neem patar shukto.
- Cook it West Bengal style/East Bengal style and it is Ghoti Shukto/Bangal Shukto.
- Cook with 5 vegetables and it becomes Panch-mishali shukto.

Shukto seems to have several parallels with the Kerala Aviyal

- Both are served at room temperature and are rarely served hot.
- Both prefer a mix of vegetables cut into long strips.
- Both are served with rice.
- Both use a similar set of vegetables and avoid vegetables that colour the stew (beet root) or become mushy (okra).
- Both are mandatory in traditional lunches/festive feasts.

The Bangal- Ghoti divide:

Bangals and Ghotis prepare their shukto differently. The Ghoti version does not use poppy seed and milk.

Bangals refer to the settlers from East Pakistan who moved into India after partition.

The natives are called Ghotis. Like the Tamil Iyer-Iyengar divide, the differences are largely imagined, but bitterly contested, with each side claiming superiority!

Bangals love dried fish. Ghotis can't stand them.

Bangals allege Ghotis add sweet to everything. Ghotis allege Bangals make everything sour and spicy.

If the football team East Bengal wins, Bangals celebrate with Hilsa curry. If Mohun Bagan wins, Ghotis cook up a prawn curry.

Ghotis never have rice for breakfast, sticking to luchis. Bangals love rice so much that they even have it for breakfast.

Ghotis worship Posto. Bangals refuse to!

So, which is the ‘authentic’ Shukto? Depends on who you ask! ‘Authenticity’ plagues Indian cuisine. OPOS steers clear of authenticity/tradition by concentrating on the theme. A theme is grand, and rises above petty differences. You can add or omit an ingredient as per your preference. OPOS does not believe in the ‘only way to cook a dish’.

# Sojnedata Chorchori

## Bengali Drumstick stir-fry

Blend 1tbsp each (mustard, poppy seeds), 1tsp each (Kashmiri chilli powder, salt, sugar), 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 2tsp oil to a thick paste with minimal water.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 2tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 1/2C each (potato, ivy gourd) chopped small

Layer 3: 1/2C drumstick split into two

Layer 4: 1/2C each (eggplant, squash) chopped big

Layer 5: Spice paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Eggplant/squash with any of your favourite vegetables.
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Poppy seed powder with peanut/cashew powder
- Turmeric powder with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Vary thickness of cut vegetables to match cooking time.

# Sukhi Subji

## Dry vegetable curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C each chopped (beans, potato, carrots)

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, kasuri methi, chilli, coriander, cumin powders),  
1/2tsp garam masala

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Beans/carrots with your favourite vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Kasuri methi with your favourite herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. Layer tough cooking ingredients at the bottom and quick cooking ones on top.
2. Cut tough vegetables thinner and easy cooking vegetables thicker to balance cooking time.

This simple theme with innumerable combinations can feed you for life. And all it takes is 5 minutes.

Dry vegetable curries are cooked across India. The core vegetables remain same, but the spices, oils and additives vary across regions. Some regions insert their specialty vegetables and seasonings. This gives an illusion of complexity. But at the core, they are all alike.

This dry curry can be made from a single vegetable or a mix of vegetables. While using a mix ensure you cut them in varying thickness to ensure they all cook at the same time. For example, if you use cauliflower and potatoes, you

get Aloo Gobi, but the cauliflower florets should be big, while the potatoes have to be chopped small. This ensures they all cook at the same time.

# Tamarat ki Kadi

## Tomato Sour Stew

Take 500g whole tomatoes. Slice top off one tomato and scoop out seeds. In the scooped tomato, add 1tsp each (salt, chilli, coriander, powders, gram flour), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, tamarind paste, jaggery) and 1/4tsp (cumin, asafoetida and fenugreek powders).

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: Tomatoes

Cook on high heat for 8 whistles (7 minutes). Mash/blend all with 1/2C water.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Jaggery with sugar/other sweeteners
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Oil with ghee/butter
- Water with stock
- Tamarind paste with other souring agents

#### **Tips:**

1. Use hollowed out tomatoes for a thicker stew.
2. Cook longer for a caramelised flavour.

# Tamaratar ki launji

## Rajasthani sweet and sour relish

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2kg quartered tomatoes, 1/4C raisins

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (cumin, turmeric, garam masala powders), 1tsp each (chilli, coriander powders), 2tsp each (salt, tamarind paste), 1tbsp sugar

Cook on high heat for 8 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato with mango/pineapple/other non-watery fruits
- Tamarind with raw mango pulp
- Sugar with jaggery
- Raisins with chopped dates/other dry fruits

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use as a dip/spread.
2. Lasts months refrigerated.

The desert cuisine of Rajasthan has come up with several innovative recipes to cope with the tough desert life. When you lack water, fuel and fresh vegetables, you have to think out of the box to feed yourself! This is why most Rajasthani dishes are designed to last long - because cooking every meal is a struggle.

Imagine a family camping in a desert, under the blazing sun, in a dust storm. Cooking would be the last thing you want to do! Therefore many Rajasthani recipes follow the 'Cook once, eat for a week' principle. The Batis, the huge array of pickles and themes like the Launji - were born out of sheer necessity.

The Rajasthani Launji straddles the line between a curry and a pickle. Actually, most Indian curries are semi pickles. Pack a curry with extra sourness, salt and spices and it does turn into a pickle.

The launji takes this concept a step further and uses sugar along with a souring agent and spices to prolong the life of the dish.

Sweetness, sourness and spiciness defines a Launji. Soaked fenugreek seeds (Methi Launji), Potato (Aloo Launji), Raw mango (Kairi Launji), Tomato (Tamarat Launji), Angoor ki launji (Sour grapes), Shimla Mirch ki launji (Capsicum), Adrak ki launji (Ginger), Gajar ki Launji(Carrots), Amla Launji (Gooseberries), Karonda Launji (Sour berries) are popular. Many versions use dried fruits (especially raisins and dates).

You can turn any vegetable/fruit into a Launji by cooking it with spices in a sweet and sour base. If the vegetable/fruit is sour, you can omit the addition of a souring agent like Tamarind. If they are naturally sweet, cut down sugar.

Some versions use fresh green chillies and garnish it with fresh herbs. This goes against the theme of the recipe. People in the desert have no access to fresh chillies/herbs. Rajasthani cuisine almost always prefers dried over fresh.

The usual garnish is a tadka of any combination of cumin, kalonji (Nigella seeds), fennel, asafoetida, red chillies, cloves, cinnamon. You can vary them to your taste.

The launji is usually served with rotis, khakhras, pooris or parathas. It lasts a few days without refrigeration. The sourer/saltier/sweeter it is, the longer is its shelf life.

# Usal

## Marathi sprouts stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion arranged in a ring with 1C chopped deseeded tomato at the centre

Layer 3: 1C mung sprouts

Layer 4: 1tsp each (salt, jaggery, chilli, coriander powders, tamarind paste, ginger-garlic paste), 1/2tsp each (sesame, pepper, garam masala, turmeric powders)

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C water.

### LAYER AND FLASH

### Replace/Supplement

- Garam masala with Goda masala/your favourite spice mix.
- Mung sprouts with other lentil sprouts.
- Water with vegetable stock.

### Tips:

1. Mix in 1/4C sev/farsaan (fried gram flour snacks) and serve as Misal.

Sprouts are more nutritious than the seeds. Sprouting is a form of cooking with enzymes. During sprouting, the starch gets converted to sugar, toxins are broken down and many nutrients are unlocked. This is why most sprouts can be eaten raw. But sprouts have never been used as a dal replacement in Indian cuisine. They are not a staple in most regional cuisines, except in the Marathi cuisine. It is only here they are honoured with two themes making sprouts a star - The Usal and Misal.

You can look at Usal as a kind of a dal made from legume sprouts. (A less common variant using dried peas is also cooked). Like a dal, Usal is paired with a starch. Together they make a balanced meal. The Usal was earlier

probably paired with flatbreads. It is still paired with pressed rice (Poha). But the most loved accompaniment today is the Pav.

When the Portuguese Pao was absorbed into the West coast cuisine as the Pav, it started becoming a part of the daily meal. It was paired with a vegetable gravy into the Pav Bhaji. But the Bhaji is mostly vegetables and very little protein. So, Pav Bhaji remained a light snack. But when the pav is paired with the protein rich Usal, it becomes a full meal. Marathis eat it for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

In the traditional method, the sprouts are spiced and cooked with minimal water into a thick curry, almost like the Tamil sundal, only more watery.

Another heavily spiced, thin, watery curry (the Kut/Tarri/Rassa) is cooked separately and is served alongside the Usal. Both these are served in separate containers with Pav, accompanied by chopped onions and a wedge of lemon. The Kut is used as a kind of thin soup/dipping sauce to wash down the thick Usal - Pav combination.

This recipe cooks both the Usal and Kut together and separates them after cooking.

Extending the theme:

The basic building blocks of the Usal are the sprouts, flavouring and the additives.

Though moth bean sprouts (matki) are the most common, any legume, sprouts or a mix of them can be used (even fenugreek, though it is not very common).

The flavouring varies with the region. The basic Goda masala/Kala masala is commonly used, but different regions insert their own spice mixes. You can even use sambar powder, to cook a Tamil version.

The key additives are tamarind and jaggery. You can skip tamarind if you mix in lemon juice after cooking. Other souring agents like kokkum/mango can be added. Jaggery can be replaced with sugar/your favourite sweetener.

Peanut oil is commonly used, but you can add any of your favourite oils.

The Usal can be converted to a Misal, by just mixing in Sev (fried gram flour

snack), packing it with even more protein.

# Vangi Batata Bhaji

## Marathi Eggplant Potato Curry

Blend 1/4C chopped coconut, 1tbsp roasted peanuts, 1tsp each (salt, chilli powder, jaggery, tamarind paste), 1/4tsp each (cumin, coriander, garam masala, turmeric powders) to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp peanut oil

Layer 2: 1chopped onion, 5 curry leaves

Layer 3: 1C each chopped (eggplant, potato)

Layer 4: Coconut paste

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Eggplant with your favourite vegetables
- Peanut with other nuts/seeds
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Cut potato into small chunks and eggplant into large chunks.
2. Can mix spice powders and salt with vegetables and let them marinate for deeper flavour.
3. Use Kashmiri chilli powder for a brighter colour.

This recipe is another grain free balanced meal masquerading as a curry. A nutritionally balanced full meal should meet your carbohydrate, protein, fat and micro-nutrient requirements. In many of these curries, the carbohydrates come from starchy vegetables (potato, banana, other tubers), protein comes from lentils/nuts/dairy and fat comes from the added oil. Additives supply the fiber/micro-nutrients. Thus, these curries would fill you up, even without pairing them with rice/rotis.

Though we are accustomed to consume starch in the form of rice/rotis, it is optional. Our carbohydrate requirement can be met in many other ways.

Kappa (Tapioca) replaces rice in parts of Kerala. Potatoes replace rice/bread in Ireland. Green bananas are the chief starch in many Latin American countries. Sweet Potato and other tubers sustain the population in many African countries.

Cereals (rice, wheat, and maize) and root vegetables (potatoes and cassava) supply most of our starch, but other starch sources are popular in other regions. Tubers (taro, cassava, yam), rhizomes (potato, lotus), nuts (acorns, chestnuts), fruits (bananas, breadfruit), flower bulbs (katakuri), roots (kudzu) are all starch sources, though we see them as vegetables.

The core building blocks of this theme are a vegetable, a starch, protein and spices. The vegetable used here is the Marathi favourite - eggplant. Potatoes supply the starch, protein comes from peanuts and coconut and the vegetable provides the trace nutrients. Fat comes from the added oil and tadka. All are cooked together with a sweet-spicy and tangy sauce with jaggery, a spice mix (usually Marathi goda masala) and tamarind.

As with many Marathi dishes, jaggery lends a sweet touch, and also makes possible a glossy sauce that coats the vegetables. Peanut powder, another Marathi favourite additive, supplies the protein and acts as a thickener.

The traditional recipe calls for a tadka, with onions and spices. Eggplant is then added and stir fried. Water gets added next and the curry is simmered till eggplants are cooked and the water dries out. Jaggery, boiled potatoes, coconut and peanut powder are then mixed in and the whole mass is stirred and cooked till done.

We can achieve a similar effect by layering and flashing. The quick cooking eggplant is cut into large chunks and the potato is cut into smaller chunks so that both get cooked together at the same time. Bottled tadka and chopped herbs are then mixed in as a garnish. The Marathi tadka uses mustard seeds, turmeric and asafoetida, unlike the South Indian tadka which usually skips turmeric.

We can extend this grain-free meal theme with other starch-protein-fat combinations . Curries like Aloo Posto, Aloo Channa, Tiruvadhirai

Puzhukku, Aloo Matar, Vazhakka Podi, Vazhakka Paruppu Usili, Chena EriSSery, Molagushyam, Aviyal, Kadappa, Pav Bhaji, Sai Bhaji, Undhiyu, Sai Bhaji and Dhansak are all grain free, nutritionally balanced meals disguised as curries.

# Varan

## Marathi lentil curry

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C tuvar dal, 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, asafoetida), 1tsp ghee, 1C water. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles. Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2tsp salt, 1tsp each (jaggery, lemon juice), 1/2C water.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar dal with mung/masoor dals
- Jaggery with sugar
- Raw lentils with roasted lentils

### **Tips:**

1. Soak dal for an hour for faster cooking.
2. Soak dal in hot water for reducing presoaking time.
3. Lesser the water, lesser the spewing.

Varan runs in Marathi veins. Served with hot cooked rice, (Varan Bhat), it becomes the ultimate Marathi comfort food.

Varan (plain lentil curry) poured over steaming hot cooked rice (bhat), with a bit of homemade ghee (thoop), served with a wedge of lemon (limbu) and a pinch of salt (meeth) on the side is soul food for Marathis.

Varan is considered satvik, being cooked with no onions or garlic. It is offered as prasad to Maharashtra's favourite God, Ganesh, during the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations. It is a staple in most homes and is the first course in a Marathi wedding feast. Varan mashed with rice and ghee is the first solid food for babies.

In Maharashtra, the North and South overlap. The rotis of the North and the rice of the South are both staples here. Thus, the Varan is equally relished with both rice and rotis.

Cumin is mandatory in most North Indian tadkas. Mustard is ubiquitous in all South Indian tadkas. Both these appear together in Marathi tadkas. Though tadka is optional in a sada Varan (Basic Varan), various versions with differing combinations of tadka are relished. When tadka is added, the sada varan becomes the Phodnicha Varan (Phodni: Tadka). Many versions of tadka exist with onions, ginger, curry leaves etc.

Unlike the South where Basmathi is rare and the North which uses mostly Basmathi, Maharashtra uses both varieties. The Marathi bhat is usually cooked from normal, less expensive rice, with Basmathi being reserved for feasts.

The varan comes in many avatars. It is usually made from Tuvar dal. But Mung dal (mogacha varan) is also used. This Mogacha Varan mashed with rice is the first solid meal for many Marathi toddlers as mung is easier to digest than tuvar.

Varan can be spiced with fenugreek leaves (Methiche Varan), with garlic (Lasaniche Varan) or with any fresh herbs/spices. When tamarind is mixed alongwith more spices, this becomes the Ambat Varan or Amti. The Goan version spikes it with coconut.

Like the dal dhokli of the West, pieces of flatbread are simmered in Varan to produce a version of Marathi Pasta, the Chakolya/Varan Phal, a full meal by itself.

The building blocks of a Varan are the lentils, flavouring, sweetener and the souring agent.

Though plain Varan has a dash of lemon juice mixed in for sourness, the sourness can come from tomatoes, tamarind, kokkum or other souring agents. The sweetness can come from jaggery/sugar or other sweeteners.

Other thin lentils can be used in place of Tuvar/Mung dal to extend this theme.

#### Serving Varan:

Place a mound of rice on a plate, make a small depression on top, pour a ladle of Varan, add a dash of ghee and serve with a wedge of lemon and a pinch of salt. A dry vegetable curry (Bhaji) and a chutney/pickle is also usually served.

# White Curry Base

## Mogul white mother sauce

Blend 1/2C cashew, 2tsp poppy seeds, 2 green chillies, 2tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp each (garam masala, salt) to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C butter

Layer 2: 2C chopped onion

Layer 3: Cashew paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend with 1/4C cream to a smooth paste.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with ghee
- Poppy seeds with your favourite seeds
- Cream with milk/yogurt
- Cashew with your favourite nuts

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in flashed vegetables/meats for an instant curry.

The white curry base is not dignified by a separate name as in the case of Masala (orange-red), Dopiazza (brownish), Saag (greenish), or Makhni (orangish).

Many classes of North Indian curries can be white - the Mughlai Korma, the Shahi, the Pasanda etc. These white curries are rich and mild by definition as they are built from nut paste/dairy and use minimal spices/chillies.

Unlike other curries, onions are not caramelised (which makes them brown) but are boiled to preserve their white colour. The nuts are soaked and blended. Spices that can colour the curry are avoided - chillies are added

whole, whole spices rather than spice powders are preferred and spices like turmeric powder/chilli powder are never used. Yogurt/cream/milk is mixed in at the very end to thin the curry.

In the traditional preparation, onions are boiled and pureed; nuts are soaked, boiled and blended. This mixture is cooked for long with constant stirring. This recipe uses cashew paste and minimal water cooking to convert this theme into OPOS. The minimal water added is all evaporated on long cooking, so that you get a thick concentrated paste with a long shelf life. You just need to dilute it with water/milk/yogurt/cream and mix it with flashed meats/seafood/vegetables/paneer to have your curry ready in an instant.

True to the spirit of the rich theme, this is used as the curry base for expensive meats/vegetables.

The building blocks of the white curry are onions, nut/seed paste, dairy (milk/cream/yogurt) and whole spices.

# Zunka

## Marathi Dry chickpea flour curry

[https://youtu.be/k0WxA6\\_5pK4](https://youtu.be/k0WxA6_5pK4)

Mix 1/2C roasted gram flour, 1/2tsp each (salt, garam masala, chilli, cumin powders) and 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tsp oil,

Layer 2: 2C chopped onion (250g)

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in spiced gram flour.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### Replace/Supplement:

- Onion with cabbage/other non watery vegetables;
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix;
- Besan with paruppu podi/any OPOS Podi. (See OPOS staples).

### Tips:

1. Add gram flour in a kadai. Roast on low heat till it loses its raw smell. Let cool. Roast multiple times if needed.
2. Can blend roasted gram to gram flour.
3. Can use a slicer to cut onions.
4. Do not use very old gram flour. It is likely to be bitter.

Besan/chickpea flour is much loved on the West coast. It is added to just about everything. It forms the backbone of two Marathi classics - the Zunka and the Pitla. Zunka is a dry curry and Pitla is a thick gravy.

Being a good source of protein both these curries are paired with flatbreads or rice.

Millets are a staple in rural Maharashtra, like much of rural India. The millet

flatbread, Bhakri, is paired with Zunka. Onions and the much loved garlic chutney would complete the meal.

Using gram flour as the chief protein source is a Marathi innovation. North India has its Kadhi but it is only in West India that we see gram flour completely substituting tuvar/mung dal as a protein source, becoming a staple of the local cuisine.

The traditional method calls for sautéeing and cooking the vegetable first and then adding gram flour/gram flour slurry, stir-frying everything into a dry curry. This recipe uses roasted and ground gram flour powder and does not call for added water, instead relying on the juices of the vegetables.

The key building blocks of this theme are the vegetables used, the lentil flour and the spices/additives. All these can be varied to extend this theme. A variety of commonly used vegetables and less common ones (carrot, zucchini, Brussels sprouts etc,) can be used. A mix of them, though not traditional, can also be used.

Gram flour can be replaced by any OPOS Podi (spiced lentil powder, please see OPOS staples for recipe). The spices and additives can vary as per your choice.

# North Indian Non-vegetarian curries

# Achari Gosht

## Pickled mutton curry

Mix 250g mutton, 2tsp ginger - garlic paste, 1tsp coriander powder, 1/4tsp garam masala and 2tbsp mango pickle.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped tomato

Layer 3: Spiced mutton

Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango pickle with your favourite pickle
- Garam masala with your favourite spices
- Mutton with your favourite red meat
- Tomato with other souring agents

### **Tips:**

1. Marinate overnight for a deeper flavour/faster cooking.
2. If undercooked, cut into smaller pieces/cook longer/use a tenderizer.

# Achari Murg

## Pickled chicken curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 250g bite sized chicken with bones

Layer 3: 2tbsp mango pickle, 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, coriander powder), 1/4tsp each (garam masala, chilli powders).

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chicken with your favourite marinated meats
- Mango pickle with your favourite pickle
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Oil with ghee/butter

#### **Tips:**

1. If overcooked, release pressure/use larger pieces.
2. If undercooked, cook longer/use smaller pieces.
3. Marinate overnight for a deeper flavour.

# Aloo Koni Pitika

Assamese egg and potato mash.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil,

Layer 2: 2C peeled and chopped potato

Layer 3: 2 washed and cleaned raw eggs

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Shell eggs.

Add 1tsp each (salt, mustard oil), 1/4C chopped onion, 2 chopped green chillies. Mash coarsely.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy tubers

### **Tips:**

1. Serve with rice and dal.
2. Eggs cook well in steam.
3. Ensure eggs are at room temperature.

# Aloo Murghi

## Potato chicken curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C chicken chopped small (250g)

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp each (salt, chilli, coriander, cumin, garam masala powders)

Layer 4: 2C potatoes chopped big

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Chicken with your favourite meat/seafood
- Garam masala with chicken masala/your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Can coarsely mash potatoes to absorb excess water.
2. Cut chicken small and potatoes large to match cooking time.

Cooking chicken with potatoes is a theme prevalent all across the western world. The Greek, Lebanese, Spanish, Mediterranean, American, French and German cuisines love this combination. The protein- starch- fat combination makes a full meal and is the reason behind its universal appeal. This combination is popular in Pakistan as the Aloo Murghi.

The Tamil Pongal, the Muslim Biriyani, the American Hamburger, the Mexican Burrito, the Italian Pizza, Greek Gyro, the Korean Bibimbap and similar dishes owe their popularity to the Protein- Starch - Fat magic. This recipe is being designed as an extension of the flash cooking theme. It offers a powerful way to convert meats into a balanced meal. The building blocks are simple - meat, potato, flavouring and additives.

### **Meat:**

Chicken is most popular but can be replaced with any meat of your choice. Tougher meats like pork/beef need to be cut smaller, marinated longer and tenderised before being used. Fortunately potatoes are very tolerant of long cooking and do not disintegrate to a mush. So big chunks of potato can be cooked with tough meats.

Chicken releases juices on cooking and these are absorbed by the potato - which fills them up with a meaty flavour. This absorption converts it into a dry dish, which can even be served as an appetiser.

### **Potato:**

Any starchy vegetable would work in this theme. Banana, Taro, Tapioca can all be used. Baby potatoes can be used to convert this into a no cutting recipe.

### **Flavouring:**

Chicken masala, a mix of various spices, ginger garlic paste and fresh herbs (mint) are the only flavouring used. They all can be replaced/substituted with your favourite flavourings. The oil used provides a base note of flavour and can be changed to your favourite plant/animal fat.

### **Additives:**

Cashew powder can be replaced with any nut/seed powder. You can also mix in yogurt/milk/cream to convert this into a gravy.

You can add a whole tomato or two, which can be later mashed into a gravy. Edible greens/more vegetables can be added to beef up this theme and make it more nutritious.

You can mix in more starch (puffed rice/idiyappam/poha/cooked rice etc.,) to make this a carbohydrate rich meal.

# Dimer Jhaal

## Bengali Egg and Potato spicy stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2 tsp mustard oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped deseeded tomatoes

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1tsp each (chilli powder, salt), 1/4tsp each (turmeric powder, sugar, garam masala)

Layer 4: 1C chopped potato

Layer 5: 2 cleaned raw eggs.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Shell eggs and make slits. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato with other souring agents
- Eggs with mutton/chicken/fish/paneer/fresh legumes
- Potato with other starchy vegetables
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil

#### **Tips:**

1. Let eggs soak in gravy. Else simmer briefly.
2. Mix in water and add more spices to make it a Jhol/Dalna.
3. Shake the boiled eggs in a cup to crack the shell and peel it easily.
4. Use Kashmiri chilli powder for a redder colour.
5. Use eggs at room temperature.
6. Use more tomatoes if you want more gravy.



ODOS EGG MASALA

Dimer Jhaal (Dimer: Egg, Jhaal: Spicy thick stew) is a Portuguese gift to Bengal. Potatoes, Chillies and Tomato - the building blocks of this curry were all brought in by the Portuguese. Eggs/chicken were not a part of orthodox Bengali cuisine. They gained popularity after the British rule.

600 years back, Portugal and Spain embarked on great ocean voyages. They ended up monopolising the global ocean trade between themselves. Spain controlled the Americas and Portugal got the rest of the world.

500 years back, Portuguese find their way to India, "seeking Christians and spices". Akbar permits them to establish a trading post near today's Calcutta. They flourished in this rich land. Bengal, "The Paradise of India" seemed like the Garden of Eden to them, as recorded in the Portuguese national epic Luisiadas.

“Aquas do Gange, e a terra de Bengala  
Fertil de sort que outra não lhe iguala”

“Here by the mouths, where hallowed Ganges ends  
Bengal’s beauteous Eden wide extends”  
Camões, Os Lusiadas, Canto VII, Stanza XXI

The Spanish brought in fruits and vegetables from the Americas and Portuguese took it across the world. 400 years back, they bring Chillies,

Potatoes and Tomatoes to Bengal. It takes 3 centuries for the Bengali cuisine to accept these new vegetables. Eventually, Bengal fell head over heels in love with them. Potato became Bengal's most favourite vegetable, finding a place in everything from curries to Biriyani. It is said Bengal's potato consumption is next only to Scotland!

Tomatoes and chillies found their way into Bengali curries, replacing mango, tamarind and pepper. The bright red, thick and spicy stew (Jhaal), a less thick version (Dalna) and a thin version (Jhol) were rebuilt with these new building blocks.

The building blocks of this theme are a sour and spicy base (tomatoes and chilli powder), starch (potatoes) and protein (eggs).

**The Sour and Spicy base:**

Tomatoes and chilli powder are the preferred combinations for a variety of spicy stews like Jhaal, Jhol and Dalna. This base is used to cook up almost all edibles.

**Starch:**

Though Potatoes are most common, any starchy vegetable would work in this theme. It can be simmered in the gravy, as done here or boiled and pan fried/deep fried before being added.

**Protein:**

Any protein - Eggs (Dimer Jhaal), fish (Macher Jhaal), mutton (Mangshor Jhaal), prawns (Chingri Jhaal), chicken (Murgir jhol), a variety of pulses (Channa Jhaal), paneer etc, can be used in this theme. Meats/fish/seafood can be layered along with other ingredients.

In some versions, hard boiled eggs, meats/fish are shallow fried and then simmered in the curry.

**Flavouring:**

The flavouring is minimal and comes from the ginger- garlic and chilli powder combination. Some versions call for the Panch Phoran (Bengali five spice mix). You can use your favourite spice mix/tadka for an added flavour punch. Chopped fresh herbs are mixed in after cooking.

The Jhaal is usually paired with luchis for breakfast, rice for lunch and

phulkhas for dinner.

In the conventional method, the spices paste is shallow fried, tomatoes are added and cooked down. Boiled potatoes are then added and simmered together. Boiled eggs are added last and cooked briefly.

In this recipe, the pot in pot method, layering and flashing techniques allow us to cook everything at one shot.

# Jungli Lal Maas

## Rajasthan's Red Meat Curry

Take 500g mutton chopped small. Separate into two halves. Mix 250 gms mutton with 2 tbsp each (Kashmiri chilli powder, caramelised onions), 2tsp each (coriander powder, ginger-garlic paste), 1 tsp salt, 1/2tsp (garam masala, turmeric and amchoor), 1/8 C yogurt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tbsp mustard oil,

Layer 2: 250g mutton unmixed with spices

Layer 3: 250g mutton mixed with spices

Cook on medium heat for 20+ whistles (10 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mutton with game meat
- Amchoor with Kachiri powder/other tenderisers (Papaya paste, pineapple paste etc)
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Marinate meat longer for a deeper flavour.
2. Vegetarian versions can replace mutton with Paneer/Tofu/Mushroom/Soya chunks.
3. Cooking time varies with the meat quality and cut. Cook till you get an intense smell of cooked meat.

# Murg Nawabi

## Royal chicken curry

Mix 250g chopped chicken with 1/2tsp (garam masala, chilli, cumin powders), 1tsp salt, 2tsp ginger-garlic paste.

Blend 1/4C almonds, 1/4C raisins, 2 green chillies, 1tsp oil to a thick paste.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 4tsp butter

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion arranged in a ring, 1C chopped deseeded tomato in the centre of the ring.

Layer 3: Spiced chicken

Layer 4: Almond paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/4C cream.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chicken with other protein (Soya chunks/Paneer/Mutton mince)
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Almonds with your favourite nut/seed
- Cream with hung yogurt/sour cream/coconut milk

### **Tips:**

1. Use marinated chicken for deeper flavor.
2. Big chunks do not cook well.

The building blocks of a Nawabi curry are the onion- tomato base, nuts and dried fruits. In traditional cooking, the onions are patiently sautéed/fried, boiled tomatoes are then added and both are cooked for a long time till they reduce. The nut paste and spices are then mixed in, meats/vegetables added and the curry is simmered till done.

We use the layering, flashing and controlled caramelisation techniques to convert this recipe to OPOS. The layered onions get caramelised, the

tomatoes get roasted and the quantities are balanced so that the steam buildup happens before the caramelisation turns to burning. The Nawabs excelled in the use of sealed covered cooking (Dum) to extract maximum flavour from the ingredients used. This dum technique becomes supercharged inside a pressure cooker with its much better seal. Thus the curry that emerges is intensely flavourful and juicy.

The use of fruits, nut paste and milk/cream in cooking curries is a Mogul technique. The addition of raisins here imparts a sweetish tinge to the curry and the nut paste gives it a body. Mild spices and the addition of cream and saffron at the very end makes it rich.

This curry can be paired with both Mogul rice/flatbreads. Being a rich curry, expensive vegetables/cuts of meats are traditionally used.

You can take it a step above by infusing it with a smoky flavour, which the Nawabi cuisine made popular.

Place a betel leaf/onion slice on the curry. Place a small live charcoal on it. Pour a spoon of ghee over charcoal to make it smoke. Keep the curry covered for 10 minutes.

# Murg Pasanda

## Mughlai mild chicken curry

Mix 250g chicken with 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, chilli paste, salt),  
1/2tsp garam masala.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1C chopped onions

Layer 3: Spiced chicken

Layer 4: 1/4C each (cashew , raisins) blended to a paste

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Mix in 1/4C each (cream, milk)

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chicken with other protein (paneer, soaked soya, mushrooms)
- Cashew with other nuts/seeds
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- Cream with milk/thick yogurt

#### **Tips:**

1. Use small chicken chunks.
2. Marinate chicken for greater flavour.

# Mutton Vindaloo

Goan hot and sour mutton curry

<https://youtu.be/ezJ7gy-v07o>

Mix 250g mutton with 2tsp Kashmiri [U3]chilli powder, 1tsp each (pepper, salt, ginger-garlic paste, vinegar), 1/2tsp garam masala.

[U4]

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp vinegar, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion, 5 chopped garlic cloves

Layer 3: Spiced mutton

Cook on high heat for 20+ whistles (10 minutes) or till you get an intense flavour of cooked meat.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mutton with other meats/soya chunks
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

## **Tips:**

1. Cut mutton into small chunks and marinate overnight.
2. Mix in a meat tenderizer (papaya/pineapple paste).
3. Cooking time depends on the cut and age of meat.

The Vindaloo is a corruption of the Portuguese theme Vinha d' alhos (Wine and garlic). Carne de Vinha d' alhos (Meat with wine and garlic) is a Spanish/Portuguese technique of marinating meat with garlic, wine/vinegar and spices before cooking it.

Meat spoils fast. The Iberians (natives of ancient Spain/Portugal) learnt to pickle meat in an acid (wine/vinegar) to prolong its shelf life. Garlic, oregano and pepper were mixed in for added flavour. This pickled meat could be stored for nearly a month without refrigeration. They called the technique Adobo. Later, with the discovery of the New World, chillies entered the

marinade. This pickled meat (usually pork, the Iberian favourite) was then baked/fried/braised and served with potatoes/bread.

The Spanish/Portuguese took this preparation method to all their colonies - India, Philippines, Mexico, Latin America, Caribbean etc. Every single one of these colonies has a variant of this theme. Each of these cuisines reinterpreted this theme with their favourite meat, spices and cooking technique, creating their own variants. In all these variants, the core building blocks - garlic and vinegar remain common, but everything else changes. In all these variants, Pork continues to be the most desired meat. The term Vinha d' alhos is prevalent only in former Portuguese colonies, chiefly in Goa. In Spanish colonies, it is still called Adobo.

In the Portuguese colony of Goa, Indians replaced wine/grape vinegar with palm/coconut vinegar, oregano with Indian spices and simmered the meat into a curry, calling it Vindaloo.

In the Spanish colony of Philippines, Filipinos used coconut vinegar/rice vinegar, added soy sauce/fish sauce, local spices and coconut milk, cooking a range of meats, seafood and vegetables into the Filipino national dish, the Adobo.

In the Spanish colony of Mexico, the Mexicans called the pickling mix as Adobo Salsa (Adobo Sauce). They added cumin and chillies into the mix, converting it into a thick sauce. The native tomatoes were also used to Replace/Supplement: vinegar. This sauce is still used both as a marinade and as a pickling paste in recipes like Chipotles en adobo (Smoked chillies in Adobo sauce). Pork/chicken/other meats are cooked in this sauce - Pork Adobo and chicken adobo still remain very popular Mexican recipes.

Though this marination/pickling originated as a food preservation technique, it is now used chiefly for the flavour it imparts. In the Latin American Spanish colonies, the adobo has dropped vinegar and has become a spice rub. Garlic, oregano, black pepper and turmeric are rubbed into meats before cooking them. Pork Adobo cooked with this dry spice rub still remains the hot favourite here.

India has retained the core building blocks - garlic and vinegar, but has changed everything else. Almost all Indian spices have found their way into

the marinade. Pork gets replaced by mutton and loads of chilli powder enters the mix.

This mix is never fried/baked, but is always cooked like a curry, thus creating the 100% traditional, authentic, Indian Vindaloo - as authentic as the British Mulligatawny or Kedgeree!

Rather than serving the meat with potatoes on the side like the Europeans, Indian cuisine cooks potatoes in the curry, as potatoes are seen as a vegetable. Some unknown chef might have believed a Vind'Aloo' should contain Aloo (potatoes). All Indian versions of vindaloo have potatoes. They are served with Sannas (The Goan Idli), just like a curry!

Ignore the purists and extend this theme anyway you like, with meats/vegetables/spices of your choice, while keeping the spirit of the theme in mind.

# Omelette Kofta

## Egg balls

Beat 2 eggs with 1/2C chopped onion, 1tsp salt and 2 chopped chillies.  
Slice the tops of 5 tomatoes and scoop out the insides. Fill with egg mixture.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 3tsp oil

Layer 2: Tomatoes filled with egg

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Quarter and serve.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tomato with capsicum/hollowed out vegetables
- Onions with shallots
- Oil with butter

#### **Tips:**

1. Reduce cooking time for softer egg koftas.
2. Serve as appetiser or mix in with curry.

# Patrani Machi

## Sindhi Steamed fish

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 3 green chillies, 1/4C each (mint, cilantro), 1tsp each (tamarind paste, ginger-garlic paste, oil), 1tsp each (salt, garam masala). Smear over 250g cleaned whole fish/fish fillets. Roll each fish in a banana leaf like a cigar.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: Fish parcels

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4min). Let pressure settle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Fish with other seafood
- Mint/cilantro with your favourite herbs
- Coconut with your favourite nuts (peanut/cashew/almond etc)

#### **Tips:**

1. Ensure fish is not over 1" thick.
2. Can refrigerate marinated fish overnight.

Patrani Machi is the Parsi interpretation of the Achari theme. In the achari theme, we use the pickle gravy as the curry base. In this theme, we use a chutney/thokku as the curry base. Rolling edibles into leaves is a popular central Asian theme and it is likely this recipe is an Indian adaptation of the Dolma/Sarma. The edible grape leaves gave way to banana leaf and coconut found its way into the recipe, giving us a brand new theme.

In this Parsi theme, fish is cleaned, mixed with a chutney, rolled into a banana leaf and is steamed till done.

We can easily replicate these steps with the layer and flash technique.

# Prawn Pickle

## Mangalore Catholic prawn pickle

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C coconut vinegar, 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 500g small prawns

Layer 3: 2tsp salt, 4tsp chilli powder, 1tsp mustard powder, 1/2tsp each (cumin, turmeric powder) .

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Mix in 1/4C vinegar.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Prawns with your favourite seafood
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix
- Sesame oil with mustard oil/your favourite oil

#### **Tips:**

1. If overcooked, reduce whistles/release pressure/use bigger prawns.
2. If undercooked, increase whistles/use smaller prawns.

500 years back, Vasco da Gama discovers a sea route to India. Within 10 years, Portuguese conquer Goa from the Deccan sultans. Soon, Portuguese government is arm twisted by the Church to gain converts in the new lands. Jesuit missionaries are sent in. Indians are lured with rice, employment and other incentives to convert. A section of natives convert, but the Church is not too pleased with the fact that these converts still practice ‘pagan’ rituals (for example, greeting each other with palms a namaste, sealing a contract with an exchange of betel leaf and areca nut, growing a holy basil plant).

St. Francis Xavier requests an inquisition, to purify the faith and gain new converts. For the next 250 years, Goa echoes with screams and wails as eye lids are sliced off, arms and legs chopped, bodies broken and burnt. Konkani is banned and replaced by Portuguese, temples are destroyed and severe penalties are imposed on practice of other faiths. Most brutal punishments are

reserved for the new converts, for not being Catholic enough. Many new converts flee South, settling in Karwar and Mangalore, becoming Karwari Catholics and Mangalore Catholics. They still practice Christianity, but all have Konkani as their mother tongue and still follow ancient Hindu rituals and customs.

Mangalore Catholic cuisine evolved as a fusion of Goan, Portuguese and Mangalore cuisines. Like all coastal cuisines, coconut and sea food are heavily used. Due to the Portuguese influence, pork is relished, vinegar is used as a souring agent and offal is respected. Use of red rice, hog plums as a souring agent, use of fiery meet mirsang, raw cashew nuts in curries, use of fish/shrimp powder as flavouring are all hallmarks of Mangalore Catholic cuisine.

# Rogan Josh

## Kashmiri mutton curry

Mix 250g boneless mutton with 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (garam masala, salt), 1/4tsp (chopped ginger, fennel powder), 1tbsp Kashmiri chilli powder, 1/4C hung yogurt.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C chopped onions arranged in a ring, with 1C chopped tomato at the centre.

Layer 3: Spiced mutton.

Cook on high heat for 20+whistles (10 minutes) or till you get an intense meaty flavour. Let pressure settle. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mutton with other red meats/Paneer/Mushroom/Tofu
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix
- ginger - garlic paste with asafoetida
- Onion with shallots
- Ghee with mustard oil/your favourite fat

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use marinated and browned meat for greater flavour.
2. If undercooked, cut smaller/use a tenderiser/marinate overnight/cook longer.
3. Stir in more yogurt after opening if you like a gravy version.

Rogan Josh (Red Passion or Ghee seared) is a technique of cooking red meat. It was brought to Kashmir by the invading Central Asians. Historians believe it has its origins in Persia. They argue Roughan in Persian means fat/ghee and Josh means Intensity, and thus denotes a curry that is seared with ghee on high heat.

Others believe the Indo-European word Rogan denotes Red (the French Rouge and Spanish Roja come from this root) and Josh denotes heat, arguing the curry gets its name from the generous amounts of bright red Kashimiri chilli used.

Rogan Josh has now become a staple in the Kashmiri feast (Wazwan). Innumerable 'authentic' versions exist but they are all united by this theme and a few common characteristics:

1. The Kashmiri duo of ginger and fennel appear in all of them.
2. The souring agent is usually yogurt/tomato.
3. The bright red colour comes from soaked and ground Kashmiri chilli.
4. The body of the gravy is made up of browned onions/shallots in the Muslim version and Yogurt in the Kashmiri Pundit version, as Kashmiri pundits eat meat, but avoid onion/garlic!

The traditional preparation takes over two hours. By marination, using small chunks, layering and no water techniques, we can cut it down to under 15 minutes.

The building blocks are a red meat, colouring agent and the fat used.

**The meat:**

Mutton is most common, but beef versions are also cooked. This theme can support any non-watery red meat. The vegetarian versions can use paneer/mushrooms/soya chunks/tofu, with half the cooking time.

**Colouring agent:**

Soaked and ground Kashmiri chillies give the brightest colour. The OPOS version uses Kashmiri chilli powder. Other versions use dried flowers/roots of "Ratan Jot" (Cockscomb/Alkanna tinctoria) for an even brighter colour.

**Fat used:**

Ghee is most common, but some versions call for butter/mustard oil. You can use lard/mutton fat for a more intense flavour or use any of your favourite oils.

# Rongpu Takeng

## Arunachal's mashed eggs

In a 2L cooker add three eggs. Cover with water. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle. Let pressure settle. Drain water. Shake cooker to crack shells. Peel eggs. Mash with 1/2tsp salt, 1tsp grated ginger.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Ginger with garlic/pepper/your favourite spices.
- Can mix in finely chopped onions, tomatoes, chillies, chopped herbs.

#### **Tips:**

1. Avoid cracking by adding eggs in a small cup. This prevents them from bouncing around and getting cracked.
2. Drain water and shake the cooker gently to crack the shells and make it easy to peel.

It is fascinating how cuisines skip themes. We blend everything to a chutney, but skipped boiled chickpeas, sesame and mustard. The Middle East laid claim to them as Hummus, Tahini and the French took over mustard as their own! Mashing hard boiled eggs into a chutney is uncommon in North or South Indian cuisine. And that's what Arunachal Pradesh has been trying to teach us!

Arunachal Pradesh (The land of rising sun), like other North East Indian states, uses very little oil and spices. And no tadka. This chutney is a classic example.

# Soups

# Soups

## A Primer

Soups are one of our ancient foods. Every single culture boils their favourite edibles with their favourite flavourings into soups of their own. Indian cuisine has an array of them. They are not called soups or served as a first course, but are used like curries.

All South Indian Rasams and North Indian Shorbas are nothing but soups. All Kannada Tamblis and Kerala Arachu kalakkis are cold soups.

A soup can be thick or thin, clear or viscous, served as an appetiser or main course. It can be served hot or cold, garnished or plain, in sickness or health, during fast or feast. It is the closest we have come to an universal food. The principle for most soups/stocks is simple - Extract the goodness of the food into a liquid. The essence of edibles extracted into a liquid is the foundation of all soups.

The names do not matter much. If there is more liquid, it is a soup. If it has more solids, it is termed a stew. Clear soups have the ingredients filtered out. Thick soups have them pureed or use a thickener. In the following pages, we will use OPOS techniques to create a huge array of soups. They have been illustrated with a few ingredients, but you can use the same template to create hundreds of variations of your own.

### Module 1: Layer and flash soups:

Layer and flash vegetables. Blend into thick soups or blend with water/stock into thin soups. Or blend with milk/cream into creamy soups. This technique is illustrated with the following recipes:

Thick Tomato Soup, Caramelised carrot Soup, Potato soup, Broccoli Cheese Soup, Cream of Mushroom Soup and Cream of Spinach Soup

### Module 2: Pressure cooked soups:

Pressurecook foodstuffs, seasoning and a liquid together till their essence is extracted into the liquid. Serve as a chunky soup, or blend all into a thick soup or strain out solids and serve as a thin soup. Beaten egg can be mixed into the hot soup to fortify it. These techniques are illustrated with the following recipes:

Chicken clear Soup, Dal Shorba, Balanced meal soup, Minestrone and Egg Drop Soup

Module 3: Cold soups:

These are nothing but liquid salads. A variety of ready to eat ingredients are blended together into a cold soup, like the gazpacho.

# Broccoli Cheese Soup

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 250g broccoli florets cut small

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger- garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, sugar, pepper)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Blend with 1C milk, 1/4C cheddar cheese.

## **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Broccoli with cauliflower/zucchini other vegetables
- Butter with your favourite oil
- Milk with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Add more or less milk to vary consistency.



# Caramelised Carrot Soup

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 2C chopped carrots

Layer 3: 1tsp chopped ginger, 1/2tsp each (cumin, salt, sugar, pepper)

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Blend with 2C water.

## **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrots with other vegetables
- Butter with your favourite oil
- Water with stock/milk.

### **Tips:**

1. Add more or less water to vary consistency.
2. Can use peeled and cored carrots.
3. Filter for a richer soup.
4. Cook longer for more caramelisation.



Vegetables have strong cell walls as compared to animal cells. This is especially true of sturdy root vegetables like carrots and beetroots. These tough plant cell walls can break down only at higher temperatures, which is easier to achieve in a pressure cooker but takes long hours of simmering in an open pot.

This higher temperature inside a cooker can also caramelize the natural sugars in these vegetables without drying them out like stir-frying. The steam saturated environment inside a cooker prevents burning and makes addition of water unnecessary. This makes possible extraction of intense, concentrated juices without dilution. This method is especially ideal for rich stocks.

Once the mixture has been thoroughly cooked and caramelised, it can be pureed and served as a thick soup or blended with water/stock into a thinner version.

In open pot versions, the carrots are stir-fried till they caramelise. They are then pureed, mixed with hot stock/carrot juice and simmered with spices. The OPOS version converts it to a single step by caramelising carrots with spices and then pureeing it with a liquid.

By varying the vegetables, spices, finishing liquid and garnishes, you can create an infinite array of caramelised soups!

# Cream of Mushroom Soup

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1/4C chopped onion

Layer 3: 200g chopped button mushrooms

Layer 4: 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, pepper)

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Blend all with 1C milk.

## **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Button mushrooms with other vegetables
- Butter with your favourite oil
- Milk with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Add more or less milk to vary consistency.
2. Drink as soup/use as curry base/pasta sauce.
3. Can skip onions.

OPOS Cream of mushroom soup



# Cream of Spinach Soup

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 3C chopped spinach

Layer 3: 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1/2tsp each (salt, pepper)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Blend all with 1/2C milk, 1/4C cream.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Spinach with your favourite edible greens
- Butter with your favourite oil
- Milk with stock

## **Tips:**

1. Add more or less milk to vary consistency.
2. Drink as soup/use as curry base/pasta sauce.



# Dal Shorba

## Mogul lentil soup

<https://youtu.be/Xoj4KHy53wU>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C mung dal, 1tbsp ghee, 1C water, 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt), 1 slit chilli, 1/4tsp garam masala. Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (5 minutes). Remove chilli. Blend with 1/2C each (milk, water).

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung dal with your favourite lentils/sprouts
- Water with stock
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

### **Tips:**

1. Can add 1/8C rice to make this a full meal.
2. Can mix in cream for a richer version.



# Egg Drop Noodle Soup

## Chinese egg soup

<https://youtu.be/JkVI4S6RyPI>

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp butter, 1/2C each chopped (carrot, capsicum, onions, potato), 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt), 3C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in one well whisked raw egg, 2tsp pepper, 1tsp soy sauce.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Carrot/capsicum with your favourite vegetables
- Water with stock
- Soy sauce with your favourite sauce
- Potato with rice/noodles
- Onion with fried onion

#### Tips:

1. Can filter out solids for a clear soup.
2. Add egg in a thin stream and mix to form thin threads.
3. Blend all and serve as thick soup.
4. Do not use chilled eggs as they won't cook in retained heat.



# Full Meal Soup #1

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C each chopped (carrot, capsicum, beans), 1tbsp each (caramelised onions, cooked tuvar dal), 2tbsp rice flakes, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste, 3C water. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle.

## **PRESSURE COOK**

# Full Meal Soup #2

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp butter

Layer 2: 1/2C each chopped (carrot, capsicum, beans)

Layer 3: 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste), 1tbsp caramelised onions

Layer 4: 1tbsp cooked tuvar dal, 2tbsp rice flakes

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 3C stock.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/capsicum with your favourite vegetables
- Water with stock
- Dal with fresh green peas/mushroom/sprouts
- Rice flakes with rolled oats/crushed corn flakes/chopped potatoes
- Caramelised onions with fried onions

### **Tips:**

1. Serve as is, or strain and serve as a clear soup or blend all and serve as a thick soup.
2. Garnish with chopped cilantro.



# Gazpacho

## Spanish tomato - bread soup

Take 2C chopped tomatoes, 1/4C chopped onion, 1 deseeded chilli, 1/2C chopped cucumber, 1 garlic clove, 1tbsp olive oil, 1tsp vinegar, 1/4tsp salt, 1 slice of bread dunked in water and squeezed dry. Blend all.

**BLEND ALL**

### Replace/Supplement:

- Tomato with pineapple/watermelon
- Olive oil with your favourite oil
- Vinegar with lemon juice

### Tips:

1. Serve cold.
2. Add oil in a thin stream while blending for better emulsification.
3. Garnish with chopped hard boiled eggs, croutons, chopped salad vegetables or slivered nuts.
4. Can blend in chicken stock/vegetable stock for a more nutritious soup.

Blended soups are just liquid salads. Everything that goes into a salad like tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, spring onions can be blended into cold soups. Even fruits like water melon, apples and grapes are commonly used. Unlike regular soups, these take no time to make and are usually served cold, especially in summer. Blend the soup in short 5 second bursts or blend with ice to ensure the soup does not get heated up.

### Variations:

#### 1. Green Gazpacho:

Replace tomato with cucumber, blend in 1/4C each mint and cilantro

#### 2. Oriental Gazpacho:

Blend in 2tbsp coconut milk and 1tsp soy sauce

#### 3. Pineapple Gazpacho:

Replace tomato with pineapple

4. Tarator:

Replace tomato with cucumber, bread with 1/4C chopped walnuts. Mix in yogurt to get the consistency you like.

5. Ajoblanco:

Replace tomatoes with apple. Mix in cold stock/water after blending.

6. Salmorejo:

Skip cucumber, double the bread and olive oil quantity to make a creamier soup.

# Minestrone

## Italian Big Soup

<https://youtu.be/kl5N0PBd5xA>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1 chopped garlic clove, 1C chopped tomato

Layer 3: 1/4C each (pasta, fresh peas)

Layer 4: 1C each chopped (carrot, capsicum)

Layer 5: 1tsp each (salt, pizza seasoning), 2tsp pepper

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/4C each (grated cheese, chopped cilantro), 1tsp garlic infused olive oil, 2C stock.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/capsicum with your favourite vegetables
- Pepper with your favourite spice/spice mix
- Water with stock
- Cream with milk

### **Tips:**

1. Blend to a chunky/smooth soup.
2. Can mix in grated cheese.



Minestrone (Italian for big soup), is aptly named. It is actually a liquid meal. Minestrone is as popular in Italy as pizzas and pastas. Like all classic themes, there are innumerable variations of Minestrone. This soup is much respected, having sustained Italians over the ages. Apparently, the Roman army marched on minestrone. It is indeed ideal army food, for everything edible could go into the simmering soup pot as the army marched.

Boiling grits/flour with vegetables and protein (beans/meat) into a kind of a thick chunky soup was one of mankind's earliest cooking technique. These soups/porridges exist in every cuisine and are the cheapest way to feed a crowd. This was popular in Italy too, over 2000 years ago, as the Pulte.

Themes like Minestrone emphasizing cheap, nutritious food can be easily made from whatever is at hand, without too much fuss. Recipes like these arose from "cucina povera" (Poor Kitchen). At the other end was the "cucina nobile" (Royal Kitchen) emphasizing elaborate preparation, presentation and expensive ingredients, usually imported. The flour porridge (pulte) with meats/vegetables arising from the kitchen of the poor, is the ancestor of minestrone.

The core theme changed thrice, over the last 2000 years.

### 1. The rise of bread.

When bread started becoming easily available 2000 years ago in Rome, flour started moving out of soup. The soup was then eaten by dipping bread into it. Bread soon entered election manifestos too. Promising free food to win elections is an ancient technique practiced by Romans as 'panem et circenses' (bread and circuses). Promise free food and entertainment to the masses and they will sweep you to power! It still seems to be working well.

### 2. The rise of pasta

Pasta started taking over Italy 1000 years back. Three major classes of pasta based dishes became popular:

- Pasta asciutta, where cooked pasta is served with a sauce, very much like rice and curry.
- Pasta al forno, where pasta was baked with sauce and
- Pasta in brood, where pasta became a part of a soup. This style firmly cemented pasta's relationship with minestrone.

### 3. The rise of tomatoes.

Tomatoes and a slew of new vegetables including potatoes came into Europe

from the new world 500 years back. Tomatoes soon became an integral part of minestrone. Earlier versions relied on wine/vinegar for the tang, but soon faded away with the rise of tomatoes.

The key building blocks of minestrone are the starch, the liquid, the protein, the additives and flavouring.

Starch can come from pasta/rice/potatoes

The liquid can be water/stock.

Protein comes from beans/meats. Soya chunks/paneer/tofu, though not traditional, can be easily accommodated.

A huge range of vegetables can go into the minestrone. Vegetables that change the texture of the soup (okra), make it bitter or strongly alter the soup are usually not preferred. All leftovers (vegetables/pasta) usually go into the simmering minestrone.

The flavouring comes chiefly from the vegetables and the herb mix added. Grated cheese and chopped fresh herbs are mixed in just before serving for an added layer of flavour. Garlic is sautéed in olive oil in the traditional preparation, but can be been replaced by infused oil.

If you add a lot of pasta and beans, this becomes another classic Roman staple - Pasta Fagioli (Pasta with beans). Mix in some pesto and it becomes the flavourful and greenish Genovese Minestrone. The basic theme is flexible and can support infinite variations. Try out your own. This is a theme which can feed you for life!

# Potato Soup

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp butter

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onions

Layer 3: 2C chopped potatoes

Layer 4: 1tsp salt, 2tsp pepper.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend in 2C water, 1/2C milk.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with your favourite starchy vegetables
- Onion with garlic/shallots
- Pepper with your favourite spice/spice mix
- Water with stock
- Milk with cream

### **Tips:**

1. Blend to a chunky/smooth soup.
2. Can mix in grated cheese.

# Tomato Soup

<https://youtu.be/r1S1DWrv3wY>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp butter, 3tbsp water

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped onion, 1crushed garlic clove

Layer 3: 250g whole tomatoes (5nos)

Layer 4: Scoop out one tomato and add 1/2tsp each (salt, pepper, sugar) inside it.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Blend all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with your favourite oil
- Onions with shallots
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

## **Tips:**

1. Blend with water/stock if soup is too thick.
2. Can use deseeded/peeled tomatoes before blending.

The building blocks of a tomato soup are ripe tomatoes, a fat (usually butter/oil), and flavouring (usually bay leaf, onion, garlic, pepper). Flour is used to give it a body and fresh/dried herbs are added for additional flavour. A dash of sugar is usually added for a hint of sweetness.

The traditional recipe calls for blanching and pureeing tomatoes, sautéing onion, garlic and then simmering them all together.

We use layering and No water cooking technique to convert it into OPOS. The onion ratio has been balanced to give the soup a body, without the need of flour. After cooking, the soup is thickened both by the onion paste and by emulsification when the ingredients are blended with butter. This produces a rich and creamy mouth feel without the starchy taste.

The usual garnishes are cream/chopped herbs. Croutons, grated cheese,

toasted nuts, sour cream, flavoured oil etc, can all be used.

The fresher and riper the tomatoes, the better the soup. Use your choice of flavouring agents and explore variants of this classic theme.



# Chicken Clear Soup

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C each chopped (onion, carrot), 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, pepper, salt), 1C chopped chicken with bone, 2 cloves, 1 bay leaf, 3C water. Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (7 minutes). Strain out solids. Shred chicken and mix in.

## **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Chicken with other meats
- Bay leaf with fresh/dried herbs
- Pepper with chilli flakes/chopped chilli
- Carrot with your favourite vegetables
- Water with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Can add rice/noodles/pasta. Chill and skim off fat for a clearer soup.

Chicken soup is seen as soul food in many cuisines across the world, as is the case with ultra simple recipes. Nothing could be simpler - just pressure cook chicken in a liquid with seasoning. That's it!

The building blocks of a chicken soup are just chicken and a liquid. In this basic mix, each cuisine adds its favourite spices and additives to create its own version of this world theme.

"...at the Fat Duck we've just started using a brilliant gadget to make stocks. It's not exactly cutting-edge - it's the humble pressure cooker - but it makes stock better and quicker than any other method I know of..." - Heston Blumenthal, The Fat Duck Restaurant, Berkshire, England.

The use of a pressure cooker not only makes soups faster, it also makes them a lot better as the flavours are locked in and get concentrated. Even ultra gourmet restaurants use pressure cookers for their soup and stock preparation.

## Drinks

# Aam Panna

## Marathi Mango drink

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water

Layer 2: 250g peeled and chopped raw mango

Layer 3: 1C sugar

Layer 4: 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin powder, pepper powder), 1/4tsp cardamom powder.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend all.

Bottle. Mix one part syrup with three parts of chilled water and serve.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mango with your favourite fruit pulp
- Sugar with jaggery/your favourite sweeteners
- Cumin with chat masala/your favourite spice mix
- Cardamom with cinnamon/other sweet spices
- Pepper with chilli flakes

#### **Tips:**

1. Can use as a spicy jam.
2. Can freeze in ice trays and mix in the cubes with water.

Panna/Panha/Panhe (drink) is a popular summer drink in North India. It is almost always made from sour mangoes and is called the Aam Panna or Kaire Panhe (Marathi: Raw mango drink).

Aam panna is believed to ward off dehydration and heat stroke. This mango concentrate can be mixed with chilled water or carbonated water and served. It lasts for weeks unrefrigerated and months refrigerated.

In the traditional method, the raw mangoes are boiled whole and their pulp is removed. This pulp is mixed with sugar/jaggery, spices and cooked again.

The OPOS version caramelises sugar and gives you a golden brown Aam

Panna. The colour does not define the theme as the panna colour can vary from light green to dark brown depending on the fruit used, amount of cooking and sweetener.

This differs from the western fruit squashes as it is sweet, tangy and spicy at the same time. In a nation that even converts coke into a masala coke, we would certainly expect a spiced fruit squash! Cardamom, roasted cumin powder, black pepper, asafoetida, chat masala are all used to flavour the drink. Fresh flavourings like mint, ginger etc are also used as garnishes.

Extending the theme:

The building blocks are a sour fruit pulp, sweetener and flavouring. Though raw mango is the most popular, we can use any sour fruit pulp in this theme. The sweetener commonly used is jaggery or sugar which can be replaced with honey/molasses/corn syrup/brown sugar etc. Cumin, black pepper and be supplemented by or replaced with a wide range of your favourite flavourings.

You can even serve this as a spicy mango halwa/mango jam.



# Adrak Pudina Sharbat

## Ginger - Mint sweet syrup

In a 2L cooker, add 1C each chopped (ginger, mint leaves), 1C each (sugar, water). Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Mix in 1tbsp lemon juice. Filter and bottle.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mint with other fresh herbs

### **Tips:**

1. Stores well even without refrigeration.
2. Blend all before straining for more syrup.
3. Mix 1 part syrup with 3 parts chilled water/soda and serve.
4. Mix with coffee/tea/juices in place of sugar.

A variety of roots can be boiled/steeped in hot water to extract their flavours. Ginger, Nannari and Vettiver are the most popular. Other flavoured roots like Turmeric/Mahali are almost never used, though it would be interesting to try out a Mahali Sharbath! You can use this theme with any flavoured root!

Some recipes call for drying the roots, powdering them and steeping the powder in hot water. The water is filtered and then mixed with sugar syrup to create the sharbath. Here we use fresh roots and cook up the syrup with the root to make the recipe OPOS. Ginger Sharbath is a digestive and an excellent appetizer. It can even be added to teas for a ginger punch. It lasts for months in a fridge and over a week at room temperature.

The logic behind all Sharbats is simple - Steep aromatic compounds in hot water to extract their flavouring. Mix this flavoured liquid with sugar syrup which acts as a preservative.

These delightful, ancient, flavourful drinks, with a rich history behind them have now almost disappeared from homes, wiped out by the colas.

Sharbat (Persian/Turkish) from Arabic (Sarba: drink) denotes a sweetened,

diluted liquid. The French Sorbet/Italian Sorbetto arise from the same root, but now refer to a frozen version of the Sharbat. The Tamil Sarbath comes from the same root.

Moguls loved the Sharbat and brought it with them to India, where it was accepted with a small twist. Unlike the Persian version which often uses egg, Indian versions skip egg completely. During the Mogul reign, huge loads of ice were shipped daily from Himalayas to cool Sharbats. Baburnama records Babar's love for Sharbat. It was a favourite of the later Mogul emperors too.

Hydro distillation is the scientific name of the Sharbat making process, where water is used to extract aroma. This process works best for dried aromatics like dried flowers, roots and spices.

Use alcohol as a steeping liquid in place of water and the Sharbat becomes a liqueur. This process is even easier as alcohol is a better solvent and need not be boiled like water.

A variety of aromatic flowers, grasses, spices, fruit, wood, roots, resins, barks, seeds, leaves and gums can be used in sharbat/liqueur making. Though the same principle can be used to extract flavour from animal secretions (castor, musk, ambergris etc,) they are not very common.

#### Sharbat Additives:

To add some texture to a sharbat, it is usually served with one of these additives.

1. Soak a spoon of Basil seeds (Tukmaria seeds/Subza seeds) in water overnight. Drain, mix into sharbat and serve.
2. Mix in falooda (thin corn starch/rice/wheat noodles). Sharbat with falooda and ice cream is a Persian delicacy and was a favourite of the emperor Shah Jahan.

The following Sharbat varieties can be easily prepared using the same theme:

1. Root Sharbat (Vettiver, Nannari, Ginger, Young turmeric).
2. Dry Spice Sharbat (Cinnamon, Cardamom, Clove, Star anise, Mace, Vanilla, Aniseed, Sandal).
3. Flower Sharbat: (Rose/Hibiscus/Jasmine).
4. Herb Sharbat (Mint/Basil/Oregano).
5. Fruit Sharbat (Mango/lemon/grapes).

Use the same theme with the above ingredients, mix and match to create a never ending array of sharbats.

# Chaas

## Spiced buttermilk

Blend 1/2C yogurt, 1/2tsp salt, 1/8tsp asafoetida and 2C water to a frothy drink. Mix in 1tsp each chopped (cilantro, grated ginger, chopped chilli), 1/4tsp cumin powder.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Asafoetida with your favourite spice mix
- White salt with black/pink salt
- Cilantro with your favourite herbs.

### **Tips:**

1. Serve chilled.
2. Lasts weeks refrigerated.

The quaintly named Ram Navami (Rama ninth day) is a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Lord Rama. The proper name would have been Rama Jayanthi (Rama's birth day). But the term Rama Navami is commonly used, like Krishnashtami (Krishna eighth day). There is an interesting story behind these peculiar usages.

According to the Vedic lunar calendar, a month is the time period between two full moons. This interval is split into two halves - the dark fortnight (Krishna Paksha) when the moon wanes and the bright fortnight when the moon waxes (Shukla Paksha). Each of these 15 days is named from 1 to 15, and they repeat.

The first 15 days of the dark fortnight are Prathama, Dwitiya, Tritiya, Chaturthi, Panchami, Shashti, Saptami, Ashtami, Navami, Dasami, Ekadasi, Dvadasi, Trayodasi, Chaturdashi and Amavasya (New Moon).

The next 15 days of the bright fortnight are again Prathama, Dwitiya, Tritiya, Chaturthi, Panchami, Shashti, Saptami, Ashtami, Navami, Dasami, Ekadasi, Dvadasi, Trayodasi, Chaturdashi and Pournami (Full Moon).

Now each of these days has a deity based on whose attributes the character of

the day is defined. Ashtami belongs to Rudra (the angry one), one of the earliest Vedic Gods. This day is considered good for war or for litigation in the modern day.

The ninth day belongs to Ambika (the warrior Goddess) and is considered suitable for 'killing enemies, acts of destruction and violence'.

Due to their strong association with destructive acts, Ashtami and Navami carry a taboo. Most Hindus avoid initiating any constructive activity on these days. The story goes that Ashtami and Navami were displeased and complained to Vishnu. Vishnu promised them that two of his incarnations will happen on these unholy days. Thus Rama, the 7th Avatar was born on a Navami. Krishna, the 8th avatar was born on Ashtami. And the Ashtami/Navami taboo is downplayed by associating them with the Lord's name as RamaNavami and KrishnaAshtami.

On Rama Navami, it is customary to serve mostly uncooked offerings to Lord Rama. Soaked mung dal salad (Kosambari/vadapappu), Jaggery based drink (Panagam) and Neermoru (Spiced buttermilk) are common.

NeerMoru/Chas is a healthy and addictive summer drink. When yogurt is churned, the agitation causes fat molecules to clump up. Being lighter than water, they rise to the top as butter. This butter is removed and the remaining low- fat liquid is further diluted with water to make buttermilk/chaas. It is India's most popular summer drink. It is even served as a curry in South India, and eaten mixed with rice. It is believed to cool your body and huge mud pots filled with buttermilk line the roadside during summer, and served free in many places. Some versions use ginger and asafoetida, to aid digestion.

# Cinnamon Sharbat

## Cinnamon infused sugar syrup

[https://youtu.be/y6R1stD\\_m0](https://youtu.be/y6R1stD_m0)

In a 2L cooker, add 5g cinnamon (a finger length stick), 1C sugar, 1/2C water. Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (4 minutes). Bottle syrup.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cinnamon with cardamom/cloves/star anise/your favourite sweet spices
- Sugar with jaggery/your favourite sweetener
- Cardamom with sweet spices

### **Tips:**

1. Stores well for months without refrigeration.
2. Can use this syrup instead of sugar in coffee/tea/juices.
3. Mix 1 part syrup with 3 parts chilled water/soda and serve.

# Dum Tea

## Pressure cooked Tea

<https://youtu.be/RMohheVMhlo>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C water, 1C milk, 2tsp each (tea, sugar), one crushed cardamom. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (3 minutes). Wait till foaming minimizes and release pressure. Filter and serve.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices

### **Tips:**

1. Can skip milk and mix it in after opening, if you face foaming/curdling.
2. Can add the mixture to inner vessel, with 1/2C water outside the vessel.
3. Minimal foaming is common.
4. Note time and shut off just before foaming starts.

The Dum tea recipe was one of the most mocked recipes when it was first proposed.

"Do you need a cooker to boil tea?" was often asked. You certainly do, for various reasons.

1. It is the most consistent way to make tea.
2. It is ideal for making large volumes of tea.
3. The flavours get intensified, like all OPOS recipes.
4. Like all OPOS recipes, it works exactly the same way, for anyone, anywhere, anytime.

India runs on tea. But good tea is not always accessible, to those who desperately need it. At Siachen, for instance, water boils at 82 degrees. At this low heat, making a simple tea becomes an ordeal. Anyone can use a 25L cooker to make hundreds of glasses of piping hot tea for soldiers stationed

here, in minutes, instantly lifting their spirits.



# Dum Sulaimani Tea

## Pressure cooked Tea

In a 2L cooker add 2C water, 4tsp tea, 2tsp chopped ginger, 1" bit cardamom, 5 crushed mint leaves. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Filter. Mix in 1tsp lemon juice, 3tsp sugar and serve hot or chilled.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Ginger with your favourite spices
- Mint with your favourite herbs

#### Tips:

1. Ideal way to make tea for a large crowd.

# Jeeraka Vellam

## Kerala's sterilized, spiced water

In a 2L cooker, add 4C water, 3tsp cumin. Cook on high heat for 10 minutes. Let pressure settle. Filter and use.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Cumin with cloves/dry ginger/spice mixes

#### Tips:

1. Aerate water by pouring it back and forth.
2. No microorganism can survive extended pressure cooking, thus making this far safer than plain boiling.

Most of us have bought into this philosophy of "Bottled water is the safest". It is not. Bottled water is probably the worst thing to have happened to water! Untreated water always has fungi, bacteria, viruses and spores. Water treatment aims at killing/removing these contaminants using heat, chemicals, radiation or filters.

The surest way known to man is to sterilize water by pressure cooking. Plain boiling does not help as some bacterial spores have evolved to survive boiling. Boiling water is found in nature (in hot springs) and some spores have evolved to survive at this temperature.

But nothing can withstand prolonged boiling at 120 degrees, which is the temperature inside your cooker. Pressure cooking is what hospitals across the world use for sterilizing surgical implements - only that they call it autoclaving!

This technique went viral during the 2015 Chennai floods, when the whole city was completely cut off from supplies. Hundreds of families relied on this technique for their drinking water.

Parts of India, especially Kerala, boil spices along with water for their medical benefits, colour and taste. Give it a shot and cut your reliance on bottled water!

# Lassi

## Yogurt drink

Blend 2C yogurt, 2tsp sugar, 1/8 tsp each (cardamom powder, salt) to a frothy drink.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Yogurt with vegan yogurt
- Sugar with honey/jaggery
- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices

### **Tips:**

1. Blend in water to dilute.
2. Blend in milk/cream if yogurt is too sour.
3. Garnish with cream/crushed nuts/saffron/dry fruits.

# Mango Lassi

## Fruit- yogurt drink

Blend 2C yogurt with 1/2C mango pulp and 2tsp sugar. Garnish with cream/chopped dry fruits/nuts.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Yogurt with other fermented milks
- Sugar with honey/jaggery/other sweeteners
- Mango with other fruits

### **Tips:**

1. Add a tsp butter and blend for a creamy emulsified taste.
2. Blend in sweet spices for more flavour.
3. Use a churner for a creamier lassi.

Lassi is a blended yogurt drink, with the consistency of a milkshake. It may be sweet or salty, flavoured or plain, shaken, churned or blended, simple or bursting with goodies.

The first recorded mention of a Lassi is in the Sikh literature, as the Kachi lassi, a mixture of raw milk and water. This was once safe to drink (because of the organic farming and cattle raising methods followed earlier) and was considered a refreshing drink. This Kachi lassi is still used to wash parts of the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs.

Another lassi is talked about - the Pakki lassi, which referred to liquid left over after yogurt was churned and butter removed. As this comes from boiled and curdled milk, it had the tag pakki (cooked). The Kachi lassi gradually fell out of favour and the pakki lassi came to define Lassi.

The image of Mata Gangaji, mother of Sikh Guru HarGobind (late 1500's), offering missi roti, onions and lassi to Baba Buddha Ji is probably the first pictorial depiction of lassi we have. The Ni'matnama, a kind of cookbook authored by the Sultan of Mandu (Madhya Pradesh) Ghiyath al-Din (1469), also mentions the lassi. Another mention is in the story of Baba Nand Singhji

(1872), who was asked to fetch lassi for his elder brother. These are the earliest mentions of the pakki lassi. Based on these, we can speculate that the lassi is probably around 500 years old, and probably originated in Punjab. Lassi took hold in the North, with each region inserting its specialties into it. Rajasthan legally sells the Bhang lassi, where yogurt is blended with marijuana. The more potent versions are advertised as "Full power, 24 hour - No toilet, No shower!"

Bhang lassi is also made and consumed across North India especially during Holi, the festival of colours. Varanasi is famous for its Bhang lassis.

Regular lassis are very popular across India. Punjab is the undisputed lassi capital where a huge variety of lassi is drunk from super sized glasses. So much lassi is sold that some shops have replaced blenders with huge washing machines to churn the huge volumes!

The light pakki lassi, which was very similar to Chaach/Matha/Buttermilk, progressively got enriched with cream, sweeteners and additives to become today's rich lassi. The lassi theme seems to be "Churn fermented milk with flavouring and additives into a rich drink". Let us now try extending this theme with OPOS.

Though traditional lassis are made from cow/buffalo milk, they can be made from any fermented milk, including plant milk. Each culture has its own way of fermenting milk and almost all of them can be turned into delicious lassis. Using the Indian technique of blending fermented milk with a variety of flavourings and additives, a large variety of global lassis can be created.

The base of all lassis is fermented milk. This is blended with a variety of flavourings and additives into a never ending array of lassis. We can change the base, flavouring and additives to create innumerable variations.

The base:

You can try replacing Cow/Buffalo yogurt with any of the following fermented milks from other cultures:

Kefir, from Caucasus, is milk (usually from goat/camel) fermented with Kefir grains into a thin yogurt.

Viili is a Finnish version of yogurt made by curdling milk with special bacteria.

Kaymak, from Turkey is fermented milk made by boiling milk and then slowly simmering it for hours over gentle heat. The cream is then skimmed

and fermented into mild, rich paste.

Kumis is Central Asian fermented mare's milk.

Filmjölk, from Sweden is milk fermented by bacteria into a less sour version of normal yogurt.

South African Amasi is made by fermenting unpasteurised cow's milk in a container made from calabash/hide sack.

Irani Doogh is very similar to carbonated buttermilk.

Georgian Matsoni is a viscous version of yogurt.

All these can be turned into lassis.

Flavouring:

Many lassis are not flavoured. But a variety of flavourings like cardamom, saffron, cinnamon, vanilla, chocolate etc can be blended in.

Additives:

Almost anything edible can be blended in with the lassi. A wide variety of fruit, nuts, honey etc can be blended with the base.

A rich glass of lassi can become a full meal in itself. It is fast, easy, fail proof and can be made in minutes!

# Milkshake

## Liquid meal

Blend 2C milk, 1/2C chopped banana, 1tbsp sugar, 1/8tsp cardamom, 3 cashews, 5 raisins, 1tsp butter, and 1tbsp thin rice flakes.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with your favourite fruits
- Milk with vegan milk/ice cream
- Sugar with honey/jaggery/chocolate syrup
- Cardamom with saffron/vanilla
- Cashew with your favourite nuts
- Raisins with your favourite dry fruits

### **Tips:**

1. Blend with ice/ice-cream for a thicker shake.
2. Blend with butter/cream/oil to emulsify and make the shake thick and creamy.

A milkshake is a cold, sweet drink made by blending milk, ice cream or a combination of both. Early milkshakes were just shaken together, but the arrival of the blender made possible thick, frothy milkshakes.

Frosted milkshakes are milkshakes made with ice cream. Malted milkshakes, also called Frappe, are made with malted milk powder. (Sold under the brand names of Horlicks, Ovaltine, Milo). Floats are milkshakes which have a scoop of ice cream floating in them.

A variety of flavouring is usually blended in, with vanilla, chocolate and strawberry being the most popular ones, across the world.

Syrups, cookies, fruits, candy, eggs, jelly and even alcohol can be blended into milkshakes. In fact, the first use of the term milkshake referred to whiskey mixed with milk and eggs. Milkshakes can be a quick, filling meal. They act as medicine too — the banana milkshake with honey is supposed to act as a cure for hangover.

Milkshakes can be garnished with whipped cream, syrup, crumbled cookies or fresh fruits.

This theme blends in starch (carbohydrates), nuts (protein) and dry fruits (Micro nutrients) with milk, turning it into a nutritionally balanced meal.

Extending the theme:

The building blocks of a milkshake are the base, the flavouring and additives. Change them to open up more shakes.

Base:

Replacing/supplementing milk with ice cream, condensed milk, cream, coconut milk, soy milk, nut milks, grain milk etc., can open up more recipes. The famous ‘milkshake’ from cereal milk is the Horchata, a Mexican/Latin American drink made from rice milk.

Flavouring:

Apart from a variety of sweet spices like vanilla and saffron other flavourings like instant coffee powder, fruit syrups, even mint/dry ginger powder, roasted cumin powder etc., can be blended in.

Additives:

Anything edible can go into a milkshake. Fresh fruits, dry fruits, nuts, instant cereals, cookies, jams, custard, alcohol, malted powders, leftover desserts can all be blended into milkshakes.

Tips:

1. The more ice cream you use, the thicker the shake. The more milk you use, thinner the milkshake.

2. Blending for too long heats up the milkshake and makes it thin. So blend for as little time as possible (15-20 seconds).

3. Blending in fruits like mango/banana will thicken a shake.

4. If the shake is too thick, blend in more milk. If it is too thin, use more Ice.

5. Ice cream is just milk foam. Cheaper ice creams are nearly 50% air.

Premium ice creams have only 10-25% air mixed in and so are denser and heavier. Using denser, heavier Ice creams give thicker shakes. Use Kulfi for really dense shakes.

6. Do not try to blend rock hard ice cream as it puts too much strain on the blender. Leave it on the counter and let it soften enough so that you can push a spoon straight to the bottom.

7. Blending frozen fruit with cold milk gives very thick shakes.

8. Citrus fruits like lemon, orange etc., can also be used to make milkshakes. Blend them in with really cold milk and the milk will not split.
9. Blending in a dash of neutral oil emulsifies the shake and makes possible very thick milkshakes (called upside down milkshakes). A squirt of non stick spray contains a powerful emulsifier and can be blended in to make thick, emulsified milkshakes.

# Sattu

## Bihari Gram flour drink

Blend 1/2C roasted gram, 1/4tsp salt, 1/2tsp cumin and 1tsp ginger to a powder. Mixblend in enough water to a thin drink. Mix in chopped onions, chopped cilantro and lemon juice.

# Sattu Sharbat

## Bihari Gram flour drink

Blend 1/4C roasted gram, 1tsp sugar, 1tsp ginger to a powder. Mix in 1tsp lemon juice, 2C chilled water.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Roasted gram with roasted lentil powders
- Roasted gram with roasted grains (barley, Jowar)
- Water with milk/buttermilk
- Ginger with your favourite spice

### **Tips:**

1. Pack the dry mix as travel food.

Bihar is powered by Sattu. Tibet is powered by Tsampa. These ultra simple staples prove elaborate food processing or expensive packed foods are not needed to create healthy staples that a people can live off for generations.

Sattu is just roasted and powdered gram. Tsampa is just roasted and powdered barley. They are consumed as is - the hard working Bihari labourers make small pellets of Sattu and eat it with a pickle or drink it mixed with water. The Sherpas consume Tsampa by mixing it with tea. These foods define the people. Sattu is relished by Bihari farmhands/labourers whose mid-day meal would just be Sattu, raw onion and jaggery/pickle.

Sattu is gluten free, fat free, chemical/preservative free, has a long shelf life, is rich in fiber, is equally good for babies/adults/invalids/old people and even for diabetics. It is high on Iron, Magnesium and Manganese, low on Sodium and has a low Glycemic index. No wonder the Biharis swear by it!

Though the starch (from grains) and protein (from lentils) combination is popular across India, you come across pockets which break this rule. Grains like rice, wheat etc., have a bit of protein too. And pulses like roasted gram have starch too. So, technically it is possible to base your diet primarily on a single grain or a lentil.

The Namboodiris base their diet primarily on a grain (Rice/millet), without pairing it with a legume - which is why their rice intake is legendary. The Tibetans do the same with roasted and powdered barley. Rural Bihar bases its diet chiefly on roasted and powdered gram.

The Sattu is used in numerous ways. It is used to stuff the Bihari equivalent of the Rajasthani bati - the Litti, and the Bihari version of the Punjabi stuffed paratha - the Makuni Roti. It is stuffed into Kachoris and made into a sharbat.

The traditional method for preparing sattu calls for soaking Bengal gram, semi cooking it, drying it, roasting it and then powdering it. This recipe replaces it with roasted gram easily available across India. One whirl in your blender and the Sattu is ready.

You can eat Sattu as a solid food, by mixing it with a bit of liquid. Or have it as porridge by mixing in more liquid. You can have it as a drink, by mixing in even more liquid. You can make the drink savoury or sweet. The savoury versions are mixed with chopped onions, garnished with lemon juice and fresh herbs. The sweet versions are mixed with milk and sugar/jaggery.

You can expand this theme by trying out various combinations of roasted and powdered cereals/pulses. Pair them with different liquids (milk, buttermilk, tea, fruit juice etc). Make them sweet or salty. This flexible theme can accommodate all your tweaks.

# Sambharam

## Kerala's spiced buttermilk

Blend 1/2C yogurt, 2C water and 1/2tsp each salt. Mix in 3crushed curry leaves, 1/2tsp crushed cumin, 1 chopped green chilli, 1 crushed lemon leaf and 1tsp grated ginger.

**Mix/BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Curry leaves with cilantro/your favourite herbs
- Cumin with mustard tadka

### **Tips:**

1. Serve chilled.
2. Lasts weeks refrigerated.

Many cuisines (Especially Central Asian and Indian) churn yogurt to extract butter. The thin liquid left over after butter is extracted is called buttermilk. In all these cultures, this buttermilk is mixed with spices and served as a refreshing drink.

This drink is especially popular in summer - in roadside shops, as the first drink served to visiting guests and as the drink that accompanies a meal, to wash it down.

The spices and herbs that go into the drink vary with the region. Fresh herbs (Mint, coriander, curry leaves, lime leaves), crushed shallots, chopped onions, cucumbers, green chillies, grated ginger, roasted and crushed cumin, black pepper, chat masala, black salt, asafoetida are all used as flavouring across the country. In the South, a tadka of mustard and asafoetida is added. Buttermilk gets its frothiness (head) by being churned. The vigorous churning aerates it and makes it light. You can get the same effect by blending it or by shaking it.

The sambharam or Moru vellam (watered down buttermilk) is Kerala's take on this theme. It is commonly made and served during summer. It is also a part of the Ona Sadaya - the harvest feast. It is designed to be a digestive aid,

to help the heavy feast settle down. Echoes of this theme are found across India and Central Asia.

India has two major classes of yogurt based drinks. The heavier version is the Lassi, where the fatty yogurt is used to make a rich, filling drink. The lighter version is the Chaas/Matha/NeerMoru/Majjigae/Chaac, where the fat free yogurt is churned into a light, refreshing drink. Lassi is mostly sweet whereas the buttermilk is mostly salty.

Though traditional recipes call for yogurt from which butter has been extracted, we will use the easily available normal yogurt as a base for all the recipes below. Usually 3 to 4 parts of water is churned with 1 part of yogurt to make the buttermilk. The amount of spices you mix in is purely a personal preference.

- Marathi Mattha:  
Mix buttermilk with chopped cilantro, mint, crushed cumin, chopped ginger and salt. Some versions also call for a bit of sugar.
- North Indian Chaas:  
Mix buttermilk with roasted and coarsely crushed cumin, black salt, lemon juice, cilantro and green chillies.
- Kannadiga Masala Majjigae:  
Mix buttermilk with chopped ginger, chopped chillies, cilantro/mint and salt.
- Andhra Majjiga:  
Mix buttermilk with crushed curry leaves, grated ginger, minced green chillies, salt and a dash of lemon juice.
- Andhra Nimmakaaya Majjiga/Nimmamajjiga:  
Mix buttermilk with salt and lemon juice.
- Tamil NeerMoru:  
Mix buttermilk mixed with chopped ginger, cilantro, curry leaves, salt and a tadka of mustard, curry leaves and asafoetida.
- Bengali Ghol:  
Churn buttermilk with rock salt, chopped green chillies, mint paste. Strain.
- Rajasthani Chaach:  
Mix buttermilk with roasted and powdered cumin, black salt and chaat masala.

- Gujarathi Chaas:  
Mix buttermilk with cumin powder, ginger paste, chilli paste, black salt, chopped cilantro. Mix in a tadka of cumin and asafoetida.
- Iranian Doogh (Sparkling yogurt):  
Mix yogurt with carbonated water, water, salt, pepper and dried mint.
- Turkish national drink (Ayran):  
Mix buttermilk with salt and chilled water.
- Armenian Tahn:  
Mix buttermilk with skinned and chopped cucumber, chopped parsley and salt.

You can extend this theme with other yogurts (plant/animal), mix in spices and additives of your choice and churn all into your version of this theme!

# Torani

## Fermented rice drink

In a 2L cooker, add 1C rice, 2C water. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (7 minutes). Let cool. Mix in 2C water. Let ferment overnight. Strain out rice. Mix in 1/4C yogurt, 1/4tsp salt, 1tbsp chopped onion, 1 chopped chilli, 1tsp chopped cilantro.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with rice grits/millet grits
- Onion with shallots
- Chilli with ginger
- Cilantro with your favourite herbs

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in 1/4C cooked rice to fortify the drink.
2. Can ferment more or less depending on your taste.

## Desserts

# Akkaravadisal

## Tamil Iyengar ghee and jaggery rice pudding

Soak 1/2C raw rice, 3tsp mung dal for 1 hour. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C ghee, soaked rice and dal, 1/2C each (water, milk) and 1 crushed cardamom. Cook on medium heat for 5 whistles (9 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/4C condensed milk, 1C grated jaggery.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with rice grits
- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices

### **Tips:**

1. Cook longer/soak in hot water for mushier rice.
2. If too thick, mix in more milk.
3. Use roasted rice/mung dal for a nuttier flavor.
4. If using unbranded jaggery, dissolve 1C jaggery in 1/4C water, filter and use.

Akkara Adisil or Akkaravadisal is a holy dessert in Iyengar cuisine, mentioned in divine literature. It is especially interesting to cook up recipes mentioned in literature. The akkara vadisal finds mention in the twenty seventh verse of Thiruppavai, composed 1300 years back by the child prodigy Andaal, who later becomes the consort of Lord Vishnu .

The Akkaravadisal forms a part of the feast after a 26 day fast (paavai nonbu).

கூடாரை வெல்லும்சீர் கோவிந்தா ! உன்தன்னைப்

Triumphing over enemies, Oh Govinda,

பாடிப்பறை கொண்டு யாம்பெறும் சம்மானம்

We'll sing your praises, and with the reward we get

நாடுபுகழும் பரிசினால்நன்றாக  
சூடகமே தோள்வளையே தோடே செவிப்புவே  
பாடகமேயென்றனைய பல்கலனும் யாமணிவோம்

We'll dress up with ornaments

ஆடையுடுப்போம் அதன்பின்னே பாற்சோறு

new clothes and

மூடநெய்பெய்து முழங்கை வழிவாரக்

eat rich Akkaravadisal with ghee dripping down our elbows

கூடியிருந்து குளிர்ந்தேலோரெம்பாவாய் .

rejoicing in (Y)our company!

Don't go easy on the ghee in cooking up this recipe. Unless ghee drips down your elbows when you are eating it, the recipe is not authentic!

Iyengars are a 1000 year old sect of the 3000 year old Tamil Brahmins. Iyengars believe Vishnu to be the supreme Lord and the path leading to Him is the one revealed by the teacher (Acharya) Ramanuja.

During 500- 1000 AD, Hinduism was in decline, partly due to the spread of Buddhism/Jainism and partly due to caste oppression and elaborate ritualism. In response, Bhakti and Vedanta movements arose in the South and spread across India, revitalizing Hinduism.

Bhakti movement was spearheaded by common people from all walks of life, the 63 Saivaite Nayanmars and 12 Vaishnavite Alwars. They proposed love and surrender to God as the path to salvation. The Vedanta movement was led by the philosophies of Brahmin intellectuals - Adi Shankara's (788-820) Advaita, Ramanuja's (1077- 1157) Vishishtadvaita and Madhwa's (1238 – 1317) Dvaita.

Both Bhakti and Vedanta movements de-emphasized the cornerstones of Vedic Brahmanism - caste system, Brahmin supremacy, elaborate rituals and sacrifices. Both movements came together under Nathamuni, a Vedanta philosopher, who spent a lifetime compiling the lost poems of the poet-philosopher Alwars, into the Naalayira Divya Prabandham. His grandson Yamunacharya would later become the guru of Ramanuja.

Ramanuja's philosophy led to the emergence of a new class – the Iyengars. Tamil with a liberal sprinkling of words from Alwar poems became their language (Vaishnava paribhashai). Iyengars soon split into Vadakalai (influenced by Vedanta movement) and Thenkalai (influenced by the Bhakti movement). Persecution by the Saivaite Chola king forces Ramanuja to migrate with his followers to South Karnataka.

Their descendants become the Hebbar and Mandyam Iyengars and later, Udupi Brahmins. Iyengars follow all Tamil Brahmin cooking rituals, and go a step further. They believe their kitchen to be sacred and everything that gets cooked there is food fit for Gods, which is why all their dishes are suffixed with amudhu (ambrosia).

Iyengars are brand conscious - literally! Many brand themselves with the Conch and Discus insignia and would rather go hungry than to eat in kitchens run by unbranded, non- Vaishnavaite cooks! Even today, a girl married into an orthodox Iyengar family needs to be branded, before being granted entry into the kitchen.

Like all Brahmin cuisines, onions/garlic and spices like fennel, cinnamon, cloves are avoided in Iyengar cuisine. A basic Iyengar meal would have rice, a dry vegetable curry, a lentil stew, a thin curry, yogurt and a pickle.

# Halwas:

Halwa (Arabic for Sweet) is native to the Middle East, where a huge variety of edibles are cooked with sugar syrup into dense confections. You can look at them as thick jams. Sugar is as good a preservative as salt. Saturated with sugar, these desserts have as long a shelf life as food saturated with sugar/salt resist contamination.

Unlike salt, sugar melts and this fact makes possible a huge array of sweets. Three main classes of Halwas are commonly cooked.

Flour/grits based halwas (eg: Wheat flour halwa), Nut/seed based Halwas (e.g. Badam Halwa) and Fruit/vegetable based halwas (e.g. Carrot halwa, Chundo).

The core recipe remains the same. Melted sugar is used as a glue to bind ingredients into a fudge. The traditional method calls for a lot of ghee which acts both as a preservative and binder. The OPOS version can get away with using very little or no ghee.

Dairy rich Punjab excels in making Gajar Ka Halwa (Carrot Halwa). North India prefers the juicy red carrots and not the starchier orange ones used down South. The specialty black carrots are also occasionally used. In Punjab, the Gajar Ka Halwa becomes a sinful dessert being cooked with mounds of ghee, fatty milk, milk solids and juicy carrots. Winter time is Gajar Ka Halwa time, to coincide with the arrival of the fresh carrots. Gajar Ka Halwa routinely makes it to the list of top 10 Indian desserts. This theme is extended with beetroot and with many vegetables. When watery vegetables are used, they are squeezed to remove excess moisture before being cooked into a halwa.

The building blocks of this theme are the fruits/vegetables used, milk, sweetener, flavouring and additives.

A large array of fruits/vegetables can be used in this theme. In India, carrot is most commonly used, followed by beetroot. Neutral vegetables without an overpowering smell/taste like squash, zucchini, bottle gourd, watermelon rind, raw papaya, potato, raw banana can all be used. Fleshy fruits like pineapple, apple, pear, guava can also be used.

A variety of milks - plant milk or other animal milks can be used. The use of

coconut milk/soy milk/nut milk or grain milk would turn this dessert vegan. Milk can be replaced by milk solids (Khoya) or even milk powder if the fruit/vegetable has a lot of moisture.

Halwas cooked with watery fruits like Ash gourd don't use milk as the inherent moisture in the vegetable itself is sufficient to prevent the mass from burning. Addition of more liquid will make it watery and prevent it from setting.

Sugar can be replaced/supplemented with jaggery/syrup etc.

Though cardamom is the most common flavouring used, sweet spices like cinnamon, clove, saffron, vanilla, even dry ginger powder, edible camphor, fennel powder etc can be used.

The common additives in these halwas are cashew nuts and raisins. They can be replaced/supplemented by a variety of dry fruits and nuts.

# Badam Halwa

## Almond fudge

<https://youtu.be/-mGdHQR5Fmw>

Soak 1C almonds overnight. Remove skin (optional) and grind to a coarse paste without adding water.

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1C sugar, 1/4C water. Cook on high heat for 8[U5] whistles (4 [U6]minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C almond paste, 6 strands saffron.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Almonds with your favourite nuts
- Saffron with yellow/orange food colour
- Ghee with butter
- Sugar with jaggery

### **Tips:**

1. Can use almonds with skin.
2. Can stir-fry halwa after mixing if you need a thicker texture.

# Beetroot Halwa

## Beetroot fudge

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water

Layer 2: 500g peeled and grated beetroot

Layer 3: 250g sugar, 3 crushed cardamoms, 1tbsp ghee

Layer 4: 1/4C each (cashew, raisins)

Cook on high till you smell mild burning. Takes 12 -25 whistles depending on the moisture content of beets. Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Beetroot with carrots/non-watery vegetables
- Sugar with jaggery
- Cardamom with cinnamon/cloves/other sweet spices

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in 1/4C khoya (milk solids).
2. Can stir-fry till you get the texture you like.
3. In an induction stove, you can cook till the overheating error E5 appears.
4. Grate and squeeze watery vegetables to remove excess water before using.



Beetroot Halwa

# Gajar ka halwa

## Carrot fudge

<https://youtu.be/7exWHt5g5Yo>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water

Layer 2: 2C (250g) peeled and grated carrots

Layer 3: 1C sugar (250g)

Layer 4: 1/4C milk powder, 1tbsp ghee, 1/4tsp cardamom powder

Cook on high heat for 15 to 25 whistles (8 - 12 minutes). Release pressure.

Mix in 1/4C each (nuts, dry fruits) .

### LAYER AND FLASH

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Carrot with beetroot/winter melon/squash
- Cardamom with sweet spices
- Sugar with jaggery/your favourite sweeteners
- Milk powder with khoya/condensed milk/paneer
- Water with milk

#### Tips:

1. For a firmer fudge, cook longer or stir and cook after opening.
2. Can serve hot/cold.
3. The timing/whistles depend on moisture content of carrots.
4. Go by your nose. Wait for a mild burnt smell.
5. Note time between whistles. Switch off when time doubles.



# Lauki Halwa

## Bottle gourd fudge

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water

Layer 2: 2C grated and squeezed bottle gourd

Layer 3: 1/C sugar, 1/4tsp cardamom powder, 1/8tsp salt, 1tbsp ghee

Cook on high heat for 20 to 30 whistles (15 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Bottle gourd with squash with raw papaya/apple/pear
- Sugar with jaggery/your favourite sweetener

### **Tips:**

1. Can stir-fry after opening for a drier version.
2. Can increase/decrease sugar/ghee quantity.
3. Go by a faint burnt smell as your timing/number of whistles would vary based on the moisture content in the vegetables you use.



# Kasi Halwa

## Kasi's pumpkin fudge

<https://youtu.be/w6XgSMPw0-s>

Peel, deseed and grate white pumpkin. Squeeze dry.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water

Layer 2: 2C pumpkin, 1/4tsp cardamom powder

Layer 3: 1C sugar, 1/8tsp salt, 3tbsp ghee

Cook on high heat for 20-30 whistles (15 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- White pumpkin with other gourds (squash/zucchini, bottle gourd etc)
- Sugar with jaggery/other sweeteners
- Cardamom with cinnamon/cloves/other sweet spices

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in condensed milk/nuts/dry fruits.
2. Can add saffron/food colour.
3. Bundle grated flesh in cloth and squeeze to remove water.
4. Stir-fry longer for a firmer consistency.
5. Cooking time depends on water content.
6. Use mature pumpkin. Avoid very tender ones.
7. Grate with fine/large grater to vary texture.
8. Can be served hot or chilled.

Kasi Halwa (The Halwa of Kasi/Varanasi), is a dessert made from Ash gourd (Winter Melon). This fruit (vegetable) is called Pooshani in Tamil. Some call it Vellai Pooshani to distinguish it from the Manja Pooshani (Squash), also called as Parangikkai. The Paranginkkai is so called that because it was brought by Firangis (whites) to India.

The parangikai (Kaddu) is a Squash of American origin. The Vella Pooshani, on the other hand, is a Melon of Asian origin.

Pumpkins/Squashes are native to North America. Melons arose in Africa and South East Asia. So it is possible this is either native to India (some studies claim it is native to Himalayan foothills) or was brought in by traders.

History records the Central Asian conquerors lamenting about missing the melons of their homeland. So I believe it is possible this melon was brought into India.

However, the method of preparation is not native to India, being borrowed from the Arabs. The word Halwa is itself an Arabic word (meaning dessert).

For reasons lost in history, Pumpkin (especially Squash) came to be called as Kasiphal (The fruit of Kashi). And the halwa made from it came to be called Kasi Halwa.

This recipe shows how the halwa theme can be extended to cover even watery vegetables. The trick is to ensure the watery vegetable is grated and squeezed so that it resembles a firm fleshed vegetable. This is done in two ways. Once this is done, the same halwa preparation technique can be employed to convert a variety of watery gourds/melons into Halwas!

Kasi Halwa caught the fancy of Indians and soon it became a favourite dessert, cooked during feasts, marriages and religious ceremonies.

The building blocks of this theme are the pumpkin used, spices, sweetener and additives.

#### Pumpkin:

Apart from white pumpkin, a variety of Cucurbita (Latin: gourd) like summer/winter squash, zucchini, courgette or vegetable marrow can be used in this theme.

#### Sweetener:

Though refined white sugar is used, you can use any sweetener of your choice. The normal ratio is 1: 1, with equal weights of sweetener and vegetable flesh being used. You can change the proportions depending on how sweet you want the dessert.

#### Additives:

Milk/khoa/condensed milk is added in some versions. Dry fruits/nuts are

usually mixed in as a garnish. Saffron/food colour is added in for a shine.

Flavouring:

A variety of sweet spices can be used in this theme. Edible camphor/cinnamon/cardamom/nutmeg/mace etc are all used.

# Kesari/Sooji Halwa

## Wheat grits fudge

<https://youtu.be/eLH8YMPYu1M>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C sugar, 3tbsp ghee, 1C water, 6 strands saffron, 1 crushed cardamom. Cook on high heat for one whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/4C double roasted fine rava. Close cooker and serve after 20 minutes. No further heating!

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Water with milk/fruit pulp
- Saffron with food colour
- Cardamom with cinnamon/cloves/your favourite sweet spices
- Sugar with jaggery

#### **Tips:**

1. Add more ghee for a creamier version.
2. Double roasted rava is readily available. If not, roast rava over low heat till fragrant. Let cool and roast again till it loses its raw smell.
3. Can roast rava with ghee for extra flavor.
4. Reduce water quantity for a firmer texture.



This is slightly different from the halwa recipes listed earlier as sugar syrup is not used as a binder. Instead, we cook the grits in retained heat and ensure the right amount of water is used to get the consistency we desire.

1. Double roasted rava is perfectly edible on its own. Try mixing it with some ghee and sugar and you can eat it like a dessert.
2. A grainy texture prized in a kesari can be destroyed by overcooking rava, which turns into a mush.
3. A proper ratio of water to rava is essential for the halwa like consistency. This ratio keeps the rava from drying out even when cold.
4. Uneven heating can cause the rava to clump up - a big No-No in kesaris.

# Bhapa Doi

## Bengali cheesecake

<https://youtu.be/RUHt6qrBcA4>

Mix 1C each (yogurt, sweet condensed milk), 1/4tsp cardamom powder. Pour in a small, greased metal vessel.

Place vessel inside a 2L cooker. Add 1C water outside the vessel. Cook on medium heat for 30+ whistles (15 minutes). Let pressure settle. Unmould.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices
- Yogurt with fruit puree

### **Tips:**

1. Cook longer for a firmer consistency.
2. Cook lesser for a wobblier texture.



Bhapa Doi (Steamed Yogurt) is a unique Bengali dessert theme. Steaming yogurt into a dessert is a theme not too common in world cuisine. Yogurt is a staple in most parts of India, but it is not seen as a staple in Bengali cuisine. In Bengal, yogurt is most consumed as a dessert and not as a curry or as a lassi as in other parts of India.

The sweet toothed Bengalis have various versions of yogurt- based sweets whereas the rest of India have none except the Shrikhand.

Bhapa Doi (Steamed yogurt), Bhapa Aam Doi (Steamed Mango yogurt), Mishti Doi (Sweet yogurt) are all unique Bengali yogurt desserts.

Bhapa Doi is the closest Indian cuisine has come to in making a sweet cake. The traditional recipe calls for boiling the milk till thick, mixing it with yogurt and steaming it in a double boiler till it sets. This recipe uses yogurt, condensed milk and high temperature cooking inside a pressure cooker to set it faster.

The building blocks of Bhapa Doi are the yogurt, milk, sweetener, flavouring and additives.

There are innumerable versions of yogurt and most of them can be turned into Bhapa Doi.

Yogurt can be replaced/supplemented with other yogurts (Plant/animal) or with other fermented milk products from across the world (Kaymat, Kumis, Kefir, villi etc). The thicker the yogurt, firmer the cheesecake.

Similarly milk can be replaced/supplemented with a range of plant/animal milks. The thicker the milk, firmer the consistency of the dessert.

Sugar can be replaced/supplemented with other sweeteners (honey, molasses, syrup etc). The traditional recipe just calls for cardamom and it can be replaced/supplemented with an array of sweet spices (Cinnamon, Nutmeg, saffron etc).

Dry fruits/nuts are the most common additives. Some versions call for fruit puree to be mixed in. You can mix in any of your favourite edibles (as long as they are not watery).

Bengalis gifted this brilliant theme to the world. We can easily extend it to create hundreds of variations!

Like Creme Brulee, a caramelised top looks attractive in this theme.

It is not possible with just steaming, which produces a uniform colour.

Steaming cannot produce uneven heating. Nor can cooking in a pressure

cooker.

But uneven heating is necessary for caramelisation. The maximum temperature reached inside a pressure cooker is only 120 degree Celsius. Caramelisation starts at 170 degrees.

In Creme Brulee, the caramelisation is achieved by a blow torch. The OPOS kit does not include one. So we have to find a way to get this effect at one shot in a pressure cooker.

The way to do that is to ensure all water is evaporated. Then the temperature can rise much above 120. But the timing and water quantity have to be carefully controlled to prevent accidents and achieve just the right degree of caramelisation.

1/2C water takes around 18 minutes to completely evaporate from a 2L stainless steel pressure cooker when heated at 600 W. After this time, the cooker will be heated dry and the bottom layer will reach temperatures much above 120 degrees.

So if you add 1/2C water and cook it for 20 minutes, instead of 15 minutes, all water in the outer vessel will evaporate in 18 minutes and for the last 2 minutes, the pressure cooker will be heated dry. This heating will caramelize the bottom layer of the dessert, giving it a browned top.

The flip side is that the sticky sugar syrup would stick to the rubber seal and you might need to wrestle with your cooker to open it.

Cooking without water in a pressure cooker is a dangerous procedure and might wreck your gasket or even your cooker. Please do not try unless you get comfortable with the basic techniques.

This is one of the most validated dessert recipes!



# Cashew- Chocolate Burfi

## Cashew fudge

<https://youtu.be/0mbK8VXopAM>

In a 2L cooker, add 200g (1C) sugar, 1/4 cup water, 5tsp ghee, 1/4tsp cardamom powder. Cook on high heat for 7 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure gently. Mix in 1.5C roasted cashew powder, 2tbsp cocoa powder. Mix well. Knead into a dough. Roll out and slice.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cashew powder with milk powder/roasted flour/your favourite nut powder
- Sugar with jaggery.

#### **Tips:**

1. Can stir and cook longer to firm up texture.
2. Vary powder quantity to vary consistency.



# Chakka pradhaman

## Kerala's jackfruit pudding

<https://youtu.be/b1tNjrbIC7g>

Mix 1/2C OPOS chakkavaratti (jack fruit jam), 1/4tsp each (ginger powder, cumin powder), 1/8tsp cardamom powder, 1tbsp ghee and 2C thick coconut milk.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Jackfruit jam with other OPOS jams
- Ginger powder with your favourite sweet spices
- Coconut milk with milk
- Ghee with butter

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in fried coconut slivers/fried nuts/raisins.

Chakka Pradhaman is a specialty Kerala dessert. Kerala prefers the use of coconut milk in place of cow/buffalo milk and jaggery in place of sugar for its desserts. This converts any regular Indian payasam/kheer into a Kerala pradhaman. The use of dry ginger powder in desserts/drinks is more prevalent in the South. It is medicinal too, as it helps food settle down after a heavy feast.

The traditional preparation of desserts with coconut milk is laborious. It calls for coconut milks with differing dilutions. Coconut is first grated and pressed to extract its milk. This first pressing milk is used as a base for many recipes. But this coconut milk splits easily on heating. The grated coconut is mixed with some warm water and pressed again to get a diluted version, the second pressing milk. As it is more diluted, it has lesser chances of splitting. This exercise is repeated one more time to get the third pressing milk. In Kerala the first, second and third extracts of coconut milk are used in cooking, in the reverse order. The higher the number, higher the dilution and less are the

chances of splitting. So, the third extract is used first, the second extract is added halfway through cooking and the first extract is added at the very end or as a garnish.

As coconut milk is perfectly edible raw, this recipe does not call for any cooking and does not have any risk of splitting. However, you may briefly warm the dessert before serving it.

As this theme proves, all you need to do to convert a delicious jam into an Indian kheer is just to dilute it with thick milk/coconut milk

A variety of kheers/pradhamans can be quickly made from fruit jams.



# Chakkavaratti

## Kerala's jackfruit jam

<https://youtu.be/cT-hopgwP6c>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water

Layer 2: 250g jackfruit

Layer 3: 250g jaggery, 1tbsp ghee

Cook on high. Track the time between whistles. When the gap between whistles doubles, stop cooking. Takes around 7 to 10 minutes or 10 to 20 whistles depending on the moisture content of your fruit. Release pressure and open. Mix all and bottle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Jack fruit with your favourite non watery fruit
- Jaggery with sugar

### **Tips:**

1. Prefer the non fibrous variety of jackfruit.
2. Lasts weeks without refrigeration.

ରୂପରହ  
Chakka varatti



Chakka Pazham in Malayalam denotes Jackfruit, which are so profuse in Kerala that they used to be given away or left to rot! The Portuguese absorbed this word as Jaca, which the English corrupted to Jack, and the name Jack fruit stuck!

Chakka varatti is a method of preserving the fruit with sugar. The traditional method involves long hours of patient stirring and cooking and so is becoming rare at homes.

Jams are very rare in Indian cuisine. We have just three of them - the uncooked Panchamirtham (Banana jam) of Palani, the Chakka Varatti of Kerala and the Chundo (Mango Jam) of Gujarat. All involve preserving the fruit in copious amounts of jaggery. The high concentration of sugar acts as a preservative and thus the jam can stay unrefrigerated for months.

This method can be applied to any firm fleshed fruit, with minor modifications.

# Chakkara Pongal

Tamil sweet rice

<https://youtu.be/O4wWVYbVXGI>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C raw rice (soaked 30 minutes and drained), 1/4C each (ghee, cashew, raisins), 3 crushed cardamoms, 1/4C milk, 1C water. Cook on medium heat for 5 whistles (9 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C grated jaggery. Keep closed for 10 minutes.

**PRESSURE COOK**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Raw rice with rice grits/your favourite rice variety
- Rice with millets
- Water with sugarcane juice
- Milk with coconut milk
- Cardamom with cinnamon/cloves/other sweet spices

## **Tips:**

1. Buy industrially cleaned, moulded and packed jaggery.
2. Dissolve 1C jaggery in 1/4C water and filter to remove impurities.
3. The colour of the dish depends on the colour of jaggery used.



OPOS Sakkarai pongal

Chakkara Pongal is a delicacy usually cooked during Pongal (Tamil harvest festival), to celebrate the freshly harvested bounty and thank the Sun God for making it possible. It is made with newly harvested rice cooked with freshly made jaggery and fresh ghee. Some versions have mung dal mixed in, making it a balanced meal.

In the traditional preparation, Jaggery is cooked into a syrup, rice and mung dal are cooked separately, mixed in with the jaggery syrup and and cooked together. This multi-step process is beyond most newbies. But cooking them all together was not possible because the addition of jaggery to water decreases its boiling point. So, rice would remain uncooked if cooked along with jaggery. This recipe addresses it by cooking rice separately and mixing in jaggery, letting it cook in retained heat. You can also employ the following techniques if you want a mushier pongal.

1. Use fresh raw rice (It has a higher water content and cooks easy).
2. Precook it (By dry roasting or pre soaking).
3. Add more water and cook longer.
4. Use rice grits as grits cook faster than whole grains.

The theme can be extended with other grains, other liquids and flavouring into infinite recipes.

# Chocolate Fudge

## Milk and chocolate fudge

Mix 300g sweet condensed milk, 1/4C chocolate syrup, 1/2C crushed cookies, 1/8tsp vanilla essence in a small container.

In a 2L cooker, add 1.5C water. Place container with condensed milk inside the cooker. Cover. Cook on high heat for 15 minutes. Let pressure settle. Mix in roasted and chopped nuts/dry fruits.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chocolate syrup with grated chocolate/fruit syrups
- Vanilla essence with your favourite flavouring

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in an egg to make it a flan.
2. Vary cooking time to vary consistency.

When milk is heated, it gets thicker and thicker. When it is heated with sugar, the sugar starts getting caramelised and binds the milk into a fudge. This is the principle behind Dulce De Leche, Bhapa Doi and all milk based fudges.

As the heating progresses, the colour, flavour and consistency of the fudge changes. The Spaniards have assigned colours to each of these stages.

As the heating starts, the milk- sugar mixture goes from being Blanco (white) to Rubio (blonde) >> Pajizo (straw) >> Marrón (brown) >> Marrón oscuro (dark brown) and finally to Negro (black), at which point the sugar has become carbon and is inedible.

In each stage the fudge gets thicker and thicker. In all milk fudge recipes we start with sweetened condensed milk already at the Rubio (Blonde) stage. What takes nearly 5-6 hours in open pot boiling is done in under 40 minutes inside a pressure cooker.

The building blocks of a chocolate fudge are milk, chocolate, sugar and additives. They are then heated till the desired consistency is reached.

By blending in cookies with condensed milk and chocolate, you can get an instant fudge though it will lack the complex caramelised notes.

Milk:

Sweetened condensed milk is ideal for the fudge recipes. Since it already has most of the water evaporated, it greatly reduces the cooking time. Other milks like coconut milk/plant milks do not work well.

Chocolate:

Either cocoa powder, chocolate syrup or even grated chocolate can be mixed in. The quantity and the type of chocolate can vary based on your personal preference.

Additives:

Dry fruits/nuts can be mixed in for a texture. Vanilla/cinnamon or other sweet spices can be added for flavouring. Crumbled cookies can be mixed in for a body and for quicker setting. You can even mix in roasted grits (rava) into the fudge to make an ultra rich chocolate Kesari!

1 cup of water completely evaporates completely in around 15 minutes on high (1200W) or in about in about 40 minutes on medium heat (600W). If you plan to cook for a longer time, you need to add more water or risk burning.

Once cooked, the mixture can be moulded and set into desired shapes or eaten straight out of the tin. The fudge can be served as a dessert or used as fillings/spread or even as a dip.

Try out this simple dessert and try out variations of your own!

# Double ka Meetha/Shahi Tukda

## Hyderabadi bread halwa/ Royal bits

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C sugar

Layer 3: 1" bit cinnamon, 4 crushed cardamoms

Layer 4: 1C water

Mix all. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 50g (5 to 6) rusk slices. (double baked bread). Let them soak till soft, remove and garnish.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rusk with fried/toasted bread
- Sugar with jaggery

### **Tips:**

1. Reduce water for a thicker syrup.
2. Garnish with chopped nuts/dry fruits/ice-cream/cream.
3. Mash and serve as bread halwa/Double ka meetha.

CPOS Shahi Tukda



Shahi Tukda (Royal slices)/Double Ka Meetha (Sweetened bread) is the Hyderabadi take on bread pudding. It is commonly served in Muslim weddings and is a popular sweet during the Ramzan.

Every cuisine cooks its favourite starch with sugar, turning it into a dessert. In South it is the chakkara pongal and kheer, up North it is sooji halwa. The Mogul influenced Hyderabadi cuisine uses a novelty - leavened bread!

When leavened bread was introduced by the Europeans, it came to be called Double Roti, as it was much fluffier than local unleavened flatbreads. Soon, this leavened bread found its way into two desserts: the Shahi Tukda, where the bread pieces are whole and the Bread halwa, where they are all mashed up.

The traditional method calls for deep frying bread slices in ghee till very crisp and then soaking them in flavoured sugar syrup. A thick sauce made by condensing milk is prepared and used as a garnish. The slices can also be mashed up and served as Double ka meetha.

The OPOS version skips deep frying and uses rusk (crisp, double baked bread slices) and cooks it in sugar syrup.

# Dry Fruits Ladoo

## Indian granola

Blend 1C chopped deseeded dates, 1/4C each (chopped roasted almonds, rolled oats, raisins), 1/8tsp cardamom powder to a coarse paste. Shape into small balls.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Dates with dried figs/your favourite dry fruits
- Almonds with other seeds/nuts
- Oats with poha/other flaked/puffed grains.

### **Tips:**

1. Can use nut butter/whole nuts/chocolate as stuffing inside balls.

A ladoo denotes a small ball shaped dessert. A variety of edibles are stuck together using sugar syrup/ghee/sticky fruit puree into an array of ladoos. In this theme, we use the stickiness of dry fruits as the binder to stick nuts together.

With no added sugar, salt or oil, this is as healthy as a dessert can get. This is why it is frequently given to pregnant women and nursing mothers. The absence of water ensures these ladoos stay good for over a week unrefrigerated and months refrigerated.

The building blocks are a sticky dry fruit, flavouring and additives (usually nuts). Most dried fruits are inherently sticky, due to concentrated sugar (dates, figs, raisins). Some are infused with sugar (berries) and some are candied (papaya, kiwi etc.,). All these can be used as binders, though dates and figs work the best.

The traditional recipes do not call for addition of cereals. We can borrow an idea from the West and mix in flaked/rolled ready to eat cereals, converting a dessert into a full meal. The cereal supplies the carbohydrates, the nuts supply the fat, protein and the dry fruits supply the fiber and micro nutrients.

A meal can't get any healthier!

This is a very flexible theme and you can mix in any of your favourite edibles, as long as the binder is able to bind them together. You can increase the proportion of nuts and cereals to your taste.

Once the basic paste is ready, you can even stuff them, shape them into bars or even layer them! You can wrap each portion like candy, serve them in cup cake liners or dust them with icing sugar/dry grated coconut and serve them as is.

The choices are only limited by your imagination!

# Dulce de Leche

Spanish milk candy

<https://youtu.be/DK8-EvChiX0>

In a 2L cooker, place a can of unopened, sweetened condensed milk(400g) on its side. Add 3C water. Cook on high heat for 30 minutes (40+ whistles). Switch off. Open after can is cold.

**PRESSURE COOK**

## Tips:

1. Vary cooking time to vary texture.
2. Remove the paper label, if any.
3. Use as spread/dessert/filling.
4. The condensed milk can will not burst open. Have no worries!
5. If cooking longer than 30 minutes, add more water.

# Kashmiri Kheer

## Kashmir's sweet rice porridge

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1/4C basmathi rice, 500ml milk, 2 crushed cardamoms. Cook on medium heat for 10 minutes. Mix in 1/2C sugar, 5saffron strands, 1tbsp chopped roasted almonds and1tbsp raisins.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi with your favourite rice variety
- Saffron with vanilla/other sweet spices
- Almonds/raisins with your favourite nuts/dry fruits

#### **Tips:**

1. Add less milk for a thicker pudding/less foaming.
2. Place a small vessel inside cooker to minimize foaming.
3. Use soaked rice for faster cooking.
4. Cook longer on lower heat for lesser spewing and more caramelisation.



Kheer (from Sanskrit 'Ksheera: Milk')/"Payasam" (From Sanskrit 'peeyusham': Nectar), are desserts cooked from milk, usually sweetened by sugar.

The words are pan Indian. In Tamil, Telugu and Kannada, it is payasam. In Bengal, it is called payas or payesh. In Assam, it is Payoxh. In other parts of the country it is Kheer. Only in Kerala does the name differ, where it is called Pradhaman. The core logic also differs - coconut milk is used and jaggery is the preferred sweetener.

Kheer is an ancient recipe, at least 2000 years old. Ramayana records that king Dasaratha, father of Lord Rama, performed a large yagna (sacrificial ritual) seeking children. A deity rose from the altar and presented the king with a pot of divine kheer. He distributed it equally to his four wives, who were then blessed with children.

Kheers are mandatory in most Indian feasts. Some of the best kheers are cooked in Indian temples and served free to thousands of devotees each day. The kheer/payasams of Guruvayoor, Ambalappuzha and Sabarimala are very famous and have interesting stories behind them.

In Ambalappuzha, a small town near Alappuzha in Kerala, Lord Krishna challenged and beat a vain King in a game of chess. The king was outraged at the Lord's apparently puny demand - one grain of rice on the first square, 2 on the second, four on the third and so on. The amount of rice grew exponentially (The total amount of rice on the first half of the chessboard would weigh around 100,000 Kg. In the second half of the chess board, the rice grains would weigh 6 times over the weight of the Earth!). The now humbled king realised his folly and sought forgiveness. Lord Krishna relented and permitted him not to clear the debt immediately, but over time. The king agreed to serve rice kheer to all devotees till the debt was cleared. It is served at the Unni Krishna temple to this day and at the current rate, the debt is likely to be paid off in a few million years!

In Sabarimala, we see the Aravana payasam, a unique kheer made without milk. Broken rice, ghee and jaggery are simmered down to a very sweet, viscous, brown, grainy, glistening pudding. It is so popular that a million kg is sold every month during the festive season! According to a myth, Lord Ayyappa, the presiding bachelor deity was wooed by a girl who brought him Aravana payasam everyday. He grew so fond of it that it is still offered to Him daily.

Kerala Pradhamans are cooked in thick bottomed, heavy bronze vessels, called charakku/uruli. These thick vessels distribute heat evenly and permit long periods of simmering without burning food.

The Bhat payasa, served at the Puri Jagannath temple, is probably the oldest recorded rice pudding. It is said that the recipe has not changed in over two thousand years.

The Mogul version of kheer, cooked in Hyderabad, called Gil - e - firdaus (clay of paradise) is a thick, rich pudding cooked with milk, sugar and vermicelli.

Another variety of kheers called phirni are cooked in the North India. These are nothing but thick kheers cooked with rice paste, milk and sugar.

Though traditionally only cow/buffalo milk is used as the base, a variety of ‘plant milk’ is now available. Almond milk, Rice milk or Cashew milk can be easily made at home and used as a base for kheer. The most common ‘plant milk’ is coconut milk, which is used extensively in Kerala versions.

All kheers can be flavored by various sweet spices, or a combination of them. In this recipe we use the starch leached out from unwashed rice to create a rich and thick sauce, as the rice cooks. It makes the kheer creamier than the traditional preparation methods. The principle is the exact opposite of a Biriyani/Pulao, where this sauce formation is minimized by repeated washing and by no water cooking.

The theme can be extended with an array of rice varieties to cook up your own variations.

# Poha Kheer

## Rice flakes milk pudding

In a 2L cooker, add 2C milk,  $\frac{1}{2}$ C rice flakes, 1tbsp ghee, 2 crushed cardamom,  $\frac{1}{4}$ C raisins. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1tsp saffron,  $\frac{1}{2}$ C sugar,  $\frac{1}{4}$ C roasted cashew.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Poha with vermicelli/rice grits
- Cardamom with cinnamon/cloves/edible camphor/dry ginger

### **Tips:**

1. Reduce heat to minimize spewing.
2. Can use boiled/unboiled/frozen milk.

# Maa Laadu

## Tamil roasted gram balls

Blend 1/2C roasted gram, 1/3C jaggery, 2tbsp ghee, 1 cardamom to a smooth powder. Mould with your palm into lemon shaped balls.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Roasted gram with other roasted flours (mung, wheat flours and wheat grits are common)
- Roasted gram with roasted nuts (Peanuts, cashew, almond)
- Roasted gram with roasted seeds (sesame, sunflower, melon)
- Jaggery with honey/sugar/dry fruits
- Cardamom with cinnamon, saffron, edible camphor etc.

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in nuts/dry fruits.

Roasted chickpeas are widely available across the country. Tamilnadu uses it chiefly as a binder for its coconut chutneys the same way pine nuts are used in an Italian Pesto.

In southern Tamilnadu, especially Tirunelveli, a quick dessert is made from roasted gram - the Maa Laadu (Flour Ladoo). The same ones are cooked in the North and are called Besan ladoo/Sattu ki ladoo.

Ladoo is not a recipe but just denotes a shape, as the Sanskrit root Ladduka (small ball) indicates. Most of them are indeed the size of a small ball/a lemon.

A huge variety of ladoos are cooked across the country, the most popular of them being the Tirupathi ladoo, which does not fit into the small ball category. Over a million of this baseball sized ladoos are distributed as prasad every week, in spite of being strictly rationed. Rava ladoo made from wheat grits, atta ladoo made from wholewheat flour and mung ladoo made from roasted mung dal powder are cooked in various parts of the country.

An unusual ladoo from Rajasthan, the churma ladoo is made from deep fried dough, All ladoos are stuck together with sugar syrup/ghee as the binding agent. One exception is the dry fruit ladoo where a variety of dry fruits and nuts are coarsely blended together and held by the sticky fruit pulp.

The lone exception to the sweet ladoos is the Ram ladoo, popular in the North. It is actually a mung dal bonda masquerading as a ladoo.

Most ladoos call for roasting of flours/grits, which are then mixed with melted ghee/powdered sugar/sugar syrup and then shaped into balls. This recipe converts it into a one shot process by relying on the heat generated in the blender to melt ghee and warm the mixture enough to stick together.

Extend this theme by using any combination of your favourite roasted grains/lentils. Any grain/lentil flour/grits can become a ladoo. A variety of sweeteners, flavouring and additives can be then mixed in to create a huge array of ladoos.

# Mambazha Pradhaman

## Kerala's Mango pudding

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1C sweet mango pulp, 1/2tsp dry ginger powder, 2 crushed cardamoms, 1/4C raw rice. Add 2C water. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles. Let pressure settle. Mix in 1C grated jaggery, 1/2C thick coconut milk.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### Replace/Supplement:

- Mango pulp with other fruit pulp
- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices
- Rice with rice flakes/other grits/flakes
- Coconut milk with your favourite milk

### Tips:

1. Prefer branded, packed jaggery.
2. If using loose jaggery, dissolve in minimal water and filter to remove impurities.

Mampazha pradhaman (Mango kheer) is a unique Keralite invention. Cooking fruit pulp with milk is not too common in South India. But Kerala cooks its favourite trio - mango, banana and jackfruit with coconut milk and jaggery into a variety of pradhamans.

This is usually prepared during summer, when mangoes are in season, and served as a part of the Onasadhya (Harvest feast) and Vishu (New year) celebrations.

The building blocks are the fruit pulp, sweetener, spices, coconut milk and additives.

### Fruit pulp:

Mango, Jack fruit and Banana are commonly used. You can use any of your favourite sweet fruit pulps in this theme. The less watery they are, the better it works! Though dry fruits are not commonly used, they would work as well!

### Sweetener:

Jaggery is Kerala's preferred sweetener. Some varieties of jaggery have particles of sand in them, as jaggery production is still a cottage industry. These varieties need to be dissolved in water and filtered before using. Industrially produced branded jaggery is relatively free from impurities. Any sweetener of your choice can replace jaggery.

### Spices:

Dry ginger powder and cardamom are very commonly used in pradhamans. You can add in any sweet spice (Cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, cloves, saffron, roasted cumin powder, even vanilla).

### Coconut milk:

Coconut milk needs little cooking and is added at the very end to prevent curdling. It cooks by retained heat. You can replace it with any plant/animal milk of your choice.

### Additives:

Rice, fried coconut pieces, roasted nuts, dry fruits are all added. Ghee is usually added for a creamier mouth feel and flavour.

### Method:

Traditionally, mango pulp is cooked, jaggery is melted, rice is boiled and all these are mixed and cooked together, with periodic additions of coconut milk in various strengths. Constant stirring and simmering is needed to evaporate excess water and thicken the pudding. We can eliminate all this in the OPOS version.

# Mango Kesari

## Tamil Fruit and grits porridge

In a 2L cooker, add 1C sugar, 2tbsp ghee, 1C water, 1C sweet mango pulp, 1/4tsp each (cardamom powder, salt). Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C double roasted rava. Close and wait for 20 minutes (No further heating needed).

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sugar with your favourite sweetener
- Mango with your favourite fruit pulp
- Ghee with butter
- Cardamom with sweet spices
- Rava with oats/pressed rice/flaked cereals

### **Tips:**

1. Vary quantity of sugar/ghee/fruit pulp to taste.
2. If you don't get pre roasted rava, dry roast rava. Let cool. Roast again till it does not taste raw.
3. Vary sugar quantity to your taste.
4. Add more ghee for a creamier mouth feel.
5. Add more water/mango pulp if you like a softer consistency. Stir and cook in an open pan if you want a drier version.
6. Mould it as you like. Mould it inside fruit halves, layer it with icecream into a trifle, mould and garnish it like cup cakes.



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Mango Kesari/Aam Ka Sheera (Mango - Semolina Pudding).

The South Indian Kesari goes by the name Sheera/Sooji ka halwa in the North. Mango Kesari becomes Aam Ka Sheera.

This popular sweet takes skill to prepare the traditional way. Plain kesari was demystified by using the retained heat cooking technique. The core idea is to use a measured quantity of water which will both cook the grits by retained heat, at the same time be completely absorbed in the process. This eliminates all stirring and lumping, making the process hassle free.

The building blocks of a fruit Kesari/Sheera are the roasted grits, fruit pulp, sweetener, liquid used and additives.

**Roasted grits:**

The key is to use grits that are already edible. Here we use double roasted rava (readily available in the market), which is almost cooked and is ready to eat. It just requires a brief soak in hot water to get fully cooked. If you are unable to find them, you need to roast raw rava over low heat till it loses its raw taste. Almost any processed, ready to eat cereal can be used in place of rava - pressed rice flakes, quick cooking oats etc., can all be used.

**Fruit pulp:**

Any fruit pulp can be used, though sweet ones like mango/pineapple/chikoo are more common. If the fruit used is mildly sour, you need to add more sugar to balance the sourness.

**Sweetener:**

Jaggery is the most popular sweetener in Kerala.

Sugar/honey/molasses/maple syrup or any of your favourite sweeteners can be used.

**Liquid:**

This recipe uses water as the base liquid. You can use milk/coconut milk even fruit juice to impart an additional layer of flavour to the pudding. If you are using a sour fruit, it may curdle the milk, especially when mixed in with hot milk.

**Additives:**

In regular Kesari saffron/food colour is used to infuse a golden colour as otherwise it looks bland. In the mango version, the golden glow comes from mangoes themselves.

Dry fruit and nuts:

A variety of roasted/fried nuts and dry fruits can be mixed in.

Ghee:

Ghee gives a creamy mouth feel and lends a rich flavour. In this version, ghee can be skipped completely.

Khoya:

As this is seen as a halwa in North India, it is common to mix in milk solids (khoya). This adds an interesting texture to the kesari.

# Meethe Chawal/Zarda Pulao

## Punjabi sweet rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1/2C (30 minutes soaked and drained) basmathi, 1/2C milk, 1/4C water, 2 cloves, 2 crushed cardamom. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles. Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2C powdered sugar, 1/4C each roasted (cashew, raisins), 5 strands of saffron. Mix well. Fluff up.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Basmathi with your favourite rice/millets
- Milk with sugarcane juice/plant milk
- Ghee with butter
- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices
- Sugar with jaggery

### **Tips:**

1. Increase water for a mushier texture, reduce water for a grainier texture.
2. Wash rice multiple times to prevent it from clumping.
3. If your rice is under-cooked, increase water, soaking time and cooking time.
4. Addition of sugar will make rice watery but will firm up on cooling.
5. Food colour is normally used as a cheaper alternative to saffron.

Meethe Chawal (Sweet Rice) a Punjabi dessert, is common across the North. The closest equivalent is Kalkandu sadham (Rock candy rice) of Tamilnadu. In the rice eating South, the popular home cooked dessert is wheat based (Kesari) and in the wheat eating North, it is rice based.

Rice is still considered holy and auspicious up North. Till today, rice is symbolically worshiped on religious occasions. A mixture of rice and kum kum is still smeared on the forehead as a tilak during Havan. This prestige is

not accorded to wheat/millets. Rice is also more expensive than wheat/millets and so is not 'wasted' in regular food, but reserved for special occasions.

Meethe Chawal is cooked at many Punjabi homes during festivals like Basant Panchami and Diwali. It is also cooked as prasad in some temples/Gurudwaras.

This theme is defined by its texture. Unlike the South Indian sweet rice versions, which cook up rice into a mush, the North Indian versions are almost dry and have each grain separate.

It is in fact seen as a pulao variant, being called Zarda Pulao by the Muslims. The building blocks are the rice, liquid, spices, sweetener and additives.

Rice:

Long grain basmathi is usually preferred, but you can use your favourite rice variety which does not cook to a mush. The key is to wash the rice well to remove the coating of starch, use the right amount of water and fluff up the rice immediately after cooking to prevent clumping. Starch hardens on cooling and any rice will become firmer as it cools. You can extend the theme by replacing rice with millets/wheat grits.

Liquid:

Though water is most commonly used to boil rice, this theme can be extended with milk or sugar cane juice or other interesting liquids.

Spices:

All sweet spices fit into this theme - cardamom, cinnamon, cloves are commonly used. You can extend the theme with other sweet spices like orange/lemon zest, vanilla etc. Saffron is mixed in at the very end to give rice a golden colour.

Sweetener:

As a sweetener inhibits cooking of rice, it is mixed in at the very end. The retained heat of rice is enough to 'cook' the sweetener. Sugar is most commonly used but can be replaced with jaggery or other sweeteners. As this dessert is also defined by its colour, ensure the sweetener you use does not change the colour!

Additives:

A variety of roast/fried nuts/dry fruits are mixed in for texture and taste. Ghee supplies the base note of flavour. The added nuts (and milk) also supply the missing protein, converting this dessert into a meal!

# Adrak Murabba

## Mogul preserve

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp ghee

Layer 2: 100g finely grated ginger

Layer 3: 100g sugar, 1" bit cinnamon

Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (7 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all. Let cool and bottle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cinnamon with your favourite sweet spices
- Sugar with jaggery

#### **Tips:**

1. Can stir and cook in an open pan to thicken further.

Sugar is as good a preservative as salt. Microorganisms cannot function in a too salty or a too sweet environment. This is the principle which makes jams and pickles possible.

You can look at Murabbas as sweet pickles (and achaars as spicy jams). Sugar draws the water out from fruits/vegetables, just like salt. The reduced water content prevents internal spoilage. The saturated solution prevents microbial action, allowing fruits/vegetables to be stored unrefrigerated for a long time.

Murabba later became a dessert in its own right. The added fruits/vegetables can be grated, cut into chunks, pureed or added whole, depending on the fruit/vegetable. Murabbas are popular all across Central Asia and came to India with the invaders, along with the naan, paneer and tandoor.

The consistency can vary from a thin syrup to a rock hard candy, depending on how long sugar is cooked. This version gives you a jam like consistency. You can easily convert it into hard candy by cooking it longer in an open pan,

with constant stirring. This recipe saves the trouble of making sugar syrup separately and patiently cooking the fruits/vegetables in it, with the dangers of the sticky syrup splashing.

Understanding how sugar behaves on heating is the key to getting the consistency you like. Contrary to popular belief, sugar does not have a definite melting temperature. Its melting point depends on the heating rate. Heat it fast, at a higher temperature, and it melts at a higher temperature. Heat it slowly, at a lower temperature, and it melts at a lower temperature!

As sugar cooks, chemical reactions set in, browning it and creating flavourful molecules - caramelisation! A rich aroma emerges, and the single note of sweetness gives way to a rich, complex taste, with a hint of bitterness. Any further cooking burns it.

This caramelisation, contrary to popular belief, can happen at low temperatures too, if you cook sugar long enough.

Thus, you can cook your murabba fast and furiously or long and slow, and vary the consistency. Adding a bit of liquid glucose/corn syrup helps keep the crystal sizes small and keeps the syrup from solidifying too fast.

If you want a firmer consistency, stir and cook uncovered for a few more minutes, with constant stirring. Pour into greased moulds and let it set.

A variety of spices can be added in for added flavour. Pepper, cinnamon, fennel, cardamom, cloves, bay leaves etc can all be added. A dash of lemon juice can also be mixed in, to lend a tart taste.

# Mysorepak

## Mysore Gram flour Fudge

<https://youtu.be/IcUWcS6XN5M>

In a 2L cooker, add 200g sugar, 1/4C water (60ml), 1/4C ghee (60 ml). Mix well. Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 100g well roasted and sieved gram flour. Pour in a greased container and cut into squares .

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Gram flour with other roasted seed/nut flours
- Besan with roasted chickpeas freshly blended to a flour
- Sugar with jaggery/palm sugar etc
- Water with milk/coconut water/other flavoured liquids.

#### **Tips:**

1. Vary cooking time to vary consistency.
2. Always weigh solids. Cup measures can be tricky.
3. 4 whistles give a soft fudge. 7 whistles give a firm one.
4. Can mix in 1/2tsp baking powder for a porous texture.
5. Roast gram flour multiple times on low heat. Roast, let cool and roast again.
6. Repeat till it loses all raw taste.
7. Heat 100g roasted gram flour with 50g ghee, 50g oil to make a roux.
8. Mix the roux with sugar syrup to make a soft Mysorepak.
9. Can use a mixture of flours for an interesting flavour.
10. Can layer different coloured fudges to make a multi layer cake.
11. Can add cardamom powder or other sweet spices for flavour.
12. The cooker needs to be washed immediately after cooking. If you let it dry, the syrup solidifies and makes cleaning tough. Add water and soak/cook for a whistle to clean it easily.



Setting edibles in sugar syrup is a theme behind many Indian sweets. In Mysorepak (Mysore's sweet), roasted gram flour and ghee is set in sugar syrup.

The consistency varies from a porous crumble to a soft fudge. Legend has it that it was created in the royal kitchens of the Mysore Maharaja. In the conventional method, sugar is melted to a syrup and the roasted gram flour is mixed in. The whole mass is stirred carefully under expert supervision till the right consistency is reached. The 'right consistency' can only be judged by expert cooks as even a few seconds difference way changes the texture.

OPOSing makes the process consistent and scalable, making possible large scale preparation painless. Large scale preparation of Mysorepak the conventional way is a back breaking process and is not even attempted by home cooks. With OPOS, the amount of Mysorepak you can prepare is limited only by the size of the cooker you have.

In this recipe, Sugar is melted under controlled conditions so that its consistency is determined only by cooking time/number of whistles. Roasted gram flour is then stirred in and left to cook in the residual heat. This eliminates stirring/lumping/uncertainty.

The building blocks of the Mysorepak are gram flour, sugar and ghee.

Gram flour:

Gram flour can be replaced with any roasted flour. Rice flour, wheat flour, nut flour, millet flour, coconut flour, malted flours can all be used. The consistency of the fudge varies from flour to flour and you need to fine tune the cooking time based on the flour used.

Remember the flour does not have time to be cooked completely in residual heat. So it must be well roasted to ensure it is mostly cooked before it enters the syrup. When ready to eat nut flours (Cashew/almond/coconut) or malted flours (Horlicks, sprouted flours) are used, they need not be roasted, but when cereal/lentil flours are used, roasting is mandatory. Roasting can be dry, with oil or with ghee. It is just to ensure the flour is cooked. Raw gram flour used in traditional mysorepak takes a lot of roasting.

Raw gram flour can be replaced by fresh ground roasted gram flour (Pottu kadalai maavu). Raw gram flour is made by powdering raw channa dal. Roasted gram (pottu kadalai) is made by roasting channa dal till it is edible.

This flour does not need further roasting.

Sieving (using a sieve to sift the flour) aerates the flour and breaks up clumps, thus ensuring a better texture.

**Sugar:**

Sugar serves as a binder and a sweetener. It can be replaced with jaggery with marginal change in timings. The longer you cook sugar syrup, the firmer it becomes. Even a few seconds can change the consistency of your syrup. Please use standard equipment, heat settings and timings to perfectly recreate the recipe. Else you need to tweak it based on the equipment you have. 3-4 whistles give a soft fudge like consistency and 5-7 whistles give a firm consistency.

**Ghee:**

Ghee is responsible for the creamy mouth feel and flavour. Ghee is optional, though many versions call for ghee that is thrice the amount of gram flour, making this not a gram flour fudge, but a ghee fudge!

**Liquid:**

Water/milk or any liquid of your choice (coconut water, rose water, infused water etc) can be used. Each liquid subtly varies the flavour of the fudge. You can experiment with green tea/coffee/chocolate flavoured Mysorepak by adding the respective liquids.

**Leavening:**

Leavening is needed if you desire a porous texture. It can be done by creaming gram flour with sugar and ghee (which mixes in air bubbles) or by using baking powder or by vigorously mixing the mix, to aerate it.

Play around with these core building blocks to create your own masterpieces!

# Naked Key Lime Pie

## American egg and milk lime pudding

Mix 2 beaten eggs, 1C sweet condensed milk(400g), 2 tsp lemon zest, 4tsp lemon juice. Pour in a greased vessel. Place vessel inside a 2L cooker. Add 1C water outside vessel. Cook on medium heat for 10 whistles (15 minutes). Let cool. Unmould.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggs with heavy cream/strained yogurt
- Lemon with other sour fruits

#### **Tips:**

1. Can mix your favourite sweet spices.
2. Cook longer for a firmer texture.
3. Use a broad, shallow inner vessel.

# Paalada Pradhaman

## Kerala's rice pasta pudding

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C washed & drained ada (dry rice pasta), 1C milk, 2 crushed cardamoms, 1tbsp ghee. Mix. Cook on medium heat for 6 whistles (15 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2C condensed milk, 1C milk, 1/4C sugar, 5 strands saffron.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Milk with coconut milk
- Ada with similar sized pasta
- Cardamom with dry ginger/edible camphor/cinnamon
- Sugar with jaggery

### **Tips:**

1. Presoak ada for faster cooking.
2. If your pudding is not thick enough, mix in condensed milk.

Paal ada Pradhaman (Milk pasta Pudding) is the crown jewel of Kerala Pradhamans. Laborious and time consuming, it is reserved for very special occasions.

Ada is steamed rice batter. These bits of steamed batter are cooked into a thick and creamy pudding with milk and sugar.

Two versions are common - the Ada Pradhaman, cooked with coconut milk and jaggery and the Paal Ada pradhaman, cooked with cow milk and sugar.

The ada is unique to Kerala. You can think of it as rice pasta . Rice is soaked and ground to a thick batter with a bit of salt. This batter is smeared ('written') on banana leaves and steamed/boiled. The cooked dough sheet is cut up into little squares - the ada. This is either used fresh or sun dried, just like pasta. Dried ada, like dried pasta is now readily available and has become more popular than the fresh ones.

The key to this pudding is to cook ada till it is just about done, but not mushy,

exactly like pasta. The ada should be fully cooked, yet have a bite. Cooking pasta al-dente is alien to Indian cuisine as we prefer overcooking to undercooking.

Traditional recipes call in for elaborate steps to cook this strange new beast!

1. Soak ada in boiling water in a covered vessel for 30 minutes.
2. Wash the soaked ada 2-3 times with cold water.
3. Drain water and fry ada with ghee and sugar.
4. Add to sweetened milk that has been reduced and simmer till done.

None of these steps are essential. We can cook ada exactly like OPOS pasta.

Three key tweaks are essential to ensure

1. A creamy sauce is formed
2. Ada does not become mushy
3. Ada does not stick to each other.

Ensuring a Creamy Sauce:

Think of ada as pasta and the reduced, condensed milk as the white sauce.

While making OPOS pasta, we do not reduce milk to form the sauce. Instead we use the starch leached out from the pasta to thicken the milk and convert it into a creamy sauce.

We use the same technique in making creamy Kashmiri kheer, where we rely on starch from rice grains to do the trick. This is an opposite technique to Biriyani making where we do not want a 'sauce' to form and stick rice grains to each other.

This is the key difference between the traditional recipe and the OPOS version. You will see that the OPOS version is lighter and creamier than the traditional version. The sauce in traditional version is all condensed milk. In OPOS, it is milk thickened with starch.

Cooking Ada Al-dente:

We know that addition of sugar/salt inhibits cooking. In recipes like chakkara pongal this is a problem, as sugar/jaggery firms up the grains, making them resistant to cooking. We use this principle to inhibit cooking of ada, ensuring they do not become a mush on prolonged pressure cooking. The amount of sugar necessary depends on the ada you use. Use more sugar if your ada turns mushy and less sugar if it is under cooked.

The principle is again similar to cooking pasta. Pasta is always cooked in salted water, to firm it up and ensure it retains a bite.

Ensuring ada does not stick to each other:

In traditional cooking, a technique called 'vilayichathu' is followed to ensure ada retains its shape and does not stick to each other. It involves stir-frying ada in a sugar - ghee mixture, so that it firms up. This step can be completely avoided if we do not pre-cook ada in the first place (By steeping it in hot water)

The OPOS version is slightly messy as milk foams on boiling. This boiling can be minimised by using some ghee, using a bigger cooker and cooking on lower heat. Like the Kashmiri Kheer, dropping a small empty katori inside the cooking vessel also helps by breaking up the skin of milk, thus reducing foaming. The goal is to balance the proportions just enough that a creamy sauce forms without overcooking the ada.

The consistency of the sauce should be exactly like white pasta sauce - It needs to be thick and creamy and never runny. A line drawn on the surface with a spoon should remain. Remember that the sauce thickens considerably on cooling.

The building blocks of Ada Pradhaman are the dough bits, milk, sweetener and flavouring.

#### Dough bits:

Steamed rice batter chopped into small bits is the only ada used in traditional recipes. The same technique can be extended with all low-gluten flours to prepare a variety of millet ada. Small bits of fresh/dried pasta can be accommodated in the same theme.

#### Milk:

Both vegan version (Ada Pradhaman, using coconut milk) and Non-Vegan version (Paalada Pradhaman, using cow/buffalo milk) are common. You can use a variety of plant milk or other milks to cook up variations.

#### Sweetener:

Both sugar and jaggery are popular. Do try out other sweeteners of your choice.

#### Flavouring:

Cardamom, dry ginger, edible camphor are all commonly used. Any sweet spice (saffron, vanilla, cinnamon) can be used to flavour the pudding. A tiny pinch of salt mixed in after cooking enhances both taste and flavour.

# Panjamirdham

## Tamil raw banana jam

Mix 100g mashed ripe banana, 150g brown sugar, 20gms chopped dates, 10g rock candy, 10g raisins, 1tsp ghee, 1/4tsp cardamom powder.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with your favourite non-watery fruits
- Dates with other dry fruits
- Brown sugar with sugar/jaggery
- Cardamom powder with cinnamon/dry ginger/edible camphor

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in roasted nuts.
2. Serve as dessert or as a jam.
3. Use fruits with low water content for longer shelf life.
4. Use sour fruits for longer shelf life.
5. Treat it like a pickle - use clean, dry vessels and clean, dry, mixing and mashing equipment.
6. Vary the amount of sweetener and ghee to your taste.
7. Use as a dessert/dip/jam/spread.

Panjaamirdham (Sanskrit: Panch Amirth: Five ambrosia) is Tamilnadu's uncooked jam, eaten as a prasad/dessert.

Long, long time ago, lived a yogi called Bogar. Like many siddhas, he was a great healer. His book Saptakanda details various medicinal concoctions. A great devotee of Lord Muruga, Bogar was called upon to create an idol of Lord Muruga at Palani, Tamilnadu. Most South Indian idols are sculpted out of granite. But Bogar chose to fashion the idol out of nine poisons (nava baashanam). It is believed that he managed to convert these poisons into a highly potent medicine. Anything coming in contact with the idol becomes a medicine too!

Science says trace elements in minute quantities are highly beneficial for our body. Iodised salt and Iron fish (lucky fish) used today to combat iodine and iron deficiency owe their origins to Bogar's school of thought!

A prasad was created to be smeared over the idol, to absorb all its goodness. And thus was born the Palani Panjamirdham, Tamilnadu's uncooked jam. It was distributed to devotees and consumed as a medicine. Devotees believed it could cure all ills.

Now, parts of the idol has so worn away, that all abhishekams have been stopped. Interestingly, the face has not worn out, but the legs are almost gone, indicating unscrupulous priests have been scraping away tiny bits of the idol, selling it to the highest bidders. It is indeed surprising that the idol has withstood millions of abhishekams over centuries with such little wear.

It is also believed that Bhogar had made three identical idols, fully expecting this eventuality. The other two are said to be hidden somewhere in the Eastern Ghats. Devotees believe they would reveal themselves at the appropriate time.

Panchamirtham is to Palani what Ladoo is to Tirupathi. Over 10,000 kilos of panchamirtham is made every day at this temple town. Unlike the Tirupathi ladoo which is less than 50 years old, Panchamirtham has remained Palani's prasad for centuries.

The preparation is very simple. Mountain bananas are mashed and mixed with unrefined sugar, rock candy, dates, raisins, cardamom and ghee. What makes this jam unique is that it uses a special kind of banana grown in the Virupachi hills. This variety has very low moisture content. The shelf life of any jam/pickle depends on its water content. The lower the water content, greater the shelf life. The addition of sugar and low amount of water is sufficient to preserve this jam for weeks without refrigeration, even in the tropical heat.

The sugar used is also special. Palani Panchamirtham uses Kandasari sugar from the nearby Kangayem. This unrefined sugar is produced by cooking the sugarcane juice till thick and by letting it crystallise. The brown sugar crystals are then manually sieved. This sugar however has more moisture content than refined sugar. So if you want a jam with a longer shelf life, you need to use refined sugar in place of brown sugar (Country sugar/Kandasari sugar)

The addition of ghee also helps prolong the shelf life. Unlike the western jam

which is used as a spread, this jam is chiefly eaten as a prasad or dessert. In Marudhamalai, another temple town dedicated to lord Muruga, wild honey and more fruits apples and pomegranate) are mixed in . The combination of banana, honey and ghee also appears as the prasad served in some Kerala temples as Trimadhuram. In this version, the bananas are not mashed, but just sliced.

In March- April, during the Panguni Utharam festival, devotees trek hundreds of kilometers to Palani, carrying a Kavadi (a kind of bangy with loads at two ends of a pole), with water from holy rivers (kalasam seluthudhal) to be poured over the idol. After worship, devotees go back to their villages and make panjamirdham in large quantities, distributing it to all houses. This is stored for months without refrigeration and used as a dessert or dip for 'tiffin' items like idlis and dosas.

# Paruppu Thenga

## Tamil cone candies

In a 2L cooker, add 1C sugar, 1/4C water, 2 crushed cardamoms. Cook on high heat for 10 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1C roasted gram. Pour into a greased conical mould. Let set.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Sugar with jaggery
- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices
- Roasted gram with nuts/other edibles

### **Tips:**

1. Shape into balls and serve as ladoo
2. Shape as slabs and serve as chikkis
3. Follow the recipe to the letter. Sugar is very unforgiving.
4. The syrup solidifies very fast. Mix and mould as soon as possible.

In a Paruppu Thenga (Nut Coconut) neither nuts or coconut are mandatory. The etymology of this culturally significant candy is unclear. They are also called as Seer Koodu, (Seer: Bridal dowry and Koodu: Mould) because they are a part of South Indian marriage ceremonies.

Huge cones of this candy are a firm fixture in many wedding rituals. They occupy a place of pride in Tamil Brahmin weddings. Some of these moulds are very ornate and elaborately decorated.

The traditional method is laborious as it calls for stirring huge amounts of sugar syrup. OPOS makes it painless, consistent and a lot cheaper.

The building blocks of this theme are the edibles, sugar syrup and the moulds.

The edibles:

Any edible can be set in sugar syrup. The most common ones used are

1. Roasted gram is used for the cheapest versions. This has given birth to a

saying " Pidikkadha mappilaikku pottukadala thenga" (An unliked son-in-law gets a roasted gram candy)

2. Boondi (Fried gram flour droplets)
3. Manoharam (Extruded, fried sugar soaked gram flour crispies)
4. Mittai (Candy) and
5. Mundhiri (Cashew)

Even other desserts like Barfi/Mysorepak are set in these conical moulds as paruppu thenga. For Karthigai Deepam, puffed paddy (Nel Pori) paruppu thenga is made in some households.

Sugar Syrup:

Though cane sugar/jaggery are commonly used, any sugar/sweet syrup can be used as a binder.

Moulds:

Huge conical moulds are always used, but you can set them into any shape you like.

# Paruppu Payasam

Tamil lentil pudding

<https://youtu.be/0k40r1mYKX8>

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1/4C washed and drained mung dal, 1/4C grated coconut, 1/2tsp cardamom powder, 1C water. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (7 minutes). Mix in 1C grated jaggery, 1/4C coconut milk, 1C milk.

**PRESSURE COOK**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung dal with soaked tuvar/masoor dal
- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices
- Jaggery with sugar

## **Tips:**

1. Use roasted lentils for a nuttier flavour.
2. Add a small cup inside the cooker to break skin and reduce foaming.
3. Cook on lower heat to minimize spewing.
4. Reduce water to minimize spewing.



Paruppu Payasam (Lentil pudding) is one of our ancient recipes. This version is made from mung dal, coconut, milk and jaggery - all considered individually auspicious by South Indian cuisine and all in usage for at least the last 1000 years.

This pudding is cooked across the country with minor variations. Simpler versions omit use just water for cooking the lentils. The North Indian version omits coconut and the Keralite version uses coconut milk in place of milk. It finds a firm place in Tamil Brahmin cuisine, being cooked on most festive/auspicious occasions. If you add in a bit of rice, this protein rich pudding becomes a complete meal by itself. It is a child safe recipe and is even fed to infants.

The building blocks are the lentils, the liquid used, sweetener, spices and additives.

#### Lentils:

Mung dal is most common, followed by channa dal. Other lentils can be used, but are not so common.

#### Liquid:

Water/milk is most commonly used, though the theme can be extended with other liquids.

#### Sweetener:

Jaggery is the preferred sweetener as sugar came in much later. But unlike sugar, jaggery cooked with milk causes curdling. Hence if it is used, it is added in at the very end. Please use industrially packed jaggery which does not contain impurities. Else it needs to be dissolved in minimal water and filtered to remove impurities.

#### Spices:

Cardamom is most common, but all sweet spices can be used. You can even use vanilla/cocoa, if you like!

#### Additives:

Coconut, roasted coconut flakes, roasted nuts and dry fruits are all added to add a bit of texture.

# Pazham Nurukku

## Kerala Plantains in syrup

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1C jaggery, 1/4C water. Mix all.

Slice 1 banana with skin into thick discs. Add to the cooker. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove slices and serve with syrup.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Jaggery with sugar
- Cardamom with ginger powder/cumin powder/cinnamon
- Ghee with butter

#### **Tips:**

1. Cook further after opening to reduce syrup.

Pazham Nurukku (Chopped fruits) is Kerala's answer to the all American applesauce. Both have chopped overripe fruits cooked in syrup as a way of preserving them longer.

The Nendram pazham, (a variety of plantain) is much loved in Kerala. So much so that the word for fruit in Malayalam (pazham) usually denotes the ripe banana (ethapazham) and the word for vegetable (kaya) denotes the raw banana.

Ethapazham (ripe plantain) is a part of everyday meals and all feasts. It is eaten as breakfast, as a dessert and as a snack.

Kerala boasts of a variety of desserts made from this variety of banana. Unnakaya (stuffed and fried plantains), Pazham porichadhu (Batter fried plantain), Pazham Puzhingiyadhu (Steamed plantain), Pazham Pradhaman (Plantain pudding), Pazham Varattiyathu (Coconut- plantain stir-fry) etc are some much loved desserts.

But it is the simple Pazham Nurukku that almost defines the harvest feast (Onasadhya). For many, especially in central Kerala, this dessert is such an

integral part of the harvest festival, Onam, that the smell of Onasadhya is that of the Pazham Nurukku.

Candied fruit is a common theme in many parts of the world, where fruits are cooked in sugar syrup. Sugar absorbs moisture from the fruit and preserves it. This happens over weeks. The Arabs practiced this method of food preservation and it might be possible that the Arab traders taught it to Kerala. Pazham nurukku is very likely a quick version of this Central Asian theme.

Like any borrowed theme, it has remained tied to one fruit and one recipe! In Middle East, a huge variety of fruits are candied. Though this theme would work with any fruit with low water content, no other fruit but nendrampazham is used across Kerala. Apart from making a dessert, this is also a way of preserving overripe fruits. Keralites usually cook this dessert with only overripe banana.

The traditional method calls for cooking the plantains and then simmering them again in jaggery syrup. The OPOS version promises a longer shelf life.

#### Extending the theme:

The building blocks of this theme are the fruit, the sweetener and the flavouring.

A variety of low- water fruits like jack fruit, apple, pineapple, chikoo/sapota, pears etc., can be used. Though jaggery is the most common sweetener used in Kerala, sugar/honey/other sweeteners can fit into the theme. Cardamom powder is the chief flavouring used. It can be replaced/supplemented by other sweet spices.

# Phirni

## Mogul milk pudding

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1/4C rava, 2C milk, 2 crushed cardamom, 5 strands saffron, 1/4C chopped almonds. Mix well. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle. Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/4C edible rose petals, 1/4C sugar.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### Replace/Supplement:

- Rava with roasted grain grits
- Cardamom with cinnamon/clove/your favourite sweet spices.
- Almonds with your favourite nuts/dry fruits
- Rose petals with rose water.

### Tips:

1. Best served chilled in mud pots.

Ever since we domesticated cattle, cultures across the world have cooked their favourite grains/grits in sweetened, flavoured milk into a pudding. The grains, milk, flavouring and consistency of the pudding changes from place to place.

The Phirni/Firni (Persian) is an ancient Central Asian theme, still cooked all across Central Asia. The theme uses rice grits/wheat grits or even corn flour depending on the region. The Afghan firni is cooked from corn flour. Interestingly, most North Indian versions use rice whereas the South Indian versions use wheat (rava)!

Many Indian versions call for soaked and ground basmathi to be cooked in milk to a pudding. This OPOS version replaces it with wheat grits (Rava/sooji). It is usually poured in a mud vessel and cooled, to set. In this recipe, the quantities are so balanced that you get the desired consistency on cooling, without even refrigerating it.

You can extend this theme with different grits, different milks and different flavouring to create a huge variety of firnis.

The Moghuls garnish it with edible flowers and varq to make it a dish befitting royalty!

# Pazha Pradhaman

## Kerala's fruit pudding

<https://youtu.be/WtGp8cGc1oI>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp ghee

Layer 2: 1C peeled and chopped ripe banana

Layer 3: 1/4C jaggery, 2 crushed cardamoms

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C thick coconut milk.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Banana with your favourite fruits
- Jaggery with sugar
- Cardamom with cinnamon/other sweet spices

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in roasted/fried nuts/dry fruits.
2. Can garnish with fried coconut slivers.

Pradhaman (Sanskrit/Malayalam: Number one) take a place of pride in Kerala's feasts. 4 varieties of pradhamans are served at grand feasts. As the feast is served on a banana leaf, the pradhamans are served in leaf cups. While the diners feasted, a payasa pattu (Pudding song) would be sung in praise of this dessert.

Almost any edible can be cooked into a pradhaman.

Kadala Parippu Pradhaman (Channa dal), Chakka Pradhaman (Jack fruit jam), Cherupayar Pradhaman (Mung dal), Pazham Pradhaman (Plantain) are very common. Semiya Pradhaman (Vermicelli), Mambazha Pradhaman (Mango), Godambu Pradhaman (Wheat grits) are also occasionally cooked. The Ada Pradhaman, which is cooked with flat rice pasta is a delicacy, though it often uses plain milk rather than coconut milk.

Jaggery is the most common sweetener used in a pradhaman. The flavouring usually comes from cardamom, dry ginger powder and cumin powder. Roasted/fried coconut is often added as a garnish. The building blocks are the coconut milk, edibles used, flavouring and sweetener.

Each of these can be varied to cook up an array of easy peasy pradhamans.

# Rabdi

## Mogul condensed milk

In a small vessel, add 1.5C sweet condensed milk, 1C milk, 2 chopped bread slices, 1/4C each chopped (cashew, almonds, raisins), 1/4tsp cardamom powder, 1tbsp ghee.

In a 2L cooker, add 1C water. Place inner vessel inside cooker. Cover. Cook on high heat for 15 minutes (ignore whistles).

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement:

- Milk with coconut milk/soy milk
- Bread with khoya/paneer
- Cardamom with your favourite sweet spices

#### Tips:

1. Can mix in fruit pulp after opening.

Rabdi is just condensed milk, with a texture. The grainy texture imparted by milk solids is highly prized in a Rabdi and is painstakingly achieved.

In the traditional method, huge quantities of milk is boiled for hours in a large, shallow open pan. The milk fats clump up and rise to the surface. These are skimmed and stored. This process is repeated till the milk reduces to a thick, viscous liquid. Then sugar is added and the skimmed cream is added back to the milk. The whole mass is stirred and simmered again till thick and grainy. Flavouring, dry fruits and nuts are then mixed in.

It is primarily cooked in North India which boasts of specialised Rabdi Bhandars (Rabdi Shops). The rabdi is usually served in leaf cups and is eaten as a dessert. It is also served as a dipping sauce with North Indian flatbreads like Pooris/Parathas/Rotis and even with sweets like Jalebi and Halwas!

Rabdi is also used as the steeping medium for a variety of paneer based dishes like Rasmalai, Kheer sagar, Chena Kheri etc.

You can look at Rabdi as a mother sauce which forms the base for many sweet sauces. Mix in fruit puree and it becomes Fruit Rabdi. Mix in chocolate syrup and you get Chocolate Rabdi. By mixing in a bit of flour and water, rabdi turns into a batter and is used to cook a sweet pancake - the Rabdi Malpua.

The name of the Rabdi varies with the flavouring used as in Kesar Rabdi (Rabdi with saffron). When expensive dry fruits and nuts are mixed in, it is called the Shahi Rabdi. When prepared by patiently skimming away the cream layer by layer, it is called the Lacha Rabdi.

The traditional preparation method is labourious and painstaking, and calls for special equipment (large thick bottomed, shallow pan) and hence is usually not done at homes. This recipe eliminates the need for special equipment and uses condensed milk and bread to shorten the cooking process and achieve the prized grainy texture.

The core building blocks of a Rabdi are the milk used, sweetener, flavouring and additives. Vary them to cook up infinite versions.

# Rasayana

## Fruit in coconut milk

Mix 1/2C orange flesh, 3tsp sugar, 1 crushed cardamom, 1C thick coconut milk. Chill and serve.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Orange with your favourite fruits
- Cardamom with other sweet spices (saffron, cinnamon,...)
- Sugar with jaggery/honey
- Coconut milk with other milks

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in dry fruits/nuts.

Rasayana, a Konkani/South Karnataka delicacy is a very simple dessert Chop up fruits and mix with sweetened coconut milk - that's it! It is both served as a dessert or as accompaniment to string hoppers, dosas, neer dosa, chappati and poories, very much like the Aamras (Mango puree).

This belongs to the same family of desserts as the Doodh Kela (Banana in milk) and Ambyache Shikran (Mango in milk) . The flesh of fruits like banana/mango is mixed in with milk and sugar to create these simple desserts.

Rasayana is especially popular in South Karnataka and is also called Seehikarane (Sweet dish). The one in this recipe is the Havyaka Brahmin specialty - The Kittale hannina rasayana (Orange Rasayana)

### Extending the theme:

The building blocks are the fresh fruit, coconut milk, sweetener, additives and flavourings. This theme can support any fresh/dry fruit, though Ambe Rasayana (Mango), Chibbad rasayana (Honeydew melon), Balehannu Rasayana (Banana) and Kharjura Rasayana (dates) are the ones commonly made.

Other plant/nut milks/regular milk varieties can be used to replace/supplement coconut milk. A huge variety of sweeteners can be mixed in, though jaggery and sugar are the most common. Cardamom is the most common flavouring used. Any sweet spice like saffron, cinnamon, edible camphor, vanilla even chocolate can be used.

Some versions mix in nuts/seeds or even pressed rice, to give it a body. Ghee is also occasionally used.

You can safely mix in your favourite fruits and flavourings and create your own versions of this fool proof theme!

# Shrikhand

## Sweet yogurt cheese

Place 500g yogurt in a fine meshed filter. Let water drain away till you get a smooth paste. Mix/gently squeeze to drain more water. Mix in 1/4C powdered sugar, 12 strands of saffron, 1/8tsp cardamom powder.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cardamom with cinnamon powder/other sweet spices
- Sugar with honey/jaggery

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in chopped nuts/dry fruits.

Yogurt cheese also known as hung yogurt/chakka is just yogurt from which most of the water has been removed. It then resembles a thick, creamy paste. This paste is mixed with additives, sweetener and flavouring to prepare Shrikhand, a sweet very popular in North India, especially Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Though primarily a dessert, it is also served as a ‘curry’ with pooris. Shrikhand forms a part of many North Indian wedding feasts. It is befittingly prepared to celebrate the birth of Lord Krishna, the divine cow herd.

This is a rare recipe - one of the very few desserts using yogurt. Indian desserts can be split into four major classes.

1. Desserts soaked/cooked in sugar syrup (jalebis, katli, mysorepak, burfi, halwa)
2. Desserts based on cooked down milk (rabri, payasam, kheer, peda, kulfi)
3. Desserts based on milk solids (rasgulla, rasmalai, kalakhand)
4. Yogurt desserts (Shrikhand, Bengali Mishti doi and Bhapa doi).

While there are hundreds of desserts in the groups above, there are very few

desserts in the yogurt based desserts group. Let us see how to extend this theme. By changing the building blocks, a huge variety of Shrikhand can be made. Though common yogurt made from cow/buffalo milk is used to make traditional shrikhand, a variety of yogurts made from goat/other milk can be used. Flavoured yogurts or even soy yogurt can be used to make fusion shrikhand.

In middle east, yogurt cheese is popular as labneh and is served as small balls steeped in olive oil. Yogurt cheese is mixed with chopped garlic, cucumbers and olive oil to make the Greek dip Tzatziki. It can be used as a dip/spread/cake icing/in parfaits. Yogurt cheese made from fat free/low fat milk is a low fat substitute for cream cheese. It has a rich taste and a creamy mouth feel without being laden with calories. It is also a good source of calcium.

**Making yogurt cheese (Chakka):** Line a colander/sieve with a cloth. Pour in yogurt. Keep colander raised so that water can drain away overnight (or gather edges of cloth and hang the bag of yogurt to let water drain). You can gently squeeze the bag to make instant yogurt cheese.

**Making fruit puree:** Skin and deseed ripe fruit. Mash them to a coarse/smooth paste as per your taste.

**Making yogurt:** Boil two cups of milk. Let cool till lukewarm. Stir in a spoon of live yogurt. Rest in a warm place for 3 -5 hours.

**Making flavoured yogurt:** Boil two cups of milk. Let cool till lukewarm. Stir in a spoon of yogurt. Mix in a pinch of cardamom/cinnamon or mix in a drop of your favourite essence. Rest in a warm place for 3 -5 hours.

# Trifle

## Layered English dessert

In a glass bowl, add the following layers

Layer 1: A slice of cake dipped in fruit juice

Layer 2: A layer of chopped fresh fruits

Layer 3: A slice of cake dipped in milk

Layer 4: Chopped nuts

Layer 5: A Slice of cake dipped in wine

Layer 6: Pudding/Custard/Fresh jam

Repeat layers till bowl is filled. Finish with a layer of ice-cream/whipped cream.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Cake with cookies/muffins/brownies/waffles/pie

### **Tips:**

1. A trifle is all about great presentation. Use your best glassware.
2. Choose contrasting colored layers and a wide glass bowl which will showcase the colorful layers.
3. Ensure you have thick, well defined layers.
4. A day old cake absorbs flavors better than fresh ones.

A trifle was probably invented in bakeries as a way to use up leftovers while making/shaping cakes. It is a simple, can't go wrong dessert, like the French parfait or the English fool.

The trifle is one of those rare dessert recipes, which are almost fool proof and can be adapted to any cuisine. Use cookies/cakes popular in a region (e.g. French Brioche), moisten them with the region's favourite drink (e.g. Italian espresso, Italian Vin santo), add regional fruits (e.g. Irish raspberries), top with the local version of a creamy dessert (e.g. Greek yogurt, Italian zabaglione custard) and a brand new regional recipe is ready! It is no wonder

this simple, elegant theme is echoed in many European cuisines.

Topsy Laird is the Scottish adaptation of the trifle. It is traditionally served on Burns Night (a supper celebrating the Scottish bard Robert Burns). A layer of pound/sponge cake is moistened with Irish whiskey/drambuie, a second layer of Irish raspberries is added, and covered by a thick layer of custard. It is topped off with a layer of whipped cream. Raspberries/slivered almonds is the usual garnish.

The Irish Whim-wham has a layer of sponge fingers moistened with sherry, brandy and orange juice, covered with a layer of whipped cream mixed with thick yogurt and garnished with roasted almonds.

Mousse a l'anglaise and Pudding Diplomate are French variants of the same theme.

Zuppa Inglese (Zoo-puh in-glay-zay - English Soup) is Italy's take on the trifle. It is made by alternating a layer of Italian cookies (ladyfingers/savoiardi) or sponge cake moistened with Italian dessert wine with a layer of Italian custard and a layer of chocolate sauce. The layers are repeated and topped off with fruits. The beloved Tiramisu is the best known variant of the trifle.

Topsy Cake is America's version of the trifle, popular in the South. A layer of pound/angel food cake is moistened with whiskey, sherry, layered with jam and pudding/pie filling/custard. It is chilled and topped with whipped cream just before serving. New Orleans' Creole cake is another variant.

# Qubani Ka Meetha

## Hyderabad Apricot compote

In a 2L cooker, add 100g dried apricots(20 nos), 1C water, 2tsp sugar and 4 crushed cardamom seeds. Cook on medium heat for 12 whistles (15 minutes). Mash with a fork. Sieve to remove seeds/fibers. Garnish with chopped nuts/cream/ice cream.

### **PRESSURE COOK**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Apricot with other dry fruits
- Dried apricots with fresh ones
- Cinnamon with other sweet spices.
- Sugar with jaggery/other sweeteners

#### **Tips:**

1. Increase cooking time for a thicker compote.
2. Stir-fry in open pan for a darker colour.



Qubani ka meetha (Urdu: Apricot - Sweet) is one of the most popular desserts in Hyderabad. It is mandatory at wedding feasts and is a part of the “Shahi dastarkhwan” - the ceremonial feast.

Apricot is native to Central Asia. Turkey is still the world's largest producer of apricots. Its botanical name *Prunus Armeniaca* (Armenian Plum) is even more specific. The Arabic word is "al-barqūq" (The Plum). When Moors ruled Spain, this word entered Spanish as albaricoque, Catalan as abercoc, French as abricot and English as Apricot. The Greeks were more poetic, calling them "Sun's Golden Eggs".

How did this central Asian plum end up as Hyderabad's favourite dessert ? As usual, history holds the key.

800 years back the Central Asians had conquered large parts of North India, establishing the Delhi sultanate. They start moving South. Soon, the whole of India, barring a small bit at the southern tip, comes under their control.

Lording over the whole of India, the Sultan Mohammed bin Tuglaq actually shifts the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, 1200 kms down South, to be more centrally located. This move backfired, earning him the nickname 'Pagla Tuglaq' (Mad Tuglaq)!

Moguls did to Sultans, what the Sultans did to Indian kings. The Mogul raids weakened the Delhi Sultanate. Bahman Shah revolts against Muhammad bin Tuglaq and sets up the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan.

The Bahmani Shahs claimed descent from Bahman, the legendary king of Iran. Persian language, culture and cuisine started seeping into the South. The rise of Krishnadeva Raya breaks up the Bahmani Sultanate into 5 Deccani Sultanates (Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar, and Berar).

Quli Qutb, a contemporary of Krishna Deva Raya, sets up the Golkonda Sultanate and this dynasty rules over almost all Telugu speaking regions from Hyderabad for nearly 2 centuries.

The Sultanates were later conquered by the Mughal Empire. Asaf Jah is appointed as the governor (Nizam) and soon the Asaf Jahi dynasty would rule for 2 more centuries.

The four centuries of Central Asian rule resulted in a new language, culture and cuisine, centered around Hyderabad. Dakhni Urdu and Nizami cuisine bear testimony to these influences.

Qubani or Khobani is Urdu for apricot. The Central Asians pined for the plums and melons of their native land, bitterly complaining their non availability in this 'dusty' country.

Babur is especially vocal about Indian fruits:

"When the mango is good it is really good. . . . In fact, the mango is the best fruit of Hindustan. . . . Some people praise the mango to such an extent that they prefer it to all fruit except the melon, but it is not so good as to warrant such praise."

"... the Jackfruit is unbelievably ugly and bad tasting. It looks exactly like sheep intestines turned inside out..."

This great conqueror is reduced to tears by a fruit!

"...Recently a melon was brought and as I cut it and ate it I was oddly affected. I wept the whole time I was eating it."

To cater to the homesick rulers, Central Asian fruits soon started appearing in Indian markets and it was a matter of time before they started appearing in desserts. Apricot has a very short shelf life and so dried apricots were easily available than fresh.

Many fruit based desserts involve boiling fruit puree in syrup with spices. The English fool mixes folding pureed stewed fruit puree with custard/cream. The French compote stews fruit with sugar and spices. It is likely that all these are descendants of Central Asian recipes who use a variety of fruits in both their sweet and savoury dishes.

Traditional recipes call for overnight soaking and patient stewing. Both are unnecessary in the OPOS version. We also omit sugar/ghee, found in many traditional recipes, thus making this a healthy dessert.

The building blocks of a Qubani Ka Meetha are simple. Apricots, Sugar, Liquid and flavouring.

Spices:

Any sweet spice can be used (Vanilla, lemon/orange zest, cinnamon, star anise, mace, cardamom, cloves, can all be used)

Sugar:

Though refined sugar is preferred you can try adding a sweetener of your choice.

**Liquid:**

Like the French compote, water can be replaced with wine, kirsch (fruit brandy) rum etc.

**Apricots:**

Both fresh/dry apricots can be used. This theme can be extended with other dry/fresh fruits.

**Garnish:**

Rose water/kewra and chopped nuts are usual.

**Serving:**

It is usually served topped with cream. Ice cream/custard is also popular. It can be served as a Trifle, with alternating layers of fruit and cream.

# Others

# Baba Ghanoush

## Arab eggplant dip

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tbsp olive oil

Layer 2: 2 garlic cloves, 250g peeled and chopped eggplant

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, pepper)

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash all with 1tsp lemon juice. Garnish with chilli powder and chopped mint leaves.

### **LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chilli powder with your favourite spice mix
- Lemon juice with your favourite souring agent

### **Tips:**

1. Can mix in chopped onions, tomatoes.
2. Can mix in 1tsp tahini.
3. Cut eggplant into small chunks.
4. Serve with pita.

Baba Ghanoush (Baa Baa Ghanoosh) can be seen as a starter, dip, spread, salad or a side dish depending on where it is cooked. It is one of the three most popular recipes of the Middle East, along with Hummus and Falafel.

The name Baba Ghanoush translates to Pampered Daddy. There are several stories behind the name. Some claim this was invented in a royal harem and the name actually denotes the Sultan. Some claim ghanoush denotes the softness of the eggplant, which is the baba (father) of vegetables. Some believe this dish was created by a doting daughter for her toothless father. Some believe it translates to ‘the darling of her papa’!

Historians believe it probably originated in Lebanon, but every single country in the Middle East lays claim to it and cooks up its own variation. Thus, the appearance, texture and taste vary from region to region.

The building blocks of all these versions are grilled eggplant, a souring agent, tahini and spices. The souring agent and spices vary with the region.

The eggplant is usually grilled whole over naked flame, but this method is not advocated as some eggplants have worms in them, which are visible only when the vegetable is cut.

The souring agent is usually lemon, but other souring agents like pomegranate molasses, thick yogurt or even sumac is used.

Garlic is commonly used and other spices like chilli powder, cumin powder, coriander powder are also common. Chopped fresh herbs (usually parsley/mint) are mixed in before serving.

Additives like chopped onions, tomatoes, chopped nuts/seeds can also be mixed in, converting this into a salad.

In the traditional method, the whole eggplant is patiently roasted over a naked flame till it is cooked through. The skin is removed and the flesh is mashed. Excess liquid from the mashed puree is sometimes drained away. It is then blended/mashed with minced garlic, lemon juice and Tahini. The dish is garnished with fresh herbs/chopped nuts/pomegranate seeds or even toasted sesame seeds. Olive oil is drizzled and the dish is ready to be served.

This multi step recipe can be condensed using the layer and flash technique into OPOS. The much sought after smoky flavour is achieved by allowing a layer of the eggplants to char and blacken. The sealed cooking ensures this charred flavour is infused into all the eggplants.

Baba Ghanoush is served as a part of a Mezze (appetisers served before the main meal) or as a dip with flatbreads pita/kuboos/pita chips or as a spread in wraps. It can also be served with sliced vegetables as a dip or even used as a salad dressing. It is popular throughout the Middle East as an everyday food. It is especially popular during Ramadan and is widely used for breaking fast.

The name changes based on the region and on the building blocks used. When yogurt is used as a souring agent, it becomes the Mutabel. When the ingredients are not blended/mashed, it resembles a chunky salad and is called the Patlican salatası in Turkey and Melitzano- salata in Greece, both meaning Eggplant Salad.

When Indian spices enter the dish, it becomes the Bhaingan Bhartha. When

Tamarind comes in as a souring agent and the South Indian tadka is added, it becomes the Kathirikka Gothsu of Tamilnadu. When coconut oil replaces olive oil, this becomes the Kerala Vazhuthananga Chammanthi. The French cuisine names it caviar d'aubergines (Eggplant Caviar).

Like any much-loved dish, violent debates break out during discussions about recipe/origin. As usual you can safely bypass them by just focussing on the building blocks and cooking up variants to your taste!



# 5 minute Baby Foods: Starches

<https://youtu.be/dKXgnoiifgY>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water

Layer 2: 1/2C sweet potato cut big, 1/2C potato cut small

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Mash/serve as it is. Mix in salt/sugar if you like.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Water with stock
- Potato with other starchy vegetables

## **Tips:**

1. Can add other vegetables.
2. Can add butter/ghee as layer 1.
3. Cut mix in milk/cream.

# 5 minute Baby Foods: Protein

<https://youtu.be/sHhQTmY83lE>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water

Layer 2: 1/2C mixed sprouts, 1/2C fresh green peas

Cook on high heat for 6 - 10 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure.

Mash/serve as it is. Mix in salt/sugar if you like.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Water with stock
- Green peas with other fresh legumes (except kidney beans and soya). Please consult your doctor.

## **Tips:**

1. Prefer homemade sprouts.
2. Use bottled water for making sprouts.
3. Ensure sprouts are not slimy/ stinky.
4. Do not use kidney bean/ soy sprouts.
5. Consult your doctor before feeding sprouts to your baby.
6. Mix in tadka and serve as a snack.
7. Mix in grated coconut, chopped green chillies and serve as Tamil Sundal.

# 5 minute Baby Foods: Fruits

<https://youtu.be/6UdokSgM3II>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water

Layer 2: 1C peeled, cored and chopped apples

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (3 minutes). Release pressure. Mash/serve as it is. Mix in salt/sugar if you like.

**LAYER, FLASH AND MASH**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Apple with plums, pears, peach, berries, avocado, mango, papaya
- Water with milk

## **Tips:**

1. Prefer fresh, seasonal, organic fruits.
2. Wash multiple times.
3. Remove peel as far as possible.
4. Can add a bit of cinnamon.
5. Can add a layer of sugar.

# Bhel

## Marathi Puffed Rice Salad

Mix 1/2C each chopped (onion, tomato), 1/4C chopped cilantro, 1/2 tsp tamarind paste, 1tsp jaggery, 1/2C sev, 4C puffed rice, 2tsp lemon juice, 1 chopped green chilli, 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin powder, peanut oil).

**MIX ALL**

### Replace/Supplement

- Puffed rice with other puffed cereals
- Cumin powder with chat masala/your favourite spice mix
- Sev with fried snacks

### Tips:

1. Mix in puffed rice just before serving.
2. Nylon sev - the thin variety of fried gram flour paste is preferred.

Bhel or its common version with crushed pooris, the Bhelpuri, is probably India's most loved chaat. Bhelpuri is to Mumbai what Jhaal mudi is to Kolkata. Jhaal mudi is crisp and crunchy whereas Bhel is supposed to be slightly soggy and chewy. Both these are grouped under Chaat, the common name for North Indian street food.

The chaat is an amazing invention. It makes possible serving personalised, fresh food, from a tiny space. There are hundreds of varieties of chaats, all of them addictive.

The chaat is actually a mini meal in disguise. It perfectly mimics a full meal, with bite sized portions. Almost all chaats have a carbohydrate base, a 'curry' (chutney/yogurt/legume masala), protein and fresh vegetables.

The base can be fried bread (papdi, puffed poori, samosa, kachori, vada,), boiled carbohydrates (potato, beans) or puffed rice. The protein comes from sev/chickpeas/sprouts and the fat from the curry, which doubles as a dressing. Micronutrients come from the fresh vegetables and herbs. These are kept ready by the chaatwala (vendor) and mixed together on order.

The base also serves as an additive. For example, boiled potatoes can serve as

a base in aloo tikki and as an additive in pani poori/papdi chat. Papdi serves as a base in papdi chat and is crushed and used as an additive in bhel poori. Curried beans is a base in Ragda (mashed) patties and Misal pav and is used as an additive in Bhel poori and Masala Poori.

Chaat are usually eaten in the evening and long queues form in front of popular Chaatwalas.

The most popular chaat families are detailed below:

Puffed Poori based Chaats:

**Pani Poori** (Pani: water Poori: deep fried, puffed bread):

Take 4-6 golf ball sized puffed pooris. Punch a hole with your thumb. Fill with mashed potato/curried beans/mung sprouts. Top with pani poori water. The whole poori is popped in the mouth.

**Sev Poori** (Sev: fried gram flour stringlets):

Take 4-6 golf ball sized puffed pooris. Punch holes and fill with mashed potato/curried beans/mung sprouts and sev (fried gram flour strings). Add some chopped onions, red chilli powder and chat masala. Drizzle with a chutney. Sprinkle sev on top as garnish.

**Dahi Poori** (Dahi: Yogurt):

Take 4-6 golf ball sized puffed pooris. Punch holes and fill with mashed potato/curried beans/mung sprouts. Add some chopped onions, red chilli powder and chat masala. Add a few spoons of yogurt. Sprinkle with sev as garnish.

Puffed Rice based Chaats:

**Bhel Poori and Jhal Muri** (Jhal: Spicy, Muri: Puffed rice)

Potato based Chaats:

**Aloo Tikki** (Aloo: Potato, Tikki: Shallow fried patties):

Take 1C boiled and mashed potato. Mix in 1/4tsp each (chilli powder, salt and garam masala). Form into small patties. Shallow fry on both sides in oil till golden. Spread a chutney on top. Add half a handful of chopped onions and chickpea curry.

Mashed Bean based Chaats:

**Chole Tikki** (Chole: Beans)

Replace mashed potatoes in a Aloo tikki with mashed beans and you have the

chole tikki.

**Ragda Patties** (Ragda: Churned):

Add mashed, curried beans to Aloo tikki and you have Ragda patties.

**Misal Pav:**

Place a scoop of curried beans (usually green peas or matki) in the centre of a plate. Spread sev all around it in a circle. Over the beans sprinkle finely chopped onions, grated mango, chutney, chat masala and chilli powder. Add a bit of yogurt and some chopped cilantro. Serve with toasted pav.

Papdi based Chaats:

**Papdi Chat** (Papdi: unpuffed fried crispy flat bread):

Take 4-6 medallion sized flat pooris. Spread mashed potato/curried beans/mung sprouts. Add chopped onions, red chilli powder and chat masala. Add a dash of chutney. Sprinkle sev on top.

**Dahi Papdi:**

Replace chutney with yogurt in the recipe above and you have dahi papdi.

Quick recipe: Mix with 1/4c each (chopped onions, tomato, grated carrots, chopped cucumber, chickpea curry, 3 tsp green chutney, 1 tsp each (lemon juice, chilli powder). Store in fridge. Stores well for weeks. Just mix in puffed rice, sev and your bhel poori is ready in a jiffy!

# Boiled eggs

<https://youtu.be/JJ40ETJKegY>

In a 2L cooker, add 12 eggs. Cover with water. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (11 minutes). Let pressure settle. Drain water. Cover with cold water. Peel and use.

**PRESSURE COOK**

## Tips:

- Can cook 1 to 15 eggs in a 2L cooker
- Can add chilled eggs directly from the refrigerator.
- Overcooked? Release pressure.
- Can refrigerate cooked, unpeeled eggs for a week.
- If peeled, can refrigerate in a sealed container for 4-5 days
- Drain all water and shake the cooker to crack the shells and peel easy.
- Small/large, chilled or warm, they all cook perfectly in 1 whistle.
- Can cook any quantity from 1 to 16 eggs in a 2L cooker.
- Prevent eggs from bouncing around and cracking by placing them in a small bowl.

The pressure cooker is the fastest and most foolproof way to boil eggs.

Boiling eggs in an open pot is tricky as it can overcook or under cook. Overcooking causes the greenish ring outside the yolk. Undercooking leads to a gooey yolk. The cooking time varies depending on the size of eggs, the temperature of eggs and the altitude. This makes open pot cooking very tricky. At higher altitudes (over 10,000ft), open pot cooking is almost impossible.

Using this technique, you are guaranteed a perfect, creamy and yellow yolk every time. The size of the egg, its temperature and the altitude ceases to matter. The time taken for the whistle automatically adjusts itself to balance these factors out.

By increasing or decreasing cooking time, you can have eggs done exactly to

your taste, every single time.



## Boiled Milk

In a 2L cooker, add 500ml milk. Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Release pressure gently or Let pressure settle on its own.

**PRESSURE COOK**

## Tips:

- Refrigerated/frozen milk can be used. Time varies but whistles remain same.
- Minimal foaming happens when the pressure cooker whistles.
- Note time just before first whistle and switch off to avoid foaming.
- Milk is ready when pressure is fully built up.
- Switch off just before the first whistle to prevent spewing.
- Can also switch off after full pressure has built up.
- Release gently. If milk leaks out of the vent, wait for a while for steam to settle.
- Frozen milk/chilled milk/room temperature milk all can be used, but the timings will vary marginally.
- Ensure your cooker, gasket and lid are well scrubbed and clean to avoid milk curdling.
- Can use an inner vessel.

Boiled milk? Seriously?

OPOS is not just about unlocking complex recipes. It is about unsupervised cooking!

Boiling milk ties a person to the stove for around 10 minutes. Milk overflow happens to the most careful of cooks. The best technique we have for unsupervised cooking of milk is the milk cooker, but that is another extra piece of equipment that needs to be filled with water and tended. It is also wasteful, as you end up boiling water first and then use that water to boil milk. A waste of both water and fuel.

Microwaving is another option it needs supervision too. This daily chore in all households begs to be OPOSed.

OPOS is the fastest way of boiling milk. 500 ml chilled milk takes just 5 minutes. OPOS is also the safest way of boiling milk, as the temperatures reached are much higher.

The sedimentation at the bottom is minimal as compared to open pot cooking, and can be just wiped off.

# Fondue

## Swiss cheese dipped vegetables

<https://youtu.be/VXcDjWtb9qc>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp water, 2tbsp butter

Layer 2: 250g cauliflower florets (2C)

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, pepper powder)

Layer 4: 5 cheddar cheese cubes (100g)

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Butter with your favourite oil
- Cauliflower with broccoli/non-watery vegetables
- Cheddar with your favourite melting cheese

### **Tips:**

1. Use bite sized florets.
2. Stick in toothpicks and serve as appetizer
3. Cheddar cheese cubes/cheese slices melt well and are ideal.
4. Test out new cheeses to see how well they melt.
5. Do not cook beyond 4 minutes to avoid burning/overcooking.

The Fondue (From French: To melt) is Switzerland's national dish. It is a very simple but very flexible theme. A variety of ingredients are dipped into a bowl of molten cheese, get 'cooked' and coated with rich, molten cheese.

In the traditional method, the cheese is melted carefully with a mix of other ingredients to stabilise it. Vegetables/meats are stuck on long forks and briefly dipped into this mixture to coat them (and cook them, in some cases).

We can condense these steps into a single step by using the layer and flash technique. On opening, you have a pre-coated, pre-cooked, ready to eat

appetiser.

This recipe is specifically developed to fill the gap in the OPOS appetiser section. In all other categories, we have an array of recipes that can be prepared without using a knife. With this recipe, you can whip up scores of appetisers in a jiffy, without touching your knife.

The building blocks of a fondue:

Cheese:

Swiss cheeses (Emmental and Gruyère) are commonly used in a fondue, but you can use any cheese that melts well. If the cheese is bland, you can add in spices/additives to perk them up.

Vegetables/Meats:

All your favourite vegetables/processed meats/seafood can be used.

All non watery vegetables like asparagus spears, artichoke hearts, Brussels sprouts, baby carrots, mushrooms, baby corn, cherry tomatoes, zucchini sticks, capsicum, garlic cloves, cauliflower, broccoli, squash, eggplant etc., can be used.

A variety of sausages/fresh seafood/cooked meats can be used the same way. Ensure they are cut into bite sized pieces.

Fruits:

All non-watery fruits (pineapple/pears/apples etc) can be used. Fruits are more commonly used in a Chocolate fondue. The chocolate fondue can be cooked using the same theme, but by replacing the vegetables/meats with fruit and cheese with chocolate. Ensure the chocolate is at room temperature when added. Prefer premium chocolates that melt into a rich, thick sauce.

Stabiliser:

Corn starch is used as a stabiliser in many commercial fondues. You can skip it completely or use instant soup powder, which binds with the minimal water and melted cheese into a stable emulsion.

Flavouring:

Traditional fondue relies on the inherent flavour of cheese supplemented by alcohol (usually Kirsch and or Wine). You can replace them with lemon juice and add any spice/spice mix of your choice.

The combinations you can dream up are infinite. This flexible theme unlocks a huge variety of instant appetisers. Bon Appétit!

# Hummus

## Arab chickpea dip

Soak 1C chickpeas overnight. Drain. Add to a 2L cooker with 1/4C water. Cook on high heat for 10 whistles(7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Blend with 1/2tsp salt, 4tsp sesame seeds, 3tsp lemon juice and 1/4C olive oil. Garnish with chilli powder, cumin powder and mint leaves.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Chickpeas with other whole pulses
- Lemon juice with your favourite souring agents
- Sesame seeds with tahini
- Olive oil with your favourite oil

### **Tips:**

1. Add olive oil in a thin stream while blending to emulsify.
2. Cut carrot/cucumber into fingers and serve with dip.
3. Serve as meze (starter) with flatbreads.

South India is the world's chutney capital. Almost everything is blended into a chutney/thogayal here. But we missed out on a few 'chutneys' which the world gleefully claimed as their own.

1. Mustard chutney, which went to conquer Europe and USA as Dijon Mustard.
2. Sesame chutney which became the Middle East's favourite Tahini.
3. Basil chutney, which the Italians embraced as the Pesto.
4. Raw tomato chutney which became the Mexican Salsa and
5. Boiled chickpea chutney, which rules Middle East as the Hummus.

The Hummus (Arabic: Chickpeas), is just a puree of boiled chickpeas with spices. It can also be seen a variant of the Tamil paruppu masiyal, where a variety of lentils are boiled and mashed with spices. Though Tamilnadu uses

a variety of lentils for its Paruppu masiyal/Paruppu kadayal, it missed out on chickpeas and the larger peas/beans and legumes.

This became the Middle Eastern heartthrob Hummus bi Tahini (Chickpeas with sesame paste). It is used exactly like the Indian dal, in being paired with flatbreads (Khuboos/Pita). It is also used as a dip for vegetables/pita chips or as a spread. It is also a part of the mezze (appetiser) platter.

The humble hummus is one of the very few things uniting Jews and Arabs. It has been a Middle Eastern staple for centuries. This is a very ancient recipe and every country in the Middle East claims to have invented it, and holds their version as the most authentic. Thousands of 'original' recipes exist and tempers run high on what is authentic! We will look at it not as a recipe, but as a Levant technique of creating a creamy, chickpea dip.

Like any creamy dip, hummus has to be light, never heavy/gloopy. Hummus can however be smooth/chunky, garlicky/lemony, spicy/bland. The core building blocks of Hummus are boiled chickpeas, garlic and Tahini. All these are emulsified with olive oil, which makes the dip light and creamy.

Purists advocate the chickpeas to be cooked in a slow cooker over a low fire for many, many hours till the chickpea almost disintegrates. It is then drained and gradually blended with finely chopped garlic and sesame seed paste. Olive oil is then drizzled on top. The OPOS version flashes chickpeas to convert it into a one shot recipe. Olive oil is blended right into the dip to emulsify it and make it light and creamy.

The theme can be extended with different legumes, souring agents, additives into numerous recipes.

You can blend in your favourite additive along with chickpeas. Chillies, sun dried tomatoes, roasted garlic/onions, olives, can all be blended in.

Hummus is usually garnished with whole boiled chickpeas, paprika powder, olive oil, chopped parsley, sliced olives, sumac powder, cumin powder, pine nuts, minced garlic, mint leaves or cooked fava beans. A drizzle of olive oil adds a sheen and brightens up the surface.

This is a very forgiving recipe and a flexible one - try to whip up your own masterpiece!

# Jhaal Mudi

## Kolkatta's spicy puffed rice

Mix 3C puffed rice, 2tsp mustard oil, 1/4C each chopped (onion, tomato), 1/4C roasted peanuts, 1/2tsp each (chilli powder, cumin powder, salt, lemon juice), 1 chopped green chilli, 2tsp chopped cilantro.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement**

- Puffed rice with other puffed grains
- Onion/tomato with cucumber/mango etc
- Cumin with chat masala
- Mustard oil with your favourite oil

### **Tips:**

1. Serve immediately. Can dry roast puffed rice if it is not crisp enough.

Puffed rice is an ancient Indian staple. Mankind has been puffing grains for millenia. Archaeologists have found 4000 year old popcorn kernels. In industrial production, the soaked grain is heated in a pressurised chamber and the pressure is released suddenly, causing the steam inside the grain to expand and puff the grain.

Puffed rice is consumed across India in numerous avatars, but it is the East (Bengal and Orissa) which takes it seriously, making it a staple of their cuisine.

The Jhaal Mudi (Spicy puffed rice) is the most popular street food in Bengal. This is another complete meal masquerading as a snack. It is in fact consumed as a full breakfast in the east.

With carbohydrates coming from rice, protein from peanuts, fat from oil and micro nutrients from the added vegetables and herbs, it is in fact a well rounded meal.

Puffed cereals are a marvel in themselves - they are probably the fastest way

to cook any grain.

If you have seen popcorn being made, you'll understand the process better. All grains have some moisture in them. When they are heated at the right conditions, the tiny bit of water inside them flashes into steam. Now when water becomes steam, it expands to over 1700 times. Unable to contain this steam, the grain explodes, instantly becoming cooked and puffed.

There are two kinds of puffed rice - the smooth, white and salty variety made from semi cooked rice and the bland, ridged and speckled variety made from paddy. Due to the spoilage taboo, anything cooked is not supposed to be stored or offered to Gods. So the smooth puffed rice, which forms the basis of countless snacks across India, is not served as prasad or used in ritual cooking.

The smooth variety is made by semi cooking the rice in salted boiling water. It is then filtered out and mixed with a large volume of heated sand. The intense heat transfer causes the water inside the rice to flash into steam instantly, cooking and puffing it.

The paddy puffed rice (Nel pori/Aval pori) is made from unhusked paddy. It is not precooked and relies on the inherent moisture in the grain to puff it up. This is widely used to make desserts and has been offered as prasad in temples for centuries, even finding mention in literature.

The 15th century Tiruppugazh authored by the divine Arunagirinathar immortalises it in verse.

Kaiththala nirai kani

appam odu aval pori

kappiya kari mugan adi peni

We fall at the feet of the elephant headed God (Ganesha), offering Him fruits, sweet dumplings and puffed rice. Note that he specifies Aval pori (Puffed paddy) and not just Pori (puffed rice).

But it is the smooth, salted and semi cooked puffed rice which rules the country - as a snack or a meal. You can use puffed rice exactly the way you use cooked rice or rice flakes. It can be turned into a variety rice, upma or even a biriyani, as they do in Bangladesh.

Telugus roast it into the crispy Murmura chivda and in Rayalaseema it is cooked it into upmas. A similar recipe is relished in Karnataka as the

Mandakki oggarane/Mandakki Uppittu/Mandakki Usli. In East India, it is eaten just as rice, with fish/mutton curry or as a snack, the Jhal-mudi. When it is mixed with the protein packed sev, it becomes the Mudi Bhuja, another full meal. In Maharashtra, it is mixed with crushed papdi and chutney to become the famous Bhel puri.

Jhal Mudi is one of the easiest snacks to make in a hurry. Puffed rice stores well and can be mixed and served in minutes. It need not be limited to rice. Almost all grains can be puffed and all these translate into Jhal mudi variants! A sheet of paper rolled into a cone (Thonga) is the most popular packaging for Jhaal mudi.

Bursting with flavour, heat and textures, the Thonga Jhaal Mudi is the undisputed king of street foods in Calcutta, rivaling the Pani poori and the Katti rolls!

# Kiribath

## Srilankan milk rice

In a 2L cooker, add 1C rice, 1.5C water, 1/4C coconut milk. Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mix in 1/2tsp salt.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Water with milk

### **Tips:**

1. Shape into balls. Stuff with coconut- jaggery paste and mould to make imbul kiribath.
2. Add a pandan leaf to turn this into Malay Nasi lemak.

Rice cooked in coconut milk is notably absent in India. This theme however has become the national dish of Malaysia (Nasi Lemak) and one of the most popular dishes of Sri Lanka as the Kiri Bath (Milk rice) or Paal Choru (Tamil).

It is surprising the North Indian term for cooked rice (Bath) is used for one of the ancient Srilankan dishes. This is probably because of the fact that a Bengali founded the Sri Lankan kingdom. The Mahāvamsa records that a banished prince from West Bengal landed in Sri Lanka 2500 years ago, founding a dynasty which will rule the island for 2300 years, till the arrival of the British. The term used for rice in east India is Bath, which is probably how kiribath got its name!

Till today, the sacred language of Sinhalese Buddhists is Pali, which was the language spoken in East India 3000 years ago. Buddha spoke Pali.

Every important occasion in Sri Lanka starts with Kiribath as it is strongly associated with auspicious beginnings. Many families cook it on the first day of each month as breakfast, with the belief they will enjoy good fortune throughout the month. Like the Hummus, Kiribath transcends bitter ethnic rivalry. It is one dish that unites Tamils and Srilankans. Both Tamils and Sinhalese welcome their new year with the Kiribath.

The closest Indian equivalent is the Malabar coconut rice, where rice is cooked in coconut milk along with spices. But the Srilankan Kiribath is devoid of spices, relying on just salt and the spicy sambol it is usually served with.

Kiribath very closely resembles the Tamil pongal. Like the pongal, is cooked usually with raw rice. Some versions even use mung dal. And like the pongal, the consistency varies from a thick porridge to sliceable cakes.

The earliest records indicate kiribhat was cooked from cow's milk. It is likely that the less expensive coconut milk took over the dish completely, making it vegan.

In rural regions, cooking of Kiribath is a communal event. It is cooked in huge vats, in the open, as an offering to Gods very much like pongal. The one prepared in the southern Karthirgamam Murugan temple, called Mun Kiribath (Mung Kiribhat) comes very close to a chakkara pongal, being cooked with mung dal and jaggery.

Another variant is the Ibul Kiribath, which is a kind of a 'stuffed' pongal, where coconut cooked in jaggery syrup is stuffed into kiribath and moulded into balls.

Normally a spicy sambol (Chilli chutney) accompanies the Kiribath. It is also served with a protein stew (fish curry) making it a complete meal. Kiribhat is usually made from regional rice and its colour can range from pure white to speckled red depending on the rice used.

This theme need not be limited to rice and coconut milk. It can be extended with other grains, milks and flavouring into a infinite range of recipes!

# Kofta

## North Indian dumplings

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 2C (250g) potato chopped small

Layer 3: 1tsp each (salt, chilli powder), 1/2tsp each (garam masala, turmeric powder)

Layer 4: 1C grated carrot.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Let cool. Mash and shape into small balls. Shallow fry (optional).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Potato with other starchy vegetables (banana, yam etc.)
- Carrot with non-watery vegetables/paneer
- Garam masala with your favourite spice mix

#### **Tips:**

1. Serve as appetisers or simmer in curries.
2. Stuff in sandwiches/rolls.
3. Shallow fry and serve as tikkis.
4. Skewer with cheese/fruits and serve as appetizers.

# Lunu Miris

## Sri Lankan onion dip

Blend 1C chopped shallots, 4 dry red chillies, 1tsp salt, 1tbsp oil to a coarse paste. Mix in 3tsp lemon juice.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Shallots with onion
- Lemon juice with tamarind paste

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in dry shrimp/dried prawns/dried fish.

Lunu Miris (salt chilli) is Srilanka's favourite dip, competing with Pol sambol (Coconut chutney) for the top spot. The use of fish extract as a flavouring agent is very prevalent in coastal cuisines. Dried fish as a flavouring agent is widely used in many Srilankan dips.

It is surprising how certain cuisines totally ignore some themes. Indian cuisine completely sidelined raw onion dips. Almost all onion chutneys in India are cooked. Sri Lankan cuisine embraced it. Similarly, Indian cuisine completely ignored the chickpea dip, whereas the Mid east cuisine called it Hummus and made it a star!

This dip falls under the class of sambol (Srilankan dips) and is sometimes referred to as chilli onion sambol. It is the favourite accompaniment to Kiribath (rice cooked in coconut milk), another theme which Indian cuisine bypassed!

Like all fresh dips, it is essential not to heat it by over blending, as it destroys the flavours. Purists believe (with good reason) that a pounded dip tastes much better than a blended one!

Blending is convenient and much faster. If you blend in short bursts and ensure the dip is not heated up, there is no appreciable difference in taste between the blended and pounded versions.

# Mayonnaise

## French Egg- Oil emulsion

In a tall, narrow cup, crack 1 fresh egg. Add 1/2C oil, 1tbsp vinegar and 1/2tsp salt. Immerse a stick blender. Blend till you get a creamy dip.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Vinegar with lemon juice
- Salt with sugar
- Raw eggs with pasteurized eggs

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in tabasco, ketchup, yogurt, mustard paste, chilli sauce, soya sauce etc.
2. Move the blender head up and down while blending.
3. If your mayo is not smooth and creamy, beat an egg yolk separately and blend it in till mayonnaise is smooth.
4. A pinch of salt/mustard powder added to egg yolks while blending helps in getting a smooth, creamy mayonnaise.
5. Use fresh eggs and ensure all ingredients are at room temperature.
6. The fresher the egg, the better the mayonnaise.

An oil becoming a creamy, delicious sauce with the addition of eggs is sheer magic. The French discovered that oil when blended carefully with eggs becomes a creamy sauce. This discovery led to a huge variety of mayonnaise. These versatile sauces have a long shelf life, go with almost anything and can carry an endless variety of different flavouring and additives.

To understand a mayonnaise, you need to understand Emulsions. Mix oil and water and they'll soon separate. Use an emulsifier and they'll stay mixed. Think of emulsifiers as glue which sticks oil and water together. At the molecular level, one end of an emulsifier sticks to oil and the other end to water. This lets them stay mixed. Eggs, milk, mustard powder, honey etc., act as natural emulsifiers. Mayonnaise and Vinaigrette are both emulsions. Mayonnaise is mostly oil with some egg, whereas vinaigrette is mostly water

(lemon juice or vinegar) with some oil.

Variants:

Change the oil used, emulsifier, souring agent, additives and you can create a huge range of mayonnaises.

Oils used:

Each region prefers its own oil, souring agent and additives. Spain and France prefer Olive oil, commercial mayonnaise uses Soya bean oil and Russia prefers Sunflower oil. Oils like Canola oil, Safflower oil, Corn Oil, Cotton seed oil, Grape seed oil, Sesame oil and Peanut oil are all used in different regions.

Additives:

Each region also blends in various ingredients into Mayonnaise. The English blend in mustard powder, garlic, salt and pepper, and use just the yolks. The Russian mayonnaise has milk powder, sugar and mustard powder. Japanese blend in MSG, Japanese mustard powder (Karashi) and use rice vinegar.

Wasabi/soy sauce might also be mixed in. The Spanish call it Mahonesa and use just the yolks, blending it with lots of garlic. Mexicans mix it with salsa, making the Salsa Mayonnaise. Italians do the same with pesto, creating Pesto mayonnaise. All our chutneys can be mixed in with mayonnaise, creating infinite combinations.

Mayonnaise uses:

Dip for finger foods (fries), spread for hot dogs, sandwiches, burgers and bread, salad dressing and as a base for other sauces/dressings.

Using Mayonnaise as a mother sauce:

Mayonnaise can be mixed in with virtually any other sauce/dip as detailed below:

- Mayonnaise + Tabasco becomes the Fry sauce, usually served with French fries.
- Mayonnaise + yogurt + minced spring onions becomes Ranch dressing.
- Mayonnaise + finely chopped garlic + a bit of saffron and red pepper powder becomes the French sauce Rouille.
- Mayonnaise + ketchup + a few pinches of oregano and chilli flakes becomes Salsa Golf.
- Mayonnaise + Chopped onions + pickled cucumbers becomes

Tartar sauce.

- Mayonnaise + Ketchup is basic Thousand Island dressing.
- Mayonnaise + Mustard paste + chopped gherkins, capers, parsley and a dash of anchovy essence is the French Sauce Rémoulade.
- Mayonnaise + Red chilli sauce + caviar is Russian dressing.
- Mayonnaise + Garlic paste + a dash of olive oil becomes Garlic Mayonnaise.
- Mayonnaise + chopped herbs (Parsley, tarragon, basil, rocket etc) is Sauce Verte.

People think of mayonnaise making as a complex process, but with the OPOS recipe, you can make this in an instant. If you have the time and patience, add oil gradually, in a thin stream, while the blender is running. This would give you a creamier mayonnaise.

# Millets

Wash and drain 1C Italian millet (Foxtail millet)/Little millet. Add to a 2L cooker with 2C water. Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (6 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up.

## **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Italian millets with other similar sized millets
- Water with stock

### **Tips:**

1. Use less water for a grainier texture, more water for a mushier texture.
2. Presoak for faster cooking.
3. Can cook with 4 times the water and drain excess water after cooking.
4. Use as you would use cooked rice.

Carbohydrates are very much like sugar - the more refined they are, the closer they resemble sugar. Bad carbohydrates have very low fiber and spike up your blood glucose levels immediately - just like sugar.

Millets are smart carbohydrates - they are much less refined than wheat/rice. They have more fiber and do not spike up blood sugar. They are gluten free, protein rich and filled with anti oxidants. The world is slowly rediscovering this ancient food, in quest of a healthier diet.

All carbohydrates are broken down into blood sugar (glucose) by your body in around an hour. Your body converts a cup of any carbohydrate into 1/4 cup of blood sugar. Bad carbohydrates (white bread, white rice, maida) get converted to sugar much faster, spiking up blood sugar levels. Smart carbohydrates (wholewheat, unpolished rice, millets) take a longer time to process and so do not spike up blood sugar level. As millets have more fiber than refined carbohydrates, they help in weight loss, as you end up consuming less carbohydrates compared to refined grains .

Millets are a collective term for all small grains apart from rice, wheat and maize. They were a part of our diet till very recently. They still form a big chunk of the rural diet which sees rice and wheat as wimpy foods.

Cooking millets is as simple as cooking rice itself. Just the water quantity and cooking time changes based on the millet size.

Little Millet (*Panicum sumatrense*) also called

Saamai/Sama/Samalu/Suvan/Sava/Kutki/Shavan/Gajro/Kuri is a popular quick cooking millet. It is still a part of the Namboodiri diet and many rural diets. It cooks very fast as recorded in the Tamil saying ' Samayathukku Samai" (Samai for timely cooking). It closely resembles white mustard seeds.

Most millets will not give you separate grains and will remain clumped up after cooking - one reason many people prefer the visually more appealing white rice. But mix it in with curries/convert it into curd rice/sambhar rice or use it for making Bisi bele bath/Pongal and you can pass it off as rice, though with an interesting texture!

Foxtail millet (*Setaria Italica*) also called Thina/Kang/Navane/Korra is still a staple in the rural diets of both India and China. It is mentioned in Tamil literature and was a staple food of ancient Tamils. Unlike rice, millets can thrive in dry arid regions and was a part of a diet of these regions. Legend has it that when Lord Murugan was wooing the tribal girl Valli, he was offered roasted Foxtail millet flour and honey. Roasted and sweetened Thinai flour is still served as a prasad in Palani Murugan temple.

The supply of subsidised rice has been chiefly responsible for rice replacing millets in the rural diet. Thinai requires marginally higher cooking time than saamai. It also retains the individual grain shape better, without becoming a mush like Saamai. Hence it can be used in Pulao, Stir fries and Variety rice.

# Orange Marmalade

## Citrus fruit preserve

In a 2L cooker, layer as below

Layer 1: 250g deseeded and finely sliced oranges (with peel).

Layer 2: 500g jam sugar.

Layer 3: 1/4tsp cinnamon powder.

Cook on high heat for 5 whistles (6 minutes). Let cool and bottle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Orange with your favourite citrus fruits
- Cardamom with your favourite spice mix
- Jam sugar with brown sugar/white sugar

#### **Tips:**

1. Jam sugar contains added pectin, which sets the preserve.
2. You can use normal sugar + added pectin.
3. You can cook longer to set without pectin.
4. Vary the sugar quantity to your liking. The more the sugar, better it lasts.
5. Vary the amount of peel you add. If very little peel is added, you need to add pectin/gelatin to set the marmalade.



Marmalade is the jelly-like preserve made from the pulp and skin of sour fruits. The word comes from the Portuguese word for Quince (Marmelo), which was one of the most popular fruit for making marmalades. Think of them as whole fruit jams.

In jams, the fruit pulp is cooked and filtered out, using only the clear juice. The skin is almost never used. Marmalade uses whole fruits (including seeds, while cooking).

We always have a fascination for edibles that look solid but behave as liquids/foam. Mayonnaise, Ice-cream and Jelly are classic examples. In all these cases, a huge volume of liquid is trapped in a solid matrix, creating a unique mouth feel.

This is made possible by the use of structural proteins. These proteins form the framework of plant and animal cells. They are the scaffolding that holds the cell together. In plants, the structural protein is called Pectin and in animals it is called Collagen.

It is pectin that sets the liquid pulp in jams and marmalades. It is collagen (Gelatin) which sets jellies.

The Pectin molecules are long chains and link with one another - creating a three dimensional mesh. The liquid fruit pulp is trapped in this mesh and appears as a translucent solid - A liquid that does not flow!

The building blocks of a marmalade are the whole fruit, pectin and sugar.

Fruit:

Any fruit pulp can be used to make marmalades, provided it has enough pectin. Though all fruits contain pectin, citrus fruits like pears, apples, guavas, quince, plums, gooseberries, oranges, lime, lemon, grapefruit contain large amounts of pectin, especially in their skins and seeds. These are widely employed for making marmalades.

Pectin:

Pectin is available as a powder and is mixed into sugar to make Jam sugar. Using pectin powder or jam sugar allows you to create jams and marmalades from virtually any fruit. If pectin is not available, you can even use gelatin to set a marmalade.

Sugar:

Sugar is as good a preservative as salt. Boiling the fruit pulp with sugar sterilises it and the high sugar concentration prevents microorganisms from breeding, preserving the fruit pulp.

Play with these blocks to make marmalades from anything!

# Peanut Butter

Blend 1/2C roasted peanuts, 1tsp sugar, 1/4tsp salt, 4tsp peanut oil to a smooth/chunky paste.

**BLEND ALL**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Peanuts with other nuts/seeds
- Sugar with jaggery/honey
- Peanut oil with your favourite oil

## **Tips:**

- Stays unrefrigerated for over a week.
- Handy source of concentrated nourishment.

We have been crushing nuts and eating their paste for ages. The Aztecs are known to have used peanut butter. When peanuts are blended, they crumble into a powder. Blend long enough or add some oil and it turns into a paste. Salt and sugar spice it up a bit, acting as preservatives. You can even blend in chillies or your favourite spices to convert it into a spicy dip.

This butter is a complete hunger solution. Mixed with some milk powder, it is used to treat acute malnutrition, without even the need for hospitalization.

By blending it longer or shorter you get a creamy or a crunchy dip, both delicious.

It is surprising why Indian cuisine ignored this theme. The closest equivalent we have is the thogayal, which is a heavily spiced version. The West embraced this wholeheartedly and consumes tons of it. A variant, the sesame butter is the heart throb of the Middle East.

You can use the same core recipe to make your favourite nut butters. Do it with hazelnut and chocolate and you don't even need to buy Nutella anymore! The uses are limited only by your imagination. The most common use is as a spread/dip. But you can use them as stuffing, frosting, blend them into shakes or even eat it straight.

# Pol Sambol

## Srilankan coconut chutney

Blend 1/2C chopped coconut, 1/4C chopped onion, 1 dry red chilli, 1tsp tamarind paste, 1/2tsp salt to a coarse paste.

**BLEND ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Coconut with roasted coconut
- Onion with shallots
- Tamarind with lemon juice/vinegar

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in dried seafood.
2. Serve with rice/flatbreads/string hoppers/puttu.

The Pol Sambol (Pol: Coconut, Sambol: chutney) is one of Sri Lanka's most consumed dips. It accompanies virtually every Sri Lankan meal.

Though Coconut chutneys are a staple across South India, they are never blended with chilli powder and very rarely with onion. And that is what makes the Sri Lankan version different. The addition of roasted/cured and dried fish as a flavouring agent is also unique to the Sri Lankan version.

# Shakshouka

## Israeli Poached Egg and Tomato Stew

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tbsp olive oil

Layer 2: 1C chopped onion and 3 chopped garlic cloves, arranged as a ring with 1C chopped deseeded tomatoes at the centre

Layer 3: 1/2tsp each (salt, cumin powder), 1tsp pepper powder

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Open and mash. Crack 2 eggs. Keep closed for 10 minutes till eggs set.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Olive oil with your favourite oil
- Cumin with your favourite spice mix
- Pepper with chilli powder

### **Tips:**

1. Garnish with chopped parsley and paprika powder.
2. Use eggs at room temperature. Chilled eggs will not cook in retained heat.
3. Cook longer for more caramelisation.



# Sichuan Sauce

## Chinese Chilli- garlic sauce

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1tbsp vinegar, 1/4C sesame oil

Layer 2: 50g garlic cloves

Layer 3: 2 chopped green chillies

Layer 4: 1tbsp chopped ginger

Layer 5: 50g soaked and drained dry red chilli.

Cook on high heat for 3 whistles (4 minutes). Release pressure. Blend with 1/4C each (sesame oil, vinegar), 1/8C each (soy sauce, tomato sauce), 2tsp each (salt, sugar).

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Green chillies with Sichuan pepper
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil

### **Tip**

1. Can add more spices.
2. Can use your favourite variety of dry red chilli variety/vinegar/soy sauce.
3. Can store unrefrigerated for a week and refrigerated for months.
4. Use as a marinade/stir-fry sauce for noodles/pasta/rice.



OPOS Schezwan sauce

# Stock

In a 2L cooker add 1/2C each chopped (beans, carrot, onion, capsicum, cabbage), 1/2tsp salt, 1 crushed garlic clove. Cover with water. Cook on medium heat for 5 whistles (10 minutes). Filter out solids.

## **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Carrot/beans with other vegetables
- Garlic with ginger

### **Tips:**

1. Serve as a clear soup/use as a base for curries.
2. Save all vegetable trimmings, refrigerate and convert them to stock.

When edibles are simmered for a long time in a liquid, the liquid gets enriched. This liquid, called stock, is the foundation of all western soups. This theme has been bypassed by Indian cuisine. The closest equivalent we have is the Mogul yakhni.

Almost anything can be simmered in a liquid to extract their flavour and nutrition. Vegetables, legumes, meats, seafood are commonly used. Stocks are an elegant way to use up no-so-fresh vegetables and bones.

More flavour can be added to a stock by simmering it with spices and herbs. The key to a good stock is slow simmer over a long period. Using a cooker greatly cuts down the time and makes possible cooking good stock in minutes.

The stock can be drunk by itself as a soup. It can replace/supplement water in curries, biriyani, pasta etc to lend an added depth of flavour. It can be refrigerated for weeks or frozen forever.

# Sprouts

Soak 1C whole mung dal overnight. Drain. Add to an insulated casserole/hot pack and keep covered. Will start sprouting in a day. Rinse and drain every day to avoid moulds.

**MIX ALL**

## **Replace/Supplement:**

- Mung with chickpeas/horse gram/fenugreek/Soy

## **Tips:**

1. Eat raw/mix with salads.
2. Can flash with spices.
3. The longer you keep them covered, the longer the sprouts.
4. Pressing down with a weight makes the sprouts thicker.

All seeds have evolved to sprout under the right conditions. During sprouting, the embryo needs food to grow. The seed's own enzymes break down the stored nutrients into simpler forms to feed the embryo. Fortunately, this makes the sprouts edible for humans too! Thus we can look at sprouting as cooking with enzymes. Sprouting is the greenest and most nutritious way to cook whole seeds - as we let nature do all the work.

A seed is very similar to a hen's egg. The yolk in an egg is called the germ in a seed. The germ is the plant embryo, which later grows into a plant. The white of an egg is called the endosperm in a seed. This is packed food for the embryo. The shell of the egg is the bran in the seed, which protects it from damage.

Unlike an egg, seeds have growth inhibitors to prevent the seed growing till the right temperature and moisture conditions are reached. This is why seeds are not edible raw and need to be cooked, to deactivate these growth inhibitors. During sprouting, the seed's own enzymes deactivate these growth inhibitors and breaks down the endosperm into simpler molecules which can be easily used by the embryo. Thus, sprouting turns dormant seeds into living plants, packed with nutrients easily digestible by our bodies. This is why sprouts are a cornerstone of the raw food diet. They are also very popular in

SE Asian cuisines.

For good sprouts, we need to mimic the right temperature and moisture conditions needed for growth.

Moisture:

Seeds cannot germinate unless they absorb enough moisture. So whole seeds need to be soaked for a few hours and drained to let them absorb enough water. The bigger the seed, the longer the soak needed. Too little moisture and the sprouts dry out. Too much and they become rotten.

Temperature:

The temperature you can tolerate without feeling too hot or cold is just about right for sprouts (13 to 21 °C). Hotter temperatures dry them out. Colder temperatures slow down sprouting. Refrigeration can be used to slow down the sprouting process.

Pressure:

Seeds are designed to germinate underground. So keeping them covered, with a bit of weight on them simulates natural growth and results in bigger, crunchier sprouts. If left longer they will begin to develop leaves, and are then known as baby greens.

A huge variety of methods are followed for sprouting, some with elaborate equipment. In this recipe we rely on mimicking the natural tendency of seeds to sprout. Most whole seeds sprout in this method with some like Mung, Fenugreek, Desi channa, Horse gram giving out the longest sprouts.

Unless you know that store bought sprouts have been soaked in safe water and have been stored well, it is not advisable to consume them. Sprouts spoil easily if not germinated right. Raw sprouts are not advisable for those with weak immune systems (Children, elderly, pregnant women, recovering patients etc.). Though many sprouts are edible raw, it is better to cook them to make them totally safe for consumption. Any sign of sliminess or a rotten smell is an indication that they might not be fit to be consumed.

The warm and humid condition essential for sprouting is also ideal for the growth of bacteria. So if you are letting the sprouts grow after 2 days, it is a good idea to rinse them once a day to prevent bacterial contamination.

Tips:

1. Sprouted seeds can be dried, ground into flour and used in place of regular flour.

2. Sprouted seeds can be ground into a wet batter and used for a variety of flat breads.
3. If your seeds just refuse to sprout, even under the right temperature and moisture conditions, just try with another batch. They may have been chemically treated.

# Torshi

## Persian Pickles

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp vinegar, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: 1/2C chopped garlic (50g)

Layer 3: 1/2C each chopped (squash, eggplant, carrot, turnip, radish, capsicum)

Layer 4: 5 chopped chillies, 2tsp each (salt, crushed mustard seeds, dry fenugreek leaves)

Cook on high heat for 1 whistle (5 minutes). Release pressure gently. Let cool. Mix 1/2C vinegar and bottle.

### **LAYER AND FLASH**

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Eggplant/squash with your favourite vegetables
- Chillies with chilli flakes
- Crushed mustard with your favourite spices
- Kasuri methi with dried mint/oregano/dill

#### **Tips:**

1. Cut quick cooking vegetables into big chunks and tough ones into small chunks.
2. Do not release pressure/cook longer for a mushier consistency.
3. Stays good for months when refrigerated.

"Torshi" literally means sour in Farsi. Pickling in acid is a popular way of preserving food. This is why sour fruit pickles are the most common pickles in India. You can preserve any foodstuff as an instant pickle - by just mixing in vinegar/an acid.

Across the Middle East and the Balkans, a wide variety of non sour vegetables are converted into pickles - by using vinegar. The Persian Torshi, Turkish Turşu, Greek Toursi, Bulgarian Turshiya, Albanian Turshu are all variants of the same theme.

The building blocks are the vegetables used, the flavouring and preservatives.

**The vegetables:**

Carrot, cabbage, eggplant, cauliflower, raw tomatoes, zucchini, beets, shallots, are all used. All non watery vegetables can go into the pickle.

**The flavouring:**

Dried herbs: Mint, oregano, dill, basil are commonly used.

Spices: Mustard, caraway, fenugreek, coriander, nigella, angelica (golpar), chilli flakes, garlic, ginger, peppercorns, chilli etc, all used.

Any combination of your favourite spices can be used for flavouring.

**The preservative:**

The core idea is to preserve the vegetables in an acidic, salted medium. The more the acid and salt, the longer the pickle lasts. There are many ways to do this:

1. Cook vegetables and steep them in vinegar.
2. Salt vegetables to draw out their juices, boil this juice with vinegar and use it as a preservation medium.
3. Salt vegetables to draw out their juices and let the juice ferment, turning naturally sour. Mix in vinegar and store.

Using flash cooking, we can convert any vegetable quickly into a pickle. The cooking deactivates enzymes and prevents internal spoilage. Salt and the added vinegar inhibit the growth of microorganisms, preventing external spoilage.

We use the strengths of flash cooking to heighten the inherent colour and texture of the vegetables. We then seal it in by steeping it in vinegar. This is better than the traditional way in which vegetables are boiled in vinegar, becoming bleached before they become a pickle!

**Tips:**

1. Choose unblemished, fresh seasonal fruits/vegetables.
2. Experiment with varying amounts of vinegar.
3. Use pickles as a starter/side/stuffing/filling.
4. Convert any leftover dry curry into an instant pickle by mixing in vinegar.
5. Refrigerated, these last for months.

# OPOS Staples

## Essentials in an OPOS Pantry

The OPOS Pantry is slightly different from regular pantries. We stock the following:

1. Attalysed dough
2. Caramelised onions
3. Frozen dal
4. Ginger- garlic paste
5. Ghee
6. Paneer
7. Podi
8. Rice
9. Tadka
10. Tamarind paste

This would let you throw a party in minutes with no preparation!

# Attalysis

## Deskilled dough making for unleavened breads and dumplings

<https://youtu.be/ppObIbz8mJI>

1. Take 500g whole wheat flour. Add water gradually and knead to a dough as you do usually, but measure and note down the water used. Let us assume you use 250g water for kneading 500g wholewheat flour.
2. Now, take 250g water. Add 500g wholewheat flour to water. Mix gently with a fork or your fingertips (do not knead) till all water is absorbed by the flour and no dry flour remains. The flour would resemble wet sand.
3. Keep the mix covered for at least 30 minutes. When you open, the dough would look mostly kneaded and would need minimal kneading.
4. Make balls and roll out chappatis/phulkhas as you do normally. Cook as usual. There is no change in the rolling out/cooking method. The only change is in kneading.

**MIX ALL**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Wholewheat flour with refined flour/non- gluten flours
- Water with whey/stock

### **Tips:**

1. The dough can be stored in an air tight container and refrigerated for weeks.
2. Measure flour and water quantities carefully using a kitchen scale.
3. Addition of salt is optional.
4. Oil is optional.
5. Different flours absorb different amounts of water.
6. When non-gluten flours are used, boiling water needs to be added.



Though mankind has been kneading flour for millennia, the technique of letting the flour absorb water gently by itself, rather than force water into it by vigorous kneading, was discovered just a few decades ago by the French bread making guru Professor Raymond Calvel. He called it Autolysing (Greek: Self- digest).

His method is very simple. Mix flour and water at low speed and let it rest (from 30 minutes to overnight). Finish kneading after this resting period. That's it!

This technique lets the dough relax before kneading, making it more elastic and easier to shape. The shorter mixing time results in less oxidation, which improves colour, flavour and texture.

This technique was originally developed for leavened breads. We have adapted it to Indian unleavened breads, renaming it Attalysis, as it is mostly used with Atta (Wholewheat flour).

We use the same technique of mixing a measured quantity of water with the flour and let nature do its work.

Different flours absorb different amounts of water. It varies from 50% to 80% (500 ml to 800ml water for 1 kg flour) depending on the flour. Flours absorbing more water give softer breads.

We later found that the same principle can be extended for use with non-gluten flours (rice/millet flours) to cook up rice/millet flatbreads, dumplings

(kozhukkattais/modaks) and steamed noodles (string hoppers).

Here's how it works for non gluten flours (Rice, millet etc.)

Due to lack of gluten, rice/millet flours do not stick to each other. By mixing in boiling water, the flours get partially cooked. This semi-cooked starch is sticky and so can hold its shape. The water needed for non gluten flours is around two to three times the quantity needed for wheat flour. Rice/millet flours can absorb around 1.5C water for every cup of flour.

Attalysis for non- gluten flours

1. Add boiling water to non-gluten flour as you do normally, but carefully note down the flour: water ratio. Let us assume you use 750g water for 500g rice flour.

2. The next time you knead, take 750g hot water. Add 500g flour to water. Mix gently (do not knead) till all water is absorbed by the flour and the flour resembles wet sand.

3. Keep the mix covered for at least 30 minutes. When you open, the dough would look mostly kneaded and would need minimal kneading.

4. Make balls. Roll into flatbreads, extrude into string hoppers, stuff to make momos/modaks, steam into dumplings as you do normally. Cook as usual. There is no change in the rolling out/cooking method. The only change is in kneading.

The technique has now been validated in hundreds of kitchens for phulkhas, parathas, chappatis made from whole wheat flour, flatbreads made from millet flours, Modaks, Kozhukkattais (Stuffed/plain dumplings), elai adais made from rice flour and idiyappam (string hoppers) made from rice/millet flours.

Apart from improving the flavour, texture and softness, many members have reported that this technique has almost eliminated the need for kneading and is a boon for those unable to do heavy kneading. The process works the same way for any volume of flour. Manually kneading a large volume of flour is a back breaking job. Machines do not help much as cleaning them after kneading is as laborious. If you are using dough on a regular basis, you will find this technique very helpful.

Remember the key steps:

Step 1. Estimate water needed.

Knead as you do normally. But measure everything carefully. Find out the amount of water needed for the flour you use. This varies from flour to flour and brand to brand. Use measuring cups. Weighing makes it more accurate.

#### Step2: Attalysis

Add the measured amount of flour to the measured amount of water. Do not knead. Mix with a fork till the mixture resembles wet sand. Cover and rest 30 minutes

#### Step 3: Finish

Briefly knead the dough and shape it the way you like. Cook it they way you usually do.

# Caramelised Onions

<https://youtu.be/fFbLY3aVd7E>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp oil

Layer 2: 500g sliced onions mixed with 1/2tsp each (salt, sugar).

Cook on high heat for 7 to 20 whistles (5 to 9 minutes) till you get a mild burnt smell. Release pressure. Mix all and watch them brown!

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Onions with shallots
- Oil with ghee/butter.

### **Tips:**

1. The longer you cook, the browner onions get.
2. Use as curry base.
3. Cooking time varies with the moisture content of the onions you use.
4. Can stir and cook further to caramelize further.

Caramelised onions are very commonly used in Indian cuisine as a curry base. When onion gets heated, it becomes sweeter, browns and gets filled with flavour because of the Maillard reaction. "The longer the onions are sautéed, greater the taste" believe most cooks.

Caramelising a mound of onions is a laborious, back breaking work. It also ties you to the stove the whole time. In the traditional preparation, onions are chopped, oil is heated up and the onions are added. They are patiently stir-fried till the desired degree of caramelisation is reached. It is a sweaty, teary eyed work.

We use OPOS to eliminate sweat and tears. Onions are sliced with the skin (using a mandoline/slicer) into a bowl of water. The palm is held parallel to the slicer and the top of the onion is pressed by the palm against the slicer. This eliminates the risk of sliced fingertips. The bowl of water is placed directly under the slicer and the slices fall straight into water. This serves

three purposes.

1. The peels float and can be removed
2. No tears - as the onion is never exposed to air.
3. The black mould in the inner layers gets washed away

These onion slices are washed, mixed with salt and sugar and put directly in a cooker. Salt and sugar draws moisture out of the onions and help in faster caramelisation. These are then cooked for a preset time to achieve the caramelisation required. This technique also eliminates the use of oil.

The caramelised onions can be bottled and refrigerated for over a month and can be mixed into most of your favourite curries. They can be used in place of regular onions in almost all recipes. They are mandatory in Biriyani's.

# Dal

## Lentil mash

<https://youtu.be/ISXjLyE0rfU>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/2C tuvar dal, 1C water, 1/4tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp ghee. Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash. Mix in 1/2tsp salt.

**PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Tuvar with mung/masoor dal
- Raw dal with roasted dal
- Ghee with oil

### **Tips:**

1. Can add 1/4tsp asafoetida
2. Refrigerate for a week or freeze for ever
3. Freeze in ice cube trays for easy removal. Store frozen cubes in ziplocs.
4. Frozen dal can be added straight to all curries
5. Soak dal, cook with half the amount of water and store open in a refrigerator for a day to dehydrate. Bottle and use as instant dal.



# Ginger Garlic Paste

<https://youtu.be/VOObcdA89Cg>

In a 2L cooker, layer as below

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2tbsp oil

Layer 2: 125g each chopped (ginger, garlic)

Layer 3: 1/4tsp turmeric powder.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure. Blend to a paste. Lasts a month refrigerated.

## **LAYER AND FLASH**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Garlic with shallots/onions
- Turmeric with your favourite spice mixes

### **Tips:**

1. Can blend in 2 tsp vinegar for a longer shelf life.
2. Add more/less of ginger – garlic as per your taste.
3. Use young ginger. Older ginger is fibrous. Young ginger need not even be peeled.
4. Use peeled garlic cloves. They are commonly available. Unpeeled cloves can be used and blended. Garlic peels do not cause a problem when eaten.
5. Use a dry spoon. Even a tiny bit of water can reduce the shelf life.
6. Whole garlic can be chopped with skin and mixed with maida. The sticky cloves stick to the maida, but the skin does not. After mixing well, the skin can just be blown away.
7. Garlic cloves can also be crushed to remove their skin easily.
8. Well cleaned, unpeeled garlic cloves can be used, but you need a powerful blender to blend them to a smooth paste.

Ginger Garlic paste is an integral part of most Indian curries. It is commonly sold as a packaged paste in most Indian shops. But many prefer to make it fresh as they find the store bought pastes lacking flavour. The commercially packed versions also have added chemicals and vinegar for a longer shelf life.

Many Indian recipes start with sautéeing the Ginger - Garlic paste till it loses its raw flavour. We can convert this multistage process into OPOS, by layering and flashing. Turmeric powder has been used to increase the shelf life and to give the paste a golden sheen.

Cooking the paste eliminates the Green Garlic problem. Raw garlic paste can occasionally turn into an unappetising green colour on blending. Roasting and blending the mixture completely eliminates this problem.

Cooking increases shelf life. It saves time during everyday cooking and makes possible conversion of many recipes to OPOS because the sautéeing step is eliminated.

This paste costs just about half of the store bought paste, has double the shelf life, more intense flavour and uses no chemicals. You can keep it unrefrigerated for over a week and refrigerated for months.

The ratio of ginger to garlic varies from household to household. Up North it is more garlic and less ginger. As you come down South, the garlic ratio increases to match ginger. Choose the ratio you personally prefer.

# Ghee

Condensed, clarified and caramelised butter

<https://youtu.be/jwqA1xDyZIw>

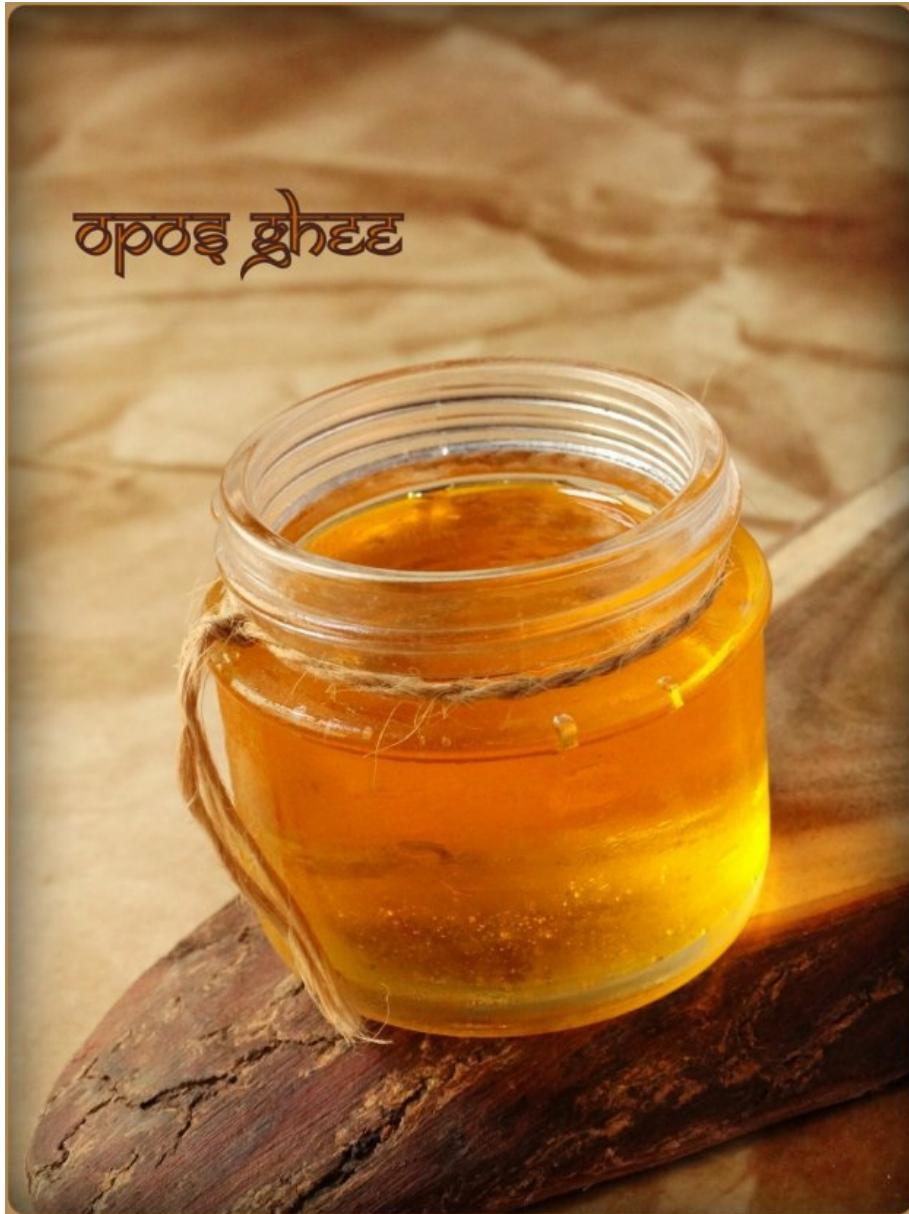
In a 2L cooker, add 250g white, unsalted butter. Cook on high heat for 10 to 35 whistles (5 to 10 minutes). Time the gap between each whistle and stop cooking when the time between whistles doubles and you hear a crackling noise. Release pressure. Optionally, cook longer to get the colour you need. Let set.

**LAYER AND FLASH**

## Tips:

- Cooking time and whistles depends on the moisture content of the butter you use.
- The browner the ghee, the longer it lasts.
- If your ghee is very pale, keep refrigerated and consume fast.
- Can also cook over medium heat.
- Cook longer in an open pan if you desire more caramelisation.
- Add herbs/whole spices of your choice.
- The sediments are perfectly edible. They can be eaten mixed with sugar into a dessert.

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Butter is nothing but milk fat. Small globules of fat are suspended in milk naturally. If fresh milk is chilled, these fat globules congeal and rise to the top as cream. This cream is mostly butter and just requires a brief churning to turn it into butter.

Countries like USA use fresh cream to extract butter (sweet cream butter). In Europe, cream is left to ferment and then used to extract a more flavourful butter (cultured butter). India follows a similar process but sours the milk into yogurt and churns the yogurt to remove butter. In some households, the top layer after boiling milk is removed and bottled. After enough cream has accumulated, it is shaken well to separate butter.

Butter does not store well. So Indian cuisine invented the process of clarifying and condensing butter into ghee, which lasts forever. India loves ghee so much so that it is the world's largest producer and consumer of Ghee.

Butter is around 80 percent milk fat, 15 - 20% percent water, and 2 percent other milk solids. Fat lasts long but the water and milk solids speed up spoilage. In making ghee, this water is evaporated and the other milk solids are burnt and filtered out.

This turns butter into pure fat, with a very long shelf life. Milk has been condensed twentyfold into the long lasting ghee. An added bonus is caramelisation, which fills the ghee with a complex flavour that butter lacks!

The building blocks of ghee are the butter used, heat and flavouring.

**Butter used:**

Indian cuisine prefers ghee made from cow's milk. But the milk fat of any mammal can be turned into ghee by the same process.

**Heat:**

The longer ghee is heated, the more it caramelises. The colour of ghee varies with the amount of heating, ranging from pale yellow to nutty brown.

**Flavouring:**

Surprisingly, Indian cuisine never bothered to flavour ghee with spices - a common practice in many Mid East and African cuisines. Down South, the leaves of drumstick are fried in ghee, more for clarifying it than for adding flavour. You can use any spice of your choice to create a range of flavoured ghee.

### **Preparation:**

Traditionally, butter is melted in an open pot and patiently stirred once a while till it becomes ghee. But this process calls for a skilled eye and lacks consistency. In OPOS, we cook butter at a precise temperature for a set time, to ensure consistency. Cooking fat in an open pan also causes grime to accumulate all around it. The closed cooking eliminates this.

The water content in butter is sufficient to build up pressure inside a cooker. The timing is adjusted so that cooking stops just when most of the water is evaporated. You can play around with the timing to get the ghee exactly to your liking.

# Paneer

## Fresh cheese

<https://youtu.be/R34Pps38u1M>

In a 2L cooker, add 500ml full fat milk, 1/4C sour yogurt. Cook for 2 whistles (6 minutes) on high. Let pressure settle. Filter out solids. Place in a colander and keep a weight over it, to let water drain away. Will set in an hour.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Yogurt with sour buttermilk/lemon juice/vinegar

#### **Tips:**

1. Can add herbs/spices to make masala paneer.
2. Use the whey in curries/soups/use for kneading dough.
3. Knead before moulding for a firmer paneer.
4. Can add spices/herbs along with yogurt to produce masala paneer.

Paneer is a non-melting fresh cheese extensively used in North Indian cuisine. Unlike other cheeses around the world, paneer is used mostly in curries.

All across Central Asia, the word Peynir/Panir means Cheese, the same way the word Naan means bread. Both Paneer and Naan were introduced into the Indian cuisine by the Central Asians and popularised by the Moguls. Both are still most popular in the regions where the Moguls once held sway.

Indian cuisine considered milk holy. So intentionally curdling it was unthinkable. This is why milk was never used in Indian curries and was used only in desserts, where there is no chance of curdling. Indian cuisine had to wait for two sets of conquerors to arrive and teach us cheese making.

400 years back, the Moguls popularised the use of Paneer in North India. 100 years later, the Portuguese introduced Chena to East India. Chena is a soft, crumbly form of paneer, which is kneaded and used as the base for a huge variety of East Indian sweets.

Both these fresh cheeses are prepared the same way. Milk is heated and an acid is mixed in. The acid curdles the milk proteins, which are then filtered out and used.

Unlike the chena, Paneer is not kneaded. The separated milk proteins are moulded and pressed till they set into a smooth block. The amount of water remaining determines the softness of paneer. The longer it is pressed, the more water gets squeezed out and firmer it gets. It can be made softer by immersing it in warm water/milk.

Fresh paneer has no flavour. Ageing infuses it with complex flavours. Our cuisine has reluctantly accepted curdling, but still frowns at fermentation. This is why aged paneer is very rare and is found only in very few pockets.

Paneer is used in many ways. It can be eaten as it is, briefly stir fried, scrambled, baked/grilled, dipped into batter and deep fried, stuffed into flatbreads or simmered in curries.

The acid used to set paneer can vary. Rennet, lemon juice, whey or yogurt are all used. The texture and yield of paneer varies with the acid used. In this recipe, we cook milk with sour yogurt. The lactic acid in yogurt curdles the milk on heating.

The texture of the paneer you get is loose and crumbly and is ideal for making a scramble/stuffing. If you need firm cubes, you need to knead and mould it.

# Podi

## South Indian spiced lentil powder

<https://youtu.be/XMJEmwAWxuA>

Blend 1/4C roasted gram, 2 dry red chillies, 1/4tsp each (salt, cumin) to a smooth powder.

**BLEND ALL**

### Replace/Supplement

- Roasted gram dal with other roasted/fried lentils
- Gram dal with dry coconut/dry curry leaves/dried seafood/sun dried vegetables.
- Chilli with pepper.
- Cumin with your favourite spice/spice mix

### Tips:

1. Roasted tuvar dal, channa dal, urad dal are most commonly used.
2. A gritty, crunchy consistency is prized.
3. Stores well for months.
4. Can be used as a cooked dal substitute in many dal based curries.

Podi (literally meaning Powder) is a brilliant way to eat dal. It is an important part of South Indian cuisine. To make a Podi, various pulses are roasted and ground together with red chilli, spices and salt. It now becomes ready to eat dal and can be mixed with almost anything. A variety of podis without lentils are also common, though most have some lentils in them.

They store well. Podis are normally prepared in large batches and stored for months. For a quick meal, a podi is mixed with hot rice, and a bit of oil or ghee. For a quick dip to go with idli/dosa, the podi is mixed with oil into a thick paste. For a quick garnish, the podi is sprinkled over a dry curry. They work as dal substitutes in many curries.

Podis form a big chunk of the baggage South Indians carry abroad. They are very popular especially in Andhra and Tamilnadu.

**OPOS pod**



# Rice

<https://youtu.be/zkRyWAYvvqs>

In a 2L cooker, add any of the following:

1C raw rice and 2.5C water.

1C basmathi rice and 2C water.

1C soaked and drained basmathi rice and 1.5C water.

1C parboiled rice and 3C water.

1C soaked and drained parboiled rice and 2C water.

Cook on high heat for 2 whistles (7 minutes). Let pressure settle. Fluff up.

## **PRESSURE COOK**

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Rice with millets

### **Tips:**

1. Presoak rice for faster cooking.
2. Can add 1/4tsp salt for flavor.
3. Increase water for a mushier texture.
4. Can refrigerate in an air tight container for weeks or freeze for ever.

Cooking rice is a no brainer in a cooker. Most rice consumed in the South is either raw rice or parboiled rice. In the North it is Basmathi. Parboiled rice looks translucent because the starch in it is precooked. Raw rice looks opaque. All these varieties cook well in a cooker. The soaking time and cooking time varies with the type of rice used. Please use the measures given here as a start. Use the following tweaks to alter the texture to your liking.

1. If you like it softer, either soak it longer, cook it longer or use more water.
2. If you like it firmer, soak it lesser, cook it lesser or use less water.

There are many myths surrounding cooking rice in a pressure cooker:

1. Rice needs to be washed multiple times.  
No. Most branded rice is industrially cleaned. Washing it is optional.
2. The water in which rice is washed is toxic and needs to be discarded.

Nope. Infact, Chettinad cuisine uses the water in which rice is washed as a thickener for curries. The water gets cloudy because it dissolves a thin film of rice powder in case of polished rice.

3. Rice is polished with talcum powder which has to be washed away.

Not anymore. This practice is not adopted by reputed brands.

4. The water in which rice is cooked needs to be filtered out and discarded.

The water is actually rice soup and is prized in many cuisines.

5. Rice 'smells' when cooked in a pressure cooker.

Yes, because a pressure cooker intensifies inherent flavours.

6. Rice clumps together when cooked in a pressure cooker.

Yes, because it is pressed down by steam. But if you transfer it to another container and fluff it up right after cooking, there will be no clumping.

7. Rice becomes mushy when cooked in a cooker.

Not if you cook with the right amount of water.

# Tadka

## Infused oil

[https://youtu.be/a\\_I1DNJFvoE](https://youtu.be/a_I1DNJFvoE)

<https://youtu.be/TPXe9ytBBrY>

In a 2L cooker, add 200ml sesame oil, 8tsp mustard seeds, 10 dry red chillies, 1C curry leaves, 1tsp solid asafoetida. Cook on high heat for 3 minutes. Release steam. Bottle and refrigerate.

### PRESSURE COOK

#### Replace/Supplement

- Mustard with cumin
- Sesame oil with your favourite oil
- Curry leaves with your favourite dry herbs

#### Tips:

1. Pressure frying is dangerous. Do not try unless you have mastered the basics.
2. Never go beyond 3 minutes.
3. Spice mix varies from region to region.
4. Can be stored for a month.
5. Keep away from sunlight.
6. Mix into dishes before/after cooking.
7. Cook longer after opening if needed.
8. Can also cook in open pan and bottle



OPOS Bottled tadka

The use of infused oil is very common in western cuisines, but very rare in India. Garlic oil, chilli oil, basil oil etc., are commonly used as dips in the west. The Indian cuisine has no equivalent, except pickle oil!

Oil absorbs flavours beautifully, even when cold. The longer the spices are steeped in oil, the more flavourful the oil becomes. India dreads stored food and so missed out on infused oils, common in other cuisines. This fear of stored food has prevented it from adopting bottled tadka all along.

A bottled tadka is much more rounded and flavourful than fresh tadka. You might be missing out on the sizzle when fresh tadka hits food, and the burst of flavour that fills the room when fresh tadka is made, but from a flavour point of view, bottled is better than fresh. In fresh tadka, the spices just do not have enough time to release all their flavour into oil in a few seconds.

Other cuisines have been practicing the infused oil technique for ages. Those cuisines missed out on the frying part and we missed out on the steeping part. With bottled tadka, we can have the best of both worlds.

A bottled tadka scores on many counts:

1. It is more flavourful;
2. It is less messy;
3. You can control the amount of oil used;

4. Different bottled tadkas can be mixed and matched, creating complex flavours.

In this theme, we heat the oil with spices, creating a hot oil infusion, the bottled tadka.

# Tamarind paste

<https://youtu.be/5TBv6H7YOFk>

In a 2L cooker, add 250g tamarind, 2C water. Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Mash all. Remove solids. Bottle.

**PRESSURE COOK**

## **Tips:**

1. Lasts a week unrefrigerated and months refrigerated.
2. Buy deseeded tamarind with fiber removed.
3. Use a big holed colander to mash and strain pulp.



OPOS Tamarind Paste

# Yogurt

Chandra Lekha

1. Pour 1/2 cup water in 2L cooker.
2. Pour 2 cups milk (whole fat milk preferably) +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water (optional) in an inner vessel. The vessel shouldn't be filled to brim to avoid spewing.
3. Cook in medium-high for 4-5 whistles.
4. Let the pressure settle on its own.
  5. Leave the cooker lid slightly open for 10 minutes (or less, in cold places) for milk temperature to reduce.
6. Add 2 tablespoons of live yogurt starter and mix well. Very hot milk will kill starter.
7. Close the cooker with the whistle on and leave it in a warm place for 6-8 hours.

Note:

1. Scale up water quantity for bigger and wider cookers.
2. Do not cook for more than 5 whistles.
3. Further cooking happens in retained heat.
4. Youghurt starter should be at room temperature
5. Do not discard the hot water in the cooker
6. The water bath gives a warm environment for curd to set faster.

## PRESSURE COOK

**Fixes:**

Q: Curd not thick.

A: Use whole fat milk. Reduce or skip adding water to milk.

Q: Curd does not set.

- A. Do NOT use curd starter straight from refrigerator.
- B. Use fresh, live curd starter at room temperature.
- C. Add more curd starter in colder temperatures.
- D. Change your starter. Get a working starter.

In very cold temperatures,

A red chili with stalk can be dropped in the inner vessel after adding curd.

The inner vessel can be transferred to a casserole containing hot water. The cooker can be wrapped in blanket/sweater and placed in an oven with lights on or near a heater.

**Q:** Yogurt still refuses to set!

**A:** Remove the pot, reheat add 1 cup boiling water in the cooker, put the inner vessel back and close.

**Q:** Yogurt turns slimy

**A:** Use fresh milk and fresh curd starter. Change starter. Do NOT add starter



**Points to note:**

- Don't fill inner pot to brim
- Don't use curd starter straight from fridge (Cold curd slows down process)
- Let it be on counter till the milk is boiled and ready
- Don't discard the warm water in PC (It gives a warm environment)
- In colder temperatures
  - a) the inner vessel can be transferred to casserole with hot water
  - b) the pot removed, water reheated for 1 whistle, and add back the pot and close

to very hot milk

# Indian Cuisine: A Primer

Though OPOS is cuisine independent, most recipes listed here are Indian, primarily because almost all the OPOStars are Indian. Since OPOS follows a theme based approach, you can translate every recipe here into any other cuisine by changing the key building blocks. If you are new to Indian cuisine, here is a primer:

## Key Ingredients:

Any cuisine evolves around locally available ingredients. The bulk of Indian cuisine is built on wheat, rice, a handful of spices, vegetables and meat that were available locally. Over time, Indian cuisine accepted new grains, vegetables, meat and spices from all over the world, gleefully incorporating them into its cuisine.

## Religious beliefs:

Jain/Buddhist philosophies of ahimsa (non – violence) set India on a road to vegetarianism. Many Indians who eat meat still feel guilty about doing so and avoid it on religious occasions. Meat is usually not a part of many wedding celebrations/religious feasts. Many clans believe in food contamination by the touch of unwashed garments, cooked food and saliva. In the pre-refrigeration days, these rules ensured food safety.

In accordance with these beliefs, in millions of homes, food is cooked and eaten only after a bath. Leftover food is not stored. Disposable leaves are preferred to plates. Water is not sipped from glasses, but poured into the mouth. Orthodox households/Brahmin cuisines/Temple cuisines avoid using strong spices, onion and garlic. Ayurveda still influences Indian cuisine and is responsible for the Indian belief in foods that heat up or cool down the body.

## Beef and Pork:

Hindus revere the cow and Muslims abhor the pig. So, very few pockets in India use beef/pork. Beef consumption in Kerala is mainly due to the Arab Muslim/Portuguese influence. Pork usage in Goa is due to the Portuguese influence. Both beef and pork are common in North East Indian cuisine due to the South East Asian influence.

## Fasting Rituals:

These elaborate rituals have led to the development of numerous variants of standard cuisines. In general, what is commonly eaten is avoided during fasts. The staples (rice, wheat) are avoided. Millets/amaranth seeds/ tuber flours/fruits/milk are consumed instead. Cooked food/leftover food are avoided.

#### External influences:

From Central Asia came the Paneer, Tandoor, the technique of slow cooking in sealed clay pots (dum), the use of milk, cream, dry fruits and nuts in curries, a variety of Biriyanis and Pulaos. The Portuguese brought in tomatoes, chilies, potato, various fruits, baking and cheese making techniques. Contact with China probably gave us stir fries and the use of sweet and sour dishes. South East Asia gave us the technique of fermentation and steaming. The English left India with a love for tea, coffee, ketchup and sandwiches.

#### The Base:

North Indian cuisine is built around wheat, lentils and dairy products. South Indian cuisine is built around rice, lentils, tamarind, yogurt and coconut. Onions and tomatoes are used across India as a curry base.

#### Flavouring:

Indian cuisine relies on just a handful of spices and herbs for flavouring its daily meal. Coriander, cumin, chilli, turmeric, ginger, garlic, cilantro and mint are widely used across the country. Asafoetida, mustard and curry leaves are popular in the South. Garam masala (a powdered mix of various sweet spices) is the most popular North Indian spice mix. Sambar powder is the South Indian equivalent. Each region has its favourite oil. Sesame oil is preferred in Tamilnadu, coconut oil in Kerala and the West coast, mustard oil in the East of India and peanut oil/mustard oil across North India. Ghee and refined vegetable oils are commonly used across the country.

#### Additives:

Hundreds of fresh vegetables, dozens of edible greens, scores of fresh and dried lentils, sun dried vegetables, sun dried lentil/cereal paste, paneer, eggs, chicken, mutton, fish, sea food, a huge variety of regional specialties like banana stem, neem flowers, bamboo shoots, colocasia leaves, baby jack fruit, jack fruit seeds, lotus stems etc., find their way into Indian recipes.

### Cooking Techniques:

Stir-frying, boiling, stewing, simmering, deep frying, tempering and pickling are commonly used. Steaming is popular in certain regions. Baking never caught on (probably due to the excessive use of fuel). Fermenting is uncommon. A pity - as Indian cuisine bypassed leavened breads/cheese/wine. Grilling, roasting, barbecuing is uncommon and ovens are very rare. Elaborate/time consuming/fancy cooking techniques are uncommon. Food presentation is not accorded a high priority.

### Staples:

Boiled rice, thin flatbreads and cooked lentils are what most of India lives on. Flatbreads (North India) and rice (in South India) are eaten thrice a day with a variety of curries. Millets supplement wheat and rice in rural areas. Learn to make flatbreads, learn to cook rice and lentils – and you can feed an Indian for life.

### Etiquette:

Food is eaten with fingers of the right hand. The left hand is considered unclean and is not used to handle food. In North India, the flatbreads are torn, dunked into curries and eaten. In South India, a variety of curries are poured on a mound of hot rice, mixed well and eaten. In many homes, food is served over a banana leaf or plate placed on the floor. The only drink that accompanies food is a glass of water. Alcohol is never served with food.

# The Myth of Authenticity

Each cuisine has its recipe police, the self appointed guardians of the purity of a cuisine. As the evolution of a cuisine parallels the evolution of a race or a language, the purity of a cuisine makes as much sense as racial purity or linguistic purity. In many cases authenticity usually means ‘the way my mom cooked’ or ‘the way I like it’ or ‘the only way I know to make this’. Indian cuisine has remained mystified for centuries, because its recipes remained locked up under the term ‘authentic’. Now, what makes a recipe authentic?

**Do cooking techniques make a recipe authentic?**

Just 50 years back, most Indian cooking was done using dried cow dung/firewood as fuel, using clay pots, over open fires. There were no pressure cookers, stainless steel vessels, non stick pans, microwaves, blenders or even cooking gas. Does this make almost anything you cook today using modern appliances inauthentic?

**Do ingredients define authenticity?**

How far back does authenticity go? ‘Authentic’ Indian recipes 100 years ago would not have wheat/rice, as millets were then the primary source of starch across India. Rice/wheat were luxuries and were consumed only on special occasions.

‘Authentic’ Indian recipes from over 500 years ago will not have potato/tomato/chilli as these came to India in the 1500’s.

Most vegetables, fruits, rice and wheat varieties we use today did not exist a few decades back. Does this make anything you cook with currently available ingredients inauthentic?

**Does perfect duplication of a recipe guarantee authenticity?**

Perfectly duplicating a recipe is impossible, even for expert cooks. They know it is far easier to create your own version of the recipe. Even very simple recipes have so many variables involved that duplicating them is doomed to fail. For example, there is just no way to exactly match the quality of ingredients used, the spice mixes, the cooking utensils or the rate and quantity of heat transfer. Even if you match all these, just duplicating what traditionally gets cooked does not guarantee authenticity – as not many cooks are aware of why they cook the way they do.

The Bengali mystic Ramakrishna Paramahansa, warns us against taking

tradition too seriously in his parable of the dog. A guru had a naughty dog which needed to be tied up before he started his pooja, to prevent it from knocking over everything. Decades later, a former student comes back to his old school to see a dog tied up at exactly the same place, as it has now become 'traditional' to do so!

In India, it is very hard to find 'The only way' to cook a dish. Even in the same cuisine, the same recipe is cooked in very different ways across households.

If you have the big picture in mind, you do not need to worry about authenticity any more. However, people love a good story. They want 'authentic' recipes handed down over generations. They want to believe in the existence of jealously guarded 'perfect' recipes. They feel downright cheated if you tell them they do not exist!

So, what is authenticity?

Authenticity is about staying true to the spirit of a cuisine. A cuisine is the reflection of the beliefs of a people. Anything that goes against this belief is inauthentic.

For example, Jain cuisine believes no living thing should be injured for your food. So any recipe involving suffering (plant/animal) is against the spirit of Jain cuisine.

The royal Mogul cuisine has rich curries using choicest cuts of meat and is mildly flavoured with expensive spices. So any Mogul recipe that calls for harsh spices or cheap cuts of meat might not be true to the Mughlai spirit of cooking. However a recipe using vanilla bean as flavouring, though unknown to the Moguls, is an authentic Mogul recipe, in spirit!

Themes matter – not recipes.

A mature cuisine does not concern itself with recipes. It evolves grand themes, which form the base for infinite recipes. For example, one theme from Kerala is the Aviyal, which states "Blend coconut with spices and souring agent into a salad dressing".

This theme is translated across regions into numerous regional recipes. This is why Aviyal has numerous avatars using various souring agents (tamarind, mango, yogurt), various additives and flavouring across regions. None of these regional recipes are more original than the other. For example, Malabar

took the theme, added eggs to it, making Mutta Aviyal. Chettinad borrowed the theme and pumped it with exotic spices making Kalla Veetu Aviyal. None of these are authentic Aviyal recipes in one context, but are perfectly authentic recipes in another context.

It is the beauty of a mature cuisine that it can accommodate ingredients it never knew existed! Staying true to the theme, we can make new aviyals using souring agents/additives/spices Indians were not even aware of. A zucchini/broccoli aviyal by this definition is an authentic Indian recipe.

Authenticity is more defined by history, geography, culture and beliefs than by recipes or by the contradictory rules imposed by the recipe police!

# The Evolution of 'Authenticity'

You can take two routes to understand a cuisine. The recipe route is confusing and is filled with self-imposed rules, which often contradict each other. The Theme based approach is easier. It tries to trace the evolution of cuisines through History, Geography and Culture. This approach bypasses vigorous discussions about 'authenticity' or 'tradition'.

It is amazing to see how much geography influences food. Man made squiggles on paper or man made rules do not have as much influence on the evolution of a cuisine. The cuisine map of India shows a remarkable overlap with the climatic map. In areas where they do not overlap, history has had a role to play.

## 1. The blue circles (North India)

This region is split into three major cuisines. The Mogul cuisine centered around Delhi, the Nawabi cuisine centered around Lucknow and the Punjabi cuisine.

## 2. The lilac branches: (North East India)

The North East Indian cuisine is very different from mainstream Indian cuisine because of the Chinese/South East Asian influence. Mainland India and Northeast India do not share the same cuisine in spite of having a similar climate because of the different dynasties that ruled them and because of their neighbours. History and culture trumped geography.

## 3. The rose arches: (West India)

The desert cuisines of Gujarat and Rajasthan seamlessly morph into one another. They use the same set of core building blocks. The brown squared stripe down South has given birth to another arid cuisine - the Chettinad cuisine, which mirrors the Rajasthani desert cuisine, with a different set of building blocks.

## 4. The brown squares: (West India)

The east of the Aravalli hills is lush compared to the bone dry west. The cuisines of Rajasthan and Gujarat in this relatively Fertile Crescent use more fresh vegetables, herbs and water than the ones in the arid west.

## 5. The red striped region (East India)

Though it falls in the same climatic zone as most of North India, its food

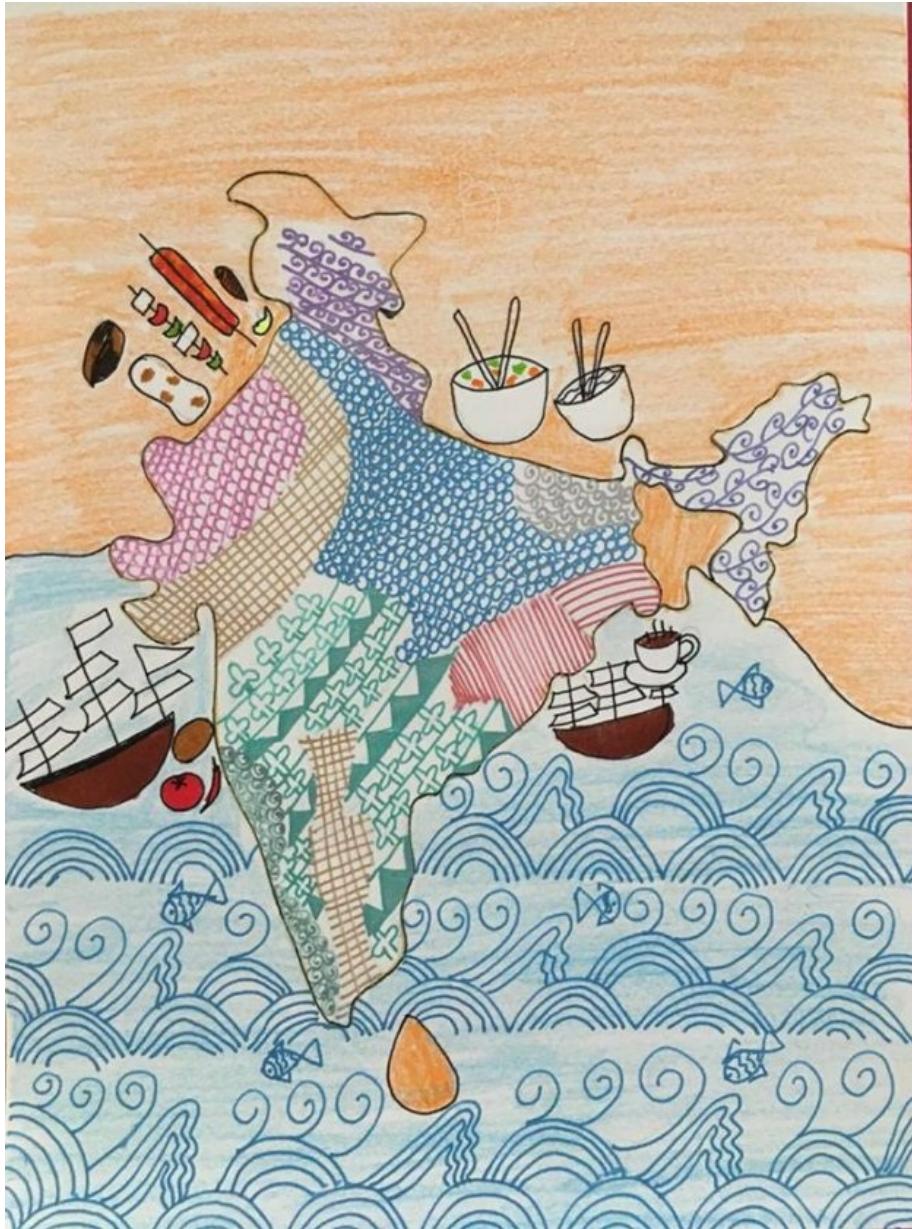
habits date back to an ancient age. Rice is a staple, mustard oil is common and the five spice mix is the chief flavouring agent.

#### 6. The olive spirals (South West India)

The cuisines all along the West coast are very similar but for the different names by which the dishes are called. Coconut and coconut oil form the basis of most curries here.

#### 7. The green crosses and triangles (South and Central India)

The five states of South India share a similar cuisine, but for marginal differences. The cuisine of Maharashtra shows an influence of both the South and North. In Central India, there is an overlap of both South and North Indian spices and ingredients. Both wheat and rice are staples. The Odisha cuisine still resembles South Indian cuisine in spirit, though has a strong East Indian influence. The Bengali cuisine is an amalgam of South, North and East Indian cuisines.



## Your Food, Your Way!

Orthodox cuisines frown upon using onions/garlic. Vegans frown on recipes using milk/yogurt. Vegetarians frown on non-vegetarian recipes. Non-vegetarians frown on beef/pork/offal based recipes. OPOS bypasses this frowning by not focussing on ingredients.

OPOS treats food as food and does not discriminate recipes based on the ingredients they use. You are free to use the techniques, with ingredients you like. You can freely substitute meat in a recipe with vegetables/paneer/soy

chunks/baby jackfruit/mushrooms. You can freely substitute vegetables in a recipe with meat/eggs/seafood. What you choose to OPOS is completely up to you.

You will repeatedly see most of our food rules are self-imposed. They vary from place to place. India has always been very tolerant of differing food habits. In India, food is intricately linked with religion. Almost all Indian temples serve food. We can see this tolerant, non-judgmental attitude reflected in the prasad (divine offerings).

Some Indian temples serve liquor as prasad. The Hadimba Temple, Manali, serves rice beer. Alcohol is the prasad in Kal Bhairav Nath Temple Ujjain and Khabees Baba Temple, Sitapur. Arrack and beedi are offered in some Muneeswaran (guardian deity) temples in Tamilnadu. Meat is served as prasad in some Kali temples during Durga Pooja celebrations. In the Karni Mata Temple (Rat Temple), Rajasthan, the leftovers eaten by rats are served as prasad. Pancha Gavyam (Cow milk, ghee, yogurt, dung and urine mixed together) is served as prasad in some temples.

OPOS believes in the ‘Your Food, Your Way’ school of thought. This cookbook includes both vegetarian, non-vegetarian recipes and recipes from other cuisines. This is just to indicate OPOS is universal and works across all ingredients/cuisines. You are free to adapt these recipes with your favourite ingredients, to cook food the way you like.

Matthew 15:11 sums it best. “Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man”.

# OPOS Equipment – The 2L Pressure Cooker

All OPOS recipes are standardised with a 2L pressure cooker. This ensures any recipe that works for one, works for all. After all, that is the core promise of OPOS. Recipes are dime a dozen. Validated recipes are rare. We go one step ahead in validating recipes - by validating them with the very same equipment. This makes recipes transparent and absolutely trustworthy. Each of these recipes is priceless because they always work. A 2L cooker is a small price to pay for entry into this magical realm of great food, across cuisines. Once you gain confidence, you can scale up the recipe to any sized cooker.

Though we use a 2L pressure cooker to ensure our cooking conditions are similar, the OPOS techniques have been tested and validated with cookers of all sizes from the 1.5 liter mini to the 260 liter giant. Non-whistling cookers can also be used, once you understand the techniques.

The 2L cooker looks like a toy. Don't be fooled by its size. This tiny 2L cooker can cook

breakfast/lunch/dinner for 2, Dry/Wet Curries/Soups for 4, Starters for 5, Pickles/Jam/Desserts for 10 and Hard boiled eggs for 15 people. The best part is, it can cook all the above in 5 to 10 minutes!

When buying your first 2L cooker, keep the following in mind:

Ensure you buy a short and broad cooker. Tall and narrow ones don't work as well. Handi shaped ones don't work as well as plain cylindrical cookers.

We prefer outer lid ones because they are easy to lock and easy to clean.

We prefer those which give a long and loud whistle as many recipes go by whistles.

Two types of safety valves are used in pressure cookers. The fixed valve cookers have safety valve that does not move. The floating valve cookers have safety valve which moves. Some models come with both. You can use any of these, though fixed valve cookers work marginally better. Food cooked in a fixed valve cooker remains sealed and so remains fresh for nearly a week if left unopened.

In a fixed valve cooker, there is no indication for having reached full

pressure. In a floating valve cooker, the valve pops up, indicating full pressure has been reached.

Floating valve cookers lose their seal on cooling and so cannot be used to store cooked food for over a few hours.

Aluminium, anodised aluminium, stainless steel - they all work. Aluminium heats faster, burns less and costs less. But it does not work on an induction stove (unless it has a steel bottom), and reacts with acids. It is not as durable as steel.

Stainless steel is very durable and can be cleaned easily, especially in case of burning. But it heats slower than aluminium, costs more and burns more. If possible, test out the cooker before buying by heating 1/4C water on high. Check if you get a long and loud whistle in 1 to 2 minutes. Get the right equipment and spare yourself headaches. All cookers have their own pros and cons. Understand them before making your choice.

Shape:

1. Short and broad works well.
2. Avoid fancy shapes.
3. Avoid tall and narrow models.
4. Avoid inner lid models, as they are not easy to lock and are tough to clean.

Material:

Aluminium cooker - Pros:

1. Very economical.
2. Cooks faster.
3. Burns less.

Aluminium cooker - Cons:

1. Reacts with very sour foods (Anodised models don't).
2. Less durable.
3. Scratches/stains easily. Surface pits form after long usage.
4. Cleaning takes time.
5. Does not work on induction (Steel bottomed ones do).

Stainless steel cookers - Pros:

1. Does not react with any food.
2. Lasts a lifetime.
3. Easy to clean.

4. Do not stain/scratch easy. Maintains surface integrity.
5. Works on induction.
6. Dishwasher friendly.

Stainless steel cooker - Cons:

1. Twice as costly as Aluminium.
2. Cooks slower.
3. Burns more.

Safety valve:

1. Fixed valve works marginally better, as pressure builds up faster.
2. Floating valve indicates when pressure builds up, so that you don't need to worry/keep checking.
3. Fixed valve cookers can double as short term food storage vessels.

# OPOS in an InstantPot/Electric Pressure Cookers/Rice Cookers

If you already own an InstantPot/electric pressure cooker/rice cooker, you can use it for those OPOS recipes that call for lots of water - at least a cup or more. Cooking with no water would void your warranty and is likely to damage your electric pressure cooker/rice cooker.

If you have not bought one, get a 2L pressure cooker and an induction stove. The biggest strength of InstantPot/electric pressure cookers/rice cookers is quiet, unsupervised cooking. You can do the same with an induction stove and a normal pressure cooker combination, at a cheaper price.

An electric pressure cooker is quiet as steam does not exit the vessel. But this means controlled evaporation/caramelisation can't happen. So food would have a boiled taste and won't be intensely flavourful like OPOSe dishes.

If sound is a big problem, you can quieten a whistling pressure cooker by placing a bowl over the whistle, without blocking it. This acts as a silence and cuts down noise by 90%.

Electric pressure cookers/rice cookers Vs Metal Pressure cookers:

## 1. Durability

Metal pressure cookers are for life. They are commonly handed over from mom to daughter. It is tough to imagine that happening with an electric pressure cooker. Even an abused metal pressure cooker lasts for over a decade. A very well maintained electric pressure cooker would be lucky to last half as long.

## 2. Responsiveness

By the time an electric pressure cooker gets heated, most OPOS recipes would be cooked. The electric pressure cooker is sluggish and takes a very long time to heat. This is why fast and furious Flash, around which many OPOS recipes are built, cannot happen in an electric pressure cooker. Unless full pressure is reached around a minute, most OPOS recipes won't work. No electric pressure cooker can reach full pressure in 1 - 2 minutes.

## 3. Nonstick

Many electric pressure cookers come with an aluminium inner pot coated

with Teflon. This wears away with use and needs to be periodically changed.

#### 4. Bulk

Electric pressure cookers are not portable. A 2L metal cooker and a mini induction stove fits into a laptop bag.

#### 5. Cleaning

Spillage/mess is much tougher to clean in an electric pressure cooker. Electric pressure cookers are not dishwasher friendly.

#### 6. Cost

Electric pressure cookers cost at least 5 to 10 times more than a comparable sized metal pressure cooker.

#### 7. Pressure

You buy a pressure cooker for its pressure. Even the cheapest metal pressure cooker is capable of reaching and maintaining pressure better than the costliest electric pressure cooker. The pressure inside the cheapest metal cooker is 15psi. In the costliest electric pressure cooker, it is 12psi or less.

#### 8. Ruggedness

Even the costliest electric pressure cooker is mostly plastic. Even the cheapest metal pressure cooker is mostly metal.

#### 9. Flexibility

Metal pressure cookers can be used on any heat source. You can cook anywhere. An electric pressure cooker needs an uninterrupted power supply.

#### 10. Control

You can control what happens to food inside a metal pressure cooker much, much more than what you can do in an electric pressure cooker. Many OPOS techniques, especially flash and controlled caramelisation do not work with the sluggish electric cooker.

#### 11. Repair

A metal pressure cooker has just four points of failure – gasket, nozzle, whistle and safety valve. You can change all these yourself. All these spares are cheap. An electric pressure cooker has dozens of failure points.

#### 12. Recipes

Only those recipes using the ‘Pressure Cook’ technique can be cooked in electric pressure cookers. The vast set of OPOS recipes using the ‘Layer and flash’ technique do not work well in electric pressure cookers.

To summarise:

Rice cooker, electric pressure cookers and InstantPot are good for

unsupervised cooking, delayed start and keep warm functions. Both excel in cooking mushy foods - dal/ kichidi/rice/pongal etc. They are not too good at cooking foods where texture and colour are important.

Metal pressure cookers work best for almost all vegetables, meats, curries, non-mushy foods, eggs, seafood, pasta, noodles, pulao/biryani and just about everything else.

If you are already using an electric pressure cooker/Instant Pot, you have taken your first step towards OPOS. It is like you have learnt cycling with a balance bike. You can easily switch over to a racing bike now!

# OPOS Equipment: Heat Source

An induction stove with a timer and wattage level indicator is ideal for OPOS. Prefer models with the least buttons. We use the wattage levels of low (400- 600), medium (900-1200) and high (1200-1800) watts in most OPOS recipes.

Gas stoves work well, provided they have burners that heat the bottom of the vessel and not the sides. The burner that heats up sides are the ones designed for cooking with a kadai/wok. If you use them, you might face problems with the cooker handles overheating/gasket melting. If you are unable to complete lesson 1 with your gas stove, it is very likely it has a side-heating burner.

Electric/ceramic/glass top stoves are least preferred as they are very sluggish. They take ages to heat and ages to cool. If at all you have to use them, preheat them for 5 to 15 minutes at the maximum heat before placing your cooker. Remove cooker from heat as soon as you have finished cooking.

You need to find out the high heat setting of whatever stove you use by doing lesson 1. Heat 1/4C water in your 2L pressure cooker over high heat. Ensure you get the first whistle between 1 and 2 minutes. This would be your 'High' setting. 'Medium' setting would be half this, and low setting would be half the medium setting.

If you are a beginner, go for a timing close to 2 minutes. Once you gain experience, you can increase heat level to get the standardization timing close to 1 minute.

# OPOS – One Pot, One Shot

A recipe that is 'cooked' in one pot, at one shot and lives up to the OPOS promise, is an OPOS recipe. A salad, where everything gets mixed in a single bowl, is OPOS. A milkshake, where everything gets blended at one shot is also OPOS. OPOS recipes need to work exactly the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. Else, they lose the OPOS tag.

No OPOS recipe calls for a mandatory second cooking step. No OPOS recipe calls for the use of a second cooking pot. In some recipes, we use them for convenience, but they are optional.

For example, in upma & sooji halwa, we mix in grits after opening the pot. This is a second cooking step, but can be avoided by keeping the grits in an inner vessel while cooking.

In some potato and chicken dishes, we call for stir frying after opening. This step is optional and does not define the recipe.

In kurma and many curries, we add a blended paste of coconut & chillies. This is a second cooking step, but can be avoided if we use finely grated coconut and finely chopped chillies instead.

In soups and some curries, we call for blending. A hand blender is usually used to blend ingredients in the same cooking pot. This is not seen as a second cooking step as we can instead mash everything together.

Placing the weight after steam comes out of the nozzle, reducing heat after the first whistle, simmering briefly after opening are all considered second cooking steps and are avoided in OPOS.

OPOS has no second cooking step - however small.

OPOS uses no second cooking pot - for whatever reason.

OPOS recipes should live up to the OPOS promise.

Else, they lose the OPOS tag.

# OPOS Vs Traditional Cooking

In traditional cooking, the focus is on the spice paste (masala).  
In many OPOS recipes, the focus is on food and not on spices.

In traditional cooking, most vegetables end up getting overcooked.  
In OPOS, we obsess about perfectly cooked vegetables.

In traditional cooking, high heat is usually avoided. Low/medium heat is commonly used.

In OPOS, cooking on low/medium heat is usually avoided. High heat is commonly used.

In most traditional recipes, food is cooked in water.

In most OPOS recipes, food is cooked in its own juices.

In traditional cooking, long and slow is revered.

In many OPOS recipes, fast and furious is revered.

In traditional cooking, we rarely use whole tomatoes/deseeded tomatoes.  
In many OPOS recipes, we prefer whole tomatoes/deseeded tomatoes.

In traditional cooking, pasta/noodles/rice is boiled with loads of water.

In OPOS, pasta/noodles/rice is cooked with exactly the right amount of water/with no water at all.

In traditional cooking, skill plays a major role.

In OPOS, skill is optional.

In traditional cooking, recipes cannot be easily recreated.

In OPOS, every single recipe should be capable of perfect recreation.

In traditional cooking, experience matters.

In OPOS, experience is optional.

In traditional cooking, magic resides with the cook.

In OPOS, magic resides in the techniques used.

# Does OPOS spell the end of traditional cooking?

No. OPOS spells the end of incorrect traditional cooking. It spells the end of overcooked, spicy, oily, colourless, texture less, flavourless, laborious, overpriced food.

OPOS will rekindle interest in traditional cooking. Many traditional recipes almost lost to us are being revived by OPOS. They have come back on our daily menu.

OPOS will cut out drudgery from traditional cooking - freeing you to enjoy the pleasure of open pot cooking when you prefer to do so.

OPOS will set a benchmark for colour, texture, taste and flavour in traditional recipes. Chefs/authorities cannot get away with poor recipes by cloaking them with 'authentic and traditional' tags.

OPOS will put the health back into traditional cooking by shifting the emphasis away from oil, salt and spices and towards fresh, seasonal food.

OPOS will bring a whole generation back into the kitchen. It will obliterate gender differences in traditional cooking, democratising it.

We believe OPOS is probably the best thing to have happened to traditional cooking and the worst thing to have happened to industrially processed food.

# OPOS Vs. Traditional Beliefs

1. Taste is created by the cook.

No. Taste is inherent in food. A cook just unlocks it with the right cooking technique.

2. Patient, extended stir-frying produces flavour.

No. Caramelisation and Maillard reactions produce flavour.

3. The use of right combination and quantity of salt and spices defines a great cook.

No. Unlocking maximum flavour, colour, taste and texture with very little use of salt and spices defines a great cook.

4. Spinach should never be cooked covered.

No. Spinach should be flashed for best results.

5. Use of oil/ghee/butter/cream is essential for taste.

No. Use of fresh, seasonal ingredients, fresh roasted spices and minimal cooking is essential for taste.

6. A great cook never measures.

No. A great cook always measures, just that they have internalised it with repeated practice.

7. Each cuisine is very different.

No, all cuisines are alike. Only the ingredients and cooking techniques vary.

8. It takes ages to learn to cook well.

No. With the right equipment and the right recipes, anyone can learn to cook in minutes.

9. The magic added by the cook can't be replicated.

No. The magic lies in selecting and preparing ingredients. No magic enters the cooking pot.

10. Secret recipes, exotic ingredients, painstaking preparation and eye popping plating define great food.

No. Transparent recipes, fresh, seasonal ingredients and minimal, healthy cooking define great food.

11. Fresh tadka has the best flavour.

No. Bottled tadka is more infused and has a deeper flavour.

12. Long and slow cooking is essential for taste.

No. Short and fast cooking unlocks maximum colour, texture and flavour, for most recipes.

13. Pressure cooking is unhealthy.

No. Pressure cooking is one of the healthiest methods to cook.

14. Manual skill is essential to cook well.

No. Most manual skill can be replaced by the right equipment and the right recipe.

15. Repeated practice is required to master a recipe.

No. You can cook almost anything perfectly, at the very first try.

# OPOS and Ayurveda

Ayur Veda (Life science) is one of the oldest living systems of medical science. Many believe it is over 5000 years old. Legends claim Brahma taught Dhanvantari, the God of AyurVeda, who then taught the sages. Ayurvedic principles have been recorded in the Vedas. Ayurveda is regarded as a upaveda or "auxiliary knowledge". WHO classifies Ayurveda as traditional medicine. In India, Ayurveda comes under the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy).

The 2000 year old texts of Sushrutha and Charaka form the basis of Ayurveda along with the work of Vaghbhata, a later seer. Opponents of pressure cooking repeatedly quote one Sutra from the book of Vaghbhata to prove pressure cooking is bad for health and is not sanctioned by Ayurveda. The sutra quoted is "If the food does not come into contact with air and sunlight, then it becomes slow poison".

Unfortunately, this sutra does not refer to cooking at all. It just refers to the risk of fermentation when moist food is kept closed, away from sunlight. This encourages the growth of microorganisms and might lead to food poisoning.

Here's a reply from one of the members of the OPOS school. "I am an Ayurvedic Physician. I have never found a reference against pressure cooking in Ayurveda for the obvious reason of the science being ancient. But I guess the Acharyas would have been happy with a pressure cooker . Take the case of extraction of juice from leaves of Adathoda vasica/ adalodakam (Malayalam). The Acharyas instruct on sealing the leaves in a mud pot and heating it from all sides (puta paaka). This will give maximum swarasa (juice from the leaves) when crushed later in a khalwa (mortar and pestle). This is very similar to pressure cooking".

Several more 'interpretations' of these ancient texts are designed to cause fear, uncertainty and doubt.

1. "Food which has taken more time to grow needs to take more time to cook. Dals take about 6-8 months to grow in the fields, so they need to be cooked for more time to cook".

In the West coast, dals like mung and channa are not even cooked, but just

soaked and used raw. These are served as Kosambari, as a prasad in many temples. So much for cooking long!

2. "Food is to be cooked only in mud pots. Aluminium is a poisonous metal. Cooking in Aluminium vessels is dangerous".

All metals react with food. Minute traces of these metals end up in our bodies. These quantities are too usually small to cause any harm. Aluminium vessels are legal across the world and are used in almost all large scale cooking - from biryanis to bread. There is no scientific evidence that they cause harm.

3. "Cooking in mud pots retain the most nutrients".

The cooking style and not the cooking vessel determine the retention of nutrients. Overcooked food in a mud pot will have lesser nutrients as compared to rightly cooked food in a steel pot.

4. "The pressure used to cook food softens food by breaking them. They are not cooked, simply broken. So the food thus prepared is useless for the body - the molecules are damaged".

This is quackery at its best. In a pressure cooker, food is not crushed by pressure - but cooked by heat.

5. "Pressure cooking increases Vata"

Ayurveda believes three biological energies (doshas) govern the human body and mind. Each one of us is born with varying proportions of these energies. A healthy body self-regulates and maintains the ratio we are born with. When the ratios go out of balance, usually because of stress, diet and lifestyle choices, we fall sick. Using a pressure cooker is seen by some Ayurvedic practitioners as increasing Vata.

We are fortunate to have many Ayurvedic physicians and practitioners in the OPOS school. Here's what they have to say:

"Here in the Bay Area (maybe elsewhere too!), people are highly stressed, working super hard in a hyper competitive workplace wanting to get ahead. These are young men and women in their 30s. And then the commute to get to work is a killer. Add to it family, two people working, kids, private school education. Stress abounds.

Usually they come to us after they are hit with ailments and Allopathy doesn't work ..or they are unhappy with Allopathy. We always begin with their gut when they come for consultations.

We see preparation of fresh food is not happening in majority of their homes because it takes time. They prepare food weeks ahead of time and reheat. Some live on packaged salads or pick up something from outside or have protein drinks in lieu of meals. None of which help.

I only do OPOS and nothing else. I also follow a disciplined lifestyle of making fresh meals every single day. It works for me and I tell all my rogis about it. We in Ayurvedic counseling don't want to overburden those who come to us when all hell is breaking loose for them. We tell them to try eating home cooked-food even if they make it once or twice a week. We tell them to try and find ways to make healthy fresh meals. They usually see the value of it all by the end of the treatment.

Now with OPOS, life can get easier for these people. Fresh food is what people really would love to have and want to have. But they just don't have the time. OPOS can really add to a healthy lifestyle with fresh prepared meals. Nutritious, healthy, quick and wonderfully tasty on top of it. And let us not forget the variety of cuisines it offers! This is why I think the Acharyas would have embraced OPOS on seeing its benefits.

Gita has the last word.

यातयामँ गतरसँ पूतमि पर्युषितम् च यत् ।  
उच्छ्रष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 17, Verse 10

Foods that are overcooked, stale, putrid, polluted and impure are for the ignorant.

In OPOS, we strive to avoid overcooking. We steer clear of stale and putrid food by cooking fresh. We eliminate pollution and contamination by design. I'm sure Lord Krishna would be pleased!

Indian culture and religions believe there are many roads to the same goal. As long as we avoid overcooking, stale and polluted food, any way to cook them, old or new, is not prohibited!

# OPOS –Dealing with Anti-nutrients

We live in an age of plenty. Our problem is abundance - not shortage.

Yuval Noah Harari says "For the first time in history, more people die today from eating too much than from eating too little."

Though we have more to eat, we don't eat well "...malnutrition shortens life expectancy even in the richest countries on earth. In France, for example, 6 million people (about 10 per cent of the population) suffer from nutritional insecurity. They wake up in the morning not knowing whether they will have anything to eat for lunch; they often go to sleep hungry; and the nutrition they do obtain is unbalanced and unhealthy – lots of starch, sugar and salt, and not enough protein and vitamins".

Unless we understand food, learn to cook and eat well, the future looks grim. "Half of humankind is expected to be overweight by 2030. In 2010 famine and malnutrition combined killed about 1 million people, whereas obesity killed 3 million".

Medical science does not talk about anti-nutrients. For the simple reason that lack of nutrition was our biggest concern, till very recently. Only now do we face the problem of dealing with excess nutrition.

Medical science does not talk about the right way to cook either, which is probably why hospital food is universally reviled. We cannot rely on our evolutionary instincts to cook and eat well. From an evolutionary perspective, we have been cooking for a very short amount of time. We still have not understood cooking or what predigested food does to our bodies. We are evolutionarily wired to binge on sugar & fat, a key fact around which the fast food empire is built. We still have not learnt to cook healthy and eat healthy.

We need to understand food before learning to cook it. Plants did not evolve to feed us. They evolved to survive and reproduce. Many plants safeguard themselves with chemical defences. With toxins. These toxins are designed to prevent animals from eating them. These toxins are designed to deny nutrition or cause some harm to the predator. For want of a better term, we call them anti-nutrients. In very small doses, these anti nutrients do not make us sick, but prolonged consumption invariably leads to complications

Phytic acid, Tannins, Lectins, Protease inhibitors & Oxalates are all naturally

occurring chemicals in plants. We eat them, when we eat plants. But they do not provide us nutrition. Instead, they hinder our ability to absorb nutrition. Let us look at them one by one:

Phytic Acid is mostly found in seeds. Almonds, beans, lentils, rice, wheat, maize have high concentrations of phytic acid. Plants use phytic acid as a phosphorous and energy storehouse, to nourish sprouting seeds. Phytic acid hinders our body's ability to absorb iron, zinc and calcium.

Tannins are mostly found in buds, leaves, roots, and stems. They are designed to be bitter, to discourage predators. We don't need to worry about them too much in daily cooking as common fruits and vegetables have negligible amounts of Tannin.

Lectins are mostly found in seeds. They are the plant's chemical weapons against microorganisms, pests, and insects. High concentration of lectins are found in kidney beans & soy Beans. Raw/ soaked/sprouted kidney beans/ soy beans are poisonous. Even a few beans can induce nausea, diarrhea and vomiting.

Protease inhibitors are mostly found in Legumes. Plants use them to fight microbes. When ingested in large quantities, they fight microbes in our intestines, hampering digestion.

OPOS advocates soaking grains/ legumes. The soaked water is to be drained. Wherever possible, OPOS advocates use of sprouts over dried legumes. Rajma/Soya is to be never consumed raw. These simple precautions are all that is needed.

Now we come to Oxalates. These are formed from Oxalic acid that is mostly found in leafy greens. Plants use oxalic acid to store excess calcium. As we use a lot of spinach in our daily cooking, we have a lot of theories about cooking spinach 'right'

Many believe spinach should never be cooked in a closed pot because they fear spinach will lose its colour and the 'acids' won't evaporate when cooked closed.

Let us look at the facts first:

1. Worldwide, people consume a lot of edible greens as salads.
2. Raw greens are also blended and consumed as smoothies by those following a raw diet.
3. Many experts advice cooking spinach very briefly - by blanching or

steaming.

All these fly against the theory that spinach is filled with a volatile acid, which can only be rendered harmless by prolonged cooking with lots of water in an open pot!

Spinach does contain an acid - Oxalic acid. This is a naturally occurring chemical found not only in spinach but also in nuts (peanuts, pecans), bananas and even chocolate. We don't boil these to death before consuming them!

Spinach does have a larger content of Oxalic acid ( $H_2C_2O_4$ ). Mature leaves have more of it than tender leaves. Oxalic acid bonds with calcium to form calcium oxalate. Most kidney stones are made of calcium oxalate. This is what scares people.

As Oxalic acid binds with nutrients (calcium), denying it to our bodies, it is called as an 'anti-nutrient'. So, how do we reduce the Oxalic acid levels in spinach?

Oxalic acid is heat stable. Cooking does not destroy oxalic acid like it does phytic acid/ lectin. Boiling spinach with lots of water and discarding the boiled water reduces the oxalic acid levels, but then it also reduces all other nutrient levels, as they leach into the boiling water.

Open or closed cooking does not make any difference because Oxalic acid is not a volatile chemical and does not evaporate.

Eating foods high in oxalic acid might cause a problem for those suffering from kidney stones/calcium deficiencies. But for the vast majority, eating spinach, even raw, is perfectly safe as long as they do not consume huge quantities of it at a sitting!

Here's a summary:

1. Oxalic acid is not a volatile chemical. You cannot evaporate it by cooking it in an open pot.
2. It is not a dangerous chemical. It is present in many fruits, nuts and vegetables. Even our bodies naturally produce oxalic acid.
3. Open pot/closed pot cooking of spinach does not make a difference to Oxalic acid levels.
4. You can reduce Oxalic acid levels by boiling spinach in lots of water, and by draining out the water. This can be done in an open pot or in a closed pot. But along with oxalic acid, it also diminishes the nutrient levels of spinach.

5. If you are healthy, you don't need to worry about oxalic acid, unless you are consuming exceptionally large amounts of spinach everyday.
6. If you have calcium deficiency/a kidney stone problem, consult your doctor before eating spinach/any foods high in oxalic acid.

OPOS recipes advocate the following to reduce the effect of anti-nutrients:

1. Always soak grains and legumes.
2. Discard soaked water before cooking
3. Never consume raw/ sprouted rajma/soya
4. It not necessary to cook spinach to death in an open pot. Flashing is safe.



# OPOS – Minimising Spewing

Spewing and foaming are problems associated with traditional pressure cooking. This happens when boiling Dal, Pasta, Rice & Milk. Several pressure cooker manufacturers warn against cooking pasra/ rice in a pressure cooker because of the spewing concerns.

Once we understand why this happens, we can take steps to minimise it. Conventional wisdom suggests a few quick fixes to minimize foaming:

1. Add a spoon inside the pot
2. Add some oil
3. Use a larger vessel

The first two marginally minimise foaming. The last side steps the problem. To understand foaming, we need to understand the building block of a foam - a bubble. In cooking, bubbles form when a gas trying to escape gets trapped in a skin of water.

When a mass of bubbles accumulate together, we have a foam. If you blow through a straw into a glass of water, you produce a foam. This water-foam collapses fast and is not a problem in cooking.

The problem starts when the bubble does not collapse. The walls of a bubble can actually become stronger during cooking in many ways

1. By Saponins (Soapy molecules)
2. By Starch
3. By Protein

When the bubbles are reinforced by saponins/starch/protein, they do not collapse fast, the foam becomes thick and causes spewing.

Saponin:

Many dals have chemicals called saponins. When you wash dals, you can see the water foaming exactly like soapy water. These saponins form a greasy coating which stabilises the bubble and prevents it from collapsing.

Starch:

When pasta or rice is boiled, starch molecules coat the bubble, strengthening it. This is why beer foams - and why a starchy beer like Guinness has a

thicker, stabler foam than a light beer like Kingfisher.

Protein:

When boiling milk, chicken or other meats, protein molecules coat the bubbles and strengthen it, producing a stable foam. The ability of milk protein to reinforce the bubble is the secret behind foamy Espresso.

Let's see how conventional methods work:

1. Placing a spoon:

This seeks to pop the bubbles by forcing them against the spoon.

Effectiveness is marginal at best.

2. Adding oil : Oil reduces surface tension of water and marginally minimises foaming. But it is not very effective in popping reinforced bubbles, which do not hold their shape only by surface tension.

3. Using a bigger container

This does not reduce foaming, but prevents spewing, as we give foam a large area to expand. The blindingly simple solution to eliminate foaming is to eliminate water. That's the reason we flash soaked dal with minimal or no water . We did the same for rice, pasta and meats. In OPOS we just flashed the foaming problem away.

We are yet to figure out how to handle milk. As of now, pot in pot is the best solution for milk. But for recipes like kheer where we need prolonged boiling, we still have no solution.

## OPOS Validations:

A recipe can get the OPOS tag only after it has been repeatedly validated, by people who have grown with it. We are fortunate to have a huge talent bank in the UBF and OPOS School, the Facebook groups where each of these recipes was proposed, discussed, debated, tested and validated.

We had the privilege of having bloggers, authors, chefs, food stylists, nutritionists, doctors, scientists, fitness trainers, restaurateurs, and thousands of home makers who have been cooking their respective cuisines for decades.

Validations ensured that the recipes were not created at the whim of a know-all chef, but were designed to satisfy several stringent criteria before being frozen.

1. They need to be vetted by this expert panel.
2. They need to be cooked and validated by the members, especially by those who have grownup on them.
3. Any problems they face need to be addressed.
4. In case of problems, a reworked version of the recipe needs to be proposed. Kesari took over 27 iterations before it went viral. Biriyani took 3 months and nearly 100 trials.
5. After a sufficient number of satisfactory validations, the recipe is frozen.

Many recipes have been validated over a hundred times. Some recipes like the Mysorepak have been validated over 500 times! We see each validated recipe as a problem solved for ever. Join us and help solving problems from your cuisine!



# OPOS Creed:

## 1. Your food, Your way!

We believe you alone can judge what is good for you and what works for you.

## 2. Food is food.

We believe there is no difference between cooking veg, vegan, non-veg or between 'Desi' and 'Vidheshi' stuff.

## 3. As with one, so with others.

What works with one, will work with another.

## 4. Water dilutes.

We believe cooking food in its own juices, as much as possible. Water is for drinking!

## 5. Taste and flavour is God given.

We believe the cook's job is not to create taste but ensure the inherent taste and flavour in food is not lost by over/undercooking.

## 6. Themes are universal.

We believe themes belong to all. Each culture translates these themes with local ingredients, cooking techniques and cultural beliefs into local recipes.

## 7. Judge by results.

We believe food should not be judged by the effort that went in its preparation.

## 8. Cook free.

We believe cooking free is a basic right. Chaining one to the stove or to recipes/cuisines is a form of enslavement.

## 9. Bond and Share.

We believe food should be more about bonding, sharing and health than about exotic ingredients, secret recipes, eye popping presentation or laborious cooking techniques.

## 10. Anyone can cook.

We believe anyone can cook. All they need are the right recipes, the right tools and and the right frame of mind.

# OPOS – Doc Speak!

*Pallavi Shanmugaraj:*

I am a registered dietitian and I advocate OPOS because

1. Cooking in a closed vessel for the shortest time possible is the best way to minimise nutrient loss
2. The short cooking time of OPOS dishes make home cooked meals easily available
3. Usage of salt drastically reduces when dishes are OPOSe
4. My clients have told me that they love the natural flavour of veggies when they are flashcooked. This ensures they eat enough veggies, without my coaxing.

*Guru Thamaraiselvan:*

OPOS ticks all the right boxes as far as healthy cooking is concerned.

Food is cooked in...

- a) shortest time (avoiding destruction of nutrients)
- b) less condiments and spices (easy on the stomach for the elderly and children, preventing acidity)
- c) it's cooked just right (overcooked = loss of certain essential nourishment, undercooked = health hazards due to toxins etc)
- d) it is easy once you cotton out OPOS (ease of cooking ensures that you get a healthy meal, on time, everytime)

What more does anyone want?

PS: The thing that some food items should be cooked in an open vessel etc is a myth.

*Mayukhmal Guha Som:*

I am a nutritionist and why I like OPOS

1. Minimal nutrient loss as done in closed lid, high heat etc even water soluble vitamins also retain as water is not drained here
2. Less oil is consumed when in today's world there's a less chance of doing that in any dishes
3. Flashed veggies are way better than traditionally cook veggies
4. Opos ghee, jam, gg paste etc are made without preservatives

*Dr.Priyanka Kukreja:*

As a doc,I'd like OPOS because it minimises time spent in the kitchen and

related stress and so less cases of fatigue,sleep deprivation and vague body aches.

Jokes apart,in addition to all that already mentioned above I'd humbly put forward a few more:

I like that it minimises water required for cooking due to its short time high heat basis.most otherwise pressure cooked foods lose a lot of water soluble nutrients in excess water .same when you simply boil. Plus that with minimal use of bad oils.

In comparison to its counterparts of cooking this scores also because heat generated is with closed steam as opposed to say grilling where food is more in contact with heat.some foods like fatty meats may show reaction internally producing toxins.grilling is vaguely linked to certain cancers though enough evidence isn't available conclusively.

While it's true that all types of cooking loses some or the other nutrients,but you can't help it can you?

I'm personally happy eating oposed food which is tasty easy and quick albeit nutritional aspects are at par if not extremely superior to some other methods Like they say you win some you lose some. Loss is pretty little here!

*Amba Vijaya Sarathy:*

I am Physiotherapist and I work extensively in the field of pregnancy and post-partum support and care. I strongly recommend OPOS to all my clients and to anyone who has a listening ear. The reasons

1. Very little cooking time. This is a huge boon to those who are pregnant and who have a little one.

2. Traditional PP care plan required mother to have freshly cooked food that was also warm. This helped in getting better nutrition and the warmth helped in digestion. Cooking a PP meal fresh everytime is a possibility only because of OPOS.

3. Those with challenges like GD require less of carbs and more of other nutrients. This means cooking more veggies. This is so easy with the Flash cooking method.

4. In OPOS it is easy to cook a fully balanced meal in one go. Combine starches, veggies and protein in one go . This is a huge one for the crowd I work with.

5. When introducing solids to babies, OPOS wins hands down. All mom's want their babies to have wholesome nutritious food that is also easy to

make. The challenge of cooking multiple things with a toddler is now easy, thanks to OPOS.

6. Personally, OPOS is a saviour for me. On the days that I conduct classes, OPOS helps me finish class and cook lunch and get ready for the next session. On the days that I go for labours, returning home exhausted (sometimes after 12 or more hours of hard work), the last thing I worry about is cooking. OPOS gives me the freedom to rest a little longer and cook faster. I can support my family and at the same time do justice to my clients needs.

*Shilpa Mittal:*

I advocate opos because one can practice no oil cooking or with bear minimum oil, without compromising on taste.

The least exposure to heat the best retension of nutrients. ...just like pasturized milk.

The most healthiest meals are cooked through opos. ...with minimal time.

One can cook variety right from stir fried to main dishes...be it cooking soup or briyani.

The main factors I look upon to OPOS is time, nutrient retention, healthier tastier meals and less oil.

*Dr.Vandana Nihalani:*

I am a Homeopath and Reiki healer. The most important part that I liked about opos is that oil usage is reduced drastically which other wise is almost impossible in traditional cooking. Also shorter cooking time means nutrients preserved as compared to slow n prolonged cooking which kills most vitamins. Another reason...oh what a joy to be able to cook so many things so well all on your own with confidence of gauranteed success if followed steps sincerely.

*Vinita Nair:*

As a pediatrician, I advocate OPOS as the quickest way to cook veggies and still be tasty and palatable to kids. I live in the US where the average child eats only 1-2 servings of fruit or veggies a day. It's shocking. Then people rely on highly processed energy bars, fruit pouches and what not to try and get in more servings. Why would you want to spend extra money to eat highly processed poor quality food? Just eat real food! OPOS makes it easy and tasty!! I have seen a vast improvement in our own eating habits at home! No meal goes by without some flash cooked veggies!! The preservation of

nutrients is the icing on the cake!

*Mathura Shivakumar:*

As a biotechnologist I support opos as it is a method to sterilise food. This process is called autoclaving in our laboratory. The pressure increases the temperature in which no organism can live hence free from pathogens. It is very much advisable for preparing food for infants who are prone to food infection. Pressure cooking eliminates the fear of food poisoning hence food prepared this way have longer shelf life than the same prepared in traditional method.

*Janani Vaidyanathan:*

As a Food Technologist with nutrition sciences background, OPOS should be better preserving some of the heat liable nutrients than traditional cooking as the time the food is exposed to heat comes down drastically. So the nutrition loss argument dissolves. Additionally, cooking with less oil and faster cooking really does help folks reconsider ordering food or munching on unhealthy snacks.

That said, OPOS has demystified sweets that everyone has to exert will power to keep from gobbling regularly.

*Arvind Bv Raman:*

I used to be on a SAD diet (Standard American Diet) of meat and potatoes because of how little time it takes to cook. Since I started cooking OPOS food, the amount of vegetables we eat has quadrupled. My biggest selling point is this is a rare example where convenient=healthy. Having said that, the ease of making desserts will no doubt cause some bulging waist lines. It's a powerful tool as long as used in good balance. With great power comes great responsibility. ♦♦

(P.s. pressure cooking has generally not caught on outside of the Indian community. When it does, I will be recommending it to my patients. Only single digits even possess a Crock-Pot right now for "slow cooking").

*Priya Ramakrishnan:*

I am a pediatrician and I advocate OPOS as it encourages one to eat healthy food at home. OPOS makes it easy to eat resto quality food cooked with fresh ingredients at home. Colorful flash cooked veggies are inviting! Home cooking, healthy eating leads to overall good health!

# OPOS - Core Beliefs:

1. Cooking is simple, if you get the big picture straight and use the right equipment.
2. Building blocks define a cuisine - not self imposed rules.
3. Recipes are general guidelines - not rigid instructions.
4. There are no 'perfect' recipes, for the same reason there are no 'perfect' stories or 'perfect' songs.
5. The biggest secret in cooking is there is none.
6. Every step in a recipe doubles its complexity.
7. Every cuisine is riddled with holes and has much to learn from other cuisines.
8. Cuisines are alive. They keep changing all the time.
9. Recipe 'purity' is no different from racial purity or linguistic purity  
- It just does not exist.
10. Anyone can be taught to cook great food, in minutes.

# Why OPOS?

- **OPOS is Green. One pot to wash.**

OPOS uses far less water and fuel as compared to traditional methods. OPOS does not waste anything – every drop of water, every bit of food added is consumed. Many OPOStars do not even wash their cooker between dishes, by planning well to ensure the flavour of one dish does not compromise the taste or flavour of the next dish. This results in a great saving of water and cleaning liquids. OPOS uses a fraction of chemical cleaning liquids and water as the cooker can be just rinsed or even wiped clean at the very end.

- **OPOS is Clean. Hygienic. Less mess.**

Clean: In OPOS, we always cook sealed. There is little chance of contamination from the outside. In open pot cooking, this threat is ever present.

Hygienic: In OPOS, you never need to worry about hair, sweat or other contaminants entering your food. As the cooker gets sterilized everytime it is used, you cook the most hygienic way possible.

Less mess: As there is little splattering, your stove/walls/kitchen counter need not be cleaned after every cooking session.

- **OPOS is Fast. Fresh food in minutes.**

500g of vegetables cook in 5 minutes. Pasta in 5 minutes. Chicken cooks in 6 minutes. Rice in 7 minutes. Mutton in 10 minutes.

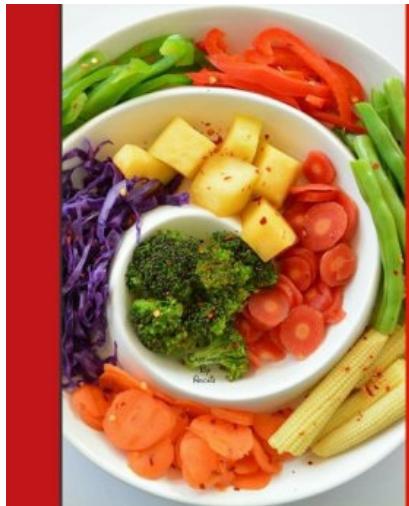
Completely unsupervised. Cooking is much faster than ordering out!

- **OPOS is Liberating. No supervision.**

The short cooking times in OPOS are actually even shorter as you do not need babysit your dish. Set the time and move away. Or keep track of whistles and switch off. This lets you clean up the counter/set the table, while your food gets cooked. No supervision eliminates uncertainty. You never need to worry if you have overcooked/undercooked.

- **OPOS is Healthy. Maximises nutrition.**  
OPOS brings vegetables alive, maximizing their colour, texture, flavour and nutrition. OPOS uses a fraction of the fat, salt and spices as compared to traditional cooking. OPOS promotes healthy eating by emphasizing a vegetable rich diet, by avoiding heavily processed food, and by empowering you to easily cook food for any diet you care to follow.
- **OPOS is Flexible. Cook your way.**  
OPOS does not tie you down to recipes. Once you understand the techniques, you can cook your way, using ingredients you like, completely personalizing food to your liking.
- **OPOS is Economical. Saves fuel and water.**  
Apart from huge savings in fuel and water, OPOS dramatically minimizes the need to order out/eat out. The savings over a period reported by members are impressive!
- **OPOS is Tasty. Intense flavours.**  
OPOS recipes are validated by the most brutal critics on earth - Toddlers. Members repeatedly report their kids love OPOSed food. OPOS intensifies the natural flavours and ensures the delicate flavours are not masked by harsh spices or lost by overcooking.
- **OPOS is Transparent. Works for all.**  
There are no hidden steps in OPOS. No subjective interpretations. A child capable of understanding a recipe should be able to cook it. That is the touchstone of OPOS recipes.
- **OPOS is Consistent. Works every time.**  
OPOS standardises the cooking equipment and the cooking conditions to ensure recipes work exactly the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. You never need to have your heart in your mouth, worrying if the recipe would turn out right. It always would!
- **OPOS is Universal. Works across cuisines!**

OPOS is a technique. It is not limited by cuisines/ingredients. You can use it to create any cuisine, using any ingredient you like.



## Why OPOS?

- OPOS is Green. One pot to wash.
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- OPOS is Fast. Fresh food in minutes.
- OPOS is Liberating. No supervision.
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- OPOS is Transparent. Works for all.
- OPOS is Consistent. Works everytime.
- OPOS is Universal. Cooks all cuisines!

# OPOS - Why Now?

Good Food should be a basic right. After 10,000 years of civilisation, many people still do not eat well for two reasons:

1. They can't afford it.
2. They can't cook.

Governments and charities focus on the first problem. We focus on the next. A person skipping a meal a day, because he cannot afford it, is actually much better off than a person gorging thrice a day on junk food.

Cooking is not a spectator sport to be watched on TV. It is more fun when you get to play! Cooking is not about secret recipes, exotic ingredients and eye popping presentation. It is about bonding, sharing and appreciating all that nature has given us. It makes you self-reliant and food secure on a gut level. It is hard to explain unless you have cooked and fed someone!

The biggest block to cooking is the one not spoken aloud. Not addressed by chefs or cookbooks. It is uncertainty. This is the biggest block to cooking. You never are sure if you have used the right ingredients, at the right time, in the right proportions. So you stand around, stirring, tasting, tweaking, hoping, and being uncertain all the while. This uncertainty plagues even expert chefs.

We have managed to address this problem through OPOS. This is the greatest strength of OPOS - eliminating uncertainty. You get it once; you've got it nailed forever.

Traditional recipes don't work for many of us. We don't have the time, the skill, the patience or the help to make them work. The problem is even worse for those staying abroad, outside the traditional support system, which is necessary to make traditional cooking work. There was a crying need for reinventing traditional recipes and adapting them to today's lifestyle. OPOS could not have happened earlier because it needed a lot of things to fall in place.

1. The equipment was not available.

Safe pressure cookers, induction stoves are less than a decade old.

2. The ingredients were not available.

Industrially cleaned and packed rice, dal, spices, masala powders etc., were

not commonly available earlier.

3. The recipes were not available.

Foolproof, one step recipes are still exceedingly rare.

4. There was no need.

Women did not work. We lived in a joint family system. Labour was cheap. We never needed OPOS! Elaborate cooking and serving rituals were the norm to keep women busy.

5. Large scale collaboration was tough.

OPOS happened because thousands of volunteers across countries collaborated. This was not easy earlier.

# OPOS Goals:

The OPOS project started with a very simple goal - to create a set of recipes that work exactly the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime. It came as a huge surprise to all of us that it went much beyond that. New cooks can still use the OPOS cookbook as a primer. More experienced users can use it to play around with recipes/cuisines. The OPOS recipes have changed over the years, but the goals have not:

- ***OPOS – empower the first time cook.***

OPOS is designed for the first time cook. No prior cooking knowledge is assumed. There are no complicated steps. All recipes are designed to be cooked by a first time cook, on the very first try. The onus is not on the user to get it right. It is on the author to ensure there is no space to go wrong, as long as you follow the recipe without tweaking.

- ***Focus on creativity, not manual skill.***

OPOS encourages creativity by not focussing on manual skill. Recipes demanding a good deal of manual skill have been avoided or replaced by easier shortcuts. The skill is built into the process and equipment, so that even first time cooks can turn out delicious dishes.

- ***Learn one – you've learnt them all!***

All OPOS recipes follow the same logic.

1. Measure ingredients.
  2. Add to the cooking vessel
  3. Layer and flash (or) Pressure cook (or) Blend/mix. That's it!
- Consistent, fool proof results are guaranteed by design.

- ***Deconstruct and Demystify.***

OPOS demystifies recipes by exposing the core building blocks. Once you understand these core building blocks, you can mix and match them, moving beyond a recipe/cuisine and cook up your own variations.

- ***Get the Big Picture.***

Any cuisine evolves around locally available ingredients. It is then shaped by external influences and cultural beliefs. OPOS dives down to the very root of recipes, showing how they evolved over time. Once you see this big picture, many other minor details fall into place. You'll know what is traditional and authentic, why certain ingredients are preferred and why certain regions prefer certain techniques. Authenticity is not about faithfully duplicating a recipe but about remaining true to the spirit of a cuisine.

- ***One theme, endless variants.***

Mature cuisines do not focus on individual recipes, but on major themes. Each theme has infinite regional variations. One page cookbooks identify these major themes. For example, one Indian theme is “Any edible flour can be kneaded into dough, shaped into a thin round and cooked on a hot surface into a roti”. All the hundreds of flatbreads cooked across India from a variety of flours are just variations of this basic theme.

- ***Create – don’t duplicate!***

OPOS highlights the big picture and the basic framework. This lets you play around and create infinite variations of classic themes, without the fear of going wrong. You really learn to cook, and not just to duplicate. Try it and you'll see how empowering and liberating OPOS can be!

# OPOS - Really Foolproof ?

OPOS is foolproof, as long as the recipe is followed. It takes scores of validations to make an OPOS recipe, but all it takes just one failure for it to lose the OPOS tag. An OPOS recipe is only valid till the first failure. OPOS recipes promise to work for anyone, anywhere, anytime - as long as the recipe is followed and standard equipment is used.

The only possible source of variation in OPOS recipes is the ingredients themselves. The tomato I get in Chennai is not the same tomato you use in London. This issue can't be addressed. But the effect of ingredient variation is minimal. Only in very rare cases does it cause a problem.

The other variation comes from the atmospheric pressure - which varies with the place. This dramatically varies the cooking time in open pot recipes but is minimised in OPOS and so is not even mentioned. At sea level, the atmospheric pressure is 15 psi (100kpa). At this pressure, water boils at 100 degrees. Inside your pressure cooker at sea level, the pressure would be 15psi + 15psi = 30psi. At this pressure, water would boil at 121 degrees. On top of Mt.Everest, atmospheric pressure is just 5psi. Here, water boils at 72 degrees. Inside a pressure cooker at the top of Mt.Everest, the pressure would be 5psi+15psi = 20 psi. At this pressure, water would boil at 109 degrees.

This is the reason why most recipes have both the whistles and the time mentioned. At top of Mt.Everest, a 7 minute pulao would take around 9 minutes, but will get cooked in two whistles, exactly the same way as it gets cooked on the plains. This standardization is not possible with open pot cooking, which is why open pot recipes do not get the OPOS tag.

As OPOS recipes promise to work the same way for anyone, anywhere, anytime, we can only use those equipments which behave exactly the same way everywhere. This is why the OPOS kit is limited to a pressure cooker, a blender and a knife, which work the same way everywhere. By standardizing cooking conditions and by repeatedly honing the recipe, we have taken them very close to being foolproof.

# OPOS- Easy Fusion!

OPOS makes fusion recipes easy. You can quickly convert your favourite recipe into many avatars using these rules:

## 1. Fusion rule #1: As with one, so with others.

- a) If you can make a biriyani from rice, you can do so with millets, pasta, noodles, idiyappam etc.
- b) If you can use tamarind for souring, you can use tomato, mango, yogurt, etc.
- c) If you are using garam masala for flavouring, you can use sambar powder, goda masala, mirepoix, etc.
- d). If you are using water for cooking a pulao/curry, you can use milk, buttermilk/stock or even other curries.

## 2. Fusion rule #2: Plug and Play

Change building blocks - one at a time!

Change base. Change flavouring. Change additives.

In an OPOS recipe, pick base from one cuisine, add flavouring from another and additives from a third to create numerous variants.

## 3. Fusion rule #3: Anything goes with anything.

Understand the starch, protein, flavouring and additives used other cuisines.  
Mix and match freely!

You never need to cook the same dish twice - the only limit is your imagination!

Here is an example:

Flash eggplants. Mash, mix in chopped onions and salt. You have an eggplant dip, popular across cuisines.

1. Mix in a dash of tamarind paste, chopped chillies and a dash of sesame oil and it becomes the South Indian Chidambaram Kathirikka Gothsu.
2. Mix in a dash of lemon juice, chopped chillies and a pinch of garam

masala: North Indian Baingan Bhartha

3. Mix in a dash of lemon juice, chopped chillies and a dash of mustard oil: Bihari Baingan Chokha.

4. Mix in a dash of lemon juice, chopped chillies, a dash of mustard oil, a pinch of chopped coriander leaves: Assamese Baingan pithika

5. Mix in a dash of vinegar, a pinch of pepper, chopped parsley and a dash of olive oil: Greek Melitzanosalata.

6. Mix in a dash of tahini, a pinch of chopped garlic and a dash of olive oil: Arab Baba Ghanoush

7. Mix in a dash of mayonnaise, a pinch of chopped garlic and a dash of olive oil: Israeli Baba Ghanoush.

8. Mix in a dash of tahini, a pinch of chopped garlic, parsley, a dash of lemon juice and a dash of olive oil: Palestinian Baba Ghanoush

9. Mix in a dash of pepper, mayonnaise, chopped garlic and a dash of sun flower oil: Romanian Salată de vinete.

10. Mix in a dash of tahini, a pinch of pepper, pomegranate seeds and a dash of olive oil:

Lebanese Muttabel.

11. Mix in a dash of tahini, a pinch of chopped garlic, a dash of olive oil, lemon juice: Armenian Mutabal.

12. Mix in a pinch of chopped garlic, parsley, a bit of chopped tomato, a dash of lemon juice and olive oil: French Aubergine caviar.

13. Mix in a pinch of chopped garlic, chopped tomatoes, a pinch of parsley and a dash of olive oil: Bulgarian Kyopoolu...and so on!

## OPOS - The Future:

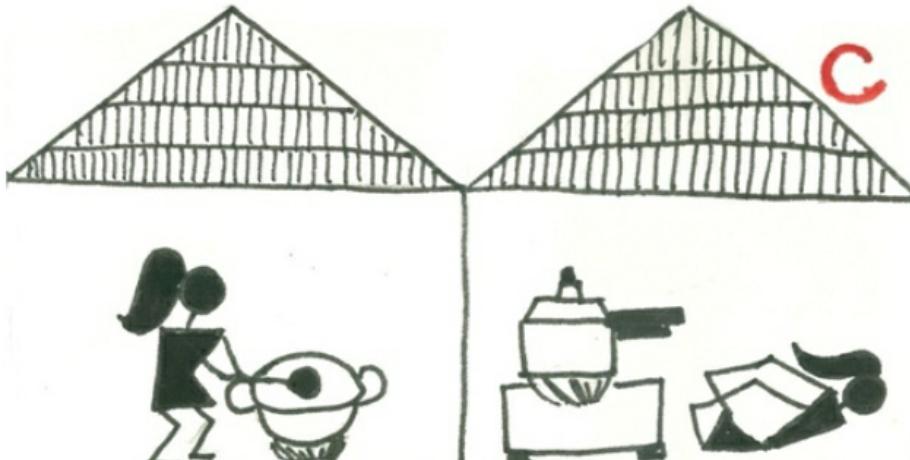
A few things seem certain.

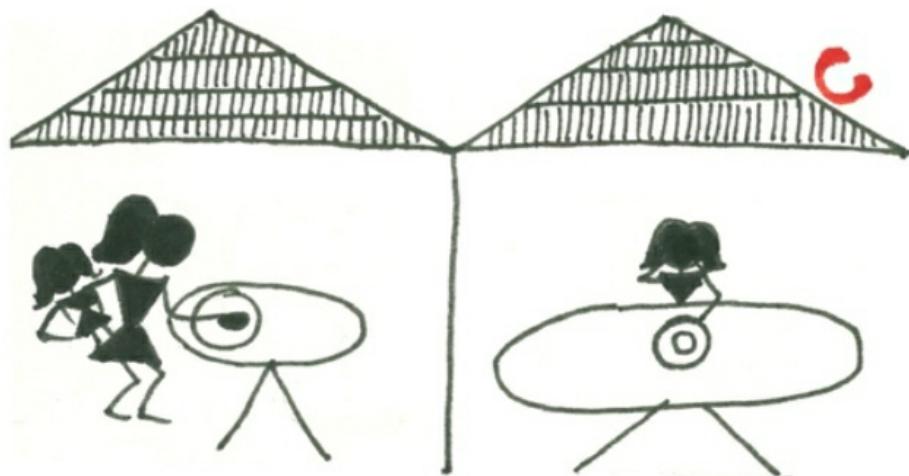
1. Most vegetables will be flash cooked. There is no better way to cook them.
2. Commercial implementations of OPOS will be sure but steady. It will first happen in charities and move over to commercial kitchens. Most large scale cooking will be OPOSed.
3. Restaurants will up their game to provide a better experience/variety. Charging a big premium in the name of taste/authenticity will become increasingly difficult.
4. OPOS would become a primer for first time cooks.
5. The bulk of world's cookbooks would be rewritten the OPOS way.
6. Cooking will not appear as scary to those who have never bothered to learn cooking.
7. Kitchens would be less cluttered and would shrink dramatically, and separate kitchens might even disappear.
8. The importance of self-styled authorities on tradition and authenticity would wane.
9. More and more cuisines would get OPOSed.
10. Sleeker equipment designed for OPOS would emerge.

## OPOS for your home:

With OPOS, you do not need a chimney/an exhaust in a home kitchen. A chimney/exhaust is mainly used to remove the oil spray which invariably accompanies most cooking. It is optional in OPOS. Even in commercial implementations of OPOS, where we cook hundreds of meals, the kitchen does not have a chimney or an exhaust.

OPOS not only makes cooking easy, but can redefine the whole concept of a 'kitchen'. With a induction stove/portable stove and a pressure cooker - a kitchen is wherever you want it to be. Your kitchen can even move to your dining table or into your bedroom. Here's a series of Before and After OPOS scenes reported often at many homes practicing OPOS. They are depicted in Warli, a tribal artform from Maharashtra. After OPOS, it is very likely you see men entering the kitchen, you get more free time, you cook more variety, your children eat on their own, you stop buying sweets and your kitchen and sink are spotless.







## OPOS for Babywearing Homes

Neha Viswanathan

Read about babywearing on : <https://babywearinginternational.org/>

1. When you wear on front in the first six months or beyond - Focus on doing chopping, layering, cleaning. Pressure cookers are safe, but it's best not to wear baby on front when actually firing the cooker. You can easily prep and layer when baby is sleeping in the carrier, and then take ten minutes to cook, when baby is safe and away from kitchen.

2. When you wear on back - Some babies will sleep immediately, and others may protest a bit. Make it fun, dance and jiggle a bit and they will get used to it. You can fire your cooker, and make sure baby is on your back when you release pressure.

3. Use a steel tumbler to dull the whistle noises - Some babies will sleep through the whistles, while others may need a little comforting. You can dull the sound by using a steel tumbler to cover the whistle. Take care to use an oven glove or cloth when removing the tumbler as the steam can make it super hot!

4. Gather any extra fabric and tuck it away. Some carriers have extra fabric. Ensure you tuck it so baby can't take it out so it doesn't go near fire.

5. Be careful once you release pressure and open. When you open to mix, fold gently so there's less splatter. Always be mindful that baby's legs are out of the carrier!

6. Get baby used to babywearing before cooking with them on you. It's hard to focus on cooking if you have a crying baby!

7. As far as possible, squat rather bend. In fact, try and get everything you need from lower shelves before you start, so you don't need to squat either!

8. Ensure hot vessels and similar objects are away from the edge of the counter - so baby's legs don't touch them by mistake. Make sure baby can't reach anything they can fling or throw.

If you can't babywear, it's best to keep children out of the kitchen as they can crawl under you and take you by surprise. I was cooking and babywearing within a week of both my babies being born. In my experience, babywearing exposes children to the joy of cooking. As my older one grew she began to participate and knew how to do so safely.

# OPOS for Commercial Kitchens

For the past 4 years, we have been implementing the OPOS concepts across orphanages, old age homes, budget restaurants and fine dining restaurants.

The biggest implementations have happened in South Indian kitchens because the daily meal of most South Indians can be completely OPOSed.

The cost savings are enormous. The consistency and hygiene OPOS guarantees are very tough to achieve with open pot cooking.

In OPOS restaurants, food is prepared on demand, multiple times, to reduce wastage. This is possible because the production process is very quick. In non-OPOS restaurants, excess food is prepared because it is time taking. And this food usually goes waste.

Most Indian restaurants are chef led. Very few restaurants are system led and track expenses on a day-to-day basis. This invariably leads to wastage/pilferage, all of which is passed on to the customers.

OPOS cuts dependence on chefs and makes possible system driven restaurants. The bulk of Indian cuisine has already been OPOSed and it is just a matter of time before OPOS finds its way into more commercial kitchens.

The current practice of using central kitchens/freeze dried bases/dehydrated mixes to ensure consistency will wane as OPOS can guarantee consistency even with a highly decentralized setup.

Consistency can be achieved in two ways. In commercial kitchens/Industrial food processing, consistency is ensured by centralizing everything. This comes at a cost. Loss of freshness, taste, texture and nutrition and increased storage and transportation cost. In OPOS we achieve consistency by standardizing the cooking process. This lets us have a decentralized setup. Freshness, taste, texture and nutrition increase, storage and transportation cost decrease. Skilled labour cost drops significantly as the skill is built into the equipment and process. For example, hundreds of members across the world have cooked Lesson 6: Kurma. The output posted by them is remarkably similar, proving the point consistency is possible even with a low-skilled, decentralized setup.



# OPOS for Corporates

Food is a real problem for people placed abroad/for those staying away from their families. OPOS trainers have been conducting OPOS demos/training sessions as a way to promote healthy eating, as a way to promote team building and make people feel food secure.

We had earlier collaborated with Cognizant, one of India's leading software companies, to conduct an OPOS cook off across their branches. This would be one of the best ways to expose your employees to OPOS. If you choose to do so, here are the guidelines and rules:

1. This is a multi level cooking contest to promote self cooking as a key to real food security.
2. All recipes will be cooked using the OPOS technique (One Pot, One Shot).
3. All contestants must be approved by organisers prior to the cook off.
4. Entrants need to be employees of
5. Entrants need to cook one or multiple dishes themselves, record the recipe as Video/Photos and upload them.
6. Each entry will be scored on a five point scale by all viewers based on looks, nutritive value and ease of preparation. Those with the highest scores win. In case of a tie, a panel of judges will cast the deciding votes.
7. All recipes must follow the OPOS recipe submission guidelines ( A list of ingredients followed by the cooking method)
8. Garnishing can be done, though we suggest it be kept simple and complement the dish being presented, and not distract from it. This is not a garnishing contest. Garnishes should be edible. Any flowers used in garnishing should be pesticide free and edible.
9. Use good fire safety practices. Keep yourself and others safe. All cooking must be done at least 18 inches above the ground.
10. Alcoholic beverages/banned substances will not be used in cooking.
11. You need to have read and understood safe food and equipment handling principles.

12. Cooking, like any other activity, has its share of risk and chances of accident. Please familiarise yourself with them and ways to minimise them. The organisers will not be held responsible for any of these risks.

## OPOS for Schools

OPOS appeals immensely to children, who take to it immediately. In a bid to promote healthy eating and keep children off junk food, OPOS trainers have been conducting OPOS workshops in schools and colleges, for both teachers and students.

The workshops give an overview of all cuisines and handhold participants to step into the OPOS world. A few hands on recipes are designed to show how simple cooking can become with OPOS. Interested participants then get added to the online OPOS school, where the real learning starts.

OPOS can also play a big role in improving the taste, quality and consistency of food served at school/college canteens, while bringing down the cost dramatically. We have already standardised most of the recipes used in school/college canteens.

# OPOS for Charities

We have been working on introducing OPOS techniques in orphanages and old age homes. In many of these places, food is a nightmare. Most are underfunded and so cannot maintain a proper kitchen or hire good cooks.

People here are hardly in a position to complain. OPOS can guarantee them good food, liberate them from bad cooks, make fresh, hot food available on demand and do all these very cost effectively.

We have been gifting large 25L cookers and other OPOS equipment to charities and orphanages, chiefly around Chennai, who take the first step and want to move to OPOS. Members have donated money and equipment so that we can take OPOS to the needy. Over a dozen charities have benefitted till date.

Check <https://youtu.be/f7xAxcQ9wLg> to understand the problems many charities face!

But in almost every single case, we have seen vested interests step in and sabotage the project. OPOS cuts out all those who have been making money on food, instantly. Those affected find some way to create fear, doubt or uncertainty. They convince others that cooker food is not good for health. They spread rumours about the management looting the funds by serving sub standard food. They blame any outbreak of illness on OPOS. In a couple of instances, the cooks worried about losing their special status intentionally sabotaged the recipe and blamed it on OPOS. Some even vandalised the equipment.

In one case, the food contractors scared kitchen workers into believing the cooker will blow up and kill them all. One school was spending a fortune on buying bottled water. We taught them to sterilise water. The water supplier instigated parents that the school is risking the lives of the children and nearly shut down the school.

We have now learnt the biggest challenge is not in introducing OPOS or gifting them the equipment, but in handholding them till OPOS takes root. Till the critics are silenced. This takes over 6 months. We are ready to donate equipment needed. We will help you finetune the menu, if you convince us you can spend the time and effort needed to handhold them for at least 6

months or till they get comfortable with OPOS.

In the OPOS school, we standardise with a 2L cooker and 250ml measuring cups. Many students keep asking about scaling up. Not much help is given as they have to learn it for ourselves.

In charities, the situation is the reverse. The equipment is scaled up ten times. We standardise with a 25L cooker. The measuring cup used is 2L. We get the scaling questions here too. Our answer is still the same. Learn it and do it!

Pic: Training to use oversized OPOS equipment. Before and After picture in an old age home kitchen.



# OPOS – for the less privileged

Born into a pot making family in Nigeria, Mohammed Bah Abba had an idea for food preservation - by placing one mud pot inside the other, filling the space between them with wet sand. This created a natural refrigerator . This simple refrigerator allowed fruits and vegetables to be stored fresh for over a week. This simple device turned into a women's liberation movement, sending thousands of girls back to schools.

Earlier, these girls could not attend school, as they were sent to the market everyday to hawk fruits and vegetables. They could not return till all food was sold. They were literally chained to their farms.

After they started using his invention, they could come back from the market early with unsold food, store it and sell it the next day. They were unchained. They could now go to school after coming back from the market. Abba's simple invention dramatically increased the number of girls attending school.

OPOS seeks to do something similar - by unchaining millions of women from the kitchen. Freeing them to pursue their goals.

Abba says " The biggest obstacle I faced was educating the villagers".

That is exactly the biggest obstacle OPOS is facing today. Each one of you can help - by dispelling myths, by demos in your kitchens and by just cooking and posting.

We hope OPOS will turn into a women's liberation movement, especially for underprivileged women, still chained to their kitchens. They need it more than we do !

# OPOS for Armed Forces

An army marches on its stomach. OPOS is ideal for soldiers posted in God forsaken places.

Almost every single recipe we have unlocked here can be made available to soldiers, wherever they are. Hot, fresh food, from their own cuisines is no more a dream.

In some places, even basic cooking is a huge problem. At Siachen, water boils at 82 degrees. At this low heat, making a simple tea becomes an ordeal. With a 25L cooker, anyone can learn to make hundreds of glasses of tea, in minutes, ensuring it tastes exactly the same, every single time.

The OPOS Dum tea recipe was one of the most mocked recipes. "Do you need a cooker to boil tea?" was often asked. You do, if you are making hundreds of glasses at a time in a place like this!

At high altitudes, Potatoes/rice/kichidi would take ages to cook. Hot food becomes a dream. OPOS would be a blessing, helping soldiers fix up instant hot food. All the recipes we have experimented and perfected here would work exactly the same way for all of them, wherever they are posted. Any soldier, with no prior experience, can recreate gourmet level food, from any cuisine, by just following the recipe and by using the right equipment.

The OPOS kit could become a part of the soldier's equipment, helping them become food secure. We hope it happens one of these days!

# OPOS for the Country

OPOS cuts fuel and water bills by over half, instantly. We have documented dozens of case studies where the water and fuel bill has fallen by 20% to over 50% after switching over to OPOS. This translates to huge savings across the country. See <https://youtu.be/ge5zcKfdEuE> to see the wastage that can be completely cut out instantly by switching over to OPOS.

With one ruling, the Government can introduce OPOS across the country, immediately saving precious resources. OPOS would also cut costs, eliminate pilferage and dramatically improve taste and nutrition in the numerous free food programs run across the country.

# OPOS for the World

OPOS is an universal technique and can be seamlessly applied across world cuisines. OPOS is cuisine blind. It is ingredient blind.

OPOS techniques are just foolproof ways to cook the building blocks of world cuisine - starch, protein and vegetables. So OPOS techniques can be applied to cook any cuisine, by just varying the key building blocks.

Wheat, rice and maize are the world's primary source of starch. Most regional cuisines are built on these cereals. Some cuisines are based on non grain starches like Sago (Indonesia, Malaysia), Potato (Ireland, Latin America) and Cassava (Africa). Other minor starches, millets (Africa, rural India) and pseudo cereals are also consumed in pockets. All starches have been OPOSED.

**Protein:** Varying combinations of plant protein (peas, beans, lentils) and animal protein (dairy, meat, seafood, eggs) are popular across the world. Most of these proteins have been OPOSED.

**Micronutrients:** A huge variety of fresh fruits, nuts, vegetables and edible greens supply most of our fibre and micro nutrient requirements. Each region uses commonly available fruits and vegetables in its cuisine. Almost all vegetables and edible greens have been OPOSED.

Thus, the building blocks of most world cuisines have been OPOSED. We hope more people across cuisines join the movement, helping us unlock all world cuisines, teaching everyone to cook free.

# OPOS in a word

Here is how OPOStars describe OPOS in a word.

Hima Bindu: Life savior

Madhu Surya: Friend

Sudha Venkat: Boon

Jyoti Abhimanyu Singh: Game changer

Shanthi Rekha Rajagopal: Fun

Saranya Prasad: My new love

Kala Sriram: Blessing

Ambilee Ramachandran: Magic

Chitra Ramesh: Tension free

Soumya Sajit: Mind blowing

Lavanya Arun Prasath: A new revolution

Pooja Ravikumar: Addiction!

Ramya Natarajan: My new obsession

Amma Vijaya Sarathy: Yogic!

Ramya Badrinath: Bliss

Priyadarshini K Selvakumar: Confidence booster

Mansi Ligga: Innovative!!

Naina Singh: Awesome

Abiramasundari Umamaheswaran: Culinary science.

Kavitha Chityala: Scientific

Aishwarya KG: Quick

Sooriya Jayaseelan: Delicious

Chitra Krishnan Venkat: Logical

Smita Gulati: Jadoo

Priyanka Kumar: Wowsome!

Annapurani Narayanan: 3M – Marvelous, Magic, Mind blowing

Kanagavalli Priya: Life saviour

Ramya S: Stress free cooking

Karthika Srinivasan Kasyap: Simple

Amulya Thota: Liberating!!

Jayeadha Nambiar: Flavourful, lip smacking, healthy

Priyavadhana Vasudevan: My best buddy ❤

Pushpa B Sridharan: A magic wand

Ambika Thambirajan: Black magic  
Supraja Sunda: Joyful  
Ranjani Thoppey: Confidence  
Divya Chelakkal Sivan: Kitchen magic  
Ashima Malik Jaiswal: Time Saving  
Geetha Kalyani: Saviour  
Jayashree Subramanian: Life changing  
Mythili Ramachandran: Discipline!!  
U Saraswathi Harinarayanan: Holy Grail  
Nirmala Jayachandran: Bliss  
Shubha Jayaprakash: Freedom  
Kriti Bharat Dave: GAME CHANGER  
Rima Das: Foodcraft, a big relief, a life saver  
Revathi Sampath: My second mom  
Aruna Karthik: Time saver. ..!!!!  
Shyam: Creative cooking  
Shenbagavalli Karthik: Path breaking  
Sowmiya Lingamoorthy: Colourful  
Sruthi S Nair: Refreshing  
Dhivya Prasanna Karthik: Gift  
Rashmi Nath Sinha: Easy peasy  
Reva Ravi: Thrilling  
Neeraja Jagannath: Genius life hack  
Dhivya Kumaresan: Piertotum Locomotor spell!!  
Sasirekha Kabilan: Delight  
Meenakshi Subramanian: Jolly jolly  
Lakshmi Sundar: Breeze  
Shachi Thakkar: Kickass ;)  
Krithika Balasubramanian: Way of life:)  
Purnima Parikh: Jakas  
Nasreen Sheik K: Phenomenal  
Agalya Subramanian: #ENCHANTING, #SCIENCE, #WHIMSICAL,  
#POWER,#PRIDE,#BLESSING  
Janani Nagaraj: Uncomplicated  
Ramya Ramakrishnan: A revelation, norm breaker, here to stay!  
Latha Venkateshwaran: Magic and gift  
Saranya Sathiyamurthy: Chemistry experiment

Joy Rubavathy: Time machine  
Gayatri Saravanan: Love  
Vijayalakshmi Swaminathan: Demigod  
Shobana Radhakrishnan: LIBERATION  
Leena Nancy Anto: Impeccable  
Gayathri Subramaniam: Unbelievable  
Pradeepa Pillai: How I cook now..  
Preethy Vijay: Life savior!  
Irene Francis: SOS!!  
Pavithra Rao: Therapy  
Arshiya Sheik A: Superstar  
Sindhu Shivalingam: Peace!  
Sujatha Srinivasan: Hip Hop  
Sneha Dutta Rohra: Flawless  
Prabha Raghavan: The best thing to happen to cooking!  
Shalini Rao Sherugar: Jhakaas  
Niranjana Narasimhan: My dream come true  
Asha Jagannathan: Cookaholism!  
Aswini Rajagopalan: Godsend  
Anand Swaminathan: Pushing limits....:)  
Sushmitha Anand: A treasure  
Gayathri Gopalswamy: Life changer!  
Merin Jimmy: Strict teacher  
Prajakta Iyer: Paradigm shift  
Dayana Sundar: Pleasure cooking  
Anu Vaishnavi: Starmaker  
Harini Kandala: Methodical  
Meyyammai Valliappan: Exciting  
Latha Reddy: Life

# OPOStars Speak!

Real people. Real experiences.

It took over 3 years to gain the trust of the first set of OPOStars. Now, they will be torch bearers in the years ahead, guiding a whole new generation to cook free. I am glad they permitted me to reproduce their comments and personal experiences here.

Chithra Viswanathan Change is inevitable. Change is constant. But, in my life, after reaching my 70's change was an option. Change helped me grow too! I keep my options open to experiment new avenues, new methods. I personally go by the theory that "end" is more important than "means". Accepting OPOS cooking has simplified my kitchen chores and I eat more vegetables, loving every bit of it. I hope many more, specially senior citizens embrace this method of cooking - an investment for better health! Much less time consuming, much more taste and flavour and last but not the least, minimum vessels to clean. Cooking by OPOS is a breeze. Sweets like halwa which are time consuming, get done quite fast. Not to mention about pickles like thokkus which are done fast, believe me, with no compromise in taste or appearance.

Manjula Natarajan I got married in 1984 and knew nothing about cooking, in fact I could not even make a cup of coffee! But after a year I was forced to take over cooking. My mother, sister and Meenakshi ammal books came in handy. Years passed. Son wanted North Indian subjis and so Mallika Badrinath books came to help me. But day to day cooking was mostly decided and ruled my MIL and my mom! But after OPOS came into my life I started real cooking. I learnt a lot of things, cooking nuances. I learnt the finesse of cooking. I am 56 now, I enjoy cooking as well as eating good and healthy food, a lot of variety too! OPOS is the best. It made my husband start cooking! I find it difficult to cook in the older style nowadays. I have no patience to wait till rasam or sambar boils. Load, finish and get out of the kitchen fast!

Varalekshmy Raghavan OPOS has given me more time for other things and I cook sweat free now. Consistency, methodical and easy are the benefits of OPOS. It got my husband cooking! Hubby had medical test today. All

parameters were so low.. Even cholesterol is low. Doctor was surprised. Hubby had given credit to OPOS ..No oil and no eating out too when I was out of station. So happy and relieved! Now he has challenged that he can cook for any number of people with an appropriate OPOS kit, how's that!??? No need to stand for hours in the hot kitchen, supervising if things are done properly. No need to worry if it will taste right. Assemble things and switch on stove, start timer, move over to dining area and sit under fan and enjoy reading/browsing/TV watching. And precious cooking fuel is saved too. This is the convenience of OPOS. The traditional method seems so laborious now. I feel unlucky that OPOS wasn't there 30 years back, I had struggled a lot to rustle up tasty food where taste is consistent, for many years. Now I make food which tastes good every time I make it.

Lakshmi Anand Be it an experienced cook or total fresher, OPOS helps. By forcing one to measure and cook for specified times, everyone gets consistent results every time with the perfect taste replicated. Time and labor savings are tremendous. Hail to OPOS!

Sharadha Nrsmhn Now anyone can cook without fear. A big time and energy saver, sure shot easy method with guaranteed results .... And with absolutely no compromise on taste! Not messy at all and less dishes to wash. Fun way to cook good food. Very happy to go the OPOS way.

Ramya Murugesh OPOS helps in stress free cooking, as most of the recipes are done in few minutes in a single step. Prior to OPOS, I had to start dinner preparation early if I'm doing any dishes like pav bhaji or North Indian gravies etc. Now I start just few minutes before dinner time. Also, if my kid ask paneer makhni for school lunch box by 5.30AM, it is ready by 6 AM. OPOS helps in a cleaner kitchen, less oil consumption but great taste. Many new recipes like Kumbakonam kadapa, Chettinadu vengaya kosu, kosmalli etc have entered our menu just because of OPOS. Flash cooking has made making poriyal and kootu easy, colourful and flavourful. More than all, OPOS helped me in feeding food to my family when I had fracture in my right wrist.

Vimala Arun OPOS is simply life changing. It's an addiction...once we start to OPOS. For me starting from tea to sambar everything is becoming OPOS nowadays here. Living far away from home country it helped me to get the taste I was longing for . I haven't mastered all but the few dishes I have learnt

are keepers for me. Restaurant visits have been fairly reduced which was twice a week before. My favourite is dum biriyani and kaara chutney. Before OPOS I used to think what to cook and even that makes me tired. Now cooking has become fun.

Shoba Shrinivasan OPOS is healthy...it cuts down the amount of fat used in cooking and it cuts down the time taken. Flash Cooking is revolutionary. This saves tremendous amount of time and effort and fuel all in one go. Sugar hacks are a blessing as it encourages people to at least try the dish once! and when it works out...it gives them the confidence to go ahead with more! Layering is a novel method of controlling the cooking process to get the results you want...OPOS is a way of life! And it has changed mine a lot!

Suresh Ramanathan OPOS has broken all barriers associated with cooking and made cooking effortless and enjoyable.

Mahalakshmi Vijayan OPOS is a kind of thrilling game! If you follow the rules you win! If you don't follow the rules you are out of the game! OPOS has made cooking very interesting.

Shobana Nippani OPOS techniques make life very much easier. Some recipes considered difficult, can be made at home with much ease. It gives so much satisfaction and it has raised my self belief that I am a better cook now.

Gayathri Aswin OPOS is revolutionary...!!! Seriously.. Being a surgical resident I hardly find time. I'm at hospital most of the time. I had to rely on my cook's pathetic cooking. Now I feel liberated. I can have nummy nummy (yummy yummy of my daughter's version) food at the same time not spend hours cooking. For a person who didn't even know basics 3 years back, finishing cooking everyday between 15-30 minutes is an award winning achievement. I now make most everyday items the OPOS way.

Ranjani Gehani I have never felt so liberated in my life before OPOS.I was not very fond of cooking and cooked just for survival. OPOS has got me interested in cooking because of the time that I save which is being used creatively in other fields. The awesome taste of the oposed dishes, the compliments that keep coming - the benefits are endless!

Gayathri Viswanathan I always loved cooking and trying new dishes. OPOS has given me the methods and ability to do this even while managing commitments at work and with family. And now as I see my family adopting

OPOS too.

[Ashwini Bee](#) What's there to complain, when cooking and cleaning time is faster and easier than prepping time??

[Indira Manoj](#) OPOS is Ek Dum easy... Dum tea to Dum Aloo to Dum Biriyani... Saves me time, effort and dishes have so much variety yet so simple to make with the super hacks.

[Janaki Sundararaman](#) OPOS has taken the stress out of my mind about cooking. It's a scientific and healthy technique of cooking recipes in a short time with less or no oil, enhancing the natural taste of vegetables. It is the sure and perfect answer to fast and easy cooking in today's fast world.

[Suba Lakshmi](#) Absolutely positive experience for me so far, lot to learn though. Saves time, energy, less mess and I feel totally bored to do non OPOS.

[Geetha Rangarajan](#) Saves enormous time and fuel. OPOS preparation time is actually more than doing cooking. No doubt one day we all will forget traditional cooking. One thing to be frank is we plan for one item, due to more time and easy methods we end up with making more number of dishes at the same time.

[Priya Mohankumar](#) No complaints. Simply awesome. Cleaner kitchen, lesser vessels to be washed,  
Kids are happy lunch getting ready in a jiffy. ....OPOS saves time and energy.  
No doubt about that.  
I should thank my friend who introduced me to this . 99%of my cooking is OPOS. No words to explain. Should be experienced.

[Amba Srikanth](#) Yes OPOS is a hit at my place. I cook all the vegetables by flash cooking it, for poriyals and also for sambar. It saves lot of time and even fuel. Vegetables don't lose their original colour. Now there is no looking back or going back to the traditional type of cooking. Have kept ready few curry base and tadkas to make life more easier. I have been successful in making my niece venture into OPOS and she has also started cooking in this way. Additionally I have stopped using kadais.

[Ramya Sundaresan Kapadia](#) Absolutely love love OPOS! Yes, it's a change of mindset especially when for some weird reason the pressure cooker frightens you (though you've watched your mom use it for years!). But once

you start OPOS-OMG, there's no looking back. The amount of freed up time, less cleaning....Just perfect. I've introduced several doctor friends of mine who lead CRAZY busy lives to OPOS and now we all have actual food to eat everyday. We take turns at picking recipes out everyday so we can have an idea of what to cook the next day:)

Meera Viswanathan Prior to OPOS, I had to start thinking at 10AM on what to cook and then get my kadais and other stuff ready, but now I enter the kitchen very late and get out very fast thanks to OPOS. No tension, no ordering food from outside, even when I suggest hubby says "you need just 10-15min to make something, we can wait"!

Prema Sridharan OPOS has definitely changed the concept of cooking from long difficult hours in the kitchen to the shortest time possible, from difficult cooking techniques to the simplest of cooking methods. It is more a pleasure to visit the kitchen now than a drudgery every day. Especially with my arthritis and difficulty having to stand for long hours cooking I find it easy to just set up the cooker and do off with cooking within 5-15 minutes, which is a great boon and blessing! Long live OPOS! Hope it touches many people's lives as it has done mine!!!!

Swetha Ram Lately OPOS has become an indispensable part of my life. It not just about the reduced cooking time, it has simplified my life in every other way. Who doesn't want a meal cooked in the wink of an eye, at the same time is loaded with taste and nutrition. OPOS is definitely not just some method of cooking but a science. The various methods - absorption, attalysis, layering, no water technique, flash cooking has created a revolution and has added a new dimension to the every day labourious cooking techniques!! All this revolution doesn't stop with our everyday cooking, the sugar syrup hack is indeed a ingenious one!! Making a sweet can't get any more easier! I remember the initial days when we came to US, I have referred many cooking blogs and had made so many dishes only to believe that sautéeing and simmering for long periods gives a flavorful dish. I was proven wrong the first time I tried OPOS and now there is no more looking back!! Now every time I come across a recipe that's not OPOS, my mind tries to imagine what techniques I could implement and convert the same into an OPOS dish!!!!That's how addictive it is! Try for yourself, see the difference and change for good.

[Payal Priyadarshini Kshatriya](#) OPOS is a healthy way to cook and maintain the nutritional value of food without wasting time in the kitchen the whole day. It has been a major part of my nuclear family and being a working woman, it is my saviour as I don't like compromising on the food that my family eats. OPOS IS THE RIGHT CHOICE. I am a passionate cook who loves to feed people with delicacies. Every single time my family is surprised about the taste, time and the outcome of variety.

[Sinduja Gowrishankar](#) OPOS is an amazing way to liberate you from standing near the cooking range and make you spend time on what you want to do!!It's changed the way I look at cooking. Saves on many resources and importantly - Money!!No more ordering out food for sudden visitors, lazy times, sick days, sweets. Slowly and steadily the variety is increasing in my kitchen. Lovely and lively choice of cooking

[Padmavathi Menakshisundaram](#) OPOS is a scientific guide which will teach you the basic principles of cooking. It liberates your mind by starting from scratch and giving you a comprehensive guide to understanding various dishes. Once you learn the basics you will start to explore different cuisines. Cooking will most certainly become a stress free exercise, sometimes even therapeutic! Your confidence will surge in the kitchen and appreciation is guaranteed.

But in order to achieve the understanding you'll have to unlearn and relearn. OPOS is a great primer and most techniques can be used even otherwise to become an excellent chef. Frankly for all the OPOS dishes I've tried so far, I haven't done them in the traditional way afterwards...

[Anitha Jayaraman](#) OPOS..is my best friend...always there to keep me happy...

[Soundarya Anantha Raman](#) OPOS has changed my life totally. OPOS equals simplicity for me. A free space where you can discover endless possibilities and a technique that gives you the comfort of enjoying different kinds of food without much sweat. The standardised dishes gives even a kitchen averse person the leverage to get out and explore cooking

[Saranya Jayaprakash](#) For me OPOS is the concept of time saving, rich and healthy food ready for consumption in an instant.

[Pavithra Elangovan](#) Absolutely am in love with OPOS concept, first of all I am so hooked with Flash cooking, sugar hack techniques. Before OPOS, I

never ever cooked my vegetables in a pressure cooker..reason I don't like the texture and don't love if my vegetables are dull. For me vegetables should have a texture with vibrant colors (I am food photographer and food stylist) .. Now I don't have any issues cooking vegetables in pressure cooker. Color, texture is maintained and more importantly it saves lots of time, I mean it. Next OPOS curry bases, thokkus, MPOS are my other most favourite..its so easy, tasty with full of flavors and colors. I am still learning... looking forward to experiment more and also teach others as well.

[Uma Rk](#) I wish to record that I am a flash cooking addict - my vaanali (wok) is my witness. I am enamored by the brightened colors of the flash-cooked vegetables and their enhanced flavors. Since my initiation to the world of flash cooking, all my Indian curries and kootus are made with flash cooked vegetables. It may not be always OPOS in my kitchen but is always flash flash flash - flash cooked, flash photographed and flash gone!!

[Saipurnima Natarajan](#)I was earlier having problems in these-Striking the correct balance in the flavours of a biriyani/pulao, the time-consuming halwa, making soft phulkas, restaurant style gravies. But I have definitely overcome these with the help of OPOS.I can confidently stir up a halwa or make a flavorful dum biriyani,make soft rotis with resto stye gravies! More than the time saving factor, it helps boost a confidence in you that you will not go wrong with the recipe!

[Mythili Slp](#) It has renewed my interest in cooking, and dishes which I stayed away from seems so easy now with OPOS!

[Sharmila Ramesh](#) More than the actual physical factors, for me OPOS clears the cobweb thought of tedious cooking. Now all I have to do is open the recipe and finish tasty cooking in a jiffy. I feel more energetic and enthusiastic when am cooking in OPOS style. Reward with great taste is just a by product

[Hamidha Shabeer](#) Cooking was always a passion but OPOS was a very new concept. First started out OPOS with soups and kheers, they were fabulous, especially soups were better than that from any flashy restaurants. Honestly, I had my doubts on raw masala smell lingering in gravy bases when OPOSED but I realized that it doesn't if we follow the recipe and the procedure meticulously.

[Krishnaiyer Ramachandran](#) The King is dead! Long live the King!! OPOS is the new tradition!!! OPOS is simply great; it taught me cooking.

[Navin Mohan](#) OPOS has opened up a totally new dimension in my cooking. I have never thought I would do kurmas, makhnis etc., on a regular basis. OPOS has facilitated me to do all these dishes without breaking sweat. The only thing I miss in this method is adjusting the taste on the fly according to needs. I can't add extra spice/salt to the recipe while it is being cooked, which I could do in an open pot mode. But that is a very small price to pay for getting so many awesome results.

[Ranjani Subramanian](#) OPOS has demystified cooking to simple recipes that are healthy, divinely delicious and give consistent results with minimum effort. To me, OPOS is a perfect blend of the art and science of cooking which is very relevant to this day and age...anyone can look like a pro with OPOS!

[Jamuna Parthasarathy](#) I have started using OPOS almost for all my day-to-day cooking. Very easy and no baby sitting any of the dishes.

[Sriprasanna Madan](#) I started oposing because I was very curious and intrigued that traditional cooking can be done in such simple ways. Not too long before I got hooked. My favourites are the curry bases.

[Vinee Pradeepan Nair](#) I live alone and use to have a cook to cook for the weekends. After OPOS we saw that the duration to cook wasn't more than 15 to 20 minutes.

[Kalpana Vasudevan Iyer](#) A whole new world opened up with OPOS! Less cooking time, less dishes to wash, no hassles about what to do with what. Just put it all in and enjoy the result. One gets to try so much more variety, especially with sweets and desserts. I promote this to any and every person I come across!!

[Priya Anil Thomas](#) Saying anything will just be tooooooooo little. I am working woman and love cooking. But with the tight schedule don't get enough time to try different food. OPOS has made life simpler. Can cook variety food so quickly without having to spend time in the kitchen.

[Soundarya Anantha Raman](#) OPOS had made my life with active baby much easier... Cooking is not a stress now as you know.. You can OPOS it all the way... No compromise on the taste and no need to spend sweaty hours in the

kitchen..OPOS has changed my life for sure.

Kothai Venkatesh The biggest advantage according to me: When using butter, ghee and milk, the vessels are non greasy! The quantity remains the same and do not reduce as in open pot cooking.

Shobha Rao OPOS is now a way of life....!!! Benefit....much less time in kitchen....and awesome taste!!

Anandhan Radhakrishnan It's liberating, one theme just explodes our imagination for multiple recipes with absolutely consistent result. And it's super addictive as well.

Suma Balachandran OPOS has made me lazy....for having lunch at 1 pm, I'll plan what to be OPOSED at 12.30.....

Ramaa KR Simple, easy to follow and time saver!

7 to 7:45 am at home is a war zone. Getting two little girls to get ready for school, yelling at them to get out of the shower, searching for something which is right under their nose, ensuring they drink the milk...yesterdays homework book is in the bag and the socks is the right one!!!! What makes all this breezy is OPOS. 3 cookers on a 4 burner stove....with one spare burner for boiling milk....cook their breakfast, lunch and evening after-school eatables all in less than an hour! OPOS makes the cooking part look more easy than packing the boxes.

Nirupama Pulasa OPOS helped me to cook certain foods which I had never even thought of making before.

Farida Lehry Science behind each dish, gives me confidence to put a single recipe to multiple uses/variations.

Bunny VJ OPOS changed many things for me earlier when fell sick I had to depend on the mercy of hotel food however with OPOS now I no longer depend on hotel meals instead I go OPOS. Many times pickle pulao has helped me save a lot.

Shammy Mohandas I am an OPOSer... It made my life easy and my food yummy and quick.... food comes to the table quickly, and my hubby says you do something something and food is ready.. how do you do it so fast? The humble pressure cooker is the hero in my kitchen ...

Vee CeeOne I used to hate cooking. I used to be a struggling cook. With

OPOS, I have learnt to cook about 5 dishes fairly Ok. About 10 more dishes, I have some degree of confidence. I've cooked more in the last 2 years than in the past 65 years combined. That is due to OPOS. Cooking has become something of a stress buster -- I never thought that I will ever reach this stage. I have to thank OPOS for this.

Suraj Prabhakaran Simplicity and consistency. There are a thousand recipes for normal cooking and I put my heart and soul into it and try. But never ever have I been able to get the perfect taste. I get that with OPOS.

Shanmugapriya Balajee OPOS is a huge time saver... More like an extra hand that helps me with my morning rush. I did not know how to make sambar for years and learnt it only as OPOS sambar and have been making it just the OPOS way till date. I don't mind being poked fun at for not knowing the traditional methods of cooking as long as I get my desired results in half the time and just a single vessel to clean .

Geetha Sankaran I have been making pickles and tomato gravies all these days and would end up making the stove sticky oily and full of food spills on the wall near the stove! After I got to know about OPOS, It's all done in a jiffy! No tell tale sights about what I have done around the stove! Aroma fills the house!

Mahalakshmi Shankar OPOS has actually changed my way of cooking. Saves a lot of time.. Every day at least one new recipe I try through OPOS. Need to wash only the cooker and hence saves a lot of cleaning work.

Sarayu Gazder OPOS has given me the confidence to cook various dishes n manage without a cook for a month, now. Apart from time saving, the other fringe benefits are: zero-oil cooking, intense flavor, kids eating without grumbling, appreciation from the maid at my efficiency and extended life of cylinder! I haven't used a kadai or other vessels in a month. Now at this rate, I can donate all vessels, soon, except the cookers and blender!

Nithishkannan Seenivasagam How I did things earlier: I did not cook. How I do things now: OPOS.

Hema Shankar In cooking there are two eras now- BOPOS and AOPOS!

Megha Ravi Dontamsetty OPOS is for my Amma... She has spent all her life till now in kitchen, kitchen and kitchen . Her world is her kitchen . She is the best and I will never find a replacement for her tasty, yummy, love filled

dishes. Now I want her to cook her own recipes in an easy and quick manner and that is through OPOS. I want her to spend less time in kitchen, and want her to come out of her world of kitchen to our world of enjoyment. I want her to cook quick (because she will never stay without cooking ...) and catch up with all her favourite movies, shows, celebrity interviews, musical shows, kirtans, bhajans, reading stories, novels and lots more which she has missed for our sake.

Vinu Pradeep I would say OPOS is simply great for its bullet proof recipes! It gives accurate result with minimum effort! Consumes less time and less vessels to wash! My favourites are halwa and curry bases. OPOSing has become a part of my life.

Lalitha Gautam OPOS is a must needed method in this ongoing fast world.

Vidya Kalai It's difficult to put it in words, but yes the things I used to dread before; after OPOS I make them in a jiffy. Especially the thokku varieties. The mess and the hard work in making them in the traditional way kept me away. But now OPOS has made things easy. Out of four meals I prepare, two are definitely OPOS.

Radhika Thirumoorthi OPOS plays an important role in my life. I just surprised myself making pumpkin halwa. Saves time, less usage of vessel n less oil.

Rajmi Arun I was one of the first few to convert to OPOS. Nowadays all my cooking is mainly using OPOS. It is infact very difficult for many to accept the fact that you can cook a Pongal or Aviyal or Navaratna Kuruma in a cooker. But its not worth teaching or preaching to them.

I use my pressure cookers ranging from 2 ltr to 10 ltr more now a days than any other vessels. Easy cooking, easy serving, easy cleaning. Best of all, oil consumption reduced. Gas consumption reduced. The time in the kitchen is also reduced. Got more time to pursue my other hobbies. Cooking is also my hobby, though it is a daily routine and part and parcel of life.

Charanya Kannan I hated cooking. I moved to Korea for work and the absence of vegetarian options forced me to cook but I never enjoyed standing and waiting for stuff to cook. Never had the patience. I was introduced to OPOS only a year ago, when I moved to the US with my one year old to pursue higher education, and this not only saved me enormous time but also

made me enjoy cooking- it feels great to get consistent tasting food with minimal stand around time. Parents are here now to help and I haven't been cooking for a while, but I'm surprised by how much I'm looking forward to cook once they leave!

Edited to add: Everywhere I said "I", replace with "we". Husband is a big fan too. We have people over almost every weekend because it is so easy to whisk up a meal for 4-5 people.

Bhavani Ganesan I have always been termed a bad cook often missing out steps and timings while I was cooking in traditional method!!! Now after OPOS I am termed as cook with a "Midas touch". What ever I cook turns best and now needless to say I now enjoy cooking effortlessly! Thanks OPOS!

Sunita Narayanan A working woman in US' s tale - struggles on a weeknight with dealing with dinner, homework, dishwashing and chauffeuring to kid's activities is gradually vanishing . Fresh flash curries and the weekend gravy making and to top it all adhering to the craving for the absolutely amazing Mysore Pak recipe...all on a weeknight..is an once unachievable dream coming true day after day....

Aara Shaikh Hiii I would like to share my experiences too with OPOS I tried few of the OPOS recipes n they turned out great. Being a food blogger it's not easy to adapt a new technique but it works. I've used 3lts pressure cooker instead of two n it never failed me. You might not believe I got my phone full of recipe cards n screen shots. My husband is surprised how can a woman not have single song in her mobile but so many pictures. I'm got married 3 months back so OPOSing is little difficult especially when MIL controls the kitchen decisions otherwise I can close my eyes and recommend OPOS to any one.

Hema Viswanathan I've been cooking the traditional non-OPOS way for a long time, and I enjoy it and don't mind the extra time consumption (for the most part). For me, the real benefit of the OPOS method has been the reproducibility of each recipe. That is, as long as I follow the instructions, the recipe will turn out exactly the same every single time. This is a huge bonus, especially for those fussy recipes I tend not to try more than a few times because they never turn out quite the same as that first successful time. (Yes, that's a reference to Mysorepak, where the OPOS sugar hack has taken all the guesswork out of the process).

[Merlin Sara Mathews](#) One of my favourite memories with OPOS has been making a sadya a day after reaching Aus from Europe. Onam had just passed while we travelled but I wanted my toddler to have the Sadya experience. We had some very dear North Indian friends holidaying in the Gold Coast then. We spent part of the weekend with them in the Gold Coast and then left two hours before they did. Bought grocery, prepped and cooked a sadya for 6 adults and 2 toddlers by the time they reached. Record time! Would I even dare to have attempted a sadya on a regular day following the traditional method? Add jet lag and a teething toddler to the equation! No way on earth! Probably only in OPOS heaven I cannot explain the sense of achievement I felt that day and have carried forward since! My day has to start with some OPOS tea. Nothing less

[Soumya Rohit](#) Today...I prepared methi malai matar...truly it's one of the most heavenly dishes I have ever prepared...being a s/w professional in Bangalore...we spend a lot of time in the traffic and so I wake up at 4.30 when I have to prepare chapathis. Also I will usually be in a hurry to not to miss my office bus..today I woke up at 5am and I had lot of time to relax and catch the office bus. OPOS is a blessing in disguise...easy to cook, time saver and tastes perfect

[Shobana Nippani](#) I really like the concept of OPOS. I have a few favourite OPOSrecipes which I repeat a lot. I am not good at making sweets, I gained confidence by trying OPOS sweets. I always follow the recipe as given, the end result is always consistent for me.

[Shyam Krishnan](#) Charity begins at home .as someone who has grown up seeing their mom cook and hearing the phrases " ellam avaloda kai pakvaam " (There is magic in her hand) I never had the courage to venture into the kitchen . when fear takes over, logic becomes a pillion rider. Then post graduation happened and job got me to Bangalore. One year I survived by eating, one random day encountered this group. it completely changed my perception as there were measured ingredients (which appealed to the engineer in me) and not kai pakvaam (magic of the hand) . I was so enthralled, purchased the kit and the first dish I made was the North Indian gravy base to which I added paneer. Ever since then I have made many dishes, fed my friends and my parents too . All were very shocked I could produce such things . Thanks is an under statement, but my gratitude for this group is limitless .

Anusha Krishnan The initial days of OPOS were like a kid toying with his new game/gadget. We were thrilled to experiment and then surprise ourselves with the OPOS magic. Soon, OPOS became a habit. We started to OPOS new themes. We took pride in the cooker and the new technique that we were just fortunate to witness in our lives. In what seems like a blink of the eye, OPOS became the second nature to most of us. At this stage, we were completely convinced that OPOS is the star.

Days went by and the technique started to take better shape with the day but it never ceased to amaze us. "Familiarity breeds contempt" doesn't apply to the technique/boon called OPOS. Who would have thought that they'll be flashing their cameras at cooked vegetables if not for the Flash technique. If at all something made our lives simpler, it'd be OPOS more than anything.

Sumaya I love Science and Opos swept me right away! . Nobody ever taught me what happens when raw edible stuffs gets cooked. Cooking was just a process and to feed people. But Opos made me realize how each and every veggie has its own beauty! Always thought that spices were bringing the taste of food, But Opos proved me wrong and we eat just Flash cooked veggies with no Spice. I eat healthy and I feed my family with a healthy food. We know the proverb Health is Wealth, and for me Health is Opos!.

Dipali Gupta OPOS is a boon.. I tried flash cooking stuff and it works like a charm! To make food the fastest way, OPOS is the only way. The best part is, it's amazingly tasty and we can tweak the recipe and add other stuff as well!

Krithika Devraj I've always loved cooking and experimenting with dishes. Loved cooking for huge groups. The fascination still continues. And OPOS has definitely helped me in this. Cooking more now. My Dal Makhni is a hot favourite with everybody. Resto style taste in OPOS. And to think I finish in half the time it normally takes to cook ajd with added taste and nutrients intact. And s, my cylinder consumption has come down considerably. Get a refill once every 2.5 mnths now. Could go on and on and on

Anjana Dhanavanthan It's a science. Hence needs to be followed to the T before going freefall. I still have amazing experiences with OPOS at home and each day is a new discovery. I remember messing up real bad once and it was my negligence. I love the concept and am talking about it to everyone!

Sushma Srinivasan I love cooking but it started to take up my precious time

away from my 2 little ones under 2 . OPOS was a boon to me which helped me with cooking restaurant like dishes at home with little effect on health and wealth. Being a vegetarian and having a toddler with allergies eating out was hard but that's something I don't miss these days as I can make all at home.

Roopa Raghav At first, I was not really convinced but thought let me give it a try. I always believe in constant learning. I thought for myself, Let me try once and it was definitely convincing. I had stopped taking lunch to office due to time crunch and very unpredictable work timing. After OPOS, no matter what my box is done in half an hour. I have gone back to my own self of stocking only home made sweets and savouries. Till date, I have never bought store sweets or savouries for any festival and with OPOS this is gonna be adding to the variety I store at home.

I have had multiple failures, burnt cookers, but wouldn't give up. OPOS has definitely made me happy and cheerful and I can see that spreading to my family. Long way to go..but no looking back.

Harini Sridhar To be crisp and short..healthy, smart, easy, time saving yet tasty cooking.. Very helpful for working women, and people who don't want to spend hours in kitchen like me .

Ramaa KR With two school going kids and a full time job and no support, it is only coz of OPOS that there was home cooked food many evenings. For me OPOS is that complete faith that nothing can go wrong when followed to T. Cooking is a science for all of those who missed the art in it.

Aishwarya Kalyanram OPOS has made life easier so much so that my mother and MIL both follow this now...

Nalini Elumalai OPOS has made cooking exciting, especially for cooking haters like me.

Nirupama Pulasa Cooking is not a chore anymore. OPOS has widened my horizon, has helped me try various dishes which I wouldn't have dared to try otherwise, easy peasy and such a time saver.

Nabanita Dutta My life has become easier now with OPOS... It saves so much time n absolutely hassle free...

Aiswarya Saikumar Cooking is easy these days. Staying abroad, expecting second kid and managing the first all alone with all the chores on me, I

should say life is simplified. My cooking time has come down greatly. Looking forward to trying more recipes later on.

Revati Sherley Nair OPOS has helped understand the taste buds, how to replace and substitute incase you do not have an ingredient with you. Its simple, saves time and draws you more to the kitchen.

Meena Thennaapan It took me a while to understand the concept. Now there is no turning back. The food is packed with flavours, colour and crunch. An amazing technique which is quite easy to follow. The only thing is - you need to switch off your brains and FOLLOW whatever is said until you learn the technique. The treats churned out by new comers are amazing. Now, I should say that cooking any other way is quite impossible.

Athithya Devi To me OPOS sweet recipes are the best which I could never imagine doing it otherwise with my toddler at home.

Chithra Ramachandran Any habit that you get addicted to once you might want to look back and get over it. But am happy with my OPOS addiction and don't want to look back. Excited with new recipes, new simple techniques and experimenting which result n sure shot success! Training kids the OPOS way so they look at cooking from a different perspective

Meenakshi Sivagnanam Kitchen is no more a nightmare... In my house, all day flash cooked vegetables only.. But I still haven't shared my secret with my in-laws... its always nice to see their expressions on how fresh the cooked vegetables look... OPOS is time-saver if you are packing lunch for your family... "Varieties within minutes " is the tagline for OPOS.

Rohini Sivamani O my goodness, after getting introduced to OPOS, I can swear my cooking improved a lot, not time consuming and just requires less efforts. Not much vessels to wash. Even cooking a full spread takes less time compared to the traditional way and did I say, I stopped looking for other food blogs for any recipe, because we learn the theme here and understand the basics and then it is up to us to play with ingredients. Wish I had known this long back when I was literally craving and crying for food. I felt so bad for diluting flavour and taste for years, after tasting my OPOS No water mushroom biriyani.

Rupika Jayaraman I am so glad to have known OPOS! I started cooking with OPOS..so I am really not aware of the cumbersome process followed for

most dishes(seen my mom follow though)! OPOS has definitely taken off the 'kitchen management' tension off my head! Thereby spending less time and energy in kitchen... Additionally, diversified OPOS recipes have helped me lose weight, eat healthy with less oil, more vegetables, thumbs up from husband and in laws, save money by making restaurant like dishes at home etc and yeah, Flashing with OPOS - additional brownie points guaranteed!!

Sanam Rahiman I started cooking only after I got married...the main way I started my cooking was by looking at recipes/blogs online..and due to my patience level, my search always involved a keyword fast/easy/few steps, but still dint satisfy me enough..And that's when my friend introduced me to OPOS and It was such a big blessing and I have never enjoyed cooking better. OPOS cards are always handy with me and I get so excited to make new and different menus..So no longer bulk cooking, same boring menu.

Nirmala Ramesh I love to cook but I would also like to spend minimum time in the kitchen. Though people like dishes I feel that I lack that traditional kaimanam. My friend introduced me to OPOS and I was absolutely bowled over. I never doubted OPOS and directly plunged in. It sounded so interesting and scientific. And I love the systematic approach of themes. My God! This IS cooking! So natural and healthy. I am an ardent fan of OPOS and a 100% convert. I was bedridden for 10 days and my daughter who doesn't know any cooking, managed very well with OPOS cooking. OPOS is a real boon. There is more flavour and taste than traditional cooking. Minimal amount of oil, water and the vessels is a real attraction. Today I shocked two youngsters talking about OPOS. I have promised to teach them the method. Life has totally changed after adopting OPOS.

Ash Ananth OPOS empowers - no more fear or ambiguity or diffidence. OPOS is a "savings bank" - saves time, effort, fuel and uses minimal water and spices! OPOS follows themes and can be customised for any cuisine in the world.

Kamakshi Chakrapani I just got started with OPOS about a week ago, and frankly, I wish I had known sooner! Let's just say I'm not the most ardent cook (I do love baking though!), but I've been forced to become an inventive cook thanks to an uber fussy toddler! I was spending way more time than I wanted to in the kitchen, trying to make up things my kid would eat. Sigh. With a full time job, no fun at all! OPOS has drastically reduced the time I

spend in the kitchen, I can make 3 dishes in the time it used to take me to make 1. And hah, wouldn't you know it? My fussy toddler enjoys flash cooked vegetables too. All in all, win win for me!

Sangeetha Bhaskaran OPOS is such an incredible concept because it really simplifies cooking and takes away the daunting element. It cuts down number of dishes required to wash, time. Of overall cook process, and most of all brings out maximum flavor with minimum oil.

Mathangi Venkatasubramani I hated standing, stirring, and waiting for the stuff to get cooked. Whenever I was standing, I would only dream what all the work I could finish off in this period or read or listen to music happily. Initially I was doubtful about how can we make such "luxurious" dishes in no time. Then I thought let me give it a try. First thing I made was pulao and gajar halwa! Blown away by the time it took me to do them. When I told mom that I made halwa, she was shocked! Though I have made mistakes, burnt my cooker badly, I am still learning and go through cards everyday for dinner and lunch. From cursing the time a simplest dish was taking to get cooked to making dishes like methi malai matar, paneer sabjis – what a transformation. It is an easy - breezy method! Once you get hold of the science and technique well, it is a joy ride.

Swethashree Paramesh My story is simple. I hated cooking before marriage and even after because it was toooo laborious and I actually started cooking after my baby was born...and meanwhile I had a lot of pitfalls because of my struggles with cooking. I was introduced to OPOS and now I actually started enjoying cooking and even taught my sibling who is abroad and share cards with him. I have actually started enjoying cooking and love to cook for my son because I can now understand cooking and what happens when, why. how etc.

Jayanthi Sankaran " Cooking over in a flash". I gained confidence by re re trying and seeing my daughters trying out different items in OPOS. Now daily one item I do in OPOS and give to my neighbours. They ask me how did you do it so fast. Now less vessels to wash, more time for other activities. Realized the power of pressure cooker on its true sense now only.

Pratiksha Manjrekar: I don't even go the traditional way when I have successfully tried a recipe.

[Prabha Sridharan](#): After OPOS, when I cook the usual way, I find it too time consuming. It needs lot of supervision to keep track of when the "vegetables are done" or "tamarind has boiled" etc. Cleaning is more. Lots of vessels to wash. We have to use chimney otherwise we have lot of smell from the spices. OPOS makes multi tasking easy. Once I have loaded my cookers, I can go for a tea break, finish cleaning, do some office work, cut vegetables for next meal, make breakfast etc.

[Priya Shankar Raman](#) Frankly speaking with OPOS cooking is no more challenging. .. after moving to Italy I am exploring more into cooking and making dishes which I've never even thought of before.. I owe a lot to OPOS.

[Farida Lehry](#) Was always cooking one pot but with hits and misses. Now with sure OPOS techniques, confidence to cook hits every time.

[Divya Kswamy](#) I recently made tomato soup the OPOS way. It took hardly 3 minutes to layer the ingredients in the cooker . I was able to serve the soup in next 15 minutes. The creamy texture and the taste that usually asks for sautéeing, blanching, blending, filtering, making white sauce (takes at least 30 minutes) was achieved with OPOS no water technique. From that day, I decided no more procedures for soup. Soup would be OPOS only..

[Mathangi Manikandan](#) Don't want to cook traditional anymore- though I enjoy cooking, I hate spending hours in the kitchen in this heat and then martyring myself on the stove- not my cup of tea at all. Nowadays, even when am back late from work/workout am able to whip up a wholesome meal in half an hour or so without emerging worse for wear. Also, OPOS has opened up new cuisines for me whose dishes used to sound complex and time consuming earlier.

[Padma Venkat](#) After started following OPOS method of cooking.... I spend less time in kitchen and more time with my grand daughters.

[Sreevidya Kandavelu](#) Definitely after OPOS, thinking of traditional cooking is big headache!!! Love cooking OPOS way! Am preaching it to my school friends in our Whatsaapp group! Hope it will ease out many lives!!!

[Vasudha Raghunathan](#) when I deliberately tried a dish in non OPOS way I felt like I self punished me. The dish that can be done in a serial break time in OPOS way went on and on like the mega serial itself. There are some dishes I shall not even think of even trying it in the non OPOS way anymore.

[Kalpana Vasudevan Iyer](#) It's easy, it's quick, seemingly effortless, less dishes! I am a Diehard OPOS fan and want to try more!

[Krishna Prabha](#) After OPOS....traditional way of stirring and sweating is gone...but suitable for this era which is rapid and need time for other aspects of life too..as long as tastes are great....btw my kadais are taken now only for re-heating and deep fries...cooking is made easy on all morning where I need to prepare both breakfast and lunch...

[Meenakshy Sambasivan](#) Traditional way, what is that?

[Nirmala Balasubramanian](#) My husband recently commented that after 15yrs of our marriage now only I have learned to master perfect cooking(after tasting OPOS Dum biriyani).. Before OPOS...sometime I overcooked vegetables...burnt spices..or don't know where I have gone wrong. Now oposing all my dishes. Have got some intense flavour and taste (even our neighbors have noticed it)!!

[Syamala Monie](#) I have a boy who comes to help my husband with his chores. It is a part time job. He has taken up cooking for a Keralite family. He saw me making OPOS cabbage Koottu. Next day he impressed the family with the new dish! Training these part time cooks in OPOS will give them more time to take up new assignments and generate income.

[Vijaya Venkatesh](#): OPOS consumes less time and there are only a few dishes to clean. Hubby has started cooking!!

[Sreeja Nambath](#): For all dishes that I have tried the OPOS way, am never going back to the traditional way. I was not too good with traditional cooking as I was just a beginner and the inconsistency of my output used to drive me crazy. OPOS stresses on measurement and themes. It works well for me and I get to try a variety of dishes too! OPOS is here to stay!

[Lakshmi Naren](#): For me, OPOS definitely has taken over my kitchen about 50%. Whatever new dishes I learn here I can never try in any other way now. Also, traditional dishes like thokku/jam or chakka vizhuthu for that matter, it feels much easier and quicker OPOS way. Some dishes like upma or santula also I am definitely not gonna go back to traditional way since the taste is so much better OPOS way. I have to say one thing though - after OPOS, no tension regarding cooking(only argument is which dish to choose, less time in kitchen and more tasty food. Looking forward to more OPOS cooking!

Lavanya Senthil Kumar Most of the elaborate meals we have are only OPOS these days and there is no looking back.....it saves time, fuel, vessels and energy....tastes phenomenal, fresh and flavourful.... No ordering food from restos, gives a lot of "me time" and is not ambiguous.... Works for me every time...no way I'm going back to traditional method except for vadas, murukkus etc which cannot be Oposed!!

Chandrika Subramaniam Though cooking in an elaborate way suits for some dishes, OPOS helps making dishes in a jiffy without compromising the taste for most of the dishes ... I prefer OPOS for some dishes especially to cater family/friends get-together where we need to spend less time in cooking and more time in chatting .

Vaidehi Kalyanaraman: Shopping for grocery in today's world is stressful, honestly. Organic, non GMO, low sodium, non irradiated, etc.!! I try to shop as consciously as possible. It's time consuming and expensive in a sense. OPOS enables me to use such food in the best possible way with the main motive of retaining nutrition....more bang for my buck so to say!!

Suneetha Poornima: I fumbled to cook in the traditional way at my cousin's place, it made me realize how much I got addicted to OPOS

Seetha Krishnaswami: I have started implementing OPOS in my day to day routine cooking every morning. Benefits: Fantastic Time Management, Tension free (No fear of dishes getting burnt) clean kitchen. Feeling proud that I have become much more efficient, Thanks to OPOS .

Neelam Vasudevan: "OPOS - helping you to create your own recipes. Such an easy formula that guarantees a successful, flavor-packed mouthwatering meals each time - and still leaves room for more creativity". The cooking is organic, simple and the pressure cooker churns out delicious food that's so easy and quick to prepare. Saving time too!

Shanthini Ilavarasan : With OPOS.....I am frowning less and my family is smiling more!

# OPOS: Step by Step

We have seen students badly stumbling when they do not follow the step by step approach.

Step 1: Cook to learn.

Step 2: Cook to eat.

Step 3: Cook to feed.

Step 4: Cook to impress.

## 1. Cooking to learn:

Do not change the recipe to suit your personal preferences. Follow it to the dot. Be prepared to throw away food. It is a small price to pay. Take notes. Record everything. Your mistake is someone else's lesson. Be brutally frank. Record successes/ failures as you see them. If you face a problem, please do not attempt to fix it yourself. Read up others experiences or ask for help in the online forum.

## 2. Cooking to eat:

Try personalising the recipe to your taste after you have cooked it once. The ingredients we use cannot be standardised. You might use fresher beans/ older rice etc., which would need a bit of tweaking (a bit less water, more soaking). Based on your experience with cooking the recipe, you can now alter it. Add your favourite ingredients and spice mixes. Add your own touches. Please note everything you do. Vary one thing at a time.

## 3. Cooking to feed:

After having tried the recipe twice, you can now add or skip ingredients according to your family preferences. Try scaling up or down, using a bigger/ smaller cooker. At first, use the same heat settings as you use for your small cooker. Go by whistles and not by time. Almost all OPOS recipes scale up seamlessly. We have cooked them on everything from a 1.5l mini cooker to a 250liter (Two hundred and fifty) monster, which takes 2 people to lift! After you are comfortable with scaling up, try increasing heat.

## 4. Cooking to impress:

Never try a recipe in front of guests that you have not tried multiple times earlier. Wowing people is easy with OPOS - just ensure you gain enough confidence before doing so. Many OPOS recipes come with a built in penalty

for non-compliance. Violate them at your own risk!

# OPOS Problems and Fixes:

## 1. Tamarind does not lose its raw taste:

Use OPOS precooked tamarind puree. This lasts for ages in the fridge or at least a week unrefrigerated. It is a lot more convenient than dissolving tamarind everytime.

## 2. Dal does not cook:

Use presoaked dal or cooked dal. You can also roast and grind dal and use the powder. A pinch of baking powder added while boiling dal also helps. Also, try cooked, dehydrated dal.

## 3. Rice does not cook:

Use presoaked rice. Let your rice soak for at least 30 minutes. While cooking, over half the time is spent in water trying to enter the grain. Only after water enters the grain can cooking begin. By presoaking you let the water reach the core and so cooking can happen much faster. Presoaking also cuts down cooking time and fuel used.

## 4. Drumstick does not cook:

Thick chunks of vegetables cannot be flashed. Because the very short cooking time is not enough for heat can reach their core. Splitting drumstick in half and not using thick chunks of vegetables help them cook faster.

## 5. Food foams out of the cooker:

Pasta, rice, dal and milk are notorious for foaming. Never fill your cooker more than half for these foods. Adding a dash of oil/ ghee minimises foaming. Use as little water as possible. Lesser the water used, lesser the foaming. If all fails, use a bigger cooker.

## 6. Burning:

Burning has one cause and one cause only – insufficient water. When you smell burning, switch off, release pressure and check. If you want to continue, add water and continue. If pressure does not build up in the first 3 minutes, burning is likely. Stop, check, add more water and proceed.

## 7. I don't like the smell of rice when cooked in a pressure cooker:

A pressure cooker concentrates flavours. So the inherent flavour of rice gets concentrated. This is welcome when the rice itself is mildly flavoured. But

some varieties of rice do not have a naturally pleasant flavour. You can still cook them in the pressure cooker, but you need to immediately transfer it to another vessel and fluff them up. This causes the flavour to dissipate.

**8. Pressure cooked rice clumps up:**

The pressure inside your cooker is 15 pounds per square inch. This presses the rice down, causing it to clump up on cooling. To fix this, transfer the rice immediately after steam settles to another vessel and fluff it up well.

**9. My cooker has stopped whistling/gives weak whistles:**

Either your cooker leaks steam or there is no steam build up. Do lesson 1 and check the standardisation timing again. If you still do not get a whistle, get your cooker serviced. You might need to change gasket/ safety valves/ nozzle or weight. These are the only points of failure.

**10. White steam leaks from sides. No pressure buildup:**

Not enough water. Switch off. Release pressure. Add more water and continue.

**11. Food gets over cooked:**

Cook for lesser time. Release pressure after cooking.

**12. When cooking mixed vegetables, some get overcooked and some are undercooked:**

Cut vegetables to different thicknesses. Easily cooked veggies need to be cut into thicker slices and hard to cook veggies should be cut into thinner slices so that they all cook evenly.

**13. Spice powders/spice pastes taste raw:**

Always use roasted spices, OPOS ginger- garlic paste and OPOS tamarind paste. Dry roast all your readymade spice powders. Dry roast them on low heat till fragrant and bottle. Consume fast as they lose flavour on extended storage.

# OPOS – Vegetables

General pointers for OPOSing all vegetables, known or strange:

1. Almost all vegetables can be cooked in 2 whistles.
2. Thick chunks cannot be flashed. While using vegetables like drumstick/ Brussels sprouts, split them open if they are too thick, else the centre would remain uncooked.
3. Releasing pressure is mandatory to retain colour.
4. Almost all fresh vegetables can be flashed in their own juices, without a drop of water.
5. Chopped vegetables/ old vegetables/ refrigerated vegetables lose their juices and need extra water. Else they burn.
6. If pressure does not build in the first 3 minutes, switch off, add water and continue.
7. Never flash 250g vegetables beyond 6 minutes. It not only leads to overcooking, but also might melt your safety valve.
8. While cooking vegetables into a curry/ gravy, always flash with minimal water. Mix in water after opening.
9. Do not try to evaporate excess water by heating. This leads to overcooking. Instead add coconut paste/ cooked dal/spiced lentil powder to absorb excess water. Else, drain water and mix it with curries.
10. OPOS vegetables will shock people with their bright colour. Many might feel they are undercooked and need more cooking. Resist the urge to overcook!
11. Cutting is optional for many vegetables. In OPOS we cut vegetables only to reduce their thickness. You can crush many vegetables (baby potato/ivy gourd) or use them whole (beans), as long as you do not use thick chunks.
12. You can easily fit 500g vegetables (feeds 5) in a 2L cooker. Never increase cooking time beyond 6 minutes for cooking up to 500g vegetables. If you find them undercooked, chop them smaller rather than cooking them longer.
13. If you like charring, do not add any water and cook on a higher heat till you smell burning.

## ***1. Starchy Vegetables (Potato/ Yam/ Sweet potato/ Colocasia):***

Flashing them directly might to burning as starch sticks to the heated base. As retention of colour is not essential here, you can cook them in an inner vessel without water. You need to add atleast a cup of water in the outer vessel. Yam & sweet potato cook very fast. Potato takes longer. Colocasia and other tubers take even longer. All tubers need to be peeled, except potato. While flashing directly, Potato and most tubers need 2 whistles, if not cut too big.

Yam/ sweet potato cook in one whistle. Releasing pressure is optional for tubers.

While using an inner vessel, you can cook all tubers for 4 to 10 whistles.

Overcooked? Cut larger. Reduce cooking time

Undercooked? Do the reverse.

## ***2. Itchy vegetables:***

Some tubers (wild yam, taro) can cause itchiness in mouth and throat. These are caused by needle like calcium oxalate crystals in the tuber. Peel, chop and soak them in tamarind water/buttermilk/vinegar overnight before cooking them. Cook them longer, with an acid (tamarind/yogurt/lemon juice/ tomatoes/vinegar/mango). Avoid them if you are sensitive. While cutting, use gloves. Else they cause itchiness in your hands.

If you have consumed them and have an itchy throat, gargle repeatedly with lemon juice/ buttermilk.

## ***3. Stuffed vegetables: 3-5 whistles***

Ensure the spice paste on the surface is wiped clean - else it would touch the bottom and burn. If not

possible, isolate the stuffed vegetable from the base using a buffer of onions/ tomatoes. Ensure steam can have easy access to the core. Big chunks of tightly stuffed vegetables cannot be flashed. Prefer baby vegetables as far as possible. 3 - 5 whistles are sufficient for most stuffed vegetables.

#### **4. Onions: 4 whistles**

Onions are notorious for burning when flashed without water. They start burning in less than 4 minutes. When they are weighed down, by other vegetables, they burn even faster. To reduce burning, do not slice them too thin. Add a thin layer of water at the base. Onions need atleast 4 whistles before they lose their raw smell. If you are flashing them with vegetables/using them in curries, you risk overcooking other vegetables. In such cases use fried onions/ caramelised onions as a top layer.

#### **5. Tomatoes: 6 - 10 whistles**

Tomatoes make a great buffer. If you want caramelisation, flash de-seeded tomatoes/ whole tomatoes for over 6 whistles without water. Using tomatoes with seeds/using tomato puree hinders caramelisation as the juices start steaming the tomato, instead of caramelising it. While cooking tomato with other vegetables, caramelising tomato would lead to overcooking of the other vegetables. In such cases, use caramelised tomato as a top layer or load other vegetables in an inner vessel, with tomato in the outer vessel.

#### **6. Cauliflower/Broccoli: 1 whistle**

Separate florets carefully, check for worms and dunk in salted water to flush out worms. One whistle is enough to flash bite sized florets. Undercooked? Use smaller florets. Overcooked? Use larger florets.

#### **7. Watery vegetables: 2 whistles**

Cabbage, Ash gourd, Mushroom and similar watery vegetables leak water when flashed. You will have a puddle of water on opening. You need to understand the cause before dealing with it.

Think of pulpy orange juice in a tetrapack. This is a plant cell. Think of a stack of such tetrapacks glued to one another. This is a vegetable. The tetrapack is made of cellulose. The glue is Pectin. The pulp is starch. The goal is to cook these enough so that the Pectin, cellulose and starch gets cooked. Cook pectin too long and the stack collapses. The vegetables shrink. Cook cellulose too long and the tetrapack bursts, releasing the juice. Cook starch too long and it swells and bursts.

Here are a few ways to cook watery vegetables to minimise leakage:

1. Do not chop them too small.
2. Chop and salt to draw out juices by osmosis before cooking.
3. Use an inner pot to reduce cooking temperature. Add water only in outer pot.
4. Reduce cooking time.

Use a combination of these techniques to reduce leakage. If all fail, mix in coconut paste/ cooked dal to absorb excess water. Do not try to cook them longer to evaporate excess water as it overcooks the vegetable. You can even layer poha/oats over the vegetables and flash them so that the starches absorb excess water. This converts the curry into a full meal.

#### **8. Legumes (*Channa/ Rajma/whole Urad dal/whole mung*): 6 to 12 whistles.**

Soak overnight and drain the soaked water. Add minimal water (1/4C water for 1C legumes). Flash for 5 to 10 whistles. The high heat, high pressure and dry heat cooking combine to cook these hardy legumes very fast. You can add 1/8tsp baking powder to the water to soften these legumes.

Undercooked?

Add 1/4C water & cook again for 5 to 10 whistles.

#### **9. Lentils (*Tuvar, Mung, Channa, Masoor*): 5 to 8 whistles**

Soak for an hour. Drain the soaked water. Add equal volume of water (1C water for 1C lentils). Cook for 5 to 10 whistles. Mung & channa dal become edible on just soaking.

Undercooked?

Add 1/4C water & cook again for 5 whistles.

**10. Sprouts/fresh beans, peas, lentils: 2-4 whistles**

Wash & drain. Add minimal water. 1/4C water or less is sufficient for 2C sprouts. Flash for 2 to 4 whistles. Most sprouts/ fresh legumes need no cooking except soya & rajma. Never consume soy/ rajma uncooked as they are toxic.

**11. Spinach: 1-2 whistles.**

Some varieties of spinach become bitter on chopping. You can add grated coconut/ cooked dal to offset this bitterness. Spinach can be flashed whole and mashed after cooking. You can cram as much spinach as possible in your cooker as it shrinks dramatically on heating. No water is needed to flash spinach.

**12. Okra: 1 whistle**

Okra gets slimy on heating. The smaller it is cut, the greater the sliminess. By flashing them whole, we can minimise its sliminess. 250g of whole okra cooks well in 4 minutes/1 whistle. It can then be cut and stir fried if needed.

**13. Firm fleshed vegetables: 2 whistles**

Vegetables like carrot, beans, beets, radish, turnip cook in 2 whistles without releasing their juices. Tough ones like cluster beans need to be chopped smaller.

**14. Soft vegetables: 1-2 whistles**

Vegetables like Eggplant, squash, Zucchini can become mush if overcooked. Cut them into big chunks and flash them for just a whistle. Always release pressure.

**15. Mushroom: 2-4 whistles**

Mushroom releases a lot of water when flashed. Cut into big chunks or use whole. Else mix in a starch (puffed rice/ beaten rice)/ spiced nut powders after opening to absorb the juices.

**16. Baby vegetables: 2 – 3 whistles**

If the baby vegetables are not too thick they can be flashed directly. Else, slit them/ crush them before using. Baby potato/ivy gourds are ideal for crushing.

**17 Long & thin vegetables: 2 whistles**

Beans, runner beans, asparagus, garlic chives, spring onions etc need not be chopped but flashed whole. The length does not matter in OPOS. Only the thickness. Other vegetables like carrots/ beans can be cut into fingers, flashed and served with a dip as appetisers.

**18. Capsicum: 1 whistle**

Bell peppers are edible raw. They can get overcooked in just one whistle if you chop them small. If you wish to retain crunch, you can even stop cooking immediately after pressure builds.

**19. Specialty vegetables: 3-4 whistles**

Lotus roots, Bamboo shoots, Baby jack fruit are used in pockets. They all cook the same way. If you face undercooking, chop them smaller/ cook them longer.

**20. Bitter vegetables: 2-4 whistles**

Vegetables like bitter gourd can be salted, let to rest for an hour and then washed and drained before being used. This draws out their juices and makes them less bitter.

**21. Edible flowers: 1-2 whistles**

Pumpkin flowers, Agathi (Sesbania grandiflora flowers) are delicate and cook in just a whistle.

**22. Unknown vegetables: 2-4 whistles**

Every single vegetable/edible green can be flashed without fear! Every single one of them will cook in 2 whistles/5 minutes.Every single one will brighten up on flashing.

# OPOS – Animal Protein

Tough meats like goat/beef/pork/camel need to be chopped small, marinated and then flashed with minimal water. 250g of these meats can be flashed with a just 3tbsp water and 1tbsp oil for upto 10 minutes or till you get an intense smell of cooked meat. The cooking time varies with the type of meat. Marinating them with pineapple paste/raw papaya paste/yogurt helps tenderise them.

Offal (Liver / Intestine) cooks in 6 whistles. Brain needs just 1 -2 whistles.

250g of bite sized Duck/ free range chicken can be flashed without added water for 8 whistles (6 minutes)

250g of Seafood (Fish, oyster, prawns, squid, crab, lobster) can be flashed without any added water in 3 whistles (5 minutes). Thick chunks do not flash well. If crab/lobster/is too thick, they need to be deshelled or crushed. If fish is too thick, it needs to be cut up.

250g Broiler chicken is a lot softer and can be flashed without water in 4 whistles.

Eggs cook in just one whistle.

# OPOS – Starches

## ***Indian pasta:***

Just about cover with water and cook for 2 whistles. Release pressure. Mix well and keep closed.

## ***Italian pasta***

Soak for 10 minutes. Cover with water and cook for 5 whistles. Let pressure settle. Mix all

## ***Noodles***

Rinse with water, layer over vegetables and flash for 2 whistles. Release pressure. Mix well and keep closed.

## ***Rava (small grits)***

Roast well, layer 1/2C rava over 4C chopped vegetables and flash for 2 whistles. Release pressure. Mix all.

## ***Bansi Rava (Big grits)***

Roast 2C Bansi Rava well. Wash & drain. Mix in 1tbsp oil. Add to an small vessel. Place inside a pressure cooker. Add water outside the vessel. Cook for 5 to 10 whistles. Let pressure settle.

## ***Sago***

Soak 1C sago in 1.5C water till soft. Drain excess water. Mix in 1tbsp oil. Add to an small vessel. Place inside a pressure cooker. Add water outside the vessel. Cook for 5 to 7 whistles. Let pressure settle.

## ***Poha***

Thin poha can be mixed with flashed vegetables and cooks in retained heat.

Thick poha needs to be washed, drained & mixed in.

Both thin/ thick poha can be layered over vegetables and flashed.

## ***Vermicelli***

Roasted thin vermicelli can be washed, layered over a bed of vegetables & flashed.

Thick vermicelli can be covered with water and cooked for a whistle.

## ***Oats***

Quick cooking oats can be layered over vegetables and flashed.

## ***Rice:***

Presoak for atleast 30 minutes.

Most rice varieties cooks in 2 whistles.

1C raw rice needs 2C water.

1C basmathi needs 1C water.

1C parboiled rice needs 2.5C water.

For unsoaked rice, increase water by 1/2C and cook for 2 whistles more.

Soaked and drained rice can be sandwiched and flashed without water by sandwiching it between watery vegetables. 1C rice needs 4C vegetables Washed Indian pasta/ washed noodles can be sandwiched between layers of vegetables and flashed without a drop of water.

## ***Millets:***

Cleaned & packed millets need to be soaked and cooked exactly like rice. If you desire a grainy texture, reduce water and fluff up on opening.

## ***Corn:***

2C sweet corn kernels can be flashed with 1/4C water in 2 whistles.

# OPOS- Maximising flavour:

1. Use OPOS GG paste
2. Use freshly roasted and ground spices (Do not use any spice powder/ spice mix over a month old. They become saw dust)
3. Add fried onion/ caramelised onion
4. Add caramelised tomato
5. Add grated & roasted coconut
6. Always flashcook vegetables
7. Mix in fresh herbs after opening
8. Add dry herbs as a middle layer
9. Mix in bottled tadka after opening.
10. Mix in flavoured oils (Coconut/ mustard/ ghee) just before serving.
11. Do not reheat/ cook further to dry out curries.
12. Stir fry meats before/ after cooking till they brown.

That's all it takes to convert all your curries/ soups/stews into flavour bombs!

# OPOS Low Carb Diet Ideas

## (Vegetarian/Vegan)

<https://youtu.be/oMG-Wov6O3s>

A diet rich in fresh, seasonal vegetables, low in processed starch, salt, sugar, spices and fats is advocated by many health experts as a healthy diet. OPOS can help you painlessly cook up any diet you choose to follow. A few ideas are given below, but these are not recommendations. Please consult your doctor before embarking on any diet.

### ***Early Morning:***

Dum tea/ Dum sulaimani without sugar.

### ***Breakfast:***

1. Flashed vegetables
2. A glass of milk/ lassi/ fruit milkshake without sugar. Use almond/ coconut milk if you prefer.

### ***Mid morning Snack:***

1. Tamil Sundal (cook up different varieties)
2. Gujarathi Sambharo
3. Fruit salad with watery fruits (Water melon/ peach/ pineapple)

### ***Lunch:***

Soup : Rasam varieties

1. Flashed vegetables
2. Flashed spinach
3. Kootu
4. Aviyal
5. Kachumber

### ***Evening:***

1. Vegetable Fondue
2. Sprouts salad
3. Kosambari (Vary veggies)

### ***Dinner:***

1. Tomato/ Mushroom/ Carrot/ Broccoli Soup
2. Cauliflower rice
3. Kadai paneer

Snack: Roasted nuts

Desserts: Shrikhand with honey, Fruit salad with cream, dry fruit laddoo.

# OPOS Low Carb Diet Ideas (Non-vegetarian)

## ***Early Morning:***

Green tea/Dum sulaimani/Black coffee without sugar.

## ***Breakfast:***

Boiled/ Poached eggs, Flashed vegetables.

## ***Snack:***

Chicken salad with lemon juice and olive oil dressing, Green salad.

## ***Lunch:***

Flashed fish/Prawns/Pepper chicken/Mutton sukka/Anchovy Avial/Egg Avial, Cauliflower rice.

## ***Snack:***

Flashed whole beans/carrot/beet strips with Mayo/Vinaigrette dip.

## ***Evening:***

Chicken/mutton soup with roasted papad.

## ***Dinner:***

Chicken/crab rasam, Minced meat koftas, Mutton uppukarri, Zucchini noodles.

Pickles: Prawn pickle, Mutton vindaloo, Fish pickle.

Desserts: Dry fruit burfi, Frozen yogurt, Chocolate, Fresh fruit Sorbet.

Drinks: Ice tea, Buttermilk, Lemon - mint cooler, Fruit milkshake with coconut milk.

# OPOS Technique 6/26: Flash

<https://youtu.be/yPDqNweqamo>

Out of the 26 OPOS techniques, Layering and Flashing are the most used. All other techniques are elaborately discussed in a separate book. Layering and flashing are listed here.

Retaining colour, maximising flavour, texture and taste is a serious issue. It took us over four years and thousands of experiments to learn it. Here's the summary of the journey:

Pressure cooking food in its own juices, without water, without using inner vessel, over high heat, and releasing pressure immediately were all techniques never practised before we pioneered their use. Each refinement took us years. There is the work of hundreds behind it. Every step of this journey has been documented and validated.

We had been struggling with the colour retention problem for a long time. A senior member, Chithra Viswanathan had posted a solution way back in 2005, in the Indus ladies forum. She posted “Cook 250g of vegetables with 1tbsp water for 2 whistles. Wait for 2 minutes and release pressure”. This is the earliest recorded mention of minimal water pressure cooking. But this technique did not widely catch on as it needed a few more refinements before magic happened.

On February 26, 2014, I cut out the water completely and posted the No Water way to cook vegetables, in their own juices. This addressed half the problem, but still did not do magic. It did not ignite member interest in cooking up a variety of veggies. We were still struggling with this problem in May when I did a comparative study after many members flatly refused to OPOS coloured vegetables.

One tiny little piece of the jigsaw was missing. The trick was to cook at the highest possible heat for the lowest possible time. This meant you cook without water, at the highest possible heat, for a very short time, release pressure immediately and instantly transfer the vegetable to a cooler vessel to stop cooking. Even a few seconds delay dulls the colour. With this final piece falling into place, Flash was born.

Now, everything clicked together and magic happened. The floodgates opened with member validations pouring in. They would never cook

vegetables any other way ever again. Flash was here to stay!

Flash is an OPOS technique of cooking food in its own juices at the highest possible heat for the lowest possible time. This produces dramatic results. It heightens flavours, colour, textures and promises greater nutrition. It is just too good to be true.

The flash technique evolved in multiple steps.

Step 1 was to eliminate the inner vessel. The high temperature needed for flash cannot be produced in an inner vessel.

Step 2 was to get comfortable with no water cooking. Flash requires little or no water.

Step 3 was to get comfortable with pressure cooking at the highest heat. The pressure cooker manufacturers caution against this, but it is perfectly safe to use as it is done for a very brief time. (If your cooker is not in good condition and leaks steam, do not try this technique!)

It all started when we were trying to simulate stir-frying in OPOS. Stir-frying happens at the highest possible heat for the lowest possible time. It promises a firm texture, greater colours and flavour, unlike boiling/steaming. But stir frying has a flaw - it requires constant supervision. We need to keep stirring to ensure that the top surface also gets heated and the bottom surface does not get burnt.

To understand how stir frying is simulated in OPOS, you need to understand what happens to food when it is flash cooked.

### ***Stage 1: Loading.***

Food is cut into small pieces and loaded inside the pressure cooker. The food has to be cut into thin bits, like we do in stir frying. Thick chunks cannot be flashed.

### ***Stage 2: Sautéing.***

Food is heated at the highest possible heat. Until the time steam builds up, the temperature of the pressure cooker crosses its safe operating limit - which is not a problem because only the bottom portion is at this heat - the lid is yet to realise it. Hence the safety valve does not blow. During this stage, the pressure cooker is not yet pressurised and so food gets sautéed at this high heat, producing complex caramelised flavours unlike boiled or steamed food.

### ***Stage 3: Steam buildup.***

This high heat soon causes the cooker to fill up with steam - mostly produced

from food's own juices. Remember that one part of water becomes 1700 parts of steam. Thus, very little water is required to build up pressure. In most cases, the moisture from food's own juices itself is sufficient to build up pressure. This steam buildup needs to happen as fast as possible, to prevent the food getting burnt.

#### ***Stage 4: Steam saturation.***

As the steam saturates the cooker, the temperature drops - because the steam is at around 120 degrees - not as hot as the bottom surface of the cooker. The sautéeing action is minimised and steam cooking begins. As food is completely saturated by steam, all regions are at the same temperature. This eliminates the need for stirring - as all regions get heated evenly.

#### ***Stage 5: Pressure Baking.***

The food is completely enveloped in pressurised steam. This hot steam permeates food, cooking it instantly. This is why food cannot be cut into large chunks - as steam cannot reach the core of thick chunks. Now, the conditions inside the cooker perfectly replicate the condition inside an oven. Food gets pressure baked. This is the key difference between traditional pressure cooking and OPOS. In most OPOS recipes, food is pressure baked – not pressure cooked.

#### ***Stage 6: Quick release.***

Once food is cooked, any further heating has to stop immediately. Every second delay overcooks food, making it lose its colour, texture and flavour. Even after the heat is turned off, the pressurised steam continues to cook food. This steam is released manually to prevent it from overcooking food.

#### ***Stage 7: Shocking.***

The cooked food and the pot still retain heat. This heat continues to cook food. This heat needs to be removed by transferring the contents to a colder vessel.

All these steps need to happen in the order specified for flash to work. Like most OPOS recipes, all this science is hidden behind the deceptively simple recipe.

This technique opens up a million possibilities! Members have flashed starters, soups, biriyani, pastas, gravies and desserts. The bulk of the world's cuisine has been suddenly demystified.

Flash can help you create a huge range of recipes.

1. Flash vegetables/meat into dry curries.

2. Flash and blend them into soups.
3. Mix in milk/yogurt/cream/OPOS curry bases etc., with flashed food to make gravies.
4. Layer processed starch (poha, bulghur, couscous, oats etc) over veggies and flash to make full meals.
5. Roll them into phulkhas/ idiappam/ parathas to make rolls. Use them as sandwich fillings.
6. Flash spiced potatoes, Brussels sprouts, paneer, etc into bite sized appetizers.
7. Flash fruits/ vegetables with sugar to make desserts/ jams.

Flash is covered in the first three lessons. It will take you 10 minutes and a bit of courage to learn this technique. Do so and you own it for life. Cooking will never be the same again!



# Flash – Why add water?

Flashcooking is by definition without added water. So why do all recipes call for some water?

The story of one extra brick !

When the great wall of China was being built, a section of it - the Jiayuguan Pass, was entrusted to an expert builder called Yi Kaizhan. He calculated that it would take exactly 99,999 bricks to build the pass. The supervisor was appalled at his exact numbers and threatened him with hard labor if he had miscalculated.

One last chance was given. Yi Kaizan was asked to revise his estimate. Yi Kaizan revised his stimate by just adding one brick to his prior estimate, further angering the supervisor !

After the completion of the project, that extra brick was left behind and is still displayed at the Xiwong city gate. History does not record the supervisor's reaction.

Though flashcooking needs no extra water, people assume the recipe is mistaken and has missed out water. They cannot believe food can get cooked in its own juices. I got tired of answering queries about the lack of water that I started adding 3tbsp water to all flashcooked recipes. Do treat it like the one extra brick !

In some cases, where the vegetables have been chopped and refrigerated, or in cases where they are old and dry, they cannot cook in their own juices. In such cases, adding water is mandatory. If your vegetables are fresh and bursting with juices, you need not add any water in flashed recipes.

# OPOS – putting back colour into food.

Krishnaiyer Ramachandran

Cooking always result in a loss of the colours. How does flash enhance colour?

Fruits and vegetables have three kinds of colouring pigments.

They are:

1. Chlorophyll, the green pigment;
2. Carotenoids, pigments ranging from yellow to deep red and
3. Flavonoids:
  - (i) anthocyanins - red, blue or purple pigments according to the pH,
  - (ii) anthoxanthin - white pigment.

These are found in varying amounts depending on the stage of ripening.

Chlorophyll is responsible for the green colour of leaves. It is also present in fruits and vegetables like cabbage, broccoli, kiwi fruit and green apples.

Chlorophyll is fat soluble and will be washed out during stir frying with oils.

Chlorophyll is affected by the length of cooking. When the chlorophyll containing vegetables are heated, the air trapped in the tissues escape first.

This makes the vegetables bright green in colour initially. If we stop cooking at this stage, we can retain that bright colour. That is what flash cooking does by keeping the cooking time very short. If you cook longer, other chemicals in the fruit or vegetable get released and convert the chlorophyll into less bright compounds like Pheophytins. This makes the colour dull and eventually bright green takes on an yellowish hue.

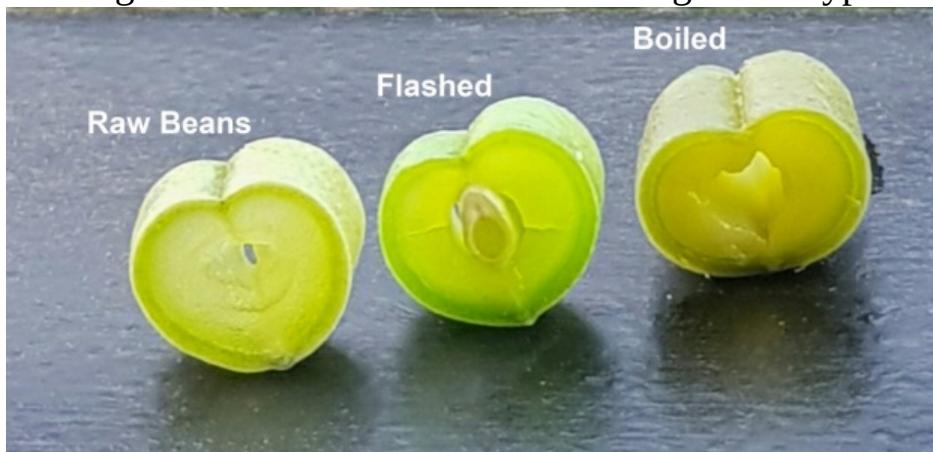
Moral 1: To keep the green colour cook for a short time with little or no oil. Carotenoid pigments are found in lemons, oranges, strawberries and in vegetables like capsicum, carrot etc. They are also fat soluble and hence can be lost by stir frying. More importantly, they are easily affected by oxidation. So any cooking which brings these vegetables in prolonged contact with atmospheric oxygen will fade them away. When you cook in a closed vessel, the steam fills the vessel, minimizing exposure to oxygen, preventing the loss

of colour due to oxidation.

Moral 2: To keep the colour of the carotenoids, keep the oxygen out. The flavonoids (anthocyanins and anthoxanthins) are present in vegetables like eggplants, apples, onions, cauliflowers and potatoes. These are water soluble and will be washed away by soaking and cooking for long in water. Their colour can be retained by avoiding water.

Moral 3: Avoid water to retain the flavonoids.

This is how flash cooking, with its low oil, no water, high heat and short cooking fits the bill in the case of retaining all the types of pigments.



# OPOS – Retaining shape

Unlike traditional cooking, most vegetables do not shrink when OPOSeD. Even their edges remain intact and almost all vegetables maintain their shape. The before and after pictures shown below illustrate this fact. None of the pictures have been edited or have used a filter.

How does OPOS ensure vegetables retain their shape? Imagine a balloon filled with water. This is a plant cell. Imagine many such balloons packed in a paper bag. This is a vegetable. It will maintain its shape as long as the paper bag and balloons are intact. The moment they collapse, the whole mass shrinks dramatically.

In OPOS, we retain the structural integrity in four ways:

- 1: We do not mix salt with vegetables, thus minimising osmosis shrinkage.
2. We do not keep mixing and stirring the vegetables, thus minimising mechanical damage.
3. We do not overcook vegetables till the cell wall breaks down, thus minimising structural damage.
4. We do not heat them for long, thus minimising evaporative damage.

The colours of most vegetables get dramatically brightened up as the brief high heat cooking collapses the small air pockets surrounding the colour pigments, making them appear brighter. By ensuring no overcooking happens, we lock this brightened colour.







# OPOS- Let there be colour!

The colour is a God-given indicator for perfectly cooked vegetables. 500g of any vegetable takes just 5 minutes of flashing. After a lifetime of overcooked vegetables, it would take a while to get used to perfectly cooked ones! In many cases, people would complain they are undercooked, just because of the colour. Resist the temptation to overcook!



# OPOS Technique 12/26: Layering

The technique of layering helped us to dramatically simplify a lot of recipes. It has now emerged as a powerful OPOS technique.

How does layering work?

In many traditional recipes, everything is boiled/simmered together.

Traditionalists believe everything has to be boiled together for a long time, for flavours to develop. They do not endorse layering as they assume it will compromise taste. This is not true. Flavour/taste does not come from everything boiling together.

Flavour comes from four sources:

1. The food itself (Vegetables/meats)
2. Flavouring agents (Spices/herbs)
3. Browning reactions (Caramelisation and Maillard reactions)
4. Oil used

1. Vegetables/meats:

Perfectly cooked vegetables/meats have a delicate complex flavour which is easily lost by overcooking. In traditional cooking, vegetables are prone to getting overcooked when everything is boiled together. In OPOS, we maximise the flavour created by preventing overcooking/undercooking. This is the primary flavour in most OPOS recipes.

2. Spices/herbs:

These impart flavour in two ways. Some have water soluble flavours (cilantro, mint, ginger). These are directly layered. They release their flavours by hydro-distillation. Some have oil soluble flavours (cumin, mustard). These are added as bottled tadka (hot oil infusion).

3. Browning reaction:

This is the key reaction that produces flavour. We achieve this by careful layering and by the use of caramelised onion/ tomato.

4. Oil:

Flavourful oils like coconut/sesame/mustard can be directly added as the first or the last step for an extra burst of flavour. Irrespective of how long you boil everything together, no new flavour gets created. In fact, delicate flavours get

destroyed on overcooking.

By preventing overcooking and by layering and flashing the core flavouring blocks, we can maximise flavour creation in OPOS. This is why you will invariably be hit by a flavour blast when you OPOS.

Apart from infusing flavour, the layering technique opened other possibilities:

1. Layering helped us cut out patient sautéeing of onions and tomatoes.
2. Layering helped us bypass the adverse effects of cooking inhibitors like tamarind/ sugar.
3. Layering enabled modular cooking.
4. Layering enabled creation of complexity.
5. Layering made flashing starches possible.
6. Layering helps create different cooking zones.

### ***1. Layering eliminates patient sautéeing of onions and tomatoes.***

Cutting out this step made possible OPOSing a lot of traditional recipes.

Let's take the traditional recipe of Paneer Butter Masala:

1. Heat oil and butter.
2. Add bay leaf and sauté. Add ginger-garlic paste and sauté till the raw aroma disappears.
3. Add tomato puree and stir well.
4. Add red chilli powder. Stir and cook till the oil starts to leave the sides of the tomato paste.
5. Add cashew paste and stir well till the oil begins to leave the sides of the masala paste.
6. Add water and simmer on low flame.
7. Add julienned ginger, chopped green chilies, salt and sugar and simmer till thick.
8. Add paneer cubes and cook till it softens.
9. Add crushed dry fenugreek leaves and garam masala.
10. Stir and cook till done. Mix in cream.

The OPOS Version of Paneer Butter Masala:

Mix 1C paneer cubes with 1tsp Kashmiri chilli powder, 1tsp OPOS Ginger Garlic paste, 4tsp cashew paste, 1 chopped green chilli, 1/2tsp each (chopped ginger, salt, sugar, garam masala).

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer ingredients as shown below :

Layer 1: 4tsp butter, 1 bay leaf, 2C chopped, deseeded tomato, 1/2tsp salt.

Layer 2: Place paneer in a small inner vessel over tomatoes.

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (or 5 minutes). Remove paneer and bay leaf.

Blend/ mash all. Mix in 1/4C cream, 1tsp kasuri methi.

The intense heat and the absence of water cooks and caramelises tomatoes to a more intense version of a gravy than the traditionally cooked version. The short cooking time and inner vessel prevents paneer from getting overcooked. The use of marinated paneer and sealed cooking infuses paneer with more flavour.

Thus, layering permits us to condense a 10 step, supervised recipe into a single step unsupervised OPOS version.

## ***2. Layering bypasses the adverse effects of cooking inhibitors like tamarind/ sugar.***

In traditional cooking, food does not get cooked well along with tamarind/jaggery/other cooking inhibitors. But by layering and flashing, we minimise the effect of these cooking inhibitors, as they are in contact with only a small portion of the food. For example, in the OPOS gajar halwa, by the time sugar melts and seeps into the carrots, the carrots are already cooked. The juiciness of the cooked carrots is locked in by sugar - which is why the OPOSe halwas are much juicier (and more colourful) than the traditional versions.

Example:

### ***Traditional recipe for Gajar Halwa:***

1. Rinse, peel and grate the carrots.
2. In a deep thick bottomed pan, add milk and grated carrots.
3. On medium flame, bring the mixture to a boil.
4. Stir and simmer till milk is reduced by half and carrots are cooked.
5. Add ghee, sugar and powdered cardamom .
6. Stir continuously and cook on a low flame.
7. Add the cashews, crushed saffron and raisins.
8. Stir and simmer till all the milk is evaporated.

### ***Carrot Halwa - OPOS Version:***

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, 2C grated carrots

Layer 2: 1C sugar, 1/4C milk powder, 4tsp ghee, 1/4tsp cardamom powder

Cook on high heat for 15 - 20 whistles (7 to 10 mins) till you smell mild burning or till the lap time between whistles doubles. Switch off. Release pressure. Mix in raisins, roasted cashew.

### ***3. Layering enables modular cooking:***

It is easy to build complex recipes from ground up, across cuisines, by just varying the layers.

Layering made possible teaching a whole cuisine to newbies in minutes! See the recipe below where just one layer changes the parentage of the recipe. This technique allows us to jump cuisines/recipes by just adding/deleting more layers.

Modular cooking example;

A dry curry below can fit into any cuisine across the world by just changing Layer 4.

Layer 1: 2 tsp your favourite oil

Layer 2: 1/4C water

Layer 3: 2C chopped vegetables

Layer 4: 2tsp your favourite spice mix (Garam masala/Bengali panch foran/ Marathi Goda masala/Tamil Sambar powder)

Layer 5: 1/4tsp each (salt, pepper)

Cook on high for 2 whistles. Switch off. Release pressure. Mix all.

### ***4. Layering enables complex flavour creation.***

Different layers of flavourings impart layers of flavour to the finished dish, so very different from the mix-all-together style of traditional cooking.

Sample Recipe:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp sesame oil

Layer 2: Arrange 10 chopped shallots and 1 chopped deseeded tomato in a bull's eye with tomato at the centre.

Layer 3: Add 1C chopped bitter gourd

Layer 4: 1tsp each (sambar powder, tamarind paste, salt)

Layer 5: 1C cooked tuvar dhal

Cook on high for 3 whistles. Mix in 1/2C stock.

Add more complexity by inserting more layers above layer 3.

Layer: Infused oil / tadka

Layer: Other vegetables

Layer: Other cooked dals (Mung/ masoor)

Layer: Other Flavourings (Fenugreek powder, slit chilli, crushed coriander, grated and roasted coconut)

### **5. Layering made flash cooking of starches possible**

Starch burns when flashed directly. We finally learnt to flashcook starches by sandwiching them between layers of vegetables/meats. No water pastas/biryanis would not have been possible without this technique.

#### **Sample Recipe: Pasta Arrabiata.**

Wash 1C penne pasta (100g). Drain. Mix with 2tsp olive oil.

In a 2L pressure cooker, layer as below :

Layer 1: 2tsp olive oil, 1 crushed garlic clove, 2chopped tomatoes

Layer 2: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder, parsley), pasta.

Layer 3: Cover pasta completely with 1.5C chopped tomatoes

Cook on high for 6 whistles (7min). Release pressure. Mix all and fluff up pasta. Mix in 4tsp grated pecorino/parmesan. Close and serve after 10 mins.

### **6. Layering helps create different cooking zones**

Take a look at the recipe below:

Channa Aloo Mirchi

Chickpea Potato Capsicum curry

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 1C soaked and drained kabuli channa mixed with 1/2tsp baking powder

Layer 3: 1/4C each caramelised (onion, tomato)

Layer 4: 1C potato chopped big

Layer 5: 1C coloured capsicum chopped large and mixed with 1tsp lemon juice

Layer 6: 1tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, salt, kasuri methi, chilli, coriander, cumin , garam masala powders).

Cook on high heat for 4 whistles (6 minutes). Release pressure. Mix all.

In this recipe, we use an alkali (baking powder) in layer 2 to speed up cooking of the bottom layer and to ensure channa gets mushy. We use an acid (lemon juice) in layer 5 to slow down the cooking of capsicum, to ensure

it retains its crunch. These layers are separated from each other by the buffer layers 3 and 4. This is how we can balance the cooking time of the hardy chickpeas with that of the delicate capsicum.

Layering is a balancing game. It is almost like setting up dominoes. Please ensure you have the following general principles in mind before you try layering your own recipes:

1. The main ingredient should never get overcooked/ undercooked. In most cases, this is all that is required for maximum flavour.
2. Only when the main ingredient is flavourless, do we need to add more flavouring.
3. When layering onion/tomato, ensure they caramelise. Else add caramelised onion/ tomato.
4. When adding whole spices/spice powders/ginger-garlic paste/tamarind paste, ensure they do not have a raw smell. Think of this raw smell as anti-flavour.
5. Mix in bottled tadka and fresh herbs at the very end.
6. Shallow frying at the very end can create more flavour.

Layering Tips:

1. Always start with a thin layer of water as the bottom layer (Not more than 1/4C for a 2L cooker).
2. A layer of oil over this is optional (Some mix oil and water into a froth, which is optional too!).
3. The next layer is usually onion/tomato/ watery vegetables/meats.
4. Add dry spice powders/coconut over the vegetables/meats. Never let them touch the bottom.
5. Do not mix the layers before cooking.
6. Starches like rice/pasta need to be completely sandwiched between watery layers (vegetables/ meats). Else, the exposed top layer will not cook.
7. Quick cooking starches like noodles/vermicelli need not be completely sandwiched between watery layers.
8. If you desire a roasted/smoked flavour, you can skip water and let the meat/ vegetable touch the bottom.
9. Adding oil as the bottom layer increases chances of burning.
10. Onions are notorious for burning. The thinner they are cut, the faster they burn. If they are pressed down (by other ingredients layered over them), they

burn fast. A cooking time of over 4 minutes guarantees burning when onions are used as a bottom layer.

# Make Magic!

How the techniques you've learnt come together to make cooking painless and magical !

# 10min South Indian Thali

<https://youtu.be/s-MUiQHcVuw>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C water and 2tsp oil. Arrange 1C each chopped eggplant, broad beans and tomatoes in three piles so that they all touch the base of the cooker.

- a. Over the eggplant pile add 1/2C cooked dal, 1tsp sambar powder, 1/2tsp each (salt, tamarind paste).
- b. Over the broad beans pile, add 1/4C cooked dal, 1/4C chopped coconut blended with 1 green chilli, 1tsp cumin and 1/2tsp salt
- c. Over the tomato pile, add 1/4C cooked dal, 1tsp sambar powder, 1/2tsp salt.

Close and cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure. Remove each pile separately. Mix in enough water to the consistency you like. Mix in bottled tadka, chopped herbs and serve with cooked rice.

# 10min North Indian Thali

<https://youtu.be/Ji3DCzORO7o>

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C water and 2tsp oil. Mix 1.5tsp each (ginger-garlic paste, cumin powder, coriander powder, chilli powder, salt, garam masala, oil). Split spice mix into three portions.

Add three piles of vegetables as below so that they all touch the base of the cooker:

Pile 1: 1/2C each chopped (carrot and beans)

Pile 2: 1/4C each chopped (deseeded tomato, carrot, capsicum, whole green peas)

Pile 3: 1C potatoes chopped small

Add the spice mix (see above) over three piles.

Close and cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure.

Remove pile 1 and serve as dry curry.

Remove pile 2. Mash coarsely with water/stock/cream and serve as Rasedar subji.

Remove pile 3. Mash coarsely and serve as a mashed curry.

Mix in bottled tadka, chopped herbs with all curries and serve with flatbreads.

# A 15 course feast in an hour

Learn to cook the traditional Ona Sadya, an elaborate harvest feast from God's own country.

Preparatory work:

1. Prepare Coconut- cumin- chilli paste (CCC Paste)

Blend 2C chopped coconut, 4tsp cumin, 2tsp salt, 4 green chillies and 4tsp coconut oil to a smooth paste.

2. Chop 2C each (long beans, raw banana, squash, carrot), 1C each chopped (cabbage, ash gourd, pineapple, ripe banana, jackfruit).

Triple flash 1: Aviyal: (Mixed vegetables in yogurt- coconut- cumin curry), Aviyal Kulambu (Mixed Veg sour stew) and Sambar (Sour lentil stew)

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C water and 2tsp coconut oil. Take 1C each (long beans, raw banana, ash gourd, carrot) chopped into fingers. Add them as three piles .

- a. Over pile 1 add 1/2C CCC paste
- b. Over pile 2, add 1/2C CCC paste, 1tsp tamarind paste
- c. Over pile 3, add 1/2C cooked dal, 1tsp sambar powder, 1/2tsp each (salt, tamarind paste).

Close and cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure.

Remove pile 1. Mix in 1C yogurt, 5 crushed curry leaves, 1tsp coconut oil.

Serve as Aviyal.

Remove pile 2. Mix in 1C water, 1tsp bottled tadka. Serve as Aviyal Kulambu.

Remove pile 3. Mix in 1/2C water. Serve as sambar.

Triple flash 2: Mezhukku Peratti (Dry vegetable curry), Thoran (Stir fry with coconut) and Kootu Kari (Vegetable- dal- coconut stew)

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C water and 2tsp oil. Arrange 1C each chopped long beans, cabbage and carrot in three piles so that they all touch the base of the cooker.

- a. Over the long beans pile add 1/2tsp salt, 1/8tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp coconut oil.

- b. Over the cabbage pile, add 1/4C CCC paste.
- c. Over the squash pile, add 1/4C each (cooked dal, CCC paste).

Close and cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure. Remove each pile separately.

Triple flash 3: Madhura Kari (Kichadi), Pazha pradhaman (Banana pudding) and Chakka payasam (Jackfruit puding).

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C water and 2tsp ghee. Arrange 1C each chopped (pineapple, ripe banana, ripe jack fruit) in three piles so that they all touch the base of the cooker.

Close and cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure.

Remove pineapple. Mix in 1/4C CCC paste, 1/2C yogurt. Serve as Madhura Kari/ Pineapple Kichadi

Remove banana. Blend with 1/4C jaggery, 1C coconut milk. Serve as Pazha pradhaman.

Remove jack fruit. Blend with 1/4C sugar, 1/4tsp cardamom powder, 1C milk. Serve as Chakka payasam.

Triple flash 4: Olan (Coconut milk curry), Erisseri (Roasted coconut stew), and Kurukku kaalan (condensed yogurt curry)

In a 2L cooker, add 1/4C water and 2tsp coconut oil. Arrange 1C each ash gourd, squash, raw banana in three piles so that they all touch the base of the cooker.

Close and cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure.

- a. Over the ash gourd add 1/2tsp salt, 1tsp crushed pepper
- b. Over the squash pile, add 1/4C CCC paste, 1/4C spiced coconut powder (Thenga molaga podi/ Podi chammanthi)
- c. Over the raw banana pile, add 1/4C each (hung yogurt, CCC paste).

Close and cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure.

Remove ashgourd. Mix in 1/2C coconut milk, 1/2C water. Serve as olan.

Remove squash. Mix all. Serve as Mathan erisseri.

Remove raw banana. Mix all. Serve as Kurukku kaalan.

While the above are cooking, prepare the following:

Arachu Kalakki (Yogurt - vegetable dip):

Blend 1/4C each (chopped carrot, CCC paste). Mix in 1C yogurt.

Pachadi (Raita):

Mix 1/2C grated cucumber, 1 chopped green chilli, 1C yogurt.

Pulissery (Raw fruit curry):

Mix 1/2C grated pineapple, 1/4C CCC paste, 1C yogurt.

Serve with yogurt, pickles, papad, plantain chips, jackfruit chips, banana and buttermilk.

# Effortless Cooking for 50

How to throw a party for 50 people, with one 2L cooker and 1 stove, within 3 hours, starting from scratch.

## Step 1. Think in Kilograms

An adult can eat 300 to 500g food depending on how hungry they are. Very rarely can adults eat above 500g in one sitting. For 50 people, we need at most 20 kg food in total. This needs to be split across dishes.

**Starter:** 2.5 Kg

Paneer pineapple sticks: 2.5kg

Layer 1C onion, 500g paneer cubes mixed with spices. Flash for 1 whistle. Chop 1 Kg pineapple, 1Kg cheddar cheese. Spear toothpicks with Pineapple, Cheddar, Paneer.

**Salad:** 2Kg

Udupi Kosambri: 1kg soaked mung dal + 1kg each (grated carrots, chopped cucumber) + chopped chillies + lemon juice.

**Soup:** 3 Kg

2C soaked mung dal+ 2C water cooked with extra spices and blended with 1kg water, 2kg milk to Dal shorba

**Prep:** Make 3C bottled tadka

3C oil + mustard + dry red chillies + curry leaves

**Mains 1:** 3.5Kg

Kaanda Batata Poha

Layer 2C onion, 2C tomato, 2C potato mixed with extra spices. Flash for 2 whistles.

Mix with 3kg soaked and drained rice flakes, 1/2C bottled tadka.

**Mains 2:** 2.5 Kg

Kothu parota:

Layer 3C onion, 3C deseeded tomato mixed with extra spices. Flash for 10 whistles. Mix with 2kg chopped parota, 1/2C bottled tadka.

**Mains 3:** 6 Kg

Thayir Avil (Dahi Poha)

Mix 2kg soaked and drained rice flakes with 4kg yogurt, 2C bottled tadka.

Curry 1: 4 kg

Boondhi Raita:

1kg boondhi + 3 kg Yogurt + cumin powder + salt = Boondhi raita

Dessert: 3.5 kg

Pradhaman:

Flash 1/2kg Jack fruit/ banana. Blend in 1kg milk, 1kg sugar, 1 kg coconut milk.

Total weight:

27.5 Kg. You can cut down 7.5 Kg by removing recipes you don't like.

Cooking needed: 6 rounds of flashing.

# Non-Veg Party time!

One 2L cooker. One stove. 3 hours. Cook a feast for 50 adults, without sweat.

Target: Prepare 20Kg food in total, as each adult consumes 400g food on an average.

Starters: 4kg

1. Chicken pineapple sticks: 2.5kg

Layer 1C onion, 500g boneless chicken mixed with spices. Flash for 5 whistles.

Chop 1 Kg pineapple, 1Kg cheddar cheese into cubes. Spear toothpicks with Pineapple, chicken, cheese.

2. Devilled eggs : 30 nos (1.5kg)

A 2L cooker can hold 15 eggs. Add eggs, water and cook for 1 whistle. Let pressure settle. Open and drain water. Gently shake to crack shells. Cover with cold water. Shell.

Halve eggs. Remove yolks. Mix yolks with pepper powder, mayonnaise, garam masala, sour cream, lemon, salt, Worcestershire sauce and Dijon mustard. Mix well. Spoon the mixture into the white (or use a piping bag).

Salad: 2Kg

3. Prawn cocktail Salad: 2Kg

Layer and flash 500g prawns with spices.

Chop 1 Kg ice berg lettuce, quarter 1/2 kg tomatoes, 3 bunches spring onions. Mix all with mayonnaise, lemon juice, olive oil, ketchup.

Soup: 4Kg

4. Hot and sour chicken soup: 4Kg

Layer 500g chopped deseeded tomato, 500g boneless chicken, GG paste and spices and flash for 8 whistles. Remove and shred chicken. Blend tomatoes with 3L water/stock. Mix in shredded chicken.

Mains 1: 3Kg

5. Fish Burritos

Flash 750g chopped fish, heavily spiced. Let cool. Flake fish. Mix in 1kg baked beans, 2 heads chopped lettuce, 2C mayonnaise. Make burritos with outsourced flatbreads.

Mains 2: 3Kg

6. Khakra - sausage Fattoush

Chop 1/2kg ready to eat sausages (smoked/ cured), 1/2kg each chopped (cucumber, tomato, onion), mint, lemon juice, salt, pepper, olive oil. Mix in 1Kg crushed khakra pieces (or chopped rotis/ chappati noodles)

Drink: 4Kg

Buttermilk/ Ice tea

Dessert: 2Kg

Trifle:

In a wide glass bowl add 1 layer of sponge cake. smear all over with condensed milk. Add a layer of crushed cookies. Add another layer of cake. Add a thick layer of cut fruits. Add another layer of cake. Add a layer of grated chocolate. Cover with cream.

Total weight: 22 Kg. You can cut down 2 Kg by removing recipes you don't like.

Cooking needed: 5 rounds of flashing.

# Dasavatar Curry

## One curry - Ten Avatars

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped vegetables

Layer 3: 1/2tsp salt, 1 chopped green chilli, 1tsp ginger- garlic paste, 1/4C cashew paste

Layer 4: See below

Cook on high for 2 whistles. Release pressure. Mix in 1/2C milk/ cream/coconut milk

In Layer 4, add the following to change the curry colour. Use a combination of these to create your own shades.

1. 1tsp Kashmiri chili powder for red.
2. 10 strands of saffron mixed with 1 tbsp milk for gold.
3. 1/4tsp turmeric for yellow.
4. 1/2tsp each (cumin, coriander, garam masala powders) for light brown.
5. 1/4C crushed blueberries for blue.
6. 1/4C caramelised onions for dark brown.
7. 1/4C beetroot puree for pink.
8. 1/4C caramelised tomato puree for light red.
9. 1/4C mint/coriander chutney for green.
10. 1/4C carrot puree for orange.

# Navratri feast:

In many homes, it is customary to cook up a rice dish, a dal based snack and a dessert on each day of Navratri (Nine nights), an autumn festival to celebrate the manifestation of divine feminine energy.

## ***Cooking starches:***

### **Step 1: Make tadka**

Make tadka of mustard, urad dal, channa dal, dry red chillies, asafoetida, curry leaves. Bottle.

### **Step 2: Mix in additives**

1. Mix with stir fried, grated coconut: Coconut rice mixture.
2. Mix with coriander/ mint/ curry leaves thokku: Cilantro rice/ mint rice/ curry leaves mixture.
3. Mix with roast and ground pepper - Cumin : Pepper rice (Samba Saadham) mixture.
4. Mix with roast and coarsely ground peanut/ cashew/ almonds/ sesame: Nutty rice mixture.
5. Mix with lemon juice, turmeric powder: Lemon rice mixture.
- 6: Mix with OPOS tamarind paste, jaggery, pepper powder: Tamarind rice mixture.

### **Step 3: Mix in starch**

Mix the above mixture with cooked and cooled rice/ washed and drained poha/ shredded idiyappam/ steamed rava/ steamed rolled oats and salt to taste.

10 mixes \* 5 starches = 50 varieties of Prasad ready without sweat.

## ***Sundal Ideas (dal based snack):***

Soak 1/2C each (whole mung dal, horse gram, desi channa) in 4C water mixed with 2tsp salt overnight. Drain.

In a 2L cooker, layer as below

Layer 1: 1/2C water, 1tbsp oil

Layer 2: Soaked dals arranged in three piles

Layer 3: 1tbsp chopped chilli, 1/2tsp asafoetida

Cook on high heat for 6 whistles (5 minutes). Let pressure settle. Remove

each pile separately. Mix in chopped cilantro, bottled tadka, grated coconut, 1tsp lemon juice.

### **Replace/Supplement:**

- Whole mung with whole Channa dal/ chickpeas/ whole fenugreek seeds/dried peas/black eyed peas/kidney beans/soy beans/peanuts/butter beans)
- Soaked dry legumes with fresh legumes/ sprouts (Fresh green peas, sweet corn etc.)

#### **Dessert Ideas:**

##### **Burfis:**

Heat 1C sugar and 1/4C water for 6 whistles. Release pressure.

Add 1/4C Cashew powder, 1/4C Badam powder, 1/4C walnut powder, 1/4C pistachio powder in greased cups that can hold 1C liquid.

Add 1/4C hot syrup into each cup using stainless steel measuring cup. Mix all and let set.

##### **Katlis/Rolls:**

Soak 1/4C each (almonds, pista, cashew, walnuts) for 2 hours. Blend each separately to a paste without water. Place in greased cups that can hold 1C liquid.

In a 2L cooker, add 1tbsp ghee, 1C sugar, 1/4C water. Cook on high heat for 8 whistles. Release pressure.

Add 1/4C hot syrup into each cup using a stainless steel measuring cup. Knead after it cools and shape it the way you like.

##### **Kerala Pradhamans:**

In a 2L cooker triple flash as below

Layer 1: 1/4C ghee, 1/4C Water

Layer 2: 1/2C each (Mango, Pineapple, Banana)

Layer 3: 1/4C Jaggery over each pile

Flash for 3 whistles.

Remove each pile and mix in 1C coconut milk to make Pradhaman.

Or mix in 1/4C condensed milk and 1C milk to make Payasam/Kheer.

##### **Kesari:**

In a 2L cooker, add 4C water, 1C sugar, 1tsp cardamom powder, 1/4C ghee. Cook for 1 whistle.

Mango kesari: Mix in 1C hot syrup with 1/4C mango pulp, 1/4C double roasted rava.

Banana Kesari: Mix in 1C hot syrup with 1/4C banana pulp, 1/4C double roasted rava.

Sapota Kesari: Mix in 1C hot syrup with 1/4C chikoo pulp, 1/4C double roasted rava.

Pineapple Kesari: Mix in 1C hot syrup with 1/4C pineapple pulp, 1/4C double roasted rava.

Jack fruit Kesari: Mix in 1C hot syrup with 1/4C jackfruit pulp, 1/4C double roasted rava.

Kerala Pazham Nurukku:

Layer 1: 1/4C ghee, 1/4C Water

Layer 2: 1/2C each (Mango, Pineapple, Banana) chopped big

Layer 3: 1/4C Jaggery over each pile

Flash for 3 whistles.

Remove each pile separately.

Konkani Rasayana:

Mix 1/2C fruit pulp (see below), 3tsp sugar, 1 crushed cardamom, 1C thick coconut milk. Chill and serve.

1. Mango pulp
2. Banana pulp
3. Pineapple pulp
4. Sapota (Chiku) pulp
5. Jack fruit pulp

Shrikhand:

Place 1Kg yogurt in a fine meshed filter. Let water drain away till you get a smooth paste. Mix/gently squeeze to drain more water. Mix in 1/4C powdered sugar, 20 strands of saffron, 1tsp cardamom powder, 1/4C Fruit pulp (see below)

1. Mango pulp
2. Banana pulp
3. Pineapple pulp
4. Chikoo pulp

## 5. Jack fruit pulp

### Dry fruit Ladoo:

Blend 1C chopped deseeded dates/ dry figs, 1/4C each roasted nuts, grains (see below), 1/8tsp cardamom powder to a coarse paste. Shape into small balls.

1. Cashew and Thin poha
2. Almonds and Rolled oats
3. Walnuts and Red, roasted poha
4. Pistachio and Corn flakes
5. Peanuts and Wheat flakes

# OPOS Technique 14/26: No Cutting

One recipe. No cutting. A thousand dishes from a hundred cuisines!

After cooking time was brought to under 5 minutes for many recipes, the other big problem surfaced - cutting. Members demanded recipes that can be put together fast without elaborate preparation. A bunch of recipes, which needed no cutting/very minimal preparatory work were developed. Use these ideas to throw a party in an instant.

Starters:

Cauliflower/ Broccoli Fondue, Pindi Channa, Paneer tikka, Pepper chicken, Uppukari, Soya tikka, Sundal

Soups:

Tomato soup, Broccoli soup, Mushroom soup, Spinach soup, Dal shorba, Gazpacho, Rasam, Chicken soup

Breakfast:

Achari semia, Achari noodles, Muesli, Morekali, Pongal, Upma, Grits porridge

Lunch:

Penne arabiatta, Papad pickle pulao, Pesto pulao, Achari channa pulao, Pasta achari, Pesto pasta, Mushroom biriyani, Kiribath, Mac and Cheese, Mutter pulao, Pasta Alfredo, Pasta carbonara, Thayir Semia, Pasta Spinaci, Mutton Biriyani, Pasta Funghi,

Curries:

Soya Pudina Masala, Keerai Masiyal, Achari Sabji, Prawn Masal, Macher Jhol, Meen kolambu, Bhindi Shorshe, Cauliflower Posto, Rogani kumbh, Shahi Bhindi, Thakkali Kuruma, Soya Kuruma

Methi Muttar masala, Methi Malai Muttar, Tamatar kadhi, Gobhi Musallam, Palak dal, Paneer Korma, Achari Bhindi Kofta, Dimer Jhol.

Desserts:

Dulce De Leche, Aval payasam, Semia Payasam, paruppu payasam, Bhapa Doi, Chakkara pongal, Mysorepak, Shahi Tukda, Qubani ka meetha

Drinks:

Sharbath, Lassi, Dum Tea

Dips:

Hummus, Chutneys, Pesto, Kashundi

Pickles:

Hari mirch achaar, Avakkaya, Thokkus,

Most of the no cutting futting curries are summarised in the general format below.

## 1. No Cutting North Indian curry template

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, your favourite oil.

Layer 2: 250g any combination of (Paneer, Tofu, Soaked soya chunks, sprouts, fresh legumes, soaked dry legumes, soaked lentils, torn edible greens, smashed vegetables, baby potatoes, baby carrots, mushroom, whole okra, snapped beans, whole beans, cauliflower, broccoli, precut meats, cleaned fish/seafood).

Layer 3: 1tbsp any combination of (Ginger paste, garlic paste, caramelised tomato paste, caramelised onion paste, mustard paste, cashew nut paste, poppy seed paste, coconut paste, tamarind paste, hung yogurt, mint paste, pickle)

Layer 4: 1tsp any combination of (garam masala, your favourite spice mix, cumin powder, coriander powder, pepper powder kasuri methi, amchoor powder)

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder)

Cook on high for 2 to 10 whistles. Release pressure. Serve as dry curry.

Can mix in 1C (stock, water milk, cream, yogurt, cooked dal) to make a gravy.

Can mix in 2C cooked starch(chopped flatbread, rice flakes etc.,) to make a meal.

## 2. No Cutting South Indian curry template

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, your favourite oil.

Layer 2: 250g any combination of (Soaked soya chunks, sprouts, fresh legumes, soaked dry legumes, soaked dal, torn edible greens, smashed vegetables, baby potatoes, baby carrots, whole okra, snapped beans, whole beans, cauliflower, broccoli, precut meats, cleaned fish/seafood).

Layer 3: 1tbsp any combination of (Ginger paste, garlic paste, caramelised tomato paste, caramelised onion paste, cashew nut paste, coconut paste, Tamarind paste, hung yogurt, pickle, thokku).

Layer 4: 1tsp any combination of (sambar powder, your favourite spice mix, cumin powder, coriander powder, pepper powder), 1/4tsp (asafoetida, turmeric powder)

Layer 5: 1/2tsp each (salt, chilli powder)

Cook on high for 2 to 10 whistles. Release pressure. Serve as dry curry.

Can mix in 1C (stock, water, coconut milk, yogurt, cooked dal) to make a gravy.

Can mix in 2C cooked starch(rice, millets etc.,) to make a meal.

### 3. No Cutting International template

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 3tbsp water, your favourite oil.

Layer 2: 250g any combination of (Soaked soya chunks, sprouts, fresh legumes, soaked dry legumes, soaked dal, torn edible greens, smashed vegetables, baby potatoes, baby carrots, whole okra, snapped beans, whole beans, cauliflower, broccoli, precut meats, cleaned fish/seafood).

Layer 3: 1tbsp any combination of (Garlic paste, caramelised tomato paste, caramelised onion paste)

Layer 4: 1tsp your favourite spice mix, 1tsp your favourite sauce

Layer 5: 1/4tsp each (salt, pepper powder)

Cook on high for 2 to 10 whistles. Release pressure. Serve dry.

Can mix in 1C (stock, water) to make a stew/ gravy.

Can mix in 2C cooked starch(rice, couscous, pasta etc.,) to make a meal.

Tips to avoid/minimize cutting & washing

1. Use whole veggies:

Beans, cluster beans, broad beans, mushrooms etc can be used whole. No

chopping needed.

## 2. Use uncut Spinach

Spinach need not be cut. The whole bunch can be washed and cooked as it is, after trimming roots. It can then be mashed.

## 3. Crush veggies

Ivy gourd (Tendli/ kovakkai), baby brinjals, baby potatoes, baby corn, mushrooms, Brussels sprouts, tomatoes etc can be crushed and used in curries. A 2L cooker works great for crushing vegetables!

## 4. Cauliflower/ Broccoli

Needs no cutting. Just snap off florets and use.

## 5. Onions / cabbage

Buy a slicer. Makes short work of even a mound of onions/ cabbage.

## 6. Beetroot/ Carrot/ potatoes/ zucchini/ squash

Buy a julienne peeler. It just peels match stick sized strips.

## 7. Carrot/ Capsicum/ firm fleshed vegetables

A nicer dicer like instrument works fine for these vegetables.

## 8. No-Cutting additives:

Always stock mushrooms, soya chunks, baby corn, sprouts, green peas, paneer, tofu, baby potatoes etc. These can be used straight in all curries without any cutting.

### Minimising washing:

Plan dishes do that the cooker need not be washed between each dish.

If you need to scrub/ wash away tough stains, add a few drops of dishwash liquid in your cooker. Fill it half with water. Cook for one whistle. Rinse & wipe.

# Layer and Flash Indian Cuisine

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped vegetables/seafood/chicken/mutton

Layer 3: 1/2C curry paste (see below)

Layer 4: 1/2tsp salt, chilli powder

Cook on high for 2 to 10 whistles (5 to 9 minutes)

(2 whistles for vegetables/seafood, 5 whistles for chicken, 10 whistles for mutton).

North Indian curry pastes:

1. 1/2C caramelised onion paste + 1tsp each (garam masala, ginger-garlic paste) = Dopyaza.

2. 1/2C caramelised tomato paste + 1tsp each (garam masala, ginger-garlic paste) + 2tbsp butter = Makhni.

3. 1/4C each Caramelised (onion paste, tomato paste) + 1tsp each (garam masala, ginger-garlic paste) = Masala.

4. 1/2C cashew paste + 1tsp each (garam masala, ginger-garlic paste) = Korma.

5. 1/2C thick yogurt, 2tbsp gram flour, 1tsp each (garam masala, ginger-garlic paste)= Kadhi.

6. 3C finely chopped spinach + 1tbsp each Caramelised (onion paste, tomato paste) + 1tsp each (garam masala, ginger-garlic paste)= Saag.

7. 1/4C cashew paste + 1/2C cooked dal + 1tbsp each Caramelised (onion paste, tomato paste) = Dal Nawabi.

8. 1/2C cashew paste + 1/4C thick yogurt + 1tbsp each Caramelised (onion paste, tomato paste), 1tbsp raisin paste + 1tsp each (garam masala, ginger-garlic paste) = Pasanda.

South Indian Curry pastes:

1. 2tbsp OPOS tamarind paste + 2tsp sambar powder+ 1tbsp dhania powder + 1/2tsp jaggery = Tamil Kulambu.

1a. 1tbsp OPOS tamarind paste + 2tsp sambar powder+ 1tbsp each Caramelised (onion paste, tomato paste) + 1/2tsp jaggery = Tamil Kaara Kulambu.

2. 2tsp OPOS tamarind paste + 1tsp sambar powder +1/2C cooked dal =

Tamil Sambar.

3. 1/4C each (coconut paste + cooked dal) + 1tsp each (chilli, cumin paste)= Tamil Kootu.
4. 1/4C each (coconut paste + thick yogurt) + 1tsp each (chilli, cumin paste)= Kerala Aviyal.
5. 1/2C soaked and ground channa dal paste + 1tbsp chilli paste + 1/2 tsp each (asafoetida, turmeric powder+ salt)= Tamil Usili.
6. 1/2C thick yogurt + 1tsp chilli paste + 1tbsp each (coconut paste + spiced lentil powder)= Telugu Majjiga pulusu.
7. 1/2C cooked dal + 1tbsp each Caramelised (onion paste, tomato paste) = Telugu Pappu.
8. 1/4C each (cashew paste + coconut paste) + 1tbsp each Caramelised (onion paste, tomato paste)+ 1/2 tsp garam masala = Kannada saagu.

Mix and match ANY of the above curry base with ANY other curry base to create a brand new curry!

# Layer and Flash World Cuisine:

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 1/4C water, 2tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped vegetables/seafood/chicken/mutton

Layer 3: Seasoning (see below)

Layer 4: 1/4tsp each (salt, pepper powder)

Cook on high for 2 to 8 whistles (2 for vegetables and seafood, 5 for chicken, 10 for mutton). Mix all.

Want gravy? Mix in caramelised onion/ caramelised tomato paste/ stock.

Want a meal? Mix in some starch (potatoes/sweet corn/ chopped bread/ cooked rice).

Remember, anything goes with anything. The pairings are cultural and not God given. Mix and match freely!

Seasoning: Buy ready made/ Make your own

1. Italian Seasoning: (oregano, thyme, basil, rosemary, sage, marjoram, garlic powder).
2. French Fines Herbes: (chervil, chives, tarragon, parsley).
3. Greek: (Basil, oregano, thyme dill, marjoram, garlic powder, onion powder, parsley, cinnamon, nutmeg).
4. British mixed spice: (cinnamon, coriander, ginger powder, mace, allspice, nutmeg, caraway).
5. Dutch speculaaskruiden (cinnamon, ginger powder, cardamom, coriander, cloves).
6. Chinese Five spice powder (cinnamon, cloves, fennel, star anise, and Sichuan pepper).
7. Japanese Togarashi: Seven spice powder (chilli flakes, sanshō, orange zest, white sesame, black sesame, hemp seed, ginger powder, dried seaweed, poppy seed).
8. Thai Seasoning: (ginger powder, cumin, chilli powder, dessicated coconut, coconut milk powder, lemon grass powder, lime zest, garlic powder).
9. Filipino 5 spice powder: (cinnamon, cloves, fennel, Sichuan pepper, star anise).

10. Mediterranean seven spice powder: (cumin, coriander, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, paprika).
  11. Mexican Seasoning: (cumin, coriander, chilli, cinnamon, oregano, smoked paprika).
  12. Moroccan Ras el Hanout: (cumin, coriander, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, saffron turmeric).
  13. Spanish Seasoning: (oregano, rosemary, thyme).
  14. Vietnamese Seasoning: (annatto seeds, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, fennel, star anise, Sichuan pepper, star anise).
  15. Korean Seasoning: (chilli powder, garlic powder, ginger powder, gochujang (chilli paste), deonjang (soy paste), sesame seeds).
  16. Israeli Seasoning: (chilli flakes, cumin, oregano, paprika, parsley, coriander).
  17. Palestinian Za'atr: (marjoram, oregano, sumac, thyme, sesame seeds).
  18. Ethiopian Berbere: (cardamom, cumin, chilli, fenugreek, ginger, paprika)
  19. Egyptian Dukkah: (coriander, cumin, cashew, hazelnuts, pistachio, sesame seeds).
  20. Tunisian Harissa: (cumin, coriander, garlic, caraway, chilli, onion powder).
  21. Georgian Khmeli Suneli (coriander, fenugreek seeds, fenugreek leaves, dill, bay leaves, dry mint).
  22. Latin American Adobo: (Garlic powder, oregano, paprika).
  23. Jamaican Jerk spice: (Allspice, cinnamon, onion flakes, thyme, paprika, parsley).
  24. Persian Adivideh: (Cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, cumin).
  25. Turkish Baharat: (Cumin, coriander, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, dried mint,)
  26. Lebanese seasoning: (Thyme, sesame, sumac)
  27. Puerto Rican Sazon (achiote, coriander, cumin, oregano, garlic powder)
- ...and so on.

# Cook Free

## One recipe. A million possibilities!

Forget recipes. Remember Themes. Cook Free!

In a 2L cooker, layer as below:

Layer 1: 2tbsp water, 1tsp oil

Layer 2: 2C chopped vegetables

Layer 3: Your favourite spice mix

Layer 4: 1/4tsp each (salt, chilli powder)

Cook on high for 2 whistles (5 minutes). Release pressure.

1. Use as a dry curry
2. Use as sandwich stuffing
3. Roll up in a flatbread into a burrito
4. Mash all and serve with toasted pav as Pav Bhaji
5. Mix in coconut milk/cream to into a korma
6. Mix in cooked rice to make fried rice
7. Mix in chopped leftover chappati/parota/naan/roti to make a meal
8. Mix in puffed rice to make a meal (Uggani)
9. Mix in thin rice flakes/ washed and drained thick rice flakes to make poha
10. Mix in salad vegetables & dressing to make a salad.
11. Mash with bread and shallow fry into koftas/ cutlets
12. Blend with milk/ stock into a soup
13. Mix with yogurt into a raitha
14. Blend with coconut, chillies & yogurt into a Tambli
15. Blend with tamarind, dry red chillies into a thokku
16. Mix in masal vada powder into an Usili
17. Mix in roasted gram flour into a Zunka
18. Mix in grated coconut into a Thoran
19. Mix in coconut-cumin-chilli paste & Yogurt to make an aviyal
20. Mix in crumbled leftover idli/cooked grits/chopped bread to make upma.

This can feed you for life! Why remember recipes when you can create a new one every time ? Cook Free!

# Thank you!

Thank you dear reader, for taking the effort to know about OPOS. We hope you join us in spreading the word and sharing the magic.

Thank you OPOStars, for making this magic happen. Thank you Archna Venkatesswaran, Shailendra Kumar, Pavithra Elangovan and Dhivya Karthik for your gorgeous pictures, Sareetha Sugunan for the logo, Srilakshmi Anand and Yeshaswini Halthore for your illustrations. Thank you bloggers, for risking ridicule by blogging about OPOS even before it caught on.

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None of this could have happened without the scores of volunteers who step in time to time keep the forum humming. Gear up team - our journey has just begun!

# Annadata Sukhibhava!

May the ones who feed remain blessed

Chapter 18 of Yajur Veda, believed to have been composed over 5000 years ago, is called Chamakam, because of the repeated use of the word 'Cha may'(To me).

It is probably the earliest and most detailed wish list, seeking almost everything. It is a very popular chant and very moving, when chanted well. Not surprisingly, the chant starts with food! Unless good food happens, nothing else happens.

*Vaajas cha may,  
Prasavas cha may,  
Prayathis cha may,  
Prasithis cha may,  
Deedhis cha may,  
Krathus cha may*

Grant me food,  
Grant me the permission to eat food,  
Ensure purity of food,  
Grant me a keen desire to relish food, digest food,  
Grant me those rituals that would procure food.

The fourth Anuvaka ends with

*annam cha may  
akshuch cha may  
vriihiyash cha may  
yavaash cha may  
maashhaash cha may  
tilaash cha may  
mudgaash cha may  
khalvaash cha may  
godhuumaash cha may  
masuraashcha may  
priyamgavash cha may  
anavash cha may  
shyaamaakaash cha may  
nivaaraash cha may*

Grant me cereals, millets, corn;  
Grant me never diminishing food and grain;  
May I never experience hunger;  
Grant me paddy, barley, urad dal, sesame;  
Grant me mung dal, castor seeds, wheat & masur dal;  
Grant me millets, small bushy millets, superior rice;  
Grant me excellent root vegetables and wild grains.

"May I never experience hunger" has on our wish list from the very beginning. We believe there is nothing nobler than feeding a hungry person. We see OPOS as virtual Anna dhaan, a way to feed the world. It is only fitting OPOS should arise in India, the land of Anna dhaan.

[U2]space

[U3]comma

[U4]combine all 1tsp

[U5]10

[U6]4 minutes