

Curry is an international dish with a sauce or gravy seasoned with spices, mainly derived from the interchange of Indian cuisine with European taste in food, starting with the Portuguese and followed by the Dutch and British. Many dishes that would be described as curries in English are found in the native cuisines of countries in Southeast Asia and East Asia.

A first step in the creation of curry was the arrival in India of spicy hot chili peppers, along with other ingredients such as tomatoes and potatoes, part of the Columbian exchange of plants between the Old World and the New World. During the British Raj, Anglo-Indian cuisine developed, leading to Hannah Glasse's 18th century recipe for "currey the India way" in England. Curry was then spread in the 19th century by indentured Indian sugar workers to the Caribbean, and by British traders to Japan. Further exchanges around the world made curry a fully international dish.

Many types of curry exist in different countries. In Southeast Asia, curry often contains a spice paste and coconut milk. In India, the spices are fried in oil or ghee to create a paste; this may be combined with a water-based broth, or sometimes with milk or coconut milk. In China and Korea, curries are based on a commercial curry powder. Curry restaurants outside their native countries often adapt their cuisine to suit local tastes; for instance, Thai restaurants in the West sell red, yellow, and green curries with chili peppers of those colours, often combined with additional spices of the same colours. In Britain, curry has become the national dish, with some types adopted from India, others modified or wholly invented, as with Chicken tikka masala, created by British Bangladeshi restaurants in the 20th century.

Since the mid-20th century, curries of many national styles have become popular far from their origins, and increasingly become part of international fusion cuisine.[21] Alan Davidson writes that curry's worldwide extension is a result of the Indian diaspora and globalisation, starting within the British Empire, and followed by economic migrants who brought Indian cuisine to many countries.[24] In 1886, 咖喱 (Gālǐ) (Chinese pronunciation of "curry") appeared among the Chinese in Singapore.[23] Malay Chinese people then most likely brought curry to China.[24]

In India, spices are always freshly prepared for use in sauces.[28] Derived from such mixtures (but not containing curry leaves[29]), curry powder is a ready-prepared spice blend first sold by Indian merchants to European colonial traders. This was commercially available from the late 18th century,[30][31] with brands such as Crosse & Blackwell and Sharwood's persisting to the present.[32] British traders introduced the powder to Meiji era Japan, in the mid-19th century, where it became known as Japanese curry.[22]