



1131 14th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005 • 202.537.5674 • www.CulinAerie.com • info@culinaerie.com

Cook the Book: Indian Punjab Cuisine
With Chef Instructor Rupen Rao
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Butter Chicken

Murg Makhani (North India)

Butter Chicken is a great introduction to someone who has never had Indian food. This sweet, creamy and mildly spicy dish with chicken is a favorite. The key ingredient is not butter, nor chicken, instead it is 'dry fenugreek leaves' also called 'Qasoori Methi.' This dry fenugreek leaf is dried in northern parts of India and is extensively used to flavor north Indian dishes.

Serves: 3-4

Ingredients

4 Tablespoons unsalted butter
1 inch cinnamon stick
3 cardamom pods, muddled
3 cloves
1 Tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
1 Tablespoon fresh garlic, minced
1 jalapeno, deseeded and minced
1 ½ cups tomato puree
1 Tablespoon ground fenugreek leaves
½ cup heavy whipping cream
1 Tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon sea salt, or as desired
Grilled chicken (see below)

Grilled Chicken:

4 Tablespoons sunflower oil
2 lbs boneless skinless chicken breasts, chopped in 2 inch cubes
1 teaspoon sea salt
2 Tablespoons lemon juice
1 Tablespoon sweet ground paprika
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon ground black pepper

Instructions

- Pre-heat oven to 400 F.
- In a medium-size mixing bowl, add 'Grilled Chicken' ingredients and massage all chicken pieces with the ingredients.
- Spread on a small cookie sheet and bake for 20 minutes.
- Meanwhile, prepare the sauce by melting butter in a 4 qt saucepot over medium heat.
- Add whole spices – cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves. Sauté for a minute.
- Add ginger, garlic, and jalapenos, sauté for 2-3 minutes or until the raw aromas of the aromatics cooks away.
- Add tomato puree and fenugreek leaves. Cover and cook for 5 minutes to remove the raw tomato flavor.
- Add cream, sugar, and salt. Mix. Cook for a couple of minutes.
- Add grilled chicken. Mix. If the sauce is too thick, add ¼ cup of water, or as desired. Serve.



Amritsar Fried Fish

Amritsari Machhli

Amritsar is the capital city of Punjab. Deep-fried fish from this Indian state is quite popular. The fish is covered in a chickpea flour batter with bishop weed (ajwain) along with some other spices, and then fried. It is served in newspaper packets and is had fresh as it comes out piping hot from the oil in which it was fried!

Serves: 4

Ingredients

1 lb cod or swordfish, boneless and skinless, cut in 4 inch pieces

Batter:

2 cups chickpea flour

1 cup water

1 egg, beaten

½ cup plain whole milk yogurt

1 Tablespoon salt

1 teaspoon ground sweet paprika

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1 Tablespoon bishop weed

½ teaspoon ground cayenne

4 cups canola or vegetable oil, to deep-fry

Instructions

- Pre-heat oil in a fry-pan or in a saucepan until the oil reaches 360 F.
- In a medium-size mixing bowl, prepare the batter. Make sure that the batter is thick enough, just like you would prepare a pancake batter.
- Whisk it for a minute or until there are no lumps and the batter appears smooth. Add a little water if the batter is too thick.
- Pat-dry fish pieces and dip them in the batter and carefully release them in hot oil. You will need to fry the fish pieces in 4 equal batches so as to not over crowd the fry-pan.
- Fry for about 4-5 minutes, or until golden brown, and then remove and place on absorbent paper so as to allow excess oil to be soaked by the absorbent paper.
- Serve hot along with green chutney.



Punjab Home-style Lentils

Dal Tadka

This is a classic lentil dish that is served in north Indian restaurants. Back home, you can find this dish served on street-side eateries, especially when you are driving long distances.

Serves: 4

Ingredients

1-½ cups raw split pigeon peas
(toor dal), rinsed in cold running
water OR same amount of orange/
French lentils
1-teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon turmeric
½ teaspoon ground cayenne

Seasoning:

2 Tablespoons ghee
1/8-teaspoon hing (asafoetida
powder), OPTIONAL
½ teaspoon black mustard seeds
1-teaspoon cumin seeds
1 dry red chili, broken into 2 pieces;
do not discard seeds
½ teaspoon turmeric
1-teaspoon finely chopped jalapeno;
remove vein and seeds
¼ cup finely chopped cilantro

Instructions

- In a 5 qt saucepan, add 3½ cups water and lentils. Bring to a boil.
- Add salt, turmeric, ground cayenne and stir. Reduce heat to low and cook for 1 hour on low heat (partially cover the saucepan). If lentils start to dry out, then you may add ½ cup water.
- In a small fry pan, melt ghee over medium heat.
- Add hing and black mustard seeds; allow mustard seeds to pop.
- Add cumin seeds, turmeric, jalapeno and red chilies, and sauté for 2 minutes.
- Pour this seasoning on top of the cooked lentils and immediately cover the saucepan.
- After 5 minutes, add cilantro and stir. Adjust salt, if needed. Serve.



Corn Saag

Butte ka Saag

This is a green curry preparation; restaurants will replace corn with paneer, or tandoori chicken, and will add heavy whipping cream. I, however, like to leave it clean and simple. 'Saag' is a beaten or pureed green. In this traditional recipe from that state of Punjab, I use spinach and mustard greens, which is a traditional combination. Instead of corn, you can choose to use chicken or paneer.

Serves: 4

Ingredients

Puree:
4 cups chopped fresh baby spinach leaves

2 Tablespoons ghee
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
½ cup minced red onion (½ medium size onion approximately)
1-teaspoon finely chopped jalapeno, remove vein and seeds
1-Tablespoon finely chopped peeled ginger
1-Tablespoon ground turmeric
1-cup corn kernels
Salt, to taste

Instructions

- Bring 1-cup water to a boil.
- Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, add spinach. Pour boiled water in the mixing bowl. Mix and let the mixture sit for 10 minutes.
- Pour this mixture along with all its water into the blender. Puree this mixture and pour it back into the mixing bowl. This is the base for Saag.
- In a 3 qt saucepan, heat ghee over medium heat.
- Sauté cumin seeds, onions, jalapenos, and ginger. Sauté for a couple of minutes.
- Add turmeric, mix.
- Add pureed spinach, corn, and salt. Mix.
- Cover partially, cook on low heat for 5 minutes. Stir every other minute. Serve.



Cumin scented Cilantro Rice

Jeera Chawal

All Indian restaurants serve this dish as an accompaniment to curries. It is easy to make, tasting best when made with rice cooked a day before preparation of this recipe.

Serves: 4

Ingredients

1-Tablespoon ghee
1-teaspoon cumin seeds
1-cup frozen and thawed petite
green peas, OPTIONAL
Salt, to taste
1-Tablespoon chopped cilantro
2 cups cooked white basmati rice

Instructions

- In a medium frying pan, over medium heat, melt ghee.
- Add cumin seeds and sauté for one minute.
- Add peas and mix. Sauté for 3 minutes, stirring once every minute.
- Add salt and cilantro, mix.
- Remove the fry pan from heat.
- Add rice and gently mix until all ingredients have mixed well. Make sure not to break rice grains while mixing rice. Serve.