



AMATEUR GASTRONOMICAL EXPLORER'S JOURNAL

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Introduction

Let me start by saying that I did not even know how to boil an egg or cook rice until well into my job as a computer programmer when I had to travel abroad first time from India. As a pampered Bengali boy with a mother who is always ready to indulge you with awesome food, I just did not get the exposure to cooking and how pleasurable it can be instead of just a chore. At a young age cooking was really like a chore but the outcome of cooking was always the attraction; I would rather spend time playing cricket, goofing up with friends than cook or do any real contributory work at home.

As I engaged in cooking more and more, I realized I had a knack for it and I didn't find it as a chore. Perspective just changed, Food, cooking and eating transformed me to different world. For me the experience involves thinking about the food, researching recipes, followed by preparing and then yes! eating. I have heard many say that they get so tired with cooking and the aroma of the food that they do not feel like eating much, well that is not me; I wait to taste and then enjoy a good serving of what I cooked. While my son and wife had been my most ardent critique, I do not let myself easy too, like coding I do an unbiased review of the food I cook and identify improvements I can do. Food is fun and keeps me going, I can indulge in endless daydreaming about food, talking about it to the extent my better half finds it bordering eccentricity.

My all-time favorites are mutton roll and Biryani. I can have either or both foods for all meals through my entire life. I do realize that it will really hasten my exit from mortal state, and I have no idea whether these foods are available in hell or heaven wherever I land up, so I prefer to limit my intake and try to have them for a little longer.

My passion about food goes almost hand in hand with my passion about travel. I love to explore the variety in places and the food that the place present. I am fascinated by the diversity in terrain, culture, ingredients of food but yet the common aspects that pervades humanity, food truly is the unifying factor.

I had been cooking for few years now, but I do not have any formal training. I've learnt through word of mouth, cookbooks, blogs etc. I like to cook and know a bit about various cuisines, so I don't end up cooking one dish enough to master it but rather I am kind of an explorer of cuisines. I at times make some adjustment of my own and tend to forget the recipe I followed or the adjustment so I thought to put together this journal noting down recipes that I can refer for my own use and share if someone courageous enough to refer for use and finds it useful.

I do not claim any of the recipes here to be authentic but if someone determines a recipe to be authentic its likely a coincidence so no one should feel offended that the recipe here deviates from what they knew to be authentic. Similarly, if someone finds the recipe same or like any other blog, book or

reference material of any nature it is a coincidence only. I must also note that as an amateur untrained cook I may have noted some ingredients or quantity inaccurately in the recipes contained in this journal.

I personally enjoy cooking like performing a Chemistry experiment in a lab so if anyone who is exploratory in nature like me then at their own risk they may feel free to review and use the recipes here to conduct their own experiment at their own lab (kitchen), enjoy and improvise.

Note: This journal will always be a work in progress, and I will be updating content at my will so recipes may get adjusted as I realize necessary alterations during repeat experiments.

Arunoday Chatterjee

Gratitude

As a self-trained and learn through failure cook, I have leaned on several sources for information and continue to do the same in my cooking journey. I would always be grateful to all the sources and continue to be amazed by their knowledge and abilities. I may have inadvertently missed some but below is a list of my sources and inspiration of learning as of now, I am sure there will be as I continue to explore so I will keep adding to this list.

- Swapna Chatterjee – My mother. I inherited my taste bud and liking of food from her. She has fed me some of the best dishes I ever had and will ever have, she continues to do the same. Her specialty is Bengali traditional food and her ability to cook consistently with the same taste without ever using fixed measuring spoons etc. amazes me.
- Dipti Banerjee – My late mother-in-law. I was lucky to have a mother-in-law who was an awesome cook and always ready to pamper me with some of the most delectable dishes with the added benefit of getting non-Indian dishes sitting back in India like fish croquette, fried chicken much before KFC was launched.
- Mousumi Chatterjee – My better half. Well, she hardly went to the kitchen before our marriage, but she transformed into a great cook learning from both my mother and her mother, her cousin sister, her friends at Bangalore and so lot more variety. My learning to cook was an indirect inspiration from her directive – if you want more than what you get then better learn to cook! Despite the directive and me cooking these days she continues to invest time in learning new recipes and trying them.
- Chandrima Ganguly – My sister in law who can cook variety of delectable dishes and has a cunning convincing aptitude to feed people with outrageous amount of good food in a very short span of time that she can get hold of you.
- Ainesh Chatterjee – My son is not a cook but inspired most of what I cook. He has been my most fervent and candid critique. He does possess a versatile taste bud which evolved with time and that evolution provided some interesting twist in expectations which made me re-evaluate or adjust recipes that resulted in something nice most of the time.
- All the cooks and Chefs in various restaurants that I was lucky to have food but never got to know the creator of the dish while those tastes left everlasting gastronomical memories.
- Books
 - Peter Reinhart – Bread baking
 - Julia Child – French cooking
 - Marcela Hazan – Italian cooking
 - Persian cooking – Najmieh Batmanglij
- Various blogs, websites, youtube channels that I refer or had referred such as
 - <https://kitchenofdebjani.com/>
 - <https://www.mexicoinmykitchen.com>
 - <https://honestcooking.com/>
 - <https://www.whiskaffair.com/>
 - <https://www.daringgourmet.com>
 - <https://www.indianhealthyrecipes.com>
 - <https://food.ndtv.com>
 - <https://www.196flavors.com>

- <https://www.shanazrafiq.com>
- <https://ndtv.food.com>
- <https://www.bongeats.com>
- Deccani's kitchen – youtube channel
- The Dawgatha's BBQ – youtube channel
- Henry's HowTos – youtube channel
- <https://www.nonnabox.com>
- <https://cooking.nytimes.com/>
- <http://www.spoonforkandfood.com>








Contact









I can be contacted @ arunodaychatterjee@gastrowanderer.com for any questions or comments.

Stocking the kitchen

To conduct a variety of culinary experiments with cuisines from across the globe it will be important to gradually stock up the kitchen with variety cooking vessels, appliances, spices and other necessary items.

One nice to have recommendation is to prepare the spice mixes at home while buying the individual ingredients. Below are some equipment's and ingredients that I have added in my kitchen.

Equipment	Description
 Colander/mesh strainer	To wash vegetables or strain rice/pasta etc. Having at least one or multiple with varying size is helpful
 Grater	To grate various things. I've found the standing ones to be very useful. Having a handheld miniature version is also helpful to grate few things like cheese.
Knives	Working with good knives brings joy and it is critical for safety, a blunt knife is a hazard. Investing in good knives should be considered. I personally use Cutco knives and I am very happy with them; they have some amazing Customer service and it is something to handover across generation. A chef knife or a santoku knife along with pairing and carving knife should be a good collection. I like to clean and cut the meats myself when I can so I also have a butchers knife.
 Measuring spoons	Spoons with specific measures marked in them are very useful especially for baking.
Cutting boards	Good cutting boards are important. I tend to have multiple including one specifically with raised edges and slope for cutting cooked meats so that the juices don't fall off the board.
Spatula	As much variety as you can have. I have wooden, bamboo, steel and silicon. Depending on the cooking vessel these can be paired up.
Frying pan	Need to have varied sizes for different types of frying.
 Kadhai	This vessel is probably the most used one in my kitchen. They come in various sizes and makes such as stainless steel, nonstick, having variety of these depending on the experiments will be helpful.
 Cast Iron Braiser	A nonstick Cast Iron Braiser is a great addition. I really love mine from Chef Geoffrey Zakarian . It has helped me ditch the pressure cooker and use it to slow cook meats in the oven
 Hand Mixer	This is a handy tool which will be very useful for cake and dessert preparations where there is a need to beat ingredients like egg yolk or egg white etc.
 Standing mixer & attachments	This is something that has been a great addition to my kitchen. It speeds up several tasks such as preparing dough. I've the kitchen aid one and bought the meat grinder/sausage maker attachment which I love. They also have pasta making attachments which can be bought if you like to make your own pasta like I do.

 <p>Tortilla press</p>	A cast iron tortilla press is a good addition if you love tortillas.
 <p>Stone or wooden rolling stone/board & rolling pin</p>	This is a necessity if you are making breads like roti, chapati, paratha.
Covered and uncovered containers/bowls	They are very handy to store marinated food etc.
 <p>Sausage pricker</p>	In order to enjoy homemade bratwurst or other sausages with sausage casings this is a good tool to have and prick the sausage casing before cooking them.
 <p>Food processor</p>	A very helpful and time saver addition. Shredding and mixing becomes much easier especially with dishes like Gumbo to get the holy trinity going.
 <p>Mixer & grinder (Mixie)</p>	A favorite in an Indian kitchen, this is like the younger sibling of a food processor. In my kitchen this is the most used equipment and primarily to grind & mix the spices.
 <p>Counter top Rotisserie oven</p>	This is a nice to have addition if one is into kebabs, poultry roasting or better trying out shawarma at home.
 <p>Slow cooker or Crockpot</p>	I would consider this as an essential in the kitchen. I love using them to cook stews, chilies. The slow cooking renders the end result so much more flavorful. Additionally the load and forget makes it easier to manage within work schedule while working from home, the only thing needed is a bit of intelligent preparatory work.
 <p>Sandwich toaster and grill</p>	A sandwich toaster and grill just elevates the sandwich to a higher level with the crispy crust. I learnt it the hard way to buy a bigger one to accommodate larger breads, making paninis or even loading up the sandwich with a little more content.
Kebab skewers	Reusable steel or use and throw bamboo skewers are a must if you are a fan of kebabs. The skewers vary by the type of kebab e.g. for Koobideh kebab the skewers are more flat like swords while it is much thinner for seekh kebabs.
BBQ Grill	Grilled food is something to relish on. Depending on the liking and intensity on experiments it is good to invest in a grilling equipment. It can be a gas, stove top electric, coal/wood fire. Each type will yield something unique. I have a Weber Gas, Weber portable coal.

Smoker	<p>While grilling is great, a more slow and indirectly cooked and smoked meat is something that my tastebud holds at a much higher esteem.</p> <p>There are various smokers available in the market depending on the budget. Read the reviews and then make a call, it may become overwhelming with some purists going for a degree variance etc.,. Unless someone is competing just getting one of these and starting to use and getting a hang of it while enjoying is a better approach than drowning in feedbacks and reviews. I bought myself a Grilla Grills Chimp and I am pretty happy about this Covid time possession and the outlet it provided me during those times.</p> <p>Knowing the smoker will be key and going through the instruction videos on usage will be important. A very important aspect is cleaning the ashes and pellets in the burner after each cooking, it can be extremely dangerous otherwise.</p>
BBQ/Grilling equipments	These vary from spatula, tongs, cleaners and so on and so forth. Invest in as much as is needed.
Variety of oils	Stocking up the kitchen with variety of oils will be important, the oils vary by cuisine so the more varied cuisine you are cooking the more variety of oil you will need. I generally have vegetable oil, olive oil, mustard oil and sesame oil.
Spices	Stocking up the kitchen with whole spices will be important and helpful to prepare home made spice mixes such as Garam Masala, Creole Seasoning etc.
Seasonings	These come handy a lot of times. Some store bought are good but I tend to prepare them at home. One that I love to have use a lot mostly experimental quick meals is Goya Sazon Seasoning with Corriander and Annatto
Chicken stock	I started using this for stews but have fallen into some sort of love or addiction. I now tend to use it wherever I can rationally convince myself to replace water with Chicken stock such as preparing Quinoa, Bulgur or Maftool and even some Dal (Lentil preparations from Indian subcontinent).

Recipes

Indian sub-continent

Bengali

Kosha Murgir Mangsho/ Robibarar Mangsher jhol



This recipe is quite common in Bengali household. It is easily modifiable and depending on the version desired either it can be cooked on the drier side (kosha) or on the more liquid or gravy (jhol) version.

The drier version is generally accompanied with luchi, paratha or chapathi while the liquid version goes with rice, relished mostly on a Sunday lunch.

Ingredients

Chicken – 1 Kg or roughly 2 Lbs cut into curry size pieces (adjust the spices as per the quantity of meat)
Onion – 1 large or 2 medium
Garlic – 6 – 8 garlic cloves
Ginger -1 1/2 – 2 inches
Green chilies – 6 to 8 or more (as per love & tolerance of heat). The aroma of fresh green chilies makes lot of difference
Cilantro/Coriander leaves – Few sprigs and roughly chopped. Do not throw away the stems, they are treasure trove and add lot to the taste, just chop and add
Tomato – 1 medium or ½ big
Mustard oil – 4 – 5 tbsp (This is a key ingredient; the strong aroma and taste makes the most difference)
Turmeric – 1 tsp
Salt – as per taste
Coriander powder – 1 ½ tsp
Cumin powder – 1 tsp
Kashmiri Lal Mirch/Red bell pepper powder – 1 – 2 tsp (this is primarily for color)
Red chili powder or Black pepper powder (optional) – ½ or 1 tsp or more per heat tolerance

Spices for tempering

½ tsp of cumin seeds
½ inch cinnamon
1 green cardamom
1 clove

Steps

1. Make a paste of 3/4th onion, all the green chilies, ginger and garlic

2. Wash the chicken under running water. Let it dry a bit and then marinade the chicken with salt, turmeric powder, the paste above and mustard oil. Let it stand for as long as possible but at least 30 minutes.
3. Roughly chop the remaining onion
4. Roughly chop the coriander/cilantro leaves
5. Roughly chop the tomato or make a paste
6. In a small bowl prepare the spice mixture paste - pour the Kashmiri red chili powder, red chili powder (if used) coriander powder, cumin powder and mix it with a little water such that it forms a thick viscous paste
7. Put a kadai on the oven and pour the mustard oil
8. Once the oil is heated up add the bay leaf, cumin seeds, whole cloves, cardamom and cinnamon
9. Once fragrant add the chopped onions and fry till they are golden in color
10. Add the marinated chicken and cook in low heat till the chicken is fried thoroughly and has released all liquid
11. Pour the spice mixture paste and continue to cook for 5 – 10 minutes
12. Add the chopped tomato and cook for another 10 – 15 minutes till the liquid has almost dried up and the chicken is covered with the cooked paste (kosha chicken)
13. Taste and adjust salt
14. At this stage, the chicken is in a state called 'kosha chicken' and is almost ready to eat. To enjoy kosha chicken, pour the garam masala, mix and cook for 2 – 3 minutes, cover with the lid and remove from heat. Serve with pulao, roti, naan, paratha.
15. To enjoy a more liquid gravy version (jhol) pour adequate water and bring to boil. Let it boil for 5 minutes, pour the garam masala, mix and cover with the lid and switch off heat. Let it sit on the heat for 5 more minutes and then remove from the heat. Serve with plain rice.

Shorshe Murgi (Chicken with mustard)

This is another recipe that is easy to prepare and quite common across Bengali household. In some areas people may not use all the ingredients listed below and hence the taste will be altered a bit. I have enjoyed the one with all the ingredients listed below but one can go experimental and try out without some of the ingredients marked as optional or by varying the quantity of the spices and determine what suites their palate.

I've to note here that, there are similar mustard-based chicken recipes through out the world. The ingredients and methods may vary resulting in unique but great tasting food.

Ingredients

Chicken – 1 Kg or roughly 2 Lbs with bone chicken cut into curry size pieces (boneless can be used but it may miss out from the taste induced by the presence of bones)

Green chilies – 6 to 8 or more (as per love & tolerance of heat). The aroma of fresh green chilies makes lot of difference

Garlic – 4 – 8 cloves depending on the size

Ginger – 1 1/2 inches

Turmeric – 1 tsp

Salt – as per taste

Cilantro/Coriander leaves – Few sprigs and roughly chopped. Do not throw away the stems, they are treasure trove and add lot to the taste, just chop and add
Mustard oil – 4 – 5 tbsp (This is a key ingredient; the strong aroma and taste makes the most difference)
Coconut milk (optional) – 1 tin. In absence of a tinned milk one can soak shredded coconut in hot water for few minutes and churn it in a blender with the water to extract the milk
Kashundi (optional) – 2 – 3 tsp if store bought or home made if you are enthusiastic enough

Spices for tempering

½ tsp of kalo jeera/kalonji
½ inch cinnamon
1 green cardamom
1 clove

Spices for blending

Sada shorshe (Yellow mustard) – 2 tsp
Kalo shorshe (Black mustard) – 1 tsp
Posto (Khus khus/Poppy seeds) (optional) – 3 tsp

Steps

1. Wash the chicken under running water. Let it dry a bit and then marinade with 2 tsp of mustard oil, all the turmeric powder and salt. Set it aside for at least 30 minutes.
2. Soak for 10 – 15 mins all the spices for blending in a small bowl with enough water such that they are all covered
3. If you are planning to use coconut milk and plan to soak shredded coconut do this at the outset too
4. In a blender/mixie make a paste of the spice blend that was soaking, garlic, ginger and about 75% of the green chillies you planned to use. Use the pulse function so that you can control, don't make it very fine paste. Keep it aside in a bowl and you can reuse the blender/mixie
5. Slit the remaining green chillies vertically into 2 halves
6. If you are soaking coconut for milk, then you can do it now in the blender/mixie
7. In a kadai add most of the remaining mustard oil leaving 1 tsp for further use later
8. Let oil heat up and then temper it with the spices mentioned under spices for tempering
9. Once you hear a splutter add all the chicken and cook uncovered till the chicken does not have any raw color and seems to have been cooked quite thoroughly but not fully yet
10. Add the spice blend, the slit green chillies, salt as per taste mix and cook uncovered for 5 minutes or so and then cover, lower the heat to between low and medium and let it cook for 10 minutes or so
11. Check the status of the chicken and add kashundi and coconut milk at this stage if you planned to use either or both of them. Mix the chicken a bit. It is expected to be more of thick gravy but you can add a bit of hot water if you want to make more gravy than what the liquid from chicken should have produced.
12. Spread the remaining mustard oil on top of the cooked chicken along with the roughly chopped coriander/cilantro leaves, switch off the heat. Cover and leave it for another 10 minutes.
13. Serve hot with white rice of any variety preferably those with longer grains

Chicken Roll

The amount of ingredients mentioned below will yield about 6 chicken rolls. Adjust them to match the number of rolls you are planning to prepare.

Ingredients

Chicken – 500 gm or about a pound of boneless chicken cut into 1 ½ to 2 inches in sizes, not too big. Thigh pieces are most suited as breast pieces tend to dry out soon or a mix of both thigh and breast pieces.

Ginger – 1 inch

Garlic – 4 medium sized cloves

Onion – 2 medium sized or 1 large yellow or red onion

Tomato – 1 medium sized cut into small pieces or pureed

Green chilies – 4 to 6 or more (as per love & tolerance of heat. Increase the quantity if you want to add chopped green chilies in the roll)

Coriander/Cilantro leaves – Few sprigs

Lemon – 1

Spices for marinade

Cumin powder – 1 tsp

Coriander powder – 1 tsp

Black pepper powder – ½ tsp

Garam Masala – 1 tsp (homemade is best)

Kashmiri Lal Mirch/Red bell pepper powder – 1 – 2 tsp (this is primarily for color)

Red chili powder (optional) – 1 tsp or more per heat tolerance

Vegetable oil – 4 tsp + additional for rolling and frying the parathas

Salt – as per taste

All-purpose/whole wheat flour – 2 cups or enough for 6 parathas. You can mix all purpose and wheat flour

Water – As needed for kneading

Kitchen towel or plain white paper – 6 – 8 inches each. 1 for each roll

Steps

Meat preparation

1. Wash the chicken under running water and keep it aside
2. Use a blender or mixie to make a paste of the garlic, ginger, green chilies (leaving aside 1 or 2 if you desire to have some chopped in the roll), cilantro/coriander leaves, 1/4th onion. Add a bit of water if the contents become too dry, the outcome should still be viscous and not watery
3. Marinade the chicken with the paste from step 2, ½ lemon, all the spices listed under spices for marinade, 1 tsp of vegetable oil and set aside for at least 30 minutes

4. Roughly chop the remaining onion into about 1-inch sizes. Divide into 2 parts – 75% for cooking the meat and 25% for assembling the roll
5. Chop the chili into small pieces if you desire to have green chilies in the roll
6. Chop the tomato into small pieces or puree the same
7. Put a kadai on heat and add 2 tsp of oil
8. When the oil has heated add 75% of the chopped onions and let it brown
9. Add the marinated chicken and cook uncovered on medium heat till it starts to leave oil. Stir the chicken regularly to prevent it from being sticking on the vessel or burning
10. Add a bit of hot water if it becomes too dry and cover, lower the heat and cook for 5 minutes more. Switch off heat and leave it for another 5 minutes
11. The gravy should be minimal and sticking on the chicken for most part. Keep it on heat till you get this consistency

Paratha

Use the ingredients for paratha to make regular chapati style paratha from the recipe in the bread section

Assembly

1. Take a piece of paper on a plate
2. Lay a paratha on the paper such that about half the paper is covered by the paratha while the other half is outside the paratha
3. Add about 4 – 6 pieces of chicken such that a single file of chicken runs top to bottom of the paratha
4. Add some raw chopped onion and green chilies (optional)
5. Squeeze a bit of lemon on the meat
6. Fold the paratha on the meat such that the whole meat is covered in a single fold. Now fold along with the paper such that the paper also gets folded in the roll
7. Once the whole paratha along with the paper has been folded straighten it up and tuck the paper at the end into the roll so that the meat and other contents are prevented from falling off
8. Serve hot and enjoy

Mutton roll

Bengalis mean goat meat when they say mutton. For this recipe you can use either goat meat or lamb but the former is preferred. The process will be same for both. I relish lamb especially in dishes like lamb shank, lamb chops but I will use it only if I tried all means but goat managed to escape me.

Follow the Chicken roll recipe. Replace the meat with goat meat. The cooking time for goat meat will be more than the cooking time for chicken. The cooking time can also vary depending on the age of the goat, if you buy a younger goat (as Bengalis love to call 'kochi patha') then it will be faster while for a not so young goat with more fat and flavor it will take a bit longer. Slow cooking is the key to great taste but at times due to the need for speed Bengalis generally resort to their beloved pressure cooker to soften the meat. Once you finish cooking in the pressure cooker you will need to dry up any gravy but cooking with the lid open for bit more.

If you use a young goat then using pressure cooker can be disastrous. The cooked meat can turn into nothing less than a lump of something that is brownish in color, tastes something near meat but has a texture and softness of rosogolla (the infamous Bengali soft sweet made of cottage cheese). Hence, have some patience and cook the young goat in a kadai which will take a bit of time, but the outcome will be heavenly.

Note: Apart from my lab the other places I enjoy mutton rolls in my order of preference

1. Kohinoor, Benachity, Durgapur, West Bengal, India – I grew up remarkably close to this restaurant and I have never found a better roll than what they served. In my younger days I would have 4 of them in a row and most of the times with my dear friend Somenath. In my most recent visit I did find that they have adulterated the roll and used veggies like carrots and what not in it. This is nothing less than blasphemy on roll and I couldn't help going up to the manager and telling him in no uncertain terms I hated it and especially for distorting my childhood vision of this heavenly food on earth.
2. Nizams, Esplanade, Kolkata, West Bengal, India – After my parents moved to the suburbs of Kolkata this is the place I enjoyed the rolls as my next best option. The roll served here is a bit bigger than Kohinoor but taste is heavenly too. Sometimes I do rank both restaurants same.
3. Khan Sahib, Bangalore, Karnataka, India – The roll here varies a bit as they tend to make kebab but I love them too.
4. Dilli street, Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, India – This is an awesome restaurant in an airport which is always great to have. I loved most of their food and especially the roll.

Lao aloo shorshe posto

This dish is a variation of aloo (potato) posto (khus khus). The difference is the prominent presence of lao (Bottle gourd) and less of potato makes it a bit healthier version. The dish must be enjoyed with plain rice either on its own or as an accompaniment to one of the many dal (lentil dishes) Bengalis love any varieties of posto and all posto dishes are nostalgic by nature. The presence of posto makes it a great dish to assist in an afternoon pos lunch siesta.



Ingredients

Bottle gourd (Lao / Kaddu) – 1 medium sized. Check for ripeness it shouldn't look like too big and not too tight when pressed with your fingers

Potato – 2 medium size

Posto (Khus khus) – about 8 – 10 tbsp

Green chillies – 6 – 10 as per tolerance and likeness of heat

Dry red chillies – 1 – 2

Kashmiri red chilli powder – 1 tsp

Turmeric – ½ tsp

Tomato – ½ medium cut into small pieces or a paste

Panch phoron (A Bengali concoction of 5 types of whole spices that you can find in Indian stores) – 3/4th tsp

Salt – as per taste

Oil – 2 tbsp (preferably mustard oil but vegetable oil is fine too)

Water – about 2 cups

Steps

1. Wash and cut the potatoes and lao in cubes of about 2 inches size
2. In blender or mixie make a paste of the posto, dry red and green chillies. Try to make the grind a bit coarse and not too fine. Best is to grind the dry red chillies with posto first and then add the green chillies with ½ cup of water to make a thick paste
3. In a kadhai add the oil and let it heat up a bit
4. Add the panch phoron and let it sizzle
5. Add the potatoes only and fry it for about 5 – 7 minutes
6. Add the lao and let it cook for about 10 minutes
7. Add salt, turmeric powder, red chilli powder mix all, cover and cook for about 10 more minutes, stir occasionally
8. Add about 1 cup of water, cover and cook for another 5 minutes. If you want it a bit runny consistency then add a bit more water.
9. Taste for salt, adjust as needed, put the cover back again and let it cook for 2 more minutes
10. Switch off the gas and let it sit on the heat with the cover on for some more time
11. Serve hot with rice. Mix it directly with rice or enjoy as an accompaniment to a dal

Dhone pata posto

This is one of the simplest, unique but delectable dish cooked by my mother. In Bengali Cilantro/Coriander is referred as Dhone pata, hence the name.

Ingredients

Cilantro/Coriander leaves – 1 bunch

Poppy seeds – 10 tbsp

Onion – 1 small or ½ medium

Garlic – 4

Mustard oil – 3 tbsp

Steps

1. In a small bowl soak the poppy seeds
2. Roughly chop the onion and garlic
3. In a blender or mixie blend the poppy seeds with the water
4. Add the cilantro and blend it further
5. In a medium sized kadhai add the mustard oil and let it heat
6. Add the onion and garlic, fry a bit till the raw smell goes off
7. Add the poppy seeds and cilantro mixture
8. Fry in low heat till the raw smell goes off the and the mixture shows signs of browning to an extent
9. Serve with hot rice

Dim chachari

This is another of my mother's unique and delectable dish. The term 'chachari' generally means a mish mash of several things more like a hodge podge and we Bengali's tend to like lot of various chachari dishes and we even refer certain life situation with that term. This dish is unique because egg is fragile and it is not easy to mix it together with other ingredients while still retaining the general structure but have its taste augmented by the other ingredients.

Ingredients

Eggs – 4 (for estimation you can assume 2 eggs per person)

Poppy seeds – 2 tsp

Yellow mustard seeds – 2 tsp

Potato – 1 medium

Green chilies – 3 – 4

Cumin seeds – ½ tsp

Coriander powder – 1/2 tsp

Cumin powder – 1 tsp

Turmeric powder – ¼ tsp

Red Chili powder – 1 tsp

Bay leaf – 1

Dry red chili – 1

Onion – ½ small or ¼ medium

Garlic - 2 cloves

Ginger – 1 inch

Tomato – 1 small

Oil (mustard/vegetable) – 4 tbsp

Salt as per taste

Steps

1. Soak the poppy and mustard seeds in water
2. Boil and deshell the eggs
3. Deskin the potatoes and cut them into small bite sized pieces
4. Cut the green chilies into small pieces
5. Roughly chop the onions, garlic and ginger
6. Roughly chop the tomato or make a paste of it
7. In a medium sized kadhai heat up 2 tbsp oil
8. Fry the boiled eggs to the extent that they have some parts of the exterior golden brown. Cover as the egg may splutter, keep turning for even frying
9. Take out the eggs and let it cool; carefully and slowly cut the eggs into small pieces, try to retain the skin and yolk together as much as possible
10. In a blender or mixie make a paste of the soaked poppy and mustard seeds
11. In the same kadhai add the remaining oil and let it heat
12. Add the cut potatoes and fry them for about 5 minutes constantly turning them
13. Add the cumin seeds, bay leaf and dry red chili
14. When the cumin seeds splutter add the chopped onions, garlic and ginger

15. Fry for 3 – 5 minutes till the raw smell goes off
16. Add the poppy and mustard seed paste and fry for 3 – 5 minutes
17. Add the cumin powder, coriander powder, red chili powder, turmeric powder in a small bowl with a little water and make a paste, add this paste and salt into the kadhai
18. Mix them well and fry for about 3 – 5 minutes, add a bit of water if needed to prevent the spices from burning
19. Add the tomato – chopped/paste and fry some more till everything comes together
20. Add a little water so that there is a viscous gravy but not runny
21. Carefully add and mix the pieces of eggs
22. Cover and cook for 5 more minutes
23. Take it out of heat and keep it covered until you serve
24. Serve hot with rice

Kashmir

The below recipes provide are from the beautiful place of Kashmir, lovingly referred to in India as the heaven on earth.

Mutton Roganjosh

This is a red colored thin mutton gravy with spices that are prominent in nature but still subtle enough to alert your taste buds but not hit hard.

Ingredients

Mutton – 1 Kg / 2 lbs of goat meat cut into curry pieces. In India mutton by default means goat meat. You can also use lamb. The variance in meat can bring in subtle difference.

Yogurt – ½ cup

Onion – 1 medium or ½ large

Garlic – 6 – 8

Mustard oil – 4 tbsp. You can replace this with ghee or vegetable oil. The change in oil will result in certain difference in taste.

Salt – as per taste

All-purpose flour – 1 tbsp

Milk – 4 tsp

Saffron – a pinch

Fresh coriander or cilantro – 2 sprigs

Ratanjot – couple of sprigs. This is the spice that lends the fiery red color of the gravy. If you do not have this available, then either use a bit of red color or a little extra Kashmiri red chili powder.

Whole spices for tempering

Cinnamon – 2 – 3 2-inch sticks

Black cardamom – 4

Cumin seeds – 1 ½ tsp

Whole mace – 1 1-inch fragment

Dry red chilies – 4

Black pepper – 5 - 6 cloves

Ground spices

Asafetida – ¼ tsp

Turmeric – 1 tsp

Kashmiri red chili powder – 4 tsp (increase this by about 2 tsp if you don't have Ratanjot and still want to get the fiery red color)

Fennel seeds powder – 1 ¼ tsp

Coriander powder – 1 ½ tsp

Ginger powder – ½ tsp

Steps

1. Wash the mutton and keep it aside
2. Warm the milk a bit (10 seconds or so in a microwave oven) and add a pinch of saffron, set aside
3. In a bowl beat the curd and thoroughly mix all the ground spices except Asafetida.
4. If you don't have Ratanjot then you can add a bit of red food color in this mix. Set this aside.
5. Chop the onion and garlic
6. Get a pressure cooker and switch on the gas at medium heat. Once it is heated a bit add all the oil. Wait a bit and then add all the whole spices for tempering, lower the heat and fry a bit.
7. If you don't have Ratanjot you can add 1 – 2 tsp Kashmiri red chili powder at this point to attain the red color.
8. Add the asafetida
9. Add the onions and fry a bit. Add the garlic once the onions have cooked a bit but not browned yet and cook till onion and garlic has almost browned
10. Add salt as per taste
11. Add the meat and cook till the mutton changes color to almost brownish
12. Add the yogurt and spice mix
13. Add the saffron infused milk, include all the saffron strands
14. Cook covered for 15 – 20 mins and stirring in between
15. Add enough warm water to almost cover the meat. Secure the pressure cooker and let it cook in pressure till 2 – 3 whistles. The amount of time and whistles may vary a bit depending on the pressure cooker so adjust as per your prior knowledge of your pressure cooker
16. Once the pressure cooking completes with all the whistles switch off gas and let it sit
17. Open once the pressured vapor has escaped
18. The mutton should be soft but it must retain the firmness
19. Roughly shred the coriander leaves and throw them on the mutton
20. Serve with hot basmati rice or tandoori roti or naan

Notes:

1. This is originally a slow cooking recipe. Hence if you have the time you can cook in any other vessel than a pressure cooker but will have to allow quite a bit of time for the cooking to complete
2. The gravy thickness can be increased by adding more all-purpose flour. This is not a thick gravy originally

Gushtaba

This is another delectable dish from one of the most beautiful places on earth. At the time I am writing this I have not had the fortune to visit Kashmir yet, but I aspire to visit someday. Contrary to general belief about dishes from Indian subcontinent this dish is not hot at all but on the contrary, it is a bit on the sweeter side due to the presence of onion.

Ingredients

Minced lamb or goat (with 20% fat)

Coriander leaves – 1/4th bunch

Mint leaves – 2-3 twigs with adequate leaves in each

Onion – 2 medium sized

Egg - 2

Oil (Mustard/Vegetable) – 5 tbsp

Ghee – 3 tbsp

Thick Yogurt – 4 cups

1 small cheese cloth pouch or small piece of cheese cloth

Spices for meatball

Cinnamon powder – 1 tbsp

Green cardamom powder – ½ tsp

Black cardamom crushed – 2

Cloves – 5 crushed

Fennel seeds powder – 1 tbsp

Dried fenugreek powder – 1 ½ tbsp

Coriander powder – 2 tsp

Cumin powder – 1 tsp

Spices (additional)

Saffron – 5 strands

Bay leaf – 2

Cumin seeds – 1 tsp

Salt as per taste

Steps

1. Mix the ground meat with 2 tbsp of mustard oil, salt, the white from the 2 eggs and keep it aside
2. Take the yogurt out from the refrigerator and beat it, keep aside
3. Take the cheese cloth pouch or cheese cloth and put all the spices under Spices for meatball and tie it well to form the pouch

4. In a medium to large sized vessel add about 6 glasses of water and get it to boil
5. Once the water starts boiling add the bay leaves and the spice pouch, let it boil for 5 minutes
6. Make golf ball size meat balls using the ground meat mixture and add them gradually to the boiling water
7. Let the meat balls cook in the boiling water till the point the water has almost evaporated with a 1 – 2 inch of the water remaining
8. Take a bit of the water in a small bowl, take out the spice pouch using a tong and squeeze the spiced water from it into this water and put it back in the large vessel with meatballs; discard the spice pouch
9. While the meatball is cooking in the water take another small to medium sized vessel
10. Add 1 tbsp of ghee and 2 tbsp of oil
11. Let the oil heat up and add the roughly chopped onions, fry them till they are browned
12. Let the onions cool down and blend them into a paste after it has cooled
13. Mix the onion paste with the beaten yogurt
14. Add this onion paste into the beaten yogurt
15. Take the same vessel that you used to fry the onions and add 1 tbsp of oil and 1 tbsp of ghee
16. Let the oil heat up and then add the cumin seeds
17. Once the cumin seeds splutter then add the yogurt and onion paste mixture into it
18. Cook this yogurt onion mixture till it boils
19. Add this cooked yogurt onion mixture into the meatballs vessel along with 1 tbsp of ghee
20. Cook a bit for all of it to come together
21. Add the chopped cilantro and mint along with the saffron strands
22. Cover, switch off and take it out of the heat
23. Serve hot with white basmati rice or naan

Northern India/Pakistan

Seekh Kebab

From my perspective this is one of the most flavorful Indian barbeque meat one can have. The key is that the meat must have some amount of fat to retain moisture though it goes into the fire. Lamb, goat, or beef are best suited for this kebab, but you can also use chicken and reduce the cooking time.

The name is derived from the fact that these kebabs are made by wrapping the meat on a piece of metallic stick called seekh in Hindi. The can also be done using bamboo/wooden bbq sticks or just shaping using your hand without the seekh/sticks.

Ingredients

Minced meat – 0.5 gm or 1 lbs of lamb, goat, beef or chicken. Ensure that the meat has fat about (for red meat get something with 20% fat) so if you are using chicken then use the thigh portion for the minced meat and not just the breast pieces. The remaining ingredients will have to be doubled & adjusted with the change in the quantity of meat, tolerance and liking for spices & heat.

Dry spice mix

Black peppercorns – 1 tsp (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)
White peppercorns – ½ tsp (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)
Dry red chilies – 3 – 4 (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)
Cinnamon – 2 inches
Cloves – 5 pods
Green cardamom – 5 pods
Black cardamom – 1 pod
Sahi jeera/caraway seeds – 1 tsp
Cumin seeds – ½ tsp
Coriander seeds – 1 tsp
Fennel seeds – ½ tsp
Pomegranate seeds – 1 tsp
Chana dal – 1 ½ tsp (used for binding)

Wet mix

Green chilies – 2 – 3 (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)
Garlic cloves – 4 - 5 medium / large
Ginger – 1 1/2 inches
Onion – less than 1/4th of an onion to add water for grinding all these
Cilantro twigs – keep the twigs from ¼ bunch

Others

Cilantro – 1/4th bunch finely chopped. Don't throw away the twigs but use it in the wet mix as mentioned above, enhances the taste
Onion – 1 large
Turmeric powder – 1 tsp
Kashmiri red chili powder – 2 tsp
Salt – 1 tsp (adjust as per taste)
Egg – 1 (used for binding)
Oil/Ghee – 3 - 4 tsp (you can mix)
Seekh/wooden/bamboo bbq sticks – about 4, adjust as per the length of the kebab
Cheese cloth – 1

Steps

1. Thaw the minced meat and bring it to room temperature if it was frozen. Keep it in a vessel that will have lid and reasonably sized for you to mix all ingredients. Do not wash the minced meat, it will make it soggy and will prevent from binding and wrapping in the seekh/bbq sticks
2. Roast the dry spice mix at low temperature till you can smell the spices, ensure they don't burn. Allow them to cool and then grind them into powder.
3. Pour the spice powder, turmeric, Kashmiri red chili powder, salt not the minced meat
4. Use the same grinder to grind all the wet mix ingredients and pour them into the minced meat
5. Make a paste of the remaining onion. Put this in a cheese cloth and squeeze the water out of the onion as much as possible. Use your hand and may be augment with a spoon to pick up all the onions from the cheese cloth and pour them on the minced meat. This is important as

moisture from onion will make the minced meat soggy and prevent it from being shaped into the long structure by wrapping on the seekh/sticks.

6. Add the chopped cilantro
7. Break the egg and pour it into the minced meat
8. Using your hand mix all the ingredients and the minced meat very well. You may choose to wear a food safe glove.
9. Cover the vessel containing the minced meat with a lid put it in the refrigerator for 12 – 24 hours. You may choose to first cover the vessel with a plastic wrap and then put the lid, this prevents the smell from spreading inside the refrigerator.
10. Take out the minced meat from the refrigerator about 2 hours before cooking and let it thaw
11. After allowing the minced meat to thaw start to assemble the meat for cooking
 - a. If you are using wooden or bamboo bbq sticks wash them in water. If you are using metal seekh then apply a bit of oil on them
 - b. Take a small bowl and pour some vegetable oil/ghee
 - c. Apply some oil/ghee into your palms and divide the minced meat into cricket/ground hockey ball sized balls, will be about 4
 - d. Take one ball and a bbq stick or seekh and pierce from the bottom and leave a little bit of the stick/seekh protruding from the top of the ball.
 - e. Using your fingers gently press the ball and spread the meat downward such that it wraps the stick/seekh and leaves enough space at the bottom of the stick for holding. If the meat sticks dip your fingers in the oil and spread in the palm. Keep the seekh/stick with minced meat on a plate
 - f. Repeat the above till all the minced meat balls are wrapped into the seekh/stick
 - g. Drizzle the oil from the small bowl if it is not finished or replenish and baste on the minced meat
12. Light up your grill. Best done on a charcoal grill, it helps retain moisture and the smoke/aroma adds to the taste
13. Once the grill is ready (coals are burning and less smoke) take all the minced meat seekh/stick and gradually lay on the grill
14. Give about 3 – 4 minutes. You may cover the grill if you have a cover.
15. Lightly baste oil using brush and turn the kebabs. Repeat this few more times and cook for 7 – 8 minutes more. Ensure meat is browning but not burning.
16. Take out the kebab and allow it to settle a bit
17. Lightly hold the kebab and pull the seekh/stick out. Be gentle with the kebab so that it doesn't break, you may need to turn the seekh/stick in the kebab a bit to loosen it.
18. Serve it with chapati, paratha, naan, rice along with sliced/pickled onion and mint chutney. You can also consider making kali dal or a regular mixed dal to accompany.

Note –

1. You can keep the onion water and use it to prepare mixed dal (lentil) adds a nice taste/sweetness to it, better not to store in refrigerator but use it the same day.
2. If you don't have access to bbq sticks/seekh you can roll the meat in your palm and give it the long shape to the best extent possible for you.
3. If you do not have access to a grill you can shallow fry them on a tawa with oil.

Galouti / Chapli Kebab

These kebabs derive their name from the fact that they melt in your mouth. These kebabs were invented for the nawabs in Lucknow, India. There are still some famous restaurants serving these kebabs as their specialties.

These are made of minced meats and lot of spices, I like to use the same set of spices as I do for Seekh kebab. The softness is further derived by adding raw papaya paste or meat tenderizer. I like to use the naturally made meat tenderizer made by Shaan which essentially uses papaya extracts.

These are best enjoyed with roomali roti. The name is derived from the word roomal which means handkerchief, it is as thin as the handkerchief. It is an art to make roomali roti.

This kebab is similar to Chapli kebab which is a deep-fried version of the same thing and the origin of Chapli kebab is likely in Peshawar, Pakistan. I also prefer to grate the wet mix items for chapli kebab.

Ingredients

Minced meat – 0.5 gm or 1 lbs of lamb, goat, beef or chicken. Ensure that the meat has fat about (for red meat get something with 20% fat) so if you are using chicken then use the thigh portion for the minced meat and not just the breast pieces. The remaining ingredients will have to be doubled & adjusted with the change in the quantity of meat, tolerance and liking for spices & heat.

Dry spice mix

Black peppercorns – ½ tsp (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)

White peppercorns – ½ tsp (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)

Dry red chilies – 2 – 3 (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)

Cinnamon – 2 inches

Cloves – 5 pods

Green cardamom – 5 pods

Black cardamom – 1 pod

Sahi jeera/caraway seeds – 1 tsp

Cumin seeds – ½ tsp

Coriander seeds – 1 tsp

Fennel seeds – ½ tsp

Pomegranate seeds – 1 tsp

Chana dal – 1 tsp (used for binding)

Wet mix

Green chilies – 2 – 3 (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)

Garlic cloves – 4 - 5 medium / large

Ginger – 1 1/2 inches

Onion – less than 1/4th of an onion to add water for grinding all these

Cilantro twigs – keep the twigs from ¼ bunch

Onion – 1 medium

Others

Cilantro – 1/4th bunch finely chopped. Don't throw away the twigs but use it in the wet mix as mentioned above, enhances the taste

Turmeric powder – 1 tsp

Kashmiri red chili powder – 2 tsp

Salt – 1 tsp (adjust as per taste)

Egg – 1 (used for binding)

Oil/Ghee – 4 - 6 tsp (you can mix)

Raw papaya paste / Meat tenderizer – 1 ½ tsp

Steps

1. Thaw the minced meat and bring it to room temperature if it was frozen. Keep it in a vessel that will have lid and reasonably sized for you to mix all ingredients. Do not wash the minced meat, it will make it soggy and will prevent from good binding.
2. Roast the dry spice mix at low temperature till you can smell the spices, ensure they don't burn. Allow them to cool and then grind them into powder.
3. Pour the spice powder, turmeric, Kashmiri red chili powder, salt not the minced meat
4. Use the same grinder to make a paste of all the wet mix ingredients and pour them into the minced meat. **For chapli kebab** I prefer to grate them and not make a paste.
5. Add the chopped cilantro
6. Break the egg and pour it into the minced meat
7. Using your hand mix all the ingredients and the minced meat very well. You may choose to wear a food safe glove.
8. Cover the vessel containing the minced meat with a lid put it in the refrigerator for 12 – 24 hours. You may choose to first cover the vessel with a plastic wrap and then put the lid, this prevents the smell from spreading inside the refrigerator.
9. Take out the minced meat from the refrigerator about 2 hours before cooking and let it thaw
10. After allowing the minced meat to thaw start to assemble the meat for cooking
 - a. Take a small bowl and pour some vegetable oil/ghee
 - b. Apply some oil/ghee into your palms and divide the minced meat into double golf ball sized balls, will be about 8. You can adjust the size per your choice.
 - c. Take a ball in one palm and press with the other palm to form a disc of about 3 – 4 inches in diameter. The edges should be a bit rounded and not fully flat. If the meat sticks dip your fingers in the oil and spread in the palm. Keep the minced meat discs on a plate
 - d. Repeat the above till all the minced meat balls are flattened into discs
11. Light up your stove and put a flat frying pan, pour the oil
12. Once the oil is heated up take the minced meat discs and gradually lay on the pan. Depending on the size of the pan you may need to have multiple batches
13. If you are using red meat with fat it will release oil too. Give about 3 – 4 minutes on the first side and then flip. Keep flipping after couple of minutes, takes about 10 – 12 minutes and the kebabs will be brownish on both sides, ensure it doesn't burn and blacken. You may cover the pan for some time initially like you do for burger, it will help cook the meat
14. Take out the kebab and allow it to settle a bit. You may keep them on paper kitchen towel to allow some oil to be absorbed

15. Serve it with roomali rooti ideally. You can also serve it with chapati, paratha, naan, rice along with sliced/pickled onion and mint chutney. You can also consider making kali dal or a regular mixed dal to accompany.

Tandoori chicken

This is one of the most delectable BBQ items from the Indian recipe.

Ingredients

Chicken – 2 lbs / ~1 Kg. I like the leg quarters the most for this preparation. One can also use any pieces just don't make it too small. Depending on my mood or time availability I either prepare the spices from scratch or mix the previously powdered spices; the dry roasted from scratch obviously will be always better but the other version will not be bad either. **Note** – most of the powdered spices in my kitchen are home made too. This makes the the difference with a dry roasted from scratch negligible than what one can find with a store-bought powdered spice. The key is to explore so do what you can even if that means store bought powdered spices and enjoy.

Whole spices for dry roasting and grinding

Cumin seeds – 1 tsp
Coriander seeds – 1 tsp
Cinnamon – 2 inches
Green cardamom – 4 pods
Cloves – 4 pods
Dry red chili – 2 (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)
Black peppercorns – ½ tsp (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)

Previously powdered spices

Cumin powder – 1 tsp
Coriander powder – 1 tsp
Garam masala – 2 tsp
Hot red chili powder – 1 ½ tsp (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)
Black pepper – ½ tsp (adjust as per taste and heat tolerance)

Other dry ingredients

Kashmiri red chili powder – 2 tsp
Garlic powder – 1 tsp (optional)
Onion powder – 1 tsp (optional)
Salt – 1 ½ - 2 tsp (adjust as per taste)
Red/Orange food color – ¼ th tsp

Wet ingredients

Onion - 1 medium
Garlic – 5 cloves
Ginger – 2 inches
Yogurt – 4 tbsp
Vegetable oil – 4 tbsp

Steps

1. Wash the chicken and dry them using paper towel
2. Take each piece of chicken and using a knife make some shallow cuts in the chicken
3.
 - a. If you are preparing your own dry spice mix, then dry roast the ingredients under **Whole spices for dry roasting and grinding**. Allow them to cool and then grind them to a powder. Pour the powdered spice into the chicken
 - b. If you are opting to use already powdered spices, then pour all the spices mentioned under **Previously powdered spices** into the chicken
4. In the same grinder add all the wet ingredients except the oil and blend them together. Pour this into the chicken
5. Pour all the spices mentioned under **Other dry ingredients** into the chicken
6. Using your hand massage all the ingredients into the chicken along with 2 tbsp of the oil. Do it with care & love for quite a bit so that it is evenly spread
7. Cover the vessel with a plastic wrap / any other cover and refrigerate for at 8 – 24 hours, more the better

The chicken can be cooked through various means, there are differences in temperature setting, timing etc. Described below are each of those.

Kadhai Chicken Dry Peshawari style

I had some great Kadhai chicken and meat at a Pakistani restaurant named 'Desi Baithak' in Virginia and loved the food. One of the item was a dry kadhai which tasted awesome, it had lot of ginger julienne and didn't appear to have used many spices at all. I wanted to cook something similar so looked up the internet and found some videos and recipes stating they are from Peshawar, Pakistan and they appeared to be in the same line as I could recall from my visit to the restaurant. Hence, I went ahead and cooked, well as I mentioned at the beginning of this running journal, I do not claim anything to be authentic here as I do play with spices, timing etc. but they are inspired.

Ingredients

Chicken – 1.5 - 2 Kg or about 4 lbs of whole chicken cut into medium sized pieces
Onion – 2 medium sized
Garlic – 6 cloves
Ginger – 3 inches
Tomato – 2 medium sized
1 lemon
Coriander/Cilantro leaves – ¼ bunch
Oil (Mustard/Vegetable) – 2 tbsp (I prefer Mustard oil)

Ground spices

Coriander powder – 1.5 tbsp
Cumin powder – 1 tsp
Turmeric – ½ tsp
Kashmiri red chili powder – 1 tsp
Black pepper powder – ¼ tsp
Garam masala – ½ tsp
Salt as per taste

Steps

1. Wash the chicken and keep it aside
2. Roughly chop the onions
3. Cut 2/3rd of the ginger into julienne
4. Use 1/3rd of the ginger and the garlic to make a paste or roughly chop both
5. Cut the twigs of the Coriander/Cilantro into small pieces and roughly chop the leaves, keep them aside separately
6. Chop the tomatoes or make a paste
7. Cut 3/4th of the lemon into round wedges and keep them with the 1/4th of the remaining lemon
8. In a kadhai or deep cooking vessel add the oil and fry the onions till they are close to golden color
9. Add the washed chicken and let it cook at high heat, release water
10. Once the water has dried up to a large extent add the ginger garlic paste/chop and cook for few minutes till the raw smell goes off
11. The chicken should start to get browned, add salt along with the spice powders – turmeric, coriander, cumin, garam masala, Kashmiri red chili
12. Fry with the spices, add a little water if it becomes too dry
13. Add the tomatoes and squeeze the ¼ lemon, let them all cook together till they have come together
14. Taste for salt and adjust
15. Add water to make it dry but with gravy sticking to the vessel and the chicken
16. Add the chopped cilantro and cover and take it out of the heat
17. Serve with rice/roti/naan

Lal Mans

This recipe is from the state of Rajasthan. It is fiery red hot and spicy recipe. Though it may look similar to Rogan Josh the ingredients and spices vary so does the taste, Rogan Josh is more aromatic and fine spice without heat.

Ingredients

Mutton (Goat meat or Lamb) – 1 Kg / 2 lbs cut into curry pieces
Dry red chilies – 10 – 15 as per heat tolerance
Coriander seeds – 4 tsp
Cumin seeds – 1 tsp
Black pepper pods – 1 tsp
Bay leaf – 2
Cinnamon – 2 inches
Black cardamom – 2
Green cardamom – 6
Cloves – 6
Mace – 1 small flower
Turmeric powder – 1 tsp
Kashmiri red chili powder – 3 tsp
Onion – 4 medium sized
Garlic – 10 cloves
Ginger – 2 inches
Green chilies – 8 – 10 or as per heat tolerance

Coriander/Cilantro leaves – 1/3 sprig

Mustard oil – 4 tbsp

Ghee – 1 tbsp

Yogurt – 1 cup beaten

Salt as per taste

Steps

1. Wash the mutton and keep it aside
2. Dry roast the red chilies, coriander, and cumin seeds. Let it cool and then grind them into powder
3. Roughly chop the onions, garlic, ginger, green chilies, coriander/cilantro leaves and set aside
4. Heat a kadhai and add all the mustard oil
5. Once the oil is hot add the bay leaf, chopped garlic and ginger
6. Fry the garlic and ginger till the raw smell disappears
7. Add the onions and continue to fry
8. After the onions start appearing brown add the salt, continue to fry
9. Add the turmeric powder, Kashmiri red chili powder and mix
10. Fry for 5 minutes more and then add the mutton
11. Cook the mutton on medium heat. Brown the mutton by turning at a regular frequency while ensuring it does not burn
12. Lower the heat and add the beaten yogurt, mix and keep cooking
13. Cook till there is oil coming out along with a thick gravy form
14. Add hot water and try to mix all the gravy and bits that are stuck to the kadai
15. Check for salt and adjust as needed
16. Total time between the beginning of the cooking till the above point should be about 1 hour
17. At this time there are multiple options
 - a. Slow cooking in oven –
 - i. transfer the content in an oven safe cooking vessel or start cooking in an oven safe kadai or dutch oven from the beginning
 - ii. add more water to cover the meat, add more if you want more gravy
 - iii. add all the roughly chopped cilantro/coriander leaves
 - iv. pre-heat the oven to 350 F
 - v. transfer the meat and cook for 1 hour 15 minutes
 - vi. take it out and let it rest for few minutes
 - b. Pressure cooking –
 - i. transfer the content into the pressure cooker
 - ii. add more water to cover the meat, add more if you want more gravy
 - iii. add all the roughly chopped cilantro/coriander leaves
 - iv. cover the pressure cooker and cook on high heat for few minutes till it blows whistle or starts to release pressure. After that cook on medium heat for 10 minutes and switch off
 - v. remove from heat and wait till the pressure is released
18. Serve hot with rice or roti

Pindi chole

I really relish this tangy and spicey mix of chickpeas. It goes well with rice, naan, kulcha, bhatura or the plain and simple roti. I believe the name is acquired from the place of origin which is supposed to be Rawalpindi.

Ingredients

Chickpeas/chole – 2 cups
Onion – 1 large
Garlic – 4 medium or 3 large cloves
Ginger – 1 ½ inches
Tomato – 1 medium
Green chili – 5 – 6 or as per heat tolerance
Cilantro/Coriander – ¼ sprig
Vegetable oil – 4 tbsp
Asafoetida – a pinch
Salt – as per taste
Tea bags – 2
Chicken stock – 1 carton (optional)
Water – 2 cups or as needed

Whole spice for tempering

Black cardamom – 1
Green cardamom – 1
Clove – 1
Cumin seeds – ¾ tsp
Cinnamon – 1 inch
Bayleaf – 1
Dry red chili – 2

Spices for grinding/mixing

Grind any of the below mentioned ingredients if they are not grinded already.

Garam masala – 3/4th tsp
Yellow mustard – 1 tsp
Mace – ¼ tsp
Nutmeg – ¼ tsp
Coriander seeds – 2 tbsp
Cumin seeds – ¼ tsp
Amchur powder – 1 ½ tsp
Anardana/Pomegranate seeds – 2 tsp
Dry red chili – 2 – 3 or as per heat tolerance

Steps

1. Wash and soak the chickpeas
2. Roughly chop the onion, ginger, garlic, green chilies and tomato
3. Roughly chop the coriander leaves and the stems. Separate the stems
4. Grind and mix all the spices mentioned under spices for grinding/mixing. Add some water to form a paste type consistency, this prevents the spices from burning while frying
5. In a pressure cooker add all the chickpeas and enough water along with the 2 tea bags. Pressure cook as per your pressure cooker instructions so that the chickpeas are cooked and soft
6. In a kadhai heat up oil
7. Add the whole spices for tempering and asafoetida
8. Fry a bit and when the cumin seeds splutter add the onions, fry them till they are a bit brown

9. Add the chopped garlic, ginger, green chili and the coriander twigs
10. Fry for 3 – 5 minutes and add the ground spice paste
11. Fry for 3 – 5 minutes and add the chopped tomato
12. Fry for few minutes till the tomato blend in
13. Add the pressure cooked chickpeas into this and fry for couple of minutes
14. Add water as per preference of gravy – less or more. I've also played around using chicken stock here which came out quite well.
15. Add all the roughly chopped coriander/cilantro leaves
16. Cover and cook for 10 minutes, switch off and leave it for a while
17. Serve hot with rice, or any breads from Indian subcontinent

Slow cooker/crockpot version

1. Perform all the steps from 1 – 12 mentioned above except step 5
2. Transfer all the fried spices into a slow cooker
3. Transfer all the soaked chickpeas and mix
4. Add water as per preference of gravy – less or more. I've also played around using chicken stock here which came out quite well.
5. Add ½ the roughly chopped coriander/cilantro leaves
6. Cover and cook for about 7 hours in low
7. Add the left over chopped ½ coriander/cilantro leaves
8. Serve hot with rice, or any breads from Indian subcontinent

Keema Matar/Masala

An amazing dish with minced meat. Generally this is prepared with goat meat but lamb is used too. One can also use beef or chicken. The key is to use meat with some fat so chicken is the least favorite meat for this dish but if you do use chicken consider using meat from thigh to get some amount of fat.

Ingredients

Minced meat – 1 Kg / 2 lbs. Having some fat mixed in the minced meat will be great.

Onion – 2 large or 4 medium

Garlic pods – 6 – 8 medium/large

Ginger – about 2 inches

Green chilies – 4 – 6 as per taste for heat

Tomatoes – 2 large or 4 medium

Coriander/Cilantro leaves – 1/4th bunch

Yogurt – 2 tablespoons

Kasoori methi – 3 tablespoons

Turmeric powder – 1 teaspoon

Kashmiri red chili powder – 4 teaspoon

Black cardamom – 2

Cloves – 4 pods

Cinnamon stick – 2 inches

Bay leaf – 1 large or 2 medium

Whole dry red chili – 1 to 2

Coriander powder – 1.5 tablespoon

Black pepper powder – 1 tablespoon

Mustard oil or ghee – 4 – 6 tablespoon

Steps

1. Marinade the minced meat with the black pepper powder, all the yogurt, salt and 2 tablespoon of crushed kasoori methi. Keep it aside for 30 minutes at least.
2. Chop the onions in small pieces
3. Make a paste of the garlic, ginger, 2 green chilies and the twigs of cilantro/coriander leaves after removing the bottom edge. You can also chop them as fine as possible
4. Cut the tomatoes in small pieces or make a paste
5. Chop the rest of the green chilies in small pieces
6. Chop the coriander leaves
7. In a large flat frying pan add half the ghee/oil and let it heat up
8. Add the marinated minced meat. Keep frying and breaking the meat mounds as they tend to form. Cook this for about 30 minutes, turning them and seeing enough and equal browning. This process is generally called 'bhuna'.
9. If the minced meat is cooked take it out of the heat and keep it aside in the same cooking utensil
10. After about 10 minutes of starting to fry the minced meat take another kadai and add the remaining ghee/oil and let it heat up
11. Add the cloves, cardamom, cinnamon stick, bay leaf and whole red chili
12. Once the cloves starts to splutter add all the onions and fry them till most of it browned
13. Add the garlic, ginger, green chili and coriander twigs paste/pieces and fry for 3 – 5 minutes till the raw smell is gone
14. Add the remaining kasoori methi, all the coriander powder, turmeric powder and Kashmiri red chili powder
15. Fry for a minute and add all the tomatoes. Add a bit of water if needed to prevent the spices from burning
16. Keep frying till oil separates and there is a reddish color formed with all the tomatoes, onions and spices
17. Add the fried minced meat and mix well
18. Allow it to cook for 5 minutes
19. Add meat stock or water to the utensil where the minced meat was cooked and wipe away all the flavors. Pour this into the minced meat with the spices
20. The consistency will be runny but should also be viscous so add as much or as little water as needed
21. Cook for 10 minutes, taste for salt and adjust
22. Add all the chopped cilantro/coriander, cover and let it sit for 10 minutes
23. Serve hot with paratha, roti, naan. Rice goes but breads are best accompaniments or reheat as needed

Bhindi Masala

A hearty and healthy vegetarian dish.

Ingredients

Okra/Bhindi – 500 gm / 1 lbs

Onion – 1 medium
Garlic – 4
Ginger – 1 inch
Green chilies – 2 (increase or decrease as per heat tolerance)
Tomato – 1 medium
Yogurt – ¼ cup
Cilantro/Corriander leaves – 1/4th sprig
Whole cumin seeds – ½ tsp
Whole dry red chili – 1
Bay leaf – 1
Kasoori Methi – 1 tbs
Corriander powder – 1 ½ tsp
Cumin powder – ½ tsp
Garam masala – ½ tsp
Turmeric – ½ tsp
Kashmiri red chili powder – 1 ½ tbs
Oil – 3 tbs (I prefer mustard oil but canola or other oil can be used)

Steps

1. Take out the yogurt, beat it and keep aside
2. In a small bowl add all the dry powdered spices and mix it with a bit of water to form a viscous paste
3. Wash the Okra/bhindi, dry with kitchen towel or air dry it
4. Cut each of the Okra/bhindi a bit diagonally into 2 portions
5. Chop the onions longitudinally
6. Roughly chop the garlic, ginger and green chilies into small pieces
7. Take the cilantro and roughly chop the leaves. Throw away about 1 inch from the bottom of the stem and chop the remaining portion of the cilantro stem
8. Chop the tomato or puree it if the tomato skin bothers you
9. Take a deep dish pan or kadai and heat it on medium
10. Add all the oil
11. Add the whole cumin, dry red chili, bay leaf and let the cumin splutter a bit
12. Add all the onions and saute for about 5 – 7 minutes till it starts to turn a bit brown
13. Add the chopped garlic, ginger, green chilies and cilantro stems
14. Fry for 5 – 7 minutes till the raw smell goes away
15. Add the dry spice paste and fry for 5 – 7 minutes more
16. Add the chopped or pureed tomato and fry till oil starts to leave the edges
17. Add the beaten yogurt, mix and fry for 2 – 3 minutes
18. Add the cut okra/bhindi and mix
19. Cook together for about 5 minutes
20. Add water to form a bit of viscous gravy and cover with a lid
21. Cook for 5 minutes, switch off the heat and let it sit for another 5 minutes
22. Take it out of the heat and serve with roti/paratha/naan/rice

Southern India

Pandhi Curry/fry (Pork curry or fry)

This is a unique flavorful and delectable recipe from Coorg, a place in Karnataka that is close to Bangalore.

Ingredients

Pork – 1.5 Kg / 2 – 3 lbs pork. Ideally the pork should be with fat, use pork belly if you can or have a mix of ~40% meat with a layer of fat with the remaining 60% without fat. The fat renders taste and most of the cooking is done using the fat itself.

Onion – 2 medium or 1 large

Garlic – 6 large cloves or 10 small cloves

Ginger – 2 inches

Green chillies – 4 – 6 or adjust as per taste and liking for heat. The recipe has sour added which will calm down the heat and overall, there should be at least a leaving taste of heat to enjoy this. I prefer this dish quite hot myself.

Curry leaves – 2 sprigs

Turmeric powder – 1 tsp

Kashmiri red chili powder – 3 tsp

Salt – as per taste (1 – 2 tsp or a little more after tasting will be good)

Kachampuli – 1 ½ tsp. This is a black color vinegar found in Coorg. This is one of the primary ingredient that lends taste and the dark black color, it should be used carefully so that the tanginess and spicy taste play well together without any one overpowering the other. This may not be easily available so as an alternate use the following

Tamarind – a small ball of it soaked in hot water for 2 hrs or so. Use the water only

Apple cider vinegar or any other vinegar handy – 1 tsp

Mustard oil – 1 tsp (though the pork will have enough fat to cook itself, this oil is mainly for flavor)

For the spice mix

Coriander seeds – 2 tsp

Cumin seeds – 1 tsp

Yellow mustard – 1 ¼ tsp

Fennel seeds – 3/4th tsp

Fenugreek seeds – 10 – 12 (be careful with this, too much can make the dish bitter)

Dry red chilly – 2 (adjust as per taste/likeliness for heat)

Black pepper – 1 tsp (adjust as per taste/likeliness for heat)

Cinnamon – 2 inches

Cloves – 6 – 7 pods

Green cardamom – 1 (can skip, must not overpower other elements)

Steps

1. If you have bought a slab of pork belly you will need to remove the skin from the top but do it such that the fat layer is retained. You can ask the butcher to do this but sometimes it may not be how you want, I prefer to do it myself. Wash and cut the pork in cubes of about 2 – 3 inches in size with layer of fat at the top for the areas with fat.
2. Marinade the pork with all the salt, turmeric and Kashmiri red chili powder for 1 hr at least
3. Dry roast all the ingredients under spice mix along with a washed and 1 dried sprig of Curry leaves. Cool it and grind it into a fine powder
4. Slice the onions in thin strips and halve them.
5. Cut the garlic, ginger and green chillies in small bits
6. Put a braiser (a covered pan that can be put in the oven directly) on the stovetop and add the mustard oil. Add the marinated pork after the oil heats up.
7. Cook the pork in the braiser for about 15 -20 minutes and brown them up as much
8. Add the onions and sautee them for 5 minutes
9. Add the curry leaves
10. Add the garlic, ginger and green chillies and cook for another 5 minutes
11. Add the ground spice mix and cook for another 10 minutes. The consistency should be less moisture and more frying with oil coming out. Watch out, nothing should burn
12. Add the kachampuli or the tamarind water/vinegar as an alternate
13. Add some more water and manage it based on the consistency you want to have for the end product – less water if you want fry else more water for curry. Ensure there is enough water for the cooking to be done in oven.
14. Set the lower oven temperature to 350 F. Cover and cook for 5 mins + as long needed for the oven to reach the desired temperature.
15. Once the oven is ready put the braiser in there and set the timer for 1 hr 15 minutes. Check the consistency at about 50 minutes range and see the meat is soft enough without losing texture
16. Let it cook for the planned time or switch off sooner if the meat has cooked enough and cover and keep it outside. Remember the meat will continue to cook with all the heat retained in the braiser and since it will be kept covered
17. Cook this ahead of time, few hours of resting will make it taste much better
18. Warm and serve with hot rice or as Akki roti (rice flour breads, I've included a recipe)

Note: Slow cooking is best for this recipe which is why you will see the braiser and oven. If you do not have it then either slow cook on stove top or pressure cook the meat after step 12. You may need to cook it a bit more after pressure cooking to dry it up a little more.

Chettinadu chicken

This dish is a super hit at home and the very fact that the left over chicken can be directly used in another of the home favorite dish 'Kothu paratha' makes it all the more prudent choices from effort perspective. Chettinad or Chettinadu is a region in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu and the people there cooks some delectable dishes with lot of chili heat and spices. You may have tears running down your eyes after you have the food and if the chilli and spices have been in the right amount it will

likely be tears of joy and not pain but yes some pain for such great dishes is worth it and you will get accustomed as you expose your taste buds to the mélange of the spices and chilies. This dish is for brave hearts and significant reduction of the heat will take out the soul of the dish.

Ingredients

Chicken – 3 – 4 lbs/1.5 kg whole chicken cut into curry pieces (you can use boneless breast and thigh pieces, but I believe the taste is enhanced by the bones which will be missing)

Coriander/Cilantro leaves – ¼ bunch

Onion – 2 medium or 1 large

Garlic – 6 cloves

Ginger – 1 inch

Green chilies (optional) – 2 – 4 for extra flavor, heat, and taste

Curry leaves – 1 sprig washed

Tomato - 2 medium

Oil (Mustard/Vegetable) – 4 tbsp

Spices for dry roast

Red Chilies – 4 – 6 or as per heat tolerance

Coriander seeds – 2 ½ tbsp

Cumin seeds – 1 tbsp

Cinnamon – 2 inches

Cloves – 6

Stone flower/dagad ka phool – 2 tbsp

Fennel seeds – 1 tbsp

Black pepper – 1 tbsp

Shredded coconut – 4 tbsp

Curry leaves – 1 sprig washed and dried

Steps

1. Wash and keep the chicken aside
2. Dry roast the spices under the section 'Spices for dry roast', add the coconut towards the end so that it doesn't burn. Let it cool and then grind them into smooth powder
3. Roughly chop the onions, garlic and ginger
4. Roughly chop the cilantro leaves; cut and throw away the absolute end of the twigs but retain the part above it and chop them roughly
5. Cut the tomatoes in small cubes or make a paste in the same grinder used for the spices to trap the spice flavors from the grind
6. Take a large kadhai (less deep but more broad is better for even cooking) and heat up the oil
7. Add the chopped onions and fry till it is close to golden brown
8. Add the curry leaves, chopped garlic, ginger along with the cilantro twigs if you kept them; cook for 5 minutes
9. Add the chicken and cook on high for about 15 minutes or so till the chicken has released water and some of the water has dried up; regularly turn the chicken
10. Add dry spices, salt and cook for 10 more minutes

11. Add the tomato and cook for another 5 – 7 minutes, mix them well
12. Taste for salt and adjust
13. The gravy should be viscous but if you want runnier add water/chicken broth
14. Add the chopped cilantro, cover, and cook for another 5 minutes
15. Remove from heat and set aside for some time
16. Serve hot with rice

Chicken Kothu paratha

This is a famous street food in the Southern state of Tamil Nadu but I haven't had a chance to enjoy this dish cooked by a local street vendor but I had it in some Chettinadu restaurants in India and USA alongside the version I cook at my home. The best part of this dish is the usage of the left over Chettinadu chicken which makes it taste amazing.

Now, one can also avoid the chicken and do just an egg version of kothu paratha or even a vegetarian version, the taste may not match up to the version cooked with chicken.

Ingredients

Chicken cooked in Chettinadu style – about 1 lbs or 500 gms

Eggs - 2

Parathas – 4 (homemade or store bought, I like the Malabar parathas if I buy from store)

Onion – 1 large or 2 medium (Red onions goes best)

Garlic – 3 cloves

Ginger – 1 inch

Lemon – 1

Tomato – 1 small

Green chilies – 2

Cilantro/Coriander leaves – 1/4th bunch

Coriander powder – 1 tsp

Cumin powder – ½ tsp

Oil (Mustard/Vegetable) – 3 tbsp

Steps

1. Shred and debone the chicken, keep it aside along with the gravy
2. Roughly chop the onions, garlic, ginger, green chilies
3. Cut the lemon into 2 halves
4. Roughly chop the cilantro leaves; cut and throw away the absolute end of the twigs but retain the part above it and chop them roughly
5. Cut the tomatoes into small pieces or make a paste
6. Beat the eggs in a bowl and keep it aside
7. Take a medium sized kadhai and heat 2 tbsp of oil
8. Add ½ the chopped onions along with the chopped garlic, ginger, green chilies and the cilantro twigs
9. Cook for 5 – 7 minutes till the raw smell is gone
10. Add the coriander powder, cumin powder and fry for couple of minutes

11. Add the tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes
12. Add the parathas and cook for about 5 minutes
13. Spread out the ingredients to create a circular open space in the kadhai
14. Add 1 tbsp of oil in the open space and add the egg after heating the oil for 30 secs or so
15. Scramble the eggs and then mix everything together
16. Add the chicken and squeeze 1 lemon
17. Cook for 5 minutes
18. Add the roughly chopped cilantro and ½ of the onion
19. Cover and set aside
20. Serve hot

Kola Urundai (Meat balls)

This is a meatball recipe that I've heard having originated from Thanjavur in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The original elaborate recipe calls for binding each meatball with banana leaves but I did not venture into that intricacy and complexity. I've rather resorted to chana dal and egg for binding. I've also played around with some spices and cooking methods like baking vs frying.

Ingredients

Mined meat (Lamb or Goat) – 450 gms. Chicken or turkey may be used but the taste may not match up to what it will be with lamb or goat

Egg - 1

Green chilies – 2

Garlic – 2

Onion – 1/4th of a medium onion

Spices for dry roast

Dry red chili – 4

Black pepper – 1 tsp

Chana dal (Bengal gram lentil) - 2 tbsp

Ani seeds – 1 tbsp

Coriander seeds – 1 tbsp

Cloves – 4

Cinnamon – 1 inch

Curry leaves – 1 sprig (washed and dried)

Coconut – 2 tbsp shredded

Steps

1. Dry roast all the spices under the section Spices for dry roast; let it cool and then grind them into powder
2. Put the minced meat in a bowl and add the ground spices
3. Add the green chili, onion and garlic in the same grinder and make a paste, add a little water if needed to blend them together
4. Add this paste into the meat and spice mixture
5. Crack the egg into the mixture and use your hand to mix them well

6. Shape them into golf/tennis ball sized balls
7. Deep fry them or broil them. If you broil then use the narrow top oven, and broil for 10 minutes or so but do check for doneness and avoid burning them; they should brown but not blacken
8. Serve hot, goes well as appetizers

Biriyani

Hyderabadi Kachi Biriyani

Meat – 1 Kg / 2lbs

- If using Chicken then get it with bone cut into bigger pieces than curry pieces i.e. 2 – 3 inches in size, leave the drumstick as is. Boneless chicken can be used but I personally believe the bone adds to the taste.
- If using red meat like goat meat get baby goat.

Garlic – 6 medium cloves

Ginger – 1 1/2 inches

Green chilies – 3 – 5 (depending on your heat tolerance you can increase a bit or decrease)

Onion – 3 medium or 2 large (too much onion can render unwanted sweetness)

Ghee – 8 – 10 tsp

Plain yogurt – ½ cup

Coriander leaves – 2 sprigs

Mint leaves – 2 sprigs

Turmeric – 3/4th tsp

Kashmiri red chili powder – 2 – 3 tsp

Lime - 1

Saffron – pinch or so

Milk – 1/4th cup

Eggs (optional) – 3 – 4

Raw papaya paste or meat tenderizer – This is needed only for red meat

Basmati rice – 500 gm (measure of rice should be approximately ½ of the meat)

Biriyani dry spices

White pepper corns – 1 tsp*

Black pepper corns – 1/2 tsp*

Dry red chilies – 1 – 2 (deseeded)

Whole star Anis seeds – 2

Anis seeds – 1/2 tsp

Shahi jeera/black cumin seeds/caraway seeds – 1 tsp

Whole coriander seeds – 1 1/2 tsp

Cinnamon stick – 2 inches

Black cardamom – 2

Green cardamom – 4

Cloves – 4

*depending on your heat tolerance you can increase a bit or decrease

Whole spice for rice

Cinnamon – 1 inch

Green cardamom – 2

Black cardamom – 1

Cloves – 2

Shahi jeera/black cumin seeds/caraway seeds – 1 tsp

For assembly & locking the vessel cover

Wheat - 1 – ½ cup or as much needed or use multiple layers of aluminum foil

Steps

Cooking the chicken

1. Dry roast all the spices, let it cool and then grind them in a mixie or a grinder
2. Wash the rice properly about 3 times under running water and soak it in water
3. Chop the onions into thin strips and slice it from the middle
4. Wash the green chilies & garlic, deskin ginger and put them all in a mixie or blender along with a small piece (equivalent of 1/4th of a small onion) of onion
5. Roughly chop 3/4th of the coriander and mint leaves
6. Heat a kadai pour all the ghee after leaving behind about 2 spoons. Fry the onions till they are red in color and just on the verge of becoming crispy. Take the onions out of the heat with a slotted spoon to let the ghee drip into the kadai. Lay the fried onions on a plate to cool down, you can lay them on a kitchen paper towel too.
7. Let the kadai and the ghee cool down
8. In the same kadai marinade the meat with the ghee, remaining yogurt, the paste of garlic, chilies & ginger, chopped coriander & mint leaves, the ground spices, 1/4th of the fried onions. Let it sit in the refrigerator for 2 - 3 hours at least but overnight is best. Take it out about 1 – 2 hours before cooking

Saffron

1. Perform this step before starting to cook the chicken
2. Warm the milk and add saffron
3. Let it sit there for the saffron to infuse its color and aroma into the milk

Egg

1. Boil the eggs and halve them

Wheat

1. Mix the wheat with water and knead it to a soft consistency

Cooking the rice

1. In a deep saucepan or casserole pour water that is 2 times the rice
2. Add 1/4th tsp ghee, all the whole spices for rice, remaining mint and coriander leaves, a small squeeze of lemon, cover and let the water boil. If available consider using a small cotton pouch for the dry spices to separate them easily. It will be a frustrating effort to try to separate the whole shahi jeera and biting into a whole spice is not the best experience, not the way of the royals who once enjoyed this dish.
3. Once water has boiled add 2 tablespoons of salt
4. Throw away the water in which the rice was soaking and pour all the rice into the water after it starts to boil. Stir the rice and the water.
5. Cook on medium heat
6. The assembly process starts when the rice has cooked roughly to 25%

Assembly

1. Add about a cup of water into the marinated meat and mix well to have a bit of yakni and moisture for the meat to cook
2. Take some of the 25% cooked rice and spread on the meat to form a thin layer
3. On top of the rice Spread 1/3rd of the fried onion, a dollop of the ghee, 1/3rd of the saffron infused milk, and a bit of squeeze of lemon on the rice
4. Repeat step 2 & 3 to spread all the remaining rice in the form of 2 more layers of roughly 50% cooked rice and 75% cooked rice
5. Cover the vessel with 2 layers of aluminum foil to do dum cooking and lock in all the aroma
6. Cover the vessel with as heavy a lid as possible and use the wheat as an adhesive to lock edges of the lid with the vessel or put another layer of aluminum foil instead of dough
7. Crank up the heat and cook for 15 minutes
8. Take an old tawa/flat pan and heat it up on another burner
9. After the initial 15 minutes take the kadai and with the assembly and put it on this pan
10. Lower the heat to medium/sim and cook for another 20 minutes.
11. Switch off the stove and take it out of heat, let it sit for 10 minutes
12. Remove the wheat/aluminum lock, aluminum foil, enjoy the aroma for a moment
13. Carefully mix the rice and meat to avoid breaking the rice. Also keep some of the white colored rice out and mix it back in to have the multiple colors
14. Serve hot topped with eggs

Note:

1. As accompaniments you can serve Egg or Mirchi ka salan or a simple raita

Hyderabadi Pakki Biryani

The primary difference between this 'pakki' version and 'kachi' version is that the meat in 'pakki' is pre-cooked and arranged in layers contrary to the 'kachi' version where the meat is cooked fully with the

layer of rice on top. Majority of the process remains the same and below are the differences in the method when cooking the pakki Biryani.

- Cook the meat ahead of time to done. If you are using chicken you can cook it till about 90% doneness too.
- Ensure the consistency of the gravy (yakni) is not runny but viscous
- Take out 1/2 of the meat in a separate bowl
- Follow the same layering process as the kachi Biryani except that the meat kept out is put back on top of the 2nd layer of rice
- Add the final layer of rice on top of the meat

Lucknowi/Awadhi Biryani

This version of the biriyani is similar to the Hyderabadi pakki Biryani except that the big difference is in the use of spices. In the Lucknowi version the spices are used whole so they are more subtle and relies on aroma and flavor that develops when cooked together.

Meat – 1 Kg / 2lbs

- If using Chicken then get it with bone cut into bigger pieces than curry pieces i.e. 2 – 3 inches in size, leave the drumstick as is. Boneless chicken can be used but I personally believe the bone adds to the taste.
- If using red meat like goat meat get baby goat.

Garlic – 6 medium cloves

Ginger – 1 1/2 inches

Green chilies – 2 – 3 (depending on your heat tolerance you can increase a bit or decrease)

Onion – 3 medium or 2 large

Ghee – 8 – 10 tsp

Plain yogurt – 1/2 cup

Coriander leaves – 2 sprigs

Turmeric – 3/4th tsp

Kashmiri red chili powder – 2 – 3 tsp

Lime - 1

Saffron – pinch or so

Milk – small bowl

Kewda water – 3 tsp

Rose water – 1 tsp

Basmati rice – 500 gm (measure of rice should be approximately ½ of the meat)

Biryani whole dry spices

White pepper corns – 1 tsp (depending on your heat tolerance you can increase a bit or decrease)

Whole star Anise seeds – 2

Anise seeds – 1 tsp

Shahi jeera/black cumin seeds/caraway seeds – 1 tsp

Whole coriander seeds – 1 tsp
Cinnamon stick – 2 inches
Green cardamom – 5 – 7
Cloves – 5 – 7
Mace (Javitri) – 1 small petal or <1/4th spoon powder
Nutmeg (Jaiphol) – 1 small piece or <1/4th spoon powder

Whole spice for rice

Cinnamon – 1 inch
Green cardamom – 2
Cloves – 2
Bay leaf – 1

For assembly & locking the vessel cover

Wheat - 1 – ½ cup or as much as needed or use multiple layers of aluminum foil

Steps

Cooking the meat

- Marinade the meat with the paste of garlic, chilies & ginger along with 1 tsp of kewda water. If you are using red meat add the papaya paste or meat tenderizer. Let it sit in the refrigerator for 1 - 2 hours at least but overnight is best. Take it out about 1 hour before cooking
- Wash the rice properly about 3 times under running water and soak it in water
- Chop the onions into thin strips and slice it from the middle
- Wash the green chilies & garlic, deskin ginger and put them all in a mixie or blender
- Heat a kadai and pour all the ghee after leaving behind about 2 spoons. Fry the onions till they are red in color and just on the verge of becoming crispy. Take the onions out of the heat with a slotted spoon to let the ghee drip into the kadai. Lay the fried onions on a plate to cool down, you can lay them on a kitchen paper towel too.
- In the same kadai where the onions were fried add whole spices and after a while the marinated meat.
- Cook the meat in medium heat – high heat without cover till the oil separates, then lower the heat to almost sim, cover and cook for some time till the meat is done. If using red meat and you don't have meat tenderizer or raw papaya paste you can use pressure cooker
- Cook the meat to almost done and the gravy (yakni) consistency is a bit runny and closer to being viscous
- Take out about 50% of the meat

Cooking the rice

- In a deep saucepan pour water that is 2 times the rice
- Add all the whole spices for rice
- Add salt after the water has boiled
- Throw away the water in which the rice was soaking and pour all the rice into the water after it starts to boil

- Cook on medium heat
- The assembly process starts when the rice has cooked roughly to 25%
- Remove the whole spices from the rice as much as possible

Saffron

- Perform this step before starting to cook the chicken
- Warm the milk and add saffron
- Add ½ tsp of Kewda water
- Let it sit there for the saffron to infuse its color and aroma into the milk

Wheat

- Mix the wheat with water and knead it to a soft consistency

Assembly

- Take the vessel with the cooked meat out of the heat
- When the rice is about 25% cooked, take some of it out to create a first thin layer on top of the yakni and meat
- Add some of the fried onion on top of this rice
- When the rice is about 50% cooked add about 50% of that rice on top of the first thin layer of rice
- Add ½ of the saffron infused milk on top of this rice in some zig zag pattern and a squeeze of ½ lemon on the rice
- Add the cooked meat that was separated and kept out earlier on top of this layer of rice along with 50% of the remaining fried onions
- When the rice is about 75% cooked add all the rice on top of the last layer along with the remaining fried onion, about 1 spoon of ghee in multiple dollops, all of the saffron infused milk, and a squeeze of ½ lemon on the rice
- Cover the vessel with 2 layers of aluminum foil to do dum cooking and lock in all the aroma
- Cover the vessel with as heavy a lid as possible and use the wheat as an adhesive to lock edges of the lid with the vessel or put another layer of aluminum foil instead of dough
- Take an old tawa/flat pan and heat it up on another burner
- Put the assembled meat and rice on top of the old tawa/flat pan and crank up the heat to high for 5 minutes
- Lower the heat to sim and cook for another 20 minutes.
- Switch off the stove and take it out of heat, let it sit for 10 minutes
- Remove the wheat/aluminum lock, aluminum foil, enjoy the aroma for a moment
- Carefully mix the rice and meat to avoid breaking the rice. Also keep some of the white colored rice out and mix it back in to have the multiple colors

Note: As accompaniments you can serve a simple raita or a boondi raita

Non-Hyderabadi Southern Indian pakki chicken/mutton Biryani

Biryani is so loved that it has evolved over time from the 2 primary variations of Awadi & Hyderabadi by making some regional alterations. This has resulted in something different and good but some will tend to disagree and prefer one or both of the primary variations.

Meat – 1 Kg / 2lbs

- If using Chicken then get it with bone cut into bigger pieces than curry pieces i.e. 2 – 3 inches in size, leave the drumstick as is. Boneless chicken can be used but I personally believe the bone adds to the taste.
- If using red meat like goat meat get baby goat.

Garlic – 6 medium cloves

Ginger – 1 1/2 inches

Green chilies – 4 – 8 (depending on your heat tolerance you can increase a bit or decrease)

Onion – 4 - 5 medium or 2 – 3 large

Ghee – 8 – 10 tsp

Plain yogurt – 3 tsp

Coriander leaves – 2 – 3 sprigs

Mint leaves – 2 – 3 sprigs

Curry leaves – 2 sprigs

Turmeric – 3/4th tsp

Kashmiri red chili powder – 2 – 3 tsp

Lime - 1

Saffron – pinch or so

Milk – small bowl

Eggs – 3 - 4

Basmati rice – 500 gm (measure of rice should be approximately ½ of the meat)

Biryani dry spices

Black pepper corns – 1 tsp (depending on your heat tolerance you can increase a bit or decrease)

Dry red chilies - 2 – 3 (depending on your heat tolerance you can increase a bit or decrease)

Whole star Anis seeds – 1-2

Anis seeds – 1 tsp

Shahi jeera/black cumin seeds/caraway seeds – 1 tsp

Whole coriander seeds – 1 1/2 tsp

Dagad ka phool/stone flower – 2 tsp approximately, you may need to pick up this using your fingers as the flowers may not easily stay on a spoon, so estimate accordingly

Cinnamon stick – 2 inches

Black cardamom – 1 - 2

Green cardamom – 5 – 7

Cloves – 5 – 7

Whole spice for rice

Cinnamon – 1 inch

Green cardamom – 2

Cloves – 2

For assembly & locking the vessel cover

Wheat - 1 – ½ cup or as much

Steps

Cooking the chicken

9. Dry roast all the spices, let it cool and then grind them in a mixie or a grinder
10. Wash the rice properly about 3 times under running water and soak it in water
11. Chop the onions into thin strips and slice it from the middle
12. Wash the green chilies & garlic, deskin ginger and put them all in a mixie or blender along with 1 tsp of plain yogurt
13. Roughly chop 3/4th of the coriander and mint leaves
14. Heat a kadai pour all the ghee after leaving behind about 2 spoons. Fry the onions till they are red in color and just on the verge of becoming crispy. Take it out of the heat, and take out the onion with a slotted spoon to let the ghee drip into the kadai
15. Marinade the chicken with the remaining yogurt, the paste of garlic, chilies & ginger, chopped coriander & mint leaves, the ground spices, 1/4th of the fried onions. Let it sit in the refrigerator for 2 - 3 hours at least but overnight is best. Take it out an 1 – 2 hours before cooking
16. In the same kadai where the onions were fried add all the curry leaves. To get it best cook at medium – high heat without cover till the oil separates, then lower the heat to almost sim , cover and cook for some time. If the chicken releases water, cook it a bit more till the consistency becomes viscous and the masala sticks to the chicken.

Cooking the rice

7. In a saucepan or deep saucepan pour water that is 2 times the rice
8. Add salt, remaining ghee, all the whole spices for rice, remaining mint and coriander leaves
9. Throw away the water in which the rice was soaking and pour all the rice into the water after it starts to boil
10. Cook the rice till about 90% done, check for doneness by picking one or two grains, you should be able to squeeze it
11. Strain all the water and set aside the rice

Saffron

4. Perform this step before starting to cook the chicken
5. Warm the milk and add saffron
6. Let it sit there for the saffron to infuse its color and aroma into the milk

Egg

2. Boil the eggs and halve them

Wheat

2. Mix the wheat with water and knead it to a soft consistency

Assembly

15. Take out 50% of the cooked chicken and pour 50% of the cooked rice on the chicken to create a layer
16. Spread 50% of the fried onion, 50% of the ghee, 50% of the saffron infused milk, and a squeeze of ½ lemon on the rice
17. Spread the remaining chicken and then the remaining rice on top of the chicken
18. Repeat step 2 for the top layer of rice
19. Cover the vessel with 2 layers of aluminum foil to do dum cooking and lock in all the aroma
20. Cover the vessel with as heavy a lid as possible and use the wheat as an adhesive to lock the lid with the vessel
21. Take an old tawa/flat pan and put it on heat. Take the vessel with the assembly and put it on this pan
22. Cook on high for 5 minutes, lower the heat to medium/sim and cook for another 20 minutes.
23. Switch off the stove and take it out of heat, let it sit for 5 minutes
24. Remove the wheat lock, aluminum foil, enjoy the aroma for a moment
25. Carefully mix the rice and meat to avoid breaking the rice
26. Serve hot topped with eggs

Note:

2. As accompaniments you can serve Egg or Mirchi ka salan or a simple raita

Meat Pulaos

Jadoh

This is a recipe from the North eastern State of Meghalaya in India. I first had this in a restaurant named Santa's Fantasea located in Golpark, Kolkata, India. They specialize in tribal food or non-mainstream food. The version of this dish that I had at Fantasea tasted awesome, it was cooked with goat meat. I looked up the internet for a recipe and read that this dish belongs to the Kashi indigenous people of that region where they prepare it with pork. I compared few recipes and used the below ingredients and the detailed steps; it did taste exceptionally good and matched what I had at Santa's Fantasea though I think my version tasted better courtesy the pork instead of goat meat. The bits of fat attached to the pork meat creates a heavenly texture and taste.

Ingredients

Pork – Roughly 1 Kg or 2 Lbs (Shoulder cut is recommended since it has a good distribution of fat with the meat). Pork can be replaced with any other meat; key is to have some fat content.
Onion – 1 large or 2 medium
Garlic – 6 cloves
Ginger – 2 inches
Corriander/Cilantro leaves – ¼ bunch + few for chopping
Green chilies – 5 -6 (adjust as per heat affinity or tolerance)
Coriander powder – 2 teaspoons

Chilli powder – 2 teaspoons (adjust as per heat affinity or tolerance. Use a mix of Kashmiri lal mirch and a spicy version when possible)

Turmeric powder – ½ teaspoon

Rice – roughly ½ the quantity of meat. Brown rice, seeraga samba rice or thick grain rice works better.

Avoid using basmati.

Mustard oil (optional) – 1 tbsp

****No oil is needed in general when pork is used as the meat from the fat of pork will be enough and it will do it's magic. A touch of mustard oil adds to the flavor though. The quantity of ingredients will have to be adjusted based on the quantity of meat.**

Steps

1. Wash the rice under running water. Soak in water and set aside.
2. Wash the pork and dry it with paper towel. Cut the pork into small cubes. It will be good to cut the pieces such that there is a bit of fat lingering onto the pieces, some will not have any fat at all though.
3. Apply generous amount of salt on the pork leave it for 1 – 2 hours. The time is not mandatory but it is good to leave it for a bit after applying salt.
4. Optional – apply 1 tbsp of mustard oil in the pork along with salt for a bit of additional flavor
5. Use a blender or mixer to make a fine paste of garlic, ginger, ½ the quantity of coriander leaves with the twigs after stripping the absolute end, green chilies, ¼ onion
6. Roughly chop the remaining onions
7. Roughly chop the remainder of the coriander leaves
8. Take a big cooking utensil like a big kadai and put it on heat. Once it is heated pour the pork and cook for 30 minutes. The pork will release lot of oil and cook itself in the oil.
9. Pour the chopped onions and cook for another 10 – 15 minutes till the onion is translucent and the pork has browned a bit.
10. Pour the paste made using garlic, chilies, ginger, garlic and coriander leaves. Cook till the raw smell disappears.
11. Add the chili powder, coriander powder and turmeric powder. Mix well and cook for a bit till the oil starts releasing.
12. Store the water in which rice was soaking and put the rice only along with the chopped coriander leaves and mix for a bit.
13. Take water roughly double of the rice used and warm it up in a microwave or by any other means. Pour this water in the rice and meat mix above. Cover and cook on medium high heat for 5 minutes.
14. Take a tawa and put it on the heat and move the kadai on top of this tawa to allow indirect cooking and preventing the rice from burning at the bottom. Keep the heat level to medium high for 2 – 3 minutes more and then turn it down to low.
15. Cook for 20 – minutes or so and check the doneness. You may need to add more warm water if the rice is not full done.
16. Once you find the rice is done fluff the content switch off heat and let it sit for few minutes before serving.
17. Serve hot.

Yakni pulao

The gravy that is formed with the cooked meat is generally referred to as yakni. The amazing thing about this recipe is that the rice is cooked in the yakni so the meat and flavor is all locked in. This recipe is similar to the Awadhi style of Biryani and originates from the same region but is distinct from Biryani in several forms. The big similarity is that this recipe will have flavor and the spices will be subtle with absolutely not heat of chilies. I have always cooked this recipe with goat meat but I am sure this will work well with lamb or beef. I have not yet been convinced that this recipe will work with chicken at all so I have not experimented yet.

Ingredients

Meat – 2 lbs or 1 kg of goat meat. Use of pressure cooker will be recommended to add speed if you do not use baby goat. You can replace with lamb or beef.

Onion – 1 medium or ½ big

Garlic – 6 medium cloves

Ginger – 1 ½ inch

Green chilies – 2

Kewda water – 1 tbs

Yogurt – ½ cup

Whole spices

Cinnamon – 1 inch

Green cardamom – 4

Black cardamom – 2

Cloves – 4

Whole Black pepper – ½ tsp

Whole White pepper – ½ tsp

Shahi jeera/black cumin seeds/caraway seeds – 1 tsp

Whole Kebaba chini/cubeb pepper – 1 tsp (if you do not have this then increase the cinnamon and cloves a little bit)

Javitri/Mace – 1 small sprig

Jaifal/Nutmeg – 1 very small piece

Basmati rice – 500 gm (measure of rice should be approximately ½ of the meat)

A Cotton cloth pouch or cheese cloth

Steps

1. Wash the rice for 3 – 4 times and soak it for 30 minutes or more
2. Wash the meat and keep it aside
3. Chop the onion into thin strips longitudinally and halve them
4. Roughly smash/chop the garlic and ginger
5. Slit the green chilies in half

6. Add all the whole spices, chopped garlic, ginger, slit chilies into the cotton cloth pouch tighten and close the top. You can also put them all in a cheese cloth and tie them into a ball.
7. In the pressure cooker or another vessel that you will use to cook the meat add appropriate amount of water and drop the meat and the cotton/cheese cloth pouch
8. Cook the meat to almost 90%
9. In another larger deep vessel add ghee and fry the chopped onions. Take out the onions when they are crispy brown and spread them on a kitchen towel and keep aside. Retain all the ghee.
10. Once the meat is cooked take the vessel out of heat. Retain all the yakni.
11. Heat the vessel with the ghee where onion was fried
12. Using a slotted spoon take out all the meat and put them into the ghee, fry them till they are a browned a bit
13. Add the yogurt and cook for 5 minutes together
14. Throw the water in which the rice was soaking and put all the rice into the meat and yogurt mix. Fry the rice for 2 minutes.
15. Add the yakni into the meat. The amount of yakni should be twice the number of cups of rice used i.e. if the cup used for rice was 200 gm and 2 ½ cups rice was used then 5 cups of yakni should be used to cook the rice. Add additional ½ cup since there are other ingredients present. Add water if the yakni does not suffice.
16. Add the kewda water
17. Cover the lid with aluminium foil
18. Cook over high heat for 10 minutes
19. Heat a flat tawa over heat and put the vessel with rice and meat on this. Cook on low flame over this indirect heat for 20 minutes.
20. Switch off the heat and let it sit for another 10 minutes
21. Take out aluminum foil and sprinkle all the fried onions
22. Slowly mix and serve hot

Teheri

Coming soon

Breads

Tandoori roti

Ingredients

The quantity of ingredients is for 6 rotis. Adjust the ingredients if you alter the number of rotis.

Wheat flour – 1 3/4th cup wheat flour + additional as needed for rolling the rotis

Yogurt – ½ cup

Cold water – as needed

Vegetable oil – 1 tbsp

Salt – ½ tsp

Sugar – 1 tsp

Baking powder – 1 tsp

Baking soda – ¼ tsp

The baking powder and baking soda will aid the leaven process.

Steps

1. In a reasonably large vessel mix the wheat flour, salt, sugar, baking powder and baking soda
2. Add the yogurt and knead
3. Add water as needed to get a well knead dough
4. Add the oil and knead a bit more. It will be soft a bit sticky, add little flour if needed.
5. Cover it with a cloth and let it rest for 45 minutes to an hour
6. Lightly knead the dough and divide into 6 equal balls
7. Dip each ball into dry flour and roll them into the rotis with a diameter of about 8 – 10 inches. The thickness will be more than a regular chapati so feel free to adjust the size.
8. If you are rolling all the rotis together then you may want to store them one above the other while sprinkling a bit of dry flour on top of the roti on which you will keep the new roti
9. Put a tawa on the heat and once it is heated up you are ready to bake
10. To bake take a roti and dip your fingers in water and light spread on one side of the roti and then put the roti in the tawa with the water side on the tawa
11. There will be bubbles forming on the roti pretty soon, let it happen and then turn it over. You may need to turn couple of times and don't worry if some of the bubbles burn out a bit. It gives a more tandoor texture.

Naan

The quantity of ingredients is for 4 large sized naans. Adjust the ingredients if you alter the number of naans or you can get more naans if you make smaller sized naans. Personally, I like the visual of a longer sized naans with 4 – 5-inch broad width.

Ingredients

Bread flour / all purpose flour – 2 ½ cups (I prefer the bread flour)

Salt – 1 tsp

Yogurt (yogurt) – 4 tbsp

Instant yeast – 1 tsp

Vegetable oil – 1/3 cup

Water (room temperature) – roughly ¾th to 1 cup

Optional – if you want to make garlic naan, or garlic/cilantro naan

Garlic – 4 – 6 medium sized cloves, roughly chopped

Cilantro/Coriander leaves – ¼ bunch roughly chopped without any twigs

Steps

1. In standing mixture add the flour, salt, yeast, yogurt and mix it up with the flat mixing attachment
2. Add the oil and continue mixing

3. Add the garlic/cilantro if you want to cook garlic or garlic/cilantro naan
4. Gradually add water till the dough comes together and is a bit sticky in consistency
5. Let it rest for about 5 minutes and then change to a dough hook and run the mixture for 5 minutes or so
6. The dough should be soft, pliable and a bit sticky
7. Take it in a bowl, apply oil and cover with a plastic wrap
8. Let it sit for 2 hours or so, it should double in size
9. When ready to cook take the enlarged dough and form 4 equal sized balls
10. Take a tawa and get it really hot
11. Using a roller pin and roll the naan, it should be about 10 inch long and 4 – 5 inch width
12. Bake one naan at a time on the hot tawa, the naan should have brownish bubbles on both sides and the naan should inflate as a whole or in large sections so that the cooking is even
13. Once a naan is cooked apply some butter over it
14. Serve the naan as a whole or cut it into smaller pieces e.g. 1 naan into 3 equal sized pieces

Wheat parotta/paratha (regular/lacha/kerala)

Terminology: Whether to call it paratha or parotta is a choice and by my experience parotta is mostly used in Southern part of India.

Wheat is always healthier than the processed flour version. So to go down the healthier route this is a good recipe to follow. This recipe can be used to make regular parotas or lacha/Kerala parotas and can yield about 5 lacha/kerala parotas or 8 regular parotas. The reason being that for lacha/Kerala parotas you have to use a larger portion of the dough than you need for a regular parotta.

Ingredients

Wheat flour – 2 cups

Oil – 2 tablespoon

Ghee – 2 tablespoon (needed only if you are making lacha/kerala parotta or you can replace oil with ghee if you are making regular parottas)

Yogurt – ½ cup

Salt – ½ tsp

Water – room temperature, as needed

Steps

1. In a large container add the Wheat flour, salt and mix
2. Add the oil as applicable per the above note and mix
3. Add the yogurt and mix
4. Add water gradually and start kneading to form a pliable soft dough.
5. Cover with a cloth and let it rest for 5 minutes
6. Knead it again and repeat steps 5 & 6 couple of times more
7. Cover and let the dough rest for 30 minutes to 1 hour
8. When ready to cook follow the below instructions

Regular paratha/parotta

1. Make about 8 balls with the dough
2. Use a rolling pin and board to roll each dough into 6 – 7 inch size flat discs
3. Heat a tawa/griddle
4. Put the each of the discs first. Press with a spatula let it form small bubbles. Repeat for both sides
5. Spread some oil on the sides and a bit on the top
6. Fry the paratha, turn both sides to allow it to become a bit brownish
7. Take them away from the heat and keep aside and stack them covered with kitchen towel
8. You can serve them hot right after cooking or store them in fridge for 2 – 3 days and warm up in a microwave oven before eating

Lacha/Kerala paratha/parotta

1. Make about 5 balls with the dough
2. Use a rolling pin and board to roll each dough into 6 – 7 inch size flat discs
3. Take each flat discs and using a knife create a incision/marker horizontally such that each of the portion does not fully separate from the disc
4. Apply ghee on the whole disc
5. Stack each of the incised portion on top of each other and stretch the whole thing together
6. Starting at one end gradually roll the dough into a semi-tight ball
7. Put it back on the board and roll into another thicker disc of about 4 – 5 inches using much less pressure than what was used while rolling the initial disc
8. Heat a tawa/griddle
9. Put the each of the discs first. Press with a spatula let it form small bubbles. Repeat for both sides
10. Spread some oil on the sides and a bit on the top
11. Fry the paratha, turn both sides to allow it to become a bit brownish
12. Take them away from the heat and keep aside and stack them covered with kitchen towel
13. You can serve them hot right after cooking or store them in fridge for 2 – 3 days and warm up in a microwave oven before eating

You can use a standing mixer to form the dough. Use the hook for the initial mixing and the other flat mixing attachment for kneading. The repeat processes will remain the same.

Triangle paratha

I grew up eating lots of this version of paratha so I can generalize it to be more of a Bengali household paratha. The processed/all purpose flour/maida is generally used for this version but the healthier version of wheat flour is also used.

Mediterranean

NYC Halal Guys Rice & Chicken

One of mine and my son's attraction to visit New York is to enjoy the great food served by the Halal Guys. The food is simple and served through simple carts, but the taste is so alluring.

The food consists of minced chicken or a mix of beef & lamb on a bed of orange colored rice very well complimented by a white sauce and an extremely spicy red sauce.

We live close to DC, so this food became scarce after my weekly travel to NYC stopped once my project at NYC came to a closure. At that time, they were not present outside NYC so in order to cater to my son's love for this food I dived into the internet to see if I can get any recipe knowing their recipe is well guarded. I landed up with few recipes where people guessed the ingredients and methods. As always, I referred to some of them and extracted, combined the information to cook this food.

Though nothing can compare to the original, but I would say my son did use his signature expression 'hmmm' to confirm his liking for what I cooked. Over the years I did make some adjustment and things improved further especially the red sauce. I will not claim any authenticity of this recipe, it just seems to be the next best to the original which is not readily available to us. This recipe may seem a bit overwhelming but if you break it in 2 days and try it out I do not think you will regret the decision.

I will recommend a visit to Halal Guys stall near Times square. They will remain my all time favorite and a must when in the City. I used to frequent their stall at the corner of 53rd Street and 6th Avenue beside Hilton Midtown Manhattan. After the food a walk in the central park few blocks from there may help or a siesta can help too.

The Meat and its spices

Chicken thigh (boneless) – 2 lbs or 1 Kg

You can replace the chicken with either beef or a combination of beef and lamb (**need to try this out. I think flank or skirt steak will work out, though need to deal with the toughness of these cuts)

Fresh oregano leaves (optional) – 2 – 3 sprigs. This is not mandatory, but it is wonderful to have fresh oregano. If this is not available just increase in the quantity of the dried oregano leaves.

Dried oregano leaves – 1 tsp

Garlic – 4 - 8 cloves

Caraway seeds/shahi jeera – 1 tsp powdered

Coriander powder – 1 tsp

Olive oil – 2 – 4 tsp

White sauce

Yogurt – 3/4th cup (Greek yogurt if available should be used. It is much thicker and goes well but other varieties including Indian dahi will work too)

Mayonnaise – 2 tbsp

Caraway seeds/Shahi jeera – 1 tsp

Green cardamom – 2 – 3

Sumac – 1 – 2 tsp

Salt – as per taste, keep on the lower side

Red sauce

This sauce is enjoyed hot. You can try to lower the heat by reducing the chilies but that will take away the oomph from this dish. A better method to reduce the heat is to regulate using the amount of white sauce and not diluting the level of the heat of this sauce.

Dry red chilies (1 or more variety of extremely hot peppers) – 8 – 10 **augment with scotch bonnet or cayenne as per heat tolerance
Garlic – 4 – 6 cloves
Caraway seeds/Shahi jeera – 1 tsp
Coriander powder – 1 tsp
Onion – ½ medium or 2 – 4 shallots
Tomato paste – 1 tsp
Red bell pepper powder – 2 tsp
Lemon – 1/2
Olive oil – 1 – 2 tsp
Salt – as per taste. The salt compliments the heat and garlic so it may need to be on the higher side a bit but adjust as per taste

Rice

Rice – Roughly ½ the amount of meat. Preferably non fragrant varieties of rice should be used (e.g. don't use Basmati)
Food color (yellow or orange) – ¼ tsp
Cumin – 1 tsp
Cooking butter – 1 – 2 tsp
Olive oil – 1 tsp

For assembly

Pita bread – 2 – 3 medium sized store-bought ones. If you prefer to prepare at home, refer the recipe noted in this book. If you don't have Pita you can try to replace with thick roti as the last option
Iceberg Lettuce – ½ chopped into small pieces
Tomato – 1 medium quartered

Steps

The Meat

1. Wash and dry the chicken thigh pieces
2. Make a paste of all the other ingredients in a blender/mixie along with 2 tsp of olive oil
3. Keep rough 2 tsp of the marinade and use the rest to marinade the chicken with the paste for 8 hours or more. Overnight marination will be great. It also helps work with this multistep recipe

Cooking the chicken

The chicken can be cooked either on a pan or as shawarma meat in a rotisserie if you have one. You can find a chicken shawarma recipe in this book.

To cook the chicken in a pan,

1. Heat a pan and pour the remaining olive oil
2. Once heated put all the chicken and cook till it is soft, changed color and becomes a bit brownish
3. Switch off the heat and one by one take out the chicken thigh pieces carefully on a cutting board and chop them into as small pieces as you can. You can use 2 knives to perform the chopping act

like what a butcher would do mincemeat back in the old days when minced meat machines were not available

4. Mix the paste that was saved with the chopped meat, get it back on the pan, switch on the heat to lower medium and stir to mix everything for 5 – 10 minutes max
5. Remove from heat and leave it aside

Rice

1. Wash the rice under running water adequately and soak it for 30 minutes or so
2. Take a deep vessel and put it on medium heat
3. Add the butter and olive oil
4. When the butter & oil has heated up add all the cumin powder, food color and salt as per taste. Let it settle and mix for couple of minutes
5. Put all the rice without the water and let it fry a bit. Retain the water in which the rice was soaking
6. Warm the water in which the rice was soaked and add a bit more as needed depending on the rice cooking instruction. The water is generally double the amount of rice used and the rice should be fluffy while absorbing all the water
7. Cook the rice covered on high heat for about 10 minutes. Keep it covered and then lower the heat to almost low. To prevent the rice from burning at the bottom you can use a frying pan or a tawa to sit on the heat and put the vessel containing rice on it to allow indirect heating
8. Check in about 20 minutes, add more water if needed. Rice should be fully cooked, soft and fluffy when nudged with a fork

Red sauce

1. Grind the caraway seeds in a mortar pestle
2. Soak all the chilies in hot water for 20 – 30 minutes
3. In a blender/mixie make a paste using all the chilies, all the garlic, caraway seeds powder, cumin powder, salt to taste along with some water in which the chilies were soaked. This sauce will be a bit viscous in nature so control the amount of water you add to it

White sauce

1. Grind the caraway seeds and the green cardamom pods in a mortar pestle. You will have to extract the cardamom seeds and throw away the skin.
2. In a round bottom container add the freshly ground cardamom and caraway seeds
3. Add the yogurt, mayonnaise, sumac, salt and a bit of water
4. Mix and the resulting sauce will be a bit runny. Taste for salt, it should be a bit on the lower side to compliment the red sauce

Assembly

1. Cut the lettuce into small pieces
2. Warm the pitta breads
3. In a bowl add a layer of rice, top it with the meat, lettuce, red sauce (per heat tolerance), generous amount of the white sauce and then put the Pita bread

To enjoy it you should mix all the toppings except the bread. But if you are like my son you may even want to shred the bread and mix it too.

Persian Kofte kebab

This is an amazing ground meat recipe that is not very hard to prepare. Though the ingredients are similar to other Persian kebab such Koobideh kebab it can be prepared without using skewers too.

Ingredients

Ground meat – 1.5 lbs. Either a mix of 1 lbs lamb and ½ lbs beef. Only 1 type of meat can be used too but if using beef ensure there is adequate fat, lamb generally comes with fat by default.

Onion – 1 yellow onion

Parsley – 1/4th bunch

Garlic pods – 4

Black pepper – 1 tbsp

Salt – as per taste. I generally use a measure of roughly 1 tsp of salt per lb and add a little for every 1/lbss

Corriander powder – 1 tsp

Cinnamon power – 1/4th tsp

Allspice – 1 tsp

Sumac – 1 tsp

Nutmeg (optional) – 1/4th tsp

Smoked red bell pepper (optional) – 2 tsp

Binder (optional) – if you are using skewers it will be better to add some binder which can be either an egg, 1/4th cup bread crumbs or a soaked piece of bread.

Steps

1. Wash and throw the garlic, parsley leaves, onion in a food processor. Pulse this mixture
2. Add the pulsed content into an adequately sized container along with the minced meat
3. If using skewers then add breadcrumbs/soaked bread or 1 egg into the mixture
4. Add all the other spices into the minced meat mixture and mix everything very well
5. Let the mixture sit for 2 hours at least, more the better. One can put it in the fridge for few hours or overnight but take it and keep it in room temperature about 1 – 1.5 hours before preparing
6. Once ready take about 2 tbsp of meat in your hand, roll them into a ball but flatten them into more like a rounder rectangular shapes
7. If you are using skewers then you can add the meat into the skewers like other kebabs
8. Lay the kebabs on an appropriate baking tray if skewers are not used
9. Method of cooking can vary between baking in oven, grilling or using air fryer
10. For both oven and air fryer crank the temperature to 400 F
 - a. Air fryer – Air fry for 12 minutes. Take out the kebabs at about 7 – 8 minutes, turn the kebabs and return them into the oven or air fryer
 - b. If using skewers over grill or coal fire keep turning the skewers at an interval of about 3 minutes
11. Let the kebab site outside for a little bit

12. Serve hot with pitta bread, Couscous salad, rice with hummus

Puerto Rican

Arroz con Polo

I learnt about this dish in a food show and within about 2 weeks of that show one morning my boss asked me if I can travel to Puerto Rico that afternoon and I was more than happy to do that. I spent couple of days there but on the first day I ate at 4 restaurants trying out various foods like fried plantains, Mafango, Ropa Vieja and this one. I have fallen in love with this dish and so has my folks at home. I had some extensive discussion with the owner for the breakfast restaurant who let me know about the magical Sazon Seasoning with Anato and Cilantro that forms a basic ingredient in this dish. Again, through the years I may have deviated from how it is done there but what I and my folks enjoy what I cook as detailed below.

Ingredients

Chicken – 1.5 lbs Boneless combination of breast and thigh pieces. I always prefer adding a bit of the thigh pieces as breast pieces tend to get drier.

Andouille sausage – Abt 3 links. I prefer Andouille sausage but any other sausage such as Kielbasa etc. can be used

Bacon – 2 strips cut into small pieces. This is optional but if used will enhance taste and flavor as is always done by good old bacon

Rice – 1 lbs, it should be about ½ the weight of meat. Any regular rice including brown rice will work, just don't use any that has aroma like Basmati or Jasmine rice.

Jalapeno – 3 or as per heat tolerance

Cilantro – ½ sprig

Green olives – a handful

Onion – 1 medium

Garlic – 4

Cayenne pepper – 1.5 tbsp or as per heat tolerance

Goya Sazon Seasoning with Anato and Cilantro – 2 packets

Cumin powder – 1 tsp

Tomato paste – 2 tbsp

Oregano – 1 tbsp

Green peas – 1 cup

Olive oil – 2 – 3 tbsp, can reduce if using bacon which will release fat itself

Chicken stock – optional

*** need to include optional pimento and capers

Steps

1. Wash the chicken and cut it into small 1 – 2 inch cubes, marinade with salt and keep it aside
2. Wash the rice and keep it soaked in water
3. Cut the sausage into small rounds or a bit smaller is fine too
4. If you are using bacon then cut/shred the bacon into small pieces

5. Wash Green peas, cilantro, Jalapeno and keep aside
6. Roughly chop the onions, garlic and jalapeno
7. Roughly chop the cilantro leaves and the twigs except for the absolute end of the twigs
8. Cut the olives into halves or a little smaller depending on the size of the olives
9. Put a medium/large dutch oven or kadhai on the heat
10. Add olive oil and bacon if using the same
11. Add the chicken and fry a bit till it stops releasing water and browned a bit
12. Add the sausage and fry for few minutes on low heat
13. Add the chopped onion, garlic and jalapeno peppers
14. Add the sazón seasoning, cumin powder, oregano and cayenne pepper along with the tomato paste and chopped cilantro, mix and cook for 3 – 4 minutes
15. Add the rice without the water and mix, fry for couple of minutes
16. Add the olives and green peas, gently mix them
17. Add water or chicken stock such that it is a bit more than double the rice when measured in terms of cups i.e. 1 cup rice will require 2 cups of water/chicken stock
18. Mix all, cover and cook on high heat for 10 minutes
19. Without opening the lid remove the dutch oven and put a tawa or old big pan on the heat. Keep the dutch oven back on this tawa/pan lower the heat to sim and cook for about 20 minutes or so more. This is to allow the rice to cook slowly, so if you don't have the pan/tawa just lower the heat and regulate. Depending on the rice used this step may need some monitoring and adjustment like adding a bit more water
20. Once done the rice should be puffy and moist enough to enjoy but not like a porridge at all
21. Serve hot and enjoy

American BBQ

Pork ribs

Pork ribs are available generally in 3 primary forms as briefed below. They may also be available as Country style ribs which is obtained from the shoulder and is generally boneless or rib tips which are the portions of meat cut from the St. Louis style ribs.

I tend to play around with the marinade. Generally I go with lots of black pepper, salt, variety of herbs, oil and sometimes with plain mustard sauce. Experts will have opinions and once should follow what they prefer I go with what I feel like doing on the day of cooking.

Spare ribs

This cut of pork ribs is the long and flat ribs that come from the pig's belly. They have a lot of fat which gives them their flavor but this also means that they can be quite tough. Slow cooking these ribs especially in a smoker is best.

Baby back ribs

As the name suggests, baby back ribs come from the pig's back and are shorter and narrower than spare ribs. They have less fat which makes them leaner and more tender. These ribs are more suitable for direct grilling but they can be smoked too just need to be cautious about the time as they take less time and can get dry if cooked longer than necessary.

St. Louis ribs

St. Louis ribs are a type of spareribs that have been trimmed of the cartilage and breastbone. This gives them a more rectangular shape which makes them easier to eat. This cut of ribs is best suited for slow cooking especially using smoker.

Ingredients

1 slab of ribs per choice

Salt – approximately 1 teaspoon per pound. I prefer sea salt

Herbs - I tend to use a different blend of Oregano, Marjoram, Thyme, Rosemary, Sage each time

Roaster red bell pepper – 2 tablespoons

Black pepper – Fresh and coarsely ground is preferred but as you wish. I prefer about 1.25 teaspoon per pound

Other peppers – I play with cayenne pepper, habanero pepper, Amarillo, scotch bonnet either in powder form or paste as available. For those that are available as paste only I use them in the sauce.

Olive oil – 2 tablespoons. This helps keep the herbs stick to the meat and help form good crust

Djon Mustard – 3 tablespoons. I do not use this every time.

Garlic pods – about 4 large. This is optional and I tend to use it occasionally but Garlic makes things great

Onion – 2 medium, thinly sliced. I use this for only a particular type of marination as mentioned below

BBQ sauce – I tend to buy something that is smoky and add few things like pepper paste to jazz them up.

Some of them tend to be too sweet for my taste.

Steps

1. Wash the slab of ribs and pat dry
2. Turn the ribs with the bone side up. Use a serrated knife to take out the thin membrane. This will help the marinade reach the meat better. Look up youtube to find expert advice on how to take out the membrane
3. Apply olive oil and/or Djon mustard
4. Crush or make a paste of the garlic bulbs if you want to use at this point and rub it across the meat on both sides
5. Make the dry rub by mixing all the herbs you plan to use along with salt, black pepper and other dry pepper powders
6. Gently sprinkle the dry rub on the meat, first on the under side with bones and then on the side with meat. Press the dry rubs so that they form a layer and stick to the meat to result in an awesome crust
7. Wrap the rib in aluminum foil and then depending on the method of cooking and type of ribs move forward with next step

Grilling in oven

- Baby back ribs – Pre-heat to 275F/300F and cook the meat in the middle rack for 2.5 hours/2 hours respectively per temperature
- St Louis or Spare ribs – Pre-heat oven to 275F/300F and cook in the middle rack for 3.5 hours/4 hours

Mixed

Chicken Marsala with mushroom

I enjoyed this dish at restaurants so when I searched for the recipe on the internet I was quite surprised to find that the Chicken Marsala recipes stated that this dish is an American Italian recipe which meant it was not something that was originally cooked in Italy. Nevertheless, it tastes great and is a real easy dish to put together even on a weeknight.

Ingredients

Chicken breast – 2 full chicken breasts which will yield 4 pieces when each is cut into a halve
Button mushroom – sliced about 2 cups or a bit more. You can experiment with any mushroom of choice

Marsala – 1 cup

Chicken stock – 1 cup or a bit more

Olive or vegetable oil – 4 tbsp

Cooking butter – 2 tsp

Garlic – 5 cloves

Onion – ½ of a medium sized onion

Fresh parsley – few sprigs or use dry parsley

All purpose flour – about ¾ cup

Black pepper – about 2 tsp

Salt – as per taste

Steps

1. Wash the chicken breast and slice each of them to get 2 fillet per chicken breast
2. Using a hammer flatten them into cutlets and dry them using a kitchen towel
3. Marinade the chicken with most of the pepper and salt as per taste
4. In a flat plate spread out the all purpose flour and spice with a pinch of salt and pepper. Dredge both sides of the chicken cutlets in the flour, shake them to get rid of excess
5. Heat a skillet with ½ the oil
6. Add the chicken on the skillet and keep for about 3 - 4 minutes each side to get a golden brown crust
7. While the chicken is frying roughly slice the onion and garlic. Slice the mushroom if you bought whole mushrooms
8. Roughly chop the fresh parsley
9. Take the chicken out the skillet and keep it aside on a plate
10. Add the butter and remaining oil in the same skillet and then add the mushroom. Let the mushroom brown a bit, keep the heat medium high to prevent mushrooms from releasing much moisture. Add any remaining pepper.
11. Add the onions and garlic, fry for 2 minutes
12. Add about 1 tbsp of flour and mix for 2 minutes

13. Add the Marsala wine and the chicken stock, mix well
14. Put the chicken back in the pan and let it cook in the liquid
15. Reduce the liquid to a thick gravy
16. Spread the chopped parsley or dry parsley
17. Serve hot with pasta or veggies as per choice

Beef Stroganoff

This is a pretty quick and tasty dish that is also a soul food.

Ingredients

1. 1.5 lb Sirloin steak tip or flat iron steak or equivalent. A good cut of meat renders better taste.
2. Mushroom 1 pint sliced into strips. White button, Baby Bella or Cremini works well.
3. Sour cream – ½ cup
4. Whole milk or Heavy cream – ½ cup
5. All purpose flour – about 2 tablespoons
6. Stone ground or Dijon mustard – 1 teaspoon
7. Worcestershire sauce – 2 teaspoon
8. Black pepper – 1.5 tablespoons
9. Salt
10. Stock - Beef or Chicken; Beef is preferred
11. Olive oil – 2 tablespoon
12. Red or yellow onion – ½ medium sized chopped
13. Garlic – 2 – 3 medium sized chopped
14. Fettuccine pasta – store bought or home made, egg noodles

Steps

1. Wash and dry the beef.
2. Cut the beef into thin slices of 2 x 2
3. Marinade the beef for few hours or overnight with pepper, salt as per taste (roughly little less than 1 teaspoon per 1.5 lbs works for me)
4. Wash the mushroom and slice or use store bought sliced mushroom
5. Chop the onion and garlic
6. Heat a pan and add the olive oil
7. Butter – 2 tablespoon
8. Once the oil is hot keep adding the beef and brown both sides. Don't add all the beef at once but patiently brown them in batches. Depending on the slices it should take about 2 minutes per side. The meat can be unforgiving so don't sear it too much
9. Keep aside all the seared beef
10. In the same pan add the butter
11. Add the onion, fry till translucent
12. Add the garlic and fry till the raw smell goes off
13. Add the mushroom and fry for few minutes till all of this takes a brownish color
14. Add the flour and stir vigorously so that no lump is formed
15. Add the beef stock and let it simmer for few minutes. Depending on h

Baked Chicken wings

I found this process of baking wings over internet and had been using since with some modification. This recipe is just to get the wings ready to be sauced/rubbed. For sauce and dry rub ideas refer the Experimental section.

Ingredients

1. 2 lbs of chicken wings. I prefer a mix of the drum and wingette. Some prefers to have boneless wings which to me is nothing but a kebab. I've included some instructions on how to also cater to those who doesn't want to handle a bone. Let's call these **chicken kWings**, use chicken thighs for these.
2. Salt, about ½ teaspoon per pound of chicken. Remember the sauce / dry rub will have salt in them, so be careful
3. Pepper, about ½ teaspoon per pound of chicken or as per taste
4. Baking powder – 2 teaspoon / lbs of chicken wings. Do not use these for chicken kWings. The baking powder helps bring the moisture out and makes the skin crispier
5. Sauce / dry rub of your choice. Feel free to experiment and try something new, some ideas are included in the Experimental section below

Steps

1. Wash the chicken and pat them dry
2. If you are cooking chicken kWings then cut the chicken thigh into approximately 2 x 2 pieces like you do for chicken tikka or jujeh kebab.
3. Marinade the chicken with salt and pepper and keep in the refrigerator for 1 – 1.5 hrs. If you plan to use a mix of chicken wings and chicken kWings then marinade and store them in separate containers
4. Take the chicken out of the refrigerator about 45 mins to 1 hour before baking
5. Before baking apply baking powder on the marinaded chicken wings. Do not apply baking powder on the chicken kWings (chicken thighs)
6. Get all the chicken wings & kWings in a oven safe baking tray, line with parchment paper to make it easy to clean. If you are mixing wings & kWings ensure to separate them as they need a slight different treatment as mentioned below
7. Heat the lower oven to 300F
8. Put the tray in the lower rack of the oven and bake for 20 minutes
9. Increase the temperature to 400F
10. Put the tray in the highest rack and continue to bake
11. If you are baking **kWings** take them out after 15 more minutes and put the tray back in with the wings
12. Pour the kWings in the containers with sauce or rubs and generously apply those
13. Get all of them back in the tray and put them in the highest rack and continue to cook
14. Take the tray out after 10 minutes
15. If you are baking **kWings** take them out, they are ready for consumption. You can put them back in the same container where the sauce/dry rub was applied

16. Pour all the wings in the containers with sauce or rubs and generously apply those. If you want to use multiple types of sauce or rub, separate the wings and apply accordingly. . Put them back in the oven for 10 more minutes. before putting them back.
17. Take these out and they are ready to eat
18. Serve with sides such as snacking or julienned carrots, julienned celery or something you may fancy to experiment with that day

Desserts/Sweet dishes

I have generally been someone who will have another bite of meat for dessert but over the years as I aged my taste bud has taken some turns that surprised me too, listed below are few of the desserts or sweet dishes that I have started to love and was able to replicate reasonably in my lab.

Maple Pecan pie

Ingredients

For the crust (yields 2 pie)

1. 2 ½ cups of all purpose flour
2. 1 tsp salt
3. 1 tsp sugar
4. Unsalted butter – 2 sticks cut into small pieces
5. 2/3 cup of vegetable shortening ** (optional need to try out)
6. 1tsp of cider vinegar
7. Iced water

Filling

1. 2 cups of roughly broken pecans
2. ½ cup of brown sugar (you can use white sugar also if brown is not available)
3. 2 tbsp vanilla essence
4. 3 eggs
5. ¼ tsp cinnamon powder
6. ½ tsp salt
7. ¾th cup maple syrup
8. ¼th cup corn syrup
9. 1 tbsp of all purpose flour
10. 5 spoons of melted and cooled butter

Steps

For Crust

1. In a stand mixer add all the dry ingredients and butter mix with a mixer
2. Mix at low speed
3. Add the cider vinegar into the iced water and with the mixer running slowly add water using the spoon
4. Careful not to add too much or too less water, the dough should be in a state of coming together with lumped crumbles

5. Stop the mixer at this point
6. On a flat surface sprinkle flour and get the dough and form into a ball, it should come together
7. Separate the ball into 2 and shape them as flat discs
8. Wrap each disc individually in a separate plastic wrap
9. Store both in a refrigerator for 30 minutes at least before using

For filling

1. Dry roast the pecans for few mins and keep them aside
2. Add the sugar in a large bowl
3. Add the eggs and whisk into a thick consistency
4. Add the remaining ingredients and mix
5. Add the roasted pecans

Assembly & baking

1. Take the crust disc out of the refrigerator and let it stand for a while to soften a bit such that it can be rolled. The standing time will increase with increase in the refrigeration time
2. Roll the disc to about 10 – 11 inch
3. Take a pie dish about 9 inch in diameter and slowly tuck the rolled pie crust, you can crimp the edges or just fold it a bit for the pie
4. You can store this back in the refrigerator for few minutes
5. Preheat the oven to 350 F
6. If you choose to blind bake the crust you can do this by covering the crust with an aluminum foil and adding some weights on the crust
7. When ready to add the filling take the filling and gradually pour the filling and spread it out evenly with a spoon
8. Bake for 40 minutes or so; you may choose to tent the pie at midway to prevent extra browning of the edges
9. Take out the pie once the top appears to have bubbled up
10. Let it cool and then cut into small pieces and serve

Maple Pecan tart

Everything same as Maple Pecan pie except that the Crust will require 1 egg yellow..**need to try this

Tiramisu

We have been having this delectable, sweet dish at restaurants or buying off the shelf but one fine day my son sent me a link to a recipe of Tiramisu. While he enjoys good food it was not natural for him to send a recipe, may be a stress buster stuff while preparing for the final exams of his first semester. He was coming back home for Thanksgiving holidays, so I planned to experiment, and my wife decided to tag team too which was good because she is great at desserts and has been doing those for most part at home rather than me. The process was rather simple than any other desserts and the first time outcome was very good from taste perspective though structural improvements were required. During the process I also learned that the word Tiramisu meant pick me up or can also imply cheer me up, well I do not vouch that to be correct so don't pick on that but go ahead and experiment with the dish.

Ingredients

For the creamy bit

1. 4 eggs
2. ½ cup of granulated sugar
3. 2 x 450 lbs of Mascarpone cheese

For the layers

1. Espresso coffee
2. Marsala wine or dark rum (don't add if consumers will include children)
3. Lady finger cookies
4. Cocoa powder
5. Ready to drink Coffee powder

Steps

1. Keep the eggs and Mascarpone in room temperature for about 10 – 15 minutes
2. Prepare the strong espresso coffee and pour in a shallow dish with edges large enough to allow the lady finger cookies to be placed without difficulty
3. Add the Marsala wine or dark rum if you are not serving for kids
4. Separate the egg whites and put them in a medium sized bowl while putting the egg yolks into a larger sized bowl
5. Pour the sugar into the bowl with egg yolks and whip them together with a hand mixer till they form a creamy layer
6. Add the mascarpone cheese into the egg yolks mixture gradually with a spatula and blend them together carefully
7. Using the same hand mixture whip the egg whites in the other bowl so that they form a stiff peak
8. Take a bit of the stiff egg white and fold it into the egg yolk mixture, repeat till all the egg white has been incorporated into the egg yolk mixture
9. Take an 8" x 8 " baking dish or something of similar size ensuring that all the ingredients will fit in without trouble
10. Take few spoons of cocoa powder and mix a spoon of coffee powder into it
11. Through a sieve sprinkle the cocoa and coffee powder mix on the bottom of the dish to create a thin layer
12. Add a layer of the creamy mixture on top of the powder
13. Take out some lady finger cookies and individually dip them in the espresso coffee and lay them on the creamy layer; dip it enough to soak the coffee while ensuring they don't get too soggy to break apart. Use a pattern to cover maximum area with less gaps, you can break the cookies as you need to fill gaps.
14. Add another layer of cream on top of the first layer of cookies
15. Follow it up with another layer of lady finger cookies dipped in the espresso coffee
16. Add the final layer of cream mixture on top of the lady finger cookie layer
17. Put it in the refrigerator, ideally overnight before serving

18. Take it out before serving and sprinkle cocoa and coffee mixture on top creating a little thicker layer than the one you did for the bottom one
19. Cut it into sizes you need to depending on the number of consumers and serve

Cream Brûlée

This was the first non-Indian dessert dish that I had experimented with and it turned out to be a favorite at home. I seemed to have improved as I repeated the experiments while improving on the process and tools used e.g. after I used a hand mixture to whip instead of using a fork.

Ingredients

1. 450 ml of half and half milk; you can use heavy cream instead, but I couldn't with a low lactose tolerant crew at home
2. 5 eggs
3. Vanilla essence
4. Salt
5. Granulated white sugar
6. Brown sugar

Steps

1. Take out the milk from the refrigerator and warm it up a bit but don't boil
2. Remove the milk from the heat and add 1 1/2 spoon of vanilla essence and 1/2 tsp of salt into the milk and mix it
3. While the milk is heating up separate the egg yolks from the egg white and put them into the bowl. You can keep the egg whites to cook some healthy egg white omelet
4. Add the granulated white sugar into the bowl with egg yolks and whip them with a hand mixture to develop a thick creamy mixture
5. Once the milk has cooled down enough take quarter of the milk and pour it into the egg yolk mixture while mixing it quickly to ensure no lump is being formed
6. Add the egg yolk mixture back into the remainder of the milk and mix them well slowly to form the custard
7. Pre-heat the lower rack oven to 325 F
8. Take out some small sized ramekins and distribute the custard into those ramekins
9. Take a larger oven safe dish and pour hot water to a depth that will cover till about the middle of each ramekin and not more than that
10. Put each ramekin into this oven safe dish
11. When the oven is ready transfer the oven safe dish into the oven and bake for about 40 minutes
12. Take out each ramekin and put them on a cooking rack or so to cook down before transferring them into a refrigerator
13. Overnight refrigeration before serving is ideal
14. Take them out of the refrigerator before serving
15. Sprinkle brown sugar granules on top of each and light them up using a butane torch to form a brown layer of caramelized sugar. If you don't have a butane torch you can use the oven broiler for few mins or create the caramel on a pan and spread it on the custard (I understand this layer is called Brûlée in French but I do not know the language so don't pick on me)

Chena poda

This is a famous sweet dish from the state of Orissa. The word Chena means Indian cottage cheese and 'poda' means burnt/caramelized. The recipe below is a hack since I've used Ricotta cheese instead of making the Indian cottage cheese which takes a while to do. For the adventurous it will be absolutely fine to go ahead and make their own Chena at home and move forward with the rest of the ingredient. I also use pistachio which the original may not have. I've to say though that this recipe can satisfy your craving when you cannot have the original but one must venture into the sweet shops of Bhuvaneshwar and have the sweets made by the experts at least once.

Ingredients

Ricotta cheese – 1 container 450 ml

Green cardamom pods – 4 or green ¼ teaspoon cardamom powder

Pistachio – 2 tablespoon

Condensed milk – 1 tin

Sugar – 2 tablespoon/as per sweet taste. I prefer brown sugar but you can use white too.

Semolina – 2 tablespoon

Ghee – 2 – 3 tablespoons

Cheese cloth – 1

Steps

1. Extract the seeds from the green cardamom pods and grind them in a mortar pestle
2. Roughly grind the pistachio in a mortar pestle or in a mixer grinder
3. Take a big bowl and put the cheese cloth on it
4. Pour the Ricotta cheese on it
5. Squeeze gently and extract some of the water from the Ricotta cheese but not all the water
6. Throw away the water or drink it up, very tasty
7. Pour the Ricotta cheese in the bowl
8. Add the ground green cardamom powder, pistachio's, semolina, ½ tin of the condensed milk, 1 tablespoon sugar, 1.5 tablespoon ghee
9. Mix all slowly using a spatula. Taste for sweetness and add condensed milk/sugar to get to the right level if needed. I do not prefer too sweet but some may.
10. Take a baking dish 8 x 8 inches and apply some ghee on the sides and bottom
11. Pour the ricotta cheese mixture into the baking dish and spread it out
12. Sprinkle the remaining sugar on top
13. Add the remaining ghee as small drops on the whole mixture
14. Preheat the oven to 350F
15. Put the baking dish in when ready and keep it in the middle rack for about 1 hour 30 minutes
16. Be sure to turn the dish couple of times for even baking and browning
17. Once you see caramelization induced browning around the edges and top to a significant extent take it out and allow it to cool down fully
18. Take a dish and turn the baking tray upside down for the content to appear like a dome
19. The caramelized bottom portion will appear at the top
20. Cut into small pie and enjoy

Experimental

Lakasambo Soup

This recipe is inspired by an amalgamation of the Cajun/Creole Cuisine from Louisiana and Asian cuisine. More specifically this is inspired by Gumbo, Jambalaya, Red/Green curry, Laksa.

Ingredients

The ingredients below will yield 4 – 6 medium sized bowl of thick soup. The quantity of soup can be increased by increasing the quantity

Tilapia fillet – 3
Andouille sausage – 2
Tofu – 1 small slab
Soy sauce – 2 tbsp
Dried shrimp – 1 to 1 ½ cups
Dried red chilies (Indian or any variety) – 4
Garlic powder -1 tbsp
Onion powder – 1 tbsp
White pepper powder – 1 tsp
Egg – 1
Sesame oil – 3 - 5 tbsp
Garlic cloves – 3
Jalapeno - 1
Dried oregano – 1 tsp
Dried parsley – 1 tsp
Dried thyme – 1 tsp
Coriander powder – 1 tsp
Chicken broth – 1 container (you can use just water, but chicken broth will taste better. I usually buy from Costco which also has a blend of carrot, celery into it)
Fish sauce – 3 tsp
Salt as per taste

For blending

Green/Red bell pepper (depending on the color you prefer) - 1
Lemongrass – 2 small sticks
Celery sticks – 1 bunch
Cilantro – ½ bunch
Carrots - 2
Jalapeno – 1
Onion – 1 medium

Garlic – 6 cloves
Ginger – 2 inches

Steps

1. Soak the dried shrimp and dried red chilies along with 3 garlic cloves in hot water
2. Cut the andouille sausage into 2 inch rounds
3. Cut 1 Jalapeno into ½ inch round shape and keep them aside
4. Cut the tofu slab into small square pieces
5. Add all the ingredients under the section for blending in a blender and pulse them till they all come together and no large pieces are left
6. Transfer everything from the blender into a container
7. Take the moist dried shrimp, red chili, garlic and blend. Add the water in which they were soaking to the extent necessary to form a bit of a coarse mixture that is thick and not watery, keep it in a separate container
8. In the same blender add the tilapia filet, onion powder, garlic powder, white pepper powder, soy sauce, 1 tsp of fish sauce and white from the egg, blend them together. This will result in a sticky consistency, and it will take in all the flavors from the ingredients blended prior to this
9. Take a deep vessel and heat it up, add 2 tbsp sesame oil
10. Shallow fry the andouille sausage and tofu, take them out
11. Add 1 tbsp of oil in the same vessel. Make golf ball sized balls of the fish mixture and lightly fry them in the oil, take them out and keep them aside
12. Add 1 tbsp of oil in the same vessel. Add the dry shrimp paste and fry for 5 – 7 minutes
13. Add 2 tsp fish sauce and cook for a minute
14. Add the dried oregano, parsley and thyme
15. Add the blended vegetables in the same vessels and fry for 10 minutes
16. Add the andouille sausage, fish balls and fried tofu
17. Mix well and add the chicken broth / water.
18. The consistency of the soup will neither be too thin nor too thick, so adjust water and cook accordingly
19. Taste for salt and add if needed, the soy sauce and fish sauce will add salt already so be careful
20. Serve hot in a soup bowl, add few of the cut Jalapeno

Lamb ribs with Cilantro pesto

I love lamb ribs with just salt and pepper but wanted to experiment with something else and ended up with this recipe that seems to be working pretty well.

Chicken wing rubs & sauces

There is no limit to what you can use. I've used the below ingredients in various combinations and proportions. Some were a hit and some were not liked as much which is alright.

Dry rub

Black pepper, White pepper, Cayenne pepper, Scotch bonnet pepper, smoked reg bell pepper, Kashmiri red pepper, Thyme, Marjoram, Oregano, garlic powder, onion powder, garam masala, cumin powder, coriander powder

Sauce

1. A concoction of some of the dry rub
2. A paste made of any combination onion, garlic, tomato cilantro, jalapeno, habanero, scotch bonnet, mango. You can dry saute the ingredients such as tomato, onion, garlic before making the paste
3. Hot sauce of any type, barbeque sauce
4. Soya sauce, Worcestershire sauce