



S A V O U R

Indian Feast with Ashia Ismail-Singer

Welcome cup of Masala Chai

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Burtho (Aubergine Curry) *Serves 4–6*

*Prep Time 15 min * Cooking Time 30 min*

I love this curry, although I must admit as a child when my mum used to make it or even suggest that it was on the menu for dinner, my sister and I would wrinkle up our noses and whinge! I guess as children, texture and appearance is an important part of what we "like" and as a child I didn't like the texture of aubergine. But as an adult, this is one of my favourite curries, and I love the rich vibrant purple colour.

1 large aubergine
2–3 tbsp. oil
1 onion, peeled and sliced
200g tomato purée or Passatta
2–3 cloves garlic, crushed
¼ tsp turmeric
¼ tsp ground cumin
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp paprika
½ tsp chilli powder

1. Poke holes with a fork in various places in the aubergine. Place in a heatproof dish and put it under a hot grill for 15min or until cooked., turning it regularly until it is cooked. You will know as it will split open and it needs to be "mushy".
2. While the aubergine is cooking, in a saucepan, heat the oil and fry the sliced onion until pale golden.
3. Add the tomato and all the spices and cook on a low heat for 10-15 min.
4. Meanwhile when the aubergine is cooked, peel it, holding on to it by the stalk and roughly mash it with a fork. Remove the stalk and skin.
5. Add the mashed aubergine to the tomato mixture and cook on a low heat for a further 5-7 min. Serve with hot roti.

Dad's Basmati Fried Rice *Serves 4–6*

*Prep time 10 min * Cook time 15 min*

I think this recipe is an absolute winner. My dad has been making this for as long as I can remember. He doesn't cook much, but when he does, it's pure perfection. My dad is a perfectionist and very methodical, completely opposite to my mum, and being in the kitchen with him is always a pleasure. These are the cherished moments that make this book a treasure for me to pass on and share with you. This is the perfect way to cook rice and it tastes fantastic.

1 tbsp. butter
1 tbsp. olive oil
1 onion, peeled and finely sliced
2½ cups basmati rice
5 cups boiling water
2 tsp salt

1. Soak the rice in cold water for a couple of hours. Wash rice in a bowl 2–3 times, draining all the water away.
2. Heat butter and oil in a heavy-based saucepan with a lid. Add onion and cook until pale golden.
3. Add the washed rice, stirring with a wooden spoon until it starts to look translucent and sticks to the pan, 3–4 minutes.
4. Add the boiling water followed by the salt. Bring to the boil then reduce heat to the lowest setting and cover.
5. Cook for 15–20 minutes until all the water has evaporated. Make sure that the heat is really low or it will stick to the bottom of the pan and burn. The rice should be fluffy and the grains separate, not sticking together.

Serve with any meat dish.

Coconut chicken curry *serves 4-6*

*Prep time 15-20 min * Cooking time 45min - 1 hr*

This easy, delicious curry is one of my mother's signature dishes we grew up with. Eating this always brings back childhood memories.

4 green chillies, seeds removed
1 small bunch coriander, stalks removed
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
3 onions
sliced 2 chicken breasts (about 500g), diced
1 teaspoon crushed garlic
1 teaspoon salt 200g
(1/2 tin) chopped tomatoes
1 teaspoon coriander powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
250ml coconut milk
2 tsp salt
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
Fresh coriander and grated coconut or coconut chips for garnish (use fresh coconut if you can get it)

1. Using a food processor or mortar and pestle, blend chillies and coriander to a paste. Reserve 1-2 teaspoons for this dish. The remainder can be frozen for later use.
2. Heat oil in a medium saucepan or lidded frying pan and cook onions until softened and translucent.
3. Add chicken, chilli/coriander mix, garlic and salt and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5-10 minutes over medium heat. Add tomatoes and spices, cover and cook for a further 15-20 minutes.
4. Add coconut milk and cook over low heat until heated through. Serve garnished with coriander and coconut, accompanied with basmati rice and naan bread or poppadums.

Ashia's tip – I store chilli & coriander paste in an ice cube tray in the freezer, ready to use when needed.

NAAN BREAD *Makes 6-8*

*Prep time 30 min * Cooking time 30 min*

Naan is a delicious, puffy Indian bread made with milk and yoghurt. They are perfect for mopping up spicy curries or having on their own. It's best to make them just before serving as they are great hot off the grill. Traditionally this bread is cooked on the walls of a tandoor (clay oven). It is not easy to recreate the intense heat in your cooker so the texture is slightly different, but they taste divine!

3 Cups Plain flour

1 1/2 Tsp Sugar

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda

1/4 cup milk

1/3 cup yoghurt (I use creamy Gopla yoghurt which you can get in the supermarket)

1 Tbls melted butter

Topping options – poppy seeds, chopped coriander, cumin seeds, mint, chilli flakes or a combination (optional)

1. Sift flour and add all the dry ingredients, mix to combine. Make a well in the centre and add the milk, yoghurt and melted butter with approx. 3/4 cup of warm water.
2. Knead the dough until smooth. Divide into 6-8 balls.
3. Roll out in to oblong naan shapes.
4. On a non-stick frying pan, cook the naan on one side and then place on a baking tray. Do this with the remaining naan, then brush the raw side with melted butter (with the topping of your choice) grill until browned and blistered. Serve hot.

Pea and Paneer Curry *Serves 4-6*

*Prep time 15 min *Cooking time 30-40 min*

A perfect vegetarian dish, that is sweet and creamy. Paneer is a mild, fresh Indian cheese. It's made by curdling hot milk with lemon juice. It's quite bland, so it works really well with rich, spicy sauces.

500g Baby peas (frozen is fine)
3 Fresh tomatoes, chopped
1 onion finely chopped
1 Block of Paneer cheese (approx. 400g)
½ tsp Salt
½ Tsp turmeric
½ Tsp Cumin
1 ½ Tsp Coriander powder
½ Tsp Paprika
1 ½ tsp Chilli powder
¾ Cup Tomato Passatta
¼ Cup fresh cream
1 large serving spoon of Oil
1-2 cloves crushed garlic

1. Cut the paneer into 3-4 strips. Heat a non-stick pan and dry fry the paneer until golden; chop into approx. 2-3 cm squares, set aside
2. Heat oil in a pan, add the chopped onions and fry until pale.
3. Add the garlic, salt and the chopped tomatoes, cook for 6-8 min, on a medium heat, then add the spices and the passatta and cook for a further 10 min with the lid on (until the oil separates from the tomato).
4. Add the peas and cook for a further 6-8 min, or until cooked.
5. Lastly add the fried paneer, and then the cream.
6. Leave on a simmer for 5-6 min and then serve with naan.

Tip: You can make this with mushrooms or cauliflower.

Mung Dhaal *Serves 4–6*

*Prep time 10 min * Cooking time 30 min*

This was our usual Sunday brunch when growing up. It was a tradition, served with fried eggs and hot rotis drizzled with melted ghee. My children love it, but we often have it mid week, as it's quick and easy and a great way to get the family eating a meat-free meal.

2 cups mung dhal, washed and soaked overnight
2 tbsp oil
1–2 small whole green chillies (optional)
1 tsp salt
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp chilli powder
1 tsp paprika
½ tsp crushed garlic paste
¼ tsp ground cumin
¼ tsp turmeric
200g passata
Chopped fresh coriander, for garnish

1. Rinse the soaked dhal and get rid of the water. In a pan add the oil and then the whole green chillis; then add washed and drained dhal.
2. Add all the ingrediants (except the passatta) stirring continuously; once all these are added, keep stirring and add the passatta, and stir on a low heat for 5 mins, then add about 1 cup of water (more if you want it really soft).
3. Let this simmer on a low heat for about 15 mins. If the dhal is too hard, then add a bit more water. The consistency is a personal preference; I like mine almost like a thick soup.
4. Once cooked to the desired consistency, garnish with fresh coriander and fresh rotis or puris.

Raitas: These are a staple in Indian home. Everyone has their own versions and favourites. The base yoghurt is the same, and you can change it slightly by either using Greek yoghurt or plain unsweetened yoghurt.

Cucumber raita: a lovely refreshing raita, great to serve with any Indian meal, cooling for those spicy dishes, and the mint freshens up your taste buds.

1 small tub of Greek yoghurt
½ cup of diced cucumber
1 tbs chopped coriander
½ tbs chopped mint
Salt & ground pepper to taste
Sprinkling of chilli powder (optional)

Mix everything together and serve cold.

Tomato and onion relish:

1 large tomato diced
1 onion diced (or sliced)
1 spring onion sliced
1/2 tsp red chilli powder
1/4 tsp salt
Dash of vinegar

Mix all together and serve as an accompaniment to curry and rice dishes.

Indian carrot salad aka kachumber

This is a simple and straightforward salad to which you can add cabbage and flavour with additional spices, if desired (cumin, for ex).

The ingredients

Carrot. Any variety is compatible with this recipe. Grated carrots have more potential of absorbing the fellow ingredients. But alternatively chop finely, a julienne preferably (we will do this today in the workshop).

Lemon juice. It gives refreshing taste and added for its acidic value. However, lime juice, vinegar, apple cedar vinegar are the best alternatives.

Salt. To compensate the acidity of the lemon juice, the salt quantity will be slightly higher than the usual. Lower the lemon juice, lesser the salt is needed. So adjust these accordingly to suit your preference.

Curry powder. Added solely for the mild Indian flavor, but this is optional. Skip if your pantry does not have the stock.

Method: Julienne or grate the carrots. In a mixing bowl, combine carrot, lemon juice, curry powder, and salt. Serve and enjoy!

Saffron and Orange Blossom Halva

The Arabic word halva translates to 'sweetness' and can be made with a variety of ingredients that produce different textures from grainy to silky smooth. Very similar to Italian panna cotta, you can flavour it with anything you like — I've used cardamom and orange blossom water here.

SERVES 6

300ml cream

500ml full-cream milk

1/4 cup sugar

1 teaspoon agar agar mixed with 1 tablespoon water*

2 teaspoons semolina

1 teaspoon orange blossom water

3–4 cardamom pods, slightly crushed

fairy floss to garnish**

Using an eggbeater, whisk the cream and milk together, then pour the mixture into a saucepan and add the sugar. Bring to the boil for just 1 minute.

Reduce the heat and then add the agar agar mixture, semolina, orange blossom water and cardamom pods. Simmer for 6–8 minutes.

Pick out the cardamom pods and then pour into a shallow dish or your preferred moulds/dessert glasses and allow to cool. Refrigerate until set, 2–3 hours. If using moulds, remove the halva by running a knife around the edges. Decorate with fairy floss.

* Agar agar, which I use in preference to gelatine, can be bought at Asian supermarkets. Made out of seaweed, it is a vegetarian setting agent and comes in powder form.

** Fairy floss can be bought from specialty food stores.