



CHICKEN & CURRY

Pakistani
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Cooking

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Introduction

Every country has its own special dishes, with their unique flavors and delicious serving ideas and particular dishes for special occasions and festivals. All the dishes composed by my country folk bring out the very best from the raw ingredients found in our region. They bring a unique quality to our dishes, making them special. Behind every dish in this book, we can consider the massive teamwork that has been shared over hundreds of years.

Today, with globalization, most of the raw food products are available almost everywhere in the world. Curiosity gets the better of us and we want to explore and discover all the different tastes. It is an exciting adventure open to all.

I am going to share the finest dishes from my land in this book, along with fun serving ideas. If you have a true passion for tasting the great and the new, then this book is for you.

Pakistan is a wonderland, well known for its spices and its colorful and tasty curries. Pakistani food is healthy, keeps you active and above all, it is less fattening. We believe that it is due to some of the spices used in our cooking which help to keep the food light and digestible.

Some people tend to spoil the quality of the dish by adding too much oil or not balancing the spice quantities. I assure you, it is not rocket science. You just need to keep the amount of the oil as low as possible. I promise you that your dishes will not resemble boiled vegetables and meat. As for the spices, you just need to know the intensity of flavor and aroma of each spice. It is actually very similar to preparing a cake.

When you begin your curry adventure, follow my simple recipe instructions to the letter. Once your curious taste buds can notice the changing flavors as quantities of the spices change in the different recipes, you will eventually be able to play with the ingredients without following my recipe instructions.

If your taste buds are always hunting for something new and tasty, then these Indo – Pak recipes are perfect for you. I am going to share only the best and favorite centuries-old local dishes with you. My lovely mom will be sharing her knowledge and expertise in these dishes. She will be preparing the dishes and just before eating them, I am going to capture the delightful, mouthwatering and exciting dishes with my camera so that I can share the visual delight with you too.

Our journey begins with shopping for the raw ingredients. The shopping list consists mainly of chicken, vegetables and a variety of colorful spices. I do not do a lot of planning; I let my nose and eyes lead me to find the very best in each recipe.

The best thing I like about Lahore is its climate. It is not easily explained, but living here has a special spark to it. Everyone who visits Lahore feels the same sense of living in a big city, yet still close to nature.

How lonely you can sometimes feel, when you are in a remote area and you miss the buzz of the big city. On the other hand, when you are living in a crowded and packed city you can feel as if you have drawn your soul away from the lure of nature. Lahore gives you the flavor of both worlds and just like our cuisine, our land never ceases to pleasantly surprise. Are you ready to delve into this gastronomic wonderland? It is time for your spicy adventure.

Hunting for spices

I am back from shopping with my spicy treasures. I cannot smell the spices yet because they are all tightly packed. It is good to buy spices in tightly packed cellophane packets because they maintain the aroma and flavor of spices. I did not buy yoghurt or butter, although we use it in our cooking. That is because we make our own.

I have gathered some fine spices. I bought some ground spices because it is difficult to grind them yourself. Turmeric, for example, is so hard that only industrial grinding machines are efficient for grinding. The domestic electric grinders are not good enough for such tough grinding.

Having said that, some people do grind them at home. My mom ground her own spices with a stone grinder, in the past. It is quite hard work, but I have to admit that freshly ground turmeric smells and tastes so good in the food.

Fresh is best. Most of the curry dishes only require up to half a teaspoon of turmeric powder, so if you have packet spices you will have a lot left over. However, there are some brands that maintain their good quality, without artificial additives. If you prefer easy cooking to ground freshness, why not use them?

There are some spices that I recommend buying in their original state. They are easy to grind and if you keep them in a pan for a few seconds before you grind them, grinding is even easier. Spices such as black cardamom, cinnamon, star anise, coriander seeds, carom seeds, mace, and the well-known black pepper, all smell so great and zesty in the food when they have been freshly ground.

We have the custom of adding leaves to our dishes. I do not mean garnishing; we use leaves for cooking curry and rice. The most well-known, are bay leaves and curry leaves. For heavier dishes with meat, vegetables, oil and rice, we usually include mint leaves every time. It lightens the dish and makes it very much more digestible. For garnishing, we often use freshly chopped coriander leaves. Most people here are not familiar with parsley at all because we do not use it.

When choosing a chicken, we prefer using fresh rather than frozen. We buy chicken from our local butcher, not far from our home. Who can refuse fresh chicken, and buy frozen instead? That, especially when you can buy a chicken that has been cleaned and chopped in the way you wish.

Before showing you how to prepare Pakistan's finest chicken curry dishes, I am going to share some important tips with you, especially important for novice curry cookers. Take the time to read them. They are there to help you successfully prepare your curry

dishes.

Asiya's Top Tips for Achieving a Great Chicken Curry Taste

Cooking curry is an art. There are some very delicate points that you have to take care of, to obtain a flavorful chicken curry taste. Beginners usually make some very common mistakes. I know this from my own experience.

The first time I made curry was after watching a cooking program. I was so enthusiastic and decided that I would prepare it straightaway with no help. I asked my mom to leave me to cook on my own.

We had watched the show together and mom knew that the chef had not explained some important points. She tried to tell me that the way he had cooked the dish would leave a bad garlic smell, and the chicken would not be thoroughly cooked. However, I took no notice and the kitchen was mine that day.

After following the recipe instructions, step-by-step, throwing in the ingredients and happily mixing them together, my resulting curry was nothing like the delicious looking outcome the chef had had! My mom has been cooking since she was a small child and knows exactly what works and what does not, and as hard as it is for me to admit it, I should have listened to her.

Now, many years after that first experience, through trial and error, I have finally perfected my craft. In this book, I am going to share the specific things you should pay special attention to, including my mom's special tips that you just cannot go wrong with.

I want to eliminate all the guesswork and mystery from these Pakistani curry dishes for you, so that you will be successfully preparing them for many years to come. I have prepared some important points for you to bear in mind. I highly recommend that you read them before you attempt any of the chicken curry dishes in this book.

1. Whichever curry dish you try, it is always a good idea to fry the chicken first; three tablespoons of oil is enough for a whole chicken. Lightly fry the chicken until the skin is cooked. Set the fried chicken aside while you follow whichever recipe you are preparing. This is to avoid having a dominant smell of chicken in your curry.
2. Some people do not like tomato skin in the curry. For a tasty smooth curry, boil the tomatoes and remove the skin. Alternatively, you can use a mixer to make a smooth curry paste.
3. To avoid the irritating strong smell of garlic, whenever you add garlic, also add roughly three tablespoons of water and cover the pan instantly, for a few seconds. This way you get a nice blended flavor of garlic in the curry.
4. If you add yogurt, potatoes, and onions together in a single curry dish, bear in mind that these things naturally make the taste mild. In that case, you can increase the quantities of the basic curry spices just a little, such as salt, red chili

pepper, and black pepper. With practice you will learn how much of each spice to add. By experimenting with different quantities of spices, you will eventually obtain a perfect taste that suits your taste buds.

5. Perhaps, at the end of cooking, the curry sauce is too thick, or a guest unexpectedly appears just as you are about to serve up, or if a curry was not completely finished in one meal, and you plan to use it for the next meal but it is not enough, you will have to not surprisingly, add water. There are a few things you have to be careful about:
 - a. Add as little water as possible to maintain the good taste and rich flavors.
 - b. If you want to add more water, first boil the water in a separate pan. Boil the water twice before adding it to the curry.
 - c. If you do not have time to boil the water separately, first, add as little water as you can, say $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water. Then mix it well into the curry, and as bubbles appear, add a little more water. Gradually add the rest. Allow the curry to boil up to the top of the pan. I prefer the curry to boil at least twice but I try my best to achieve at least six boils. During this process constantly stir the mixture and make sure the water is mixed well into the curry. It should eventually look like no water was added, and the consistency of the curry should be the same as when it was originally cooked. Alternatively, you can do it the way my mom and many of my aunts do: they add water, bring it to the boil and then lower the heat to minimum. Then they leave it for five minutes, or until the mixture looks smooth with oil on top.

Many beginners think that food display is everything, and you often hear on cookery shows that display is very important. Display does have its place, but you should taste your curry before you transfer it to the serving dish. Some people think that you can dip your finger in the hot curry to taste and test it, but I say you should avoid such an unhygienic practice, as there might be some dust from the salt or other spices on your hand, and you may misjudge the taste of your curry.

I have also seen people put a little drop of curry on the lid and taste it. I used to do this too, but with time, I have learnt that with such a small quantity, the taste buds sometimes do not give you the correct information. You need a fair quantity to taste it properly. When my mom cooks for parties, she takes out three to four tablespoons of curry for tasting. She also prefers someone else to taste it as well,

and I am always the first to volunteer!

Also, remember that you have to check if the meat is thoroughly cooked. You can taste it. Alternatively, try pressing it with the tip of a spoon; cooked meat has less or no elasticity, whereas uncooked meat will immediately take back its shape. The recipes may tell you to cook the meat for fifteen minutes at the end and serve. To achieve the best results, closely follow the instructions.

Finally and most importantly, “served hot” means piping hot. After you have taken an extremely hot dish to the dining table, by the time people start eating, it will very slowly cool down. If it was not piping hot to start with, people may find it cold, when they take their second helping. In most of the curry dishes, you will find that the final explanation for cooking curry is that the oil separates from the mixture.

When I see oil that has started to separate, I turn off the heat. When I am about to serve, I cook the curry at a high flame and stir it to avoid burning. Then as the oil separates, I cook it a little more and serve it very hot. In this way, I heat it longer than usual and the curry stays hot until the end of the meal.

RECIPES

Chicken Tikka Malai



Chicken is the favorite meat of the people here, and this special dish, Chicken Tikka Malai, is a real treat. It is a unique curry with barbeque chicken. It is a richly flavored curry. This is the kind of dish that can bring a spark of happiness to your family home from work or school. This dish requires about a day in advance for preparations.

Recipe outline:

1. Marinate chicken
2. Grill it
3. Make curry paste and season it
4. Add grilled chicken to the curry

Heat level: Mild

Taste level: Delicious

Type: Thick smooth creamy curry

Ingredients for Chicken Tikka Malai:

- 1 pound chicken (breast piece, chopped)
- ½ cup cream
- 1 cup yogurt
- 3 tablespoons oil

1 tablespoon garlic paste
1 tablespoon ginger paste
3 tablespoons tomato paste
2 red chili peppers (grounded)
1 tablespoon black pepper (grounded)
2 inch piece cinnamon
1 Black cardamom
4 Cloves (grounded)
1 tablespoon cumin seeds (grounded)
1 teaspoon salt (or according to taste)
½ teaspoon turmeric powder (grounded)
2 tablespoons coriander seeds (grounded)
1 piece mace (grounded)
1 star anise
1 bay leaf

Coriander leaves and fresh green chilies for garnishing

Directions Chicken Tikka Malai: Put half of the quantity mentioned above of cinnamon, cumin, coriander, salt, black pepper, red chilies, mace, and cloves, and mix in yogurt. Add chicken to the mixture. Place it in a cool place and marinate for two hours.

Apply oil on barbecue sticks. Thread the meat pieces onto the sticks. Place the sticks in a pre-heated oven at 350 Fahrenheit for a while and then grill until the meat is cooked. (Alternatively, barbecue it).



Preparation of gravy: Put oil in a hot pan and add bay leaves, star anise, and cardamom seeds. Add ginger and garlic paste and cook for five minutes. Then add tomato paste and season it with remaining half of salt, red chili powder, black pepper, and mace, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, and coriander powder. This time also add turmeric powder. Cook it for a minute then add the barbecued chicken to the gravy. Pour in the cream and mix. Cover the pan and cook at low heat for twenty minutes or until the gravy is smooth and the meat is cooked.

Garnish it with chopped coriander leaves and fresh green chili. This recipe serves two people.

Exciting serving ideas:

Serve this delicious Chicken Tikka Curry with boiled rice.

Serve it with bread.

Serve lemon wedges with it

Chicken Masala Curry



Chicken and ginger in curry make an ideal combination. The zesty taste of this curry can change your mood and revive you. You do not need to serve salads, or lemon or any such thing with Chicken Masala Curry. I prefer to keep it plain to get the pure flavor of the chicken curry. The chicken meat has the flavor of the spices in it, which is enough to revive one's mood. Above all, the cooking process is simple and easy. You have an excellent meal to eat without much hard work.

Recipe outline:

1. Fry chicken in flavored oil
2. Make curry paste
3. Mix both and cook

Heat level: Low to medium

Taste level: Only vegetarians can dislike this dish. It is very tasty.

Type: Thick smooth gravy except for ginger sticks.

Ingredients for Chicken Masala Curry:

- 1 pound chicken
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 4 tomatoes (medium size, chopped)
- 8 ounces onions (chopped)
- 6 garlic cloves (chopped)
- 1 inch piece Ginger (chopped)

1 fresh green chili (optional)
Fresh coriander leaves
1 teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon or more red chili powder
½ teaspoon turmeric powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin seeds
1 teaspoon ground coriander seeds
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon (grind 1 inch piece)
1 brown cardamom
2 green cardamoms
2 bay leaves
4 cloves
2 glasses of water

Directions for Chicken Masala Curry: Heat oil in a pan and add bay leaves, cloves, brown cardamom, and green cardamoms. Add the chicken and fry it in this flavored oil. (Caution: As you add the chicken, cover the pan with the lid for a few seconds to avoid splashes of hot oil). Stir when necessary. Fry for five minutes at medium heat. Remove the chicken and spices from the oil with a strainer spoon and place everything on a plate. (I prefer to put it in a refrigerator while preparing the gravy).

Preparation of gravy: Put the chopped onions in the same oil and fry, until the edges turn golden. Add the chopped garlic and ginger. (Note: Save some chopped ginger pieces for garnishing). Fry it for a few seconds at medium heat and add chopped tomatoes. Stir and add a glass of water. Cover the pan and cook. As the tomatoes become soft, remove it from heat. Allow it to cool, and then blend everything well in a mixer. Transfer the paste back into the pan. Cook until the paste becomes thick. Season it with salt, red chili powder, turmeric powder, black pepper, cumin powder, and coriander powder. Cook it at high heat for five seconds and keep on stirring. Add the chicken and a glass of water. Cover the pan and cook it at low heat for twenty minutes.

When the chicken is cooked and the gravy is thick, transfer the curry to the serving dish. Garnish with coriander leaves and chopped ginger. Sprinkle with chili seeds and chopped green chilies if desired. The given quantity serves two people.

Exciting serving ideas:

Enjoy the tasty Chicken Masala Curry with Indian bread or brown rice.

Serve it as a main dish for a memorable meal.

Serve it with pita bread (Arabic bread)

Serve garlic sauce or ketchup with it.

Chicken with Spinach



This is a tasty and healthy dish. It is very common here and in many regions, it is considered as a must on a party menu. I consider it as a healthy dish when I see it on the dining table, but I always eat a lot more than I expected! Everyone, including myself, praises this dish.

Recipe outline:

1. Boil spinach and grind it.
2. Fry chicken
3. Make curry paste
4. Mix chicken curry paste and water
5. When meat is cooked add chicken and cook again

Heat level: Mild

Taste level: Very tasty and healthy. From my observation, 8 out of 10 people like it very much.

Type: Thick green curry

Ingredients for Chicken with Spinach:

- 1 pound chicken
- 1 pound spinach
- 2 tablespoons oil
- ½ pound onion
- ½ pound tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves
- ½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon red chili powder
½ teaspoon turmeric powder
1 teaspoon ground coriander seeds
1 teaspoon ground cumin seeds
Water as needed

Directions for Chicken with Spinach: Chop the spinach leaves and put them in a deep bowl. Add water and stir with your hand. Leave it for a few seconds. All the dust in the spinach will settle down on the base of the bowl. Transfer the spinach to another bowl with your hand and discard the remaining water. Add clean water and repeat the process. This is a very essential and easy way of cleaning spinach.

Put the spinach and a glass of water in a pan and boil. Transfer the spinach, using a strainer spoon, to a food processor. Blend it a little and place it aside for later.

Heat the oil in a pan. Keep the heat from low to medium. Add the chicken and cover the pan instantly to avoid splashes of oil. After a few seconds, lift off the lid. (For safety precautions, I prefer to transfer the pan to an unlit stove). Use a large spoon and stir the chicken. You might find it sticky, but turn the chicken over and let it cook evenly. There is no need to cover the pan again as the temperature of the chicken and the oil is the same now. Use a strainer spoon to save the oil in the pan and transfer the cooked chicken onto a plate. Keep it aside.

Add chopped onions and chopped garlic into the same oil. Cook it and when the edges turn golden add chopped tomatoes. (Boil the tomatoes and remove the outer skin before chopping, if you wish). Cover the pan for a few seconds. Then remove the lid and stir frequently. As it turns into a paste, season it with salt, black pepper, red chili powder, turmeric powder, ground coriander seeds, and ground cumin seeds. Stir the mixture well at medium heat. Then add the chicken and a glass of water. Cover the pan and cook it at low heat. When the liquid has disappeared from the mixture, add the spinach. Cover the pan and cook it for ten more minutes or until the oil separates. The given quantity serves three people.

Exciting serving ideas:

Serve naan with it.

Flavored yogurt goes well with this dish.

Serve with tomato ketchup as well.

Chicken Korma



This simple curry tastes delicious with brown rice. It is a festive dish. In this dish, we cook the meat in yogurt. Chicken korma is rich with spices. We keep it simple but for special days, we add almonds and other nuts.

Recipe outline:

1. Make curry paste
2. Fry chicken
3. Mix both
4. Add yogurt mixed with spices
5. Cover the pan and cook again

Heat level: Medium to hot

Taste level: Good. 8 out of 10 people like it.

Type: Not too thin or thick, smooth curry

Ingredients Chicken Korma:

- 1 pound chicken
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 cup yogurt
- ½ pound onions (chopped)
- 4 garlic cloves (chopped)
- 1 teaspoon salt