Indian spices and cooking techniques demystified

This introduction to Indian cooking will unravel the secrets to cooking with spices, discuss which ones are important to have in your home collection, and show you techniques for getting the most flavor out of each dish. After taking this class you’ll be able to create a complete 4-course vegetarian Indian meal and a mouthwatering dessert. And the knowledge you’ll gain can be applied to any dish that utilizes these core Indian spices.
### Shopping List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Spices</th>
<th>Grocery</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1lb potatoes</td>
<td>2 teaspoons whole black mustard seeds</td>
<td>1 cup mung OR mung lentils</td>
<td>1 cup Armenian yogurt (ex: Abali or Byblos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 green Thai bird or Indian chilies</td>
<td>4 teaspoons whole cumin seeds</td>
<td>4 cups vegetable oil</td>
<td>4-6 tablespoons milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 white onion</td>
<td>1 teaspoon asafetida</td>
<td>6 tablespoons ghee or vegetable oil</td>
<td>2 cups powdered milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 lime or lemon</td>
<td>2 teaspoons powdered turmeric</td>
<td>2 cups sugar</td>
<td>½ cup unsalted butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bunch cilantro</td>
<td>13 curry leaves</td>
<td>¾ cup all purpose flour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cups shelled fresh peas</td>
<td>4 teaspoons sea salt</td>
<td>1 teaspoon baking powder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tablespoon fresh ginger root</td>
<td>1 teaspoon red chili powder</td>
<td>1 teaspoon rose water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ LB spinach, zucchini, carrot,</td>
<td>1 teaspoon ground cardamom</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tomato, potato, pumpkin OR</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>butternut squash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 cloves of garlic</td>
<td>1-3 dried red chilies OR ½</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teaspoon red chili powder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1lb potatoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Equipment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Spices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian Wok or Dutch Oven/Heavy bottomed pot</td>
<td>Mortar and Pestle or Coffee Grinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slotted Spoon</td>
<td>Spatula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strainer</td>
<td>Seasoning Ladle or Tadka Ladle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Grater</td>
<td>Mixing Bowls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chef's Knife</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Batatyachi Bhaji
Sautéed Potatoes with Mustard Seed

Serves: 2-4, 45 minutes

Ingredients

- 1lb potatoes, boiled and peeled
- 1-2 green chilies, sliced
- 1/2 white onion, finely chopped (optional)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds (optional)
- pinch of asafetida
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 6-8 curry leaves (optional)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- pinch of sugar (optional)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 3-4 sprigs cilantro leaves, washed & finely chopped

Step-by-Step

1. Boil potatoes until well done but firm, about 20 minutes. Peel and cut them into 1-inch cubes.
2. Chop green chilies and mince onion.
4. Add green chilies.
5. When the chilies turn pale, stir-fry the onion till light brown, 2-3 minutes.
6. Add curry leaves, if using.
7. Add potatoes and warm through, 3-5 minutes.
8. Stir in salt and sugar and heat 2-3 minutes more.
9. Squeeze half a lime over the potatoes and then add to serving dish.
10. Serve hot, garnished with cilantro.
Muttari chi Usal
Lemony Green Summer Peas

Serves 4 as a side dish, 20 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups shelled fresh peas
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger (optional)
- 1/2 white onion, minced
- 1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon red chili powder
- 1/2-3/4 teaspoon salt
- pinch of sugar
- 1 teaspoon lemon or lime juice
- a few sprigs cilantro, washed & finely chopped

Step-by-Step

1. Rinse the peas and drain well.
2. Heat oil in a skillet. When it is almost smoking, add the cumin seeds, turmeric and chili powder.
3. Add ginger and the onion. Stir well.
4. Cook the onions slightly, 1-2 minutes.
5. Stir in the green peas. Cook for 1-2 minutes.
6. Add salt and sugar. Cook for 5-7 minutes till peas are tender but still bright green.
7. Squeeze in lemon juice.
8. Serve the hot peas garnished with cilantro as a side dish.
Raita

Indian Salad with Yogurt-Spice Dressing
An Indian salad is known as koshimbir or kachumbar. When you add a yogurt dressing it is called a raita. Learn the basics of raita making with this recipe, then innovate with your favorite vegetables.

Serves 4-6, 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 1/2 lb spinach, zucchini, carrot, tomato, potato, pumpkin OR butternut squash, peeled & grated or chunked
- 1 teaspoon ghee
- 1 cup yogurt
- 4-6 tablespoons milk (optional)
- 3/4-1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar or more to taste
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin seed, powdered (optional)
- 1 green chili, sliced (optional)
- 1 teaspoon ghee OR vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 5 curry leaves (optional)
- a pinch of turmeric (optional)
- 3-4 sprigs cilantro leaves, washed & finely chopped

If you are using a vegetable like zucchini, spinach, potato or squash, blanch or cook it as needed. Tomato, onions and carrots can be served raw.

Step-by-Step

1. Start by grating your zucchini with a box grater.
2. Add a teaspoon of ghee to a pan over medium/low heat. Cook for 1 minute in the ghee.
3. Whisk yogurt till smooth in a serving bowl. If tart, add sugar; if too thick, stir in some milk.
4. Add salt and cumin.
5. After the vegetable has cooled (if using cooked vegetable) fold it into the yogurt. The raita is now ready to serve, garnished with cilantro.
6. If you like, you can now make an oil-spice seasoning for the salad. Heat the ghee in a small pan.
7. Pop the mustard seed. Add chilies and curry leaves.
8. Turn off the heat and add turmeric.
9. Stir once and mix seasoning into the salad.
10. Garnish with cilantro.
11. Serve cool / at room temperature.
### Lasuni Dal

**Mung Dal with Garlic & Red Chilies**

Here is a quick, tasty way to add flavor to cooked lentils like mung dal (split, husked mung beans) or masoor (split, husked lens culinaris or red lentils).

**Serves 2-4, 30 minutes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup mung OR mung lentils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 - 1/2 teaspoon turmeric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pinch of asafetida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salt to taste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 cloves of garlic, sliced fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 teaspoons ghee OR vegetable oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 dried red chilies OR 1/2 teaspoon red chili powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon cumin seed (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 sprigs cilantro leaves, washed &amp; finely chopped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Step-by-Step

1. To cook the lentils, wash & drain them well. Place them in a heavy saucepan with 2 1/2 cups water, turmeric and asafetida.
2. Cook on medium heat for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until lentils are tender and mushy. Add a little more water as needed. Turn off the heat when the lentils are cooked.
3. Mash them till smooth with the back of a ladle, adding as much water as you like to make a sauce to eat with bread or rice.
4. Stir in salt to taste.
5. Bring lentils back to temperature over low heat and transfer to a serving bowl.
6. Meanwhile, heat ghee for the seasoning in a seasoning ladle or small saucepan.
7. When it is almost smoking, add the garlic and cook till golden and aromatic, but not brown, 2-3 minutes.
8. Add the red chilies and cook briefly then add the cumin until it pops.
9. Immediately pour the seasoning over the lentils. Stir and cover the dish for 3-5 minutes before serving.
10. Garnish with cilantro.
Gulab Jamun

Fried Milk Dumplings in Rose Water-Cardamom Sugar Syrup
This easy recipe for a popular Indian dessert is sweet, delicious and aromatic. Serve Gulab Jam warm or chilled, on their own or with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream.

Makes 20-24 dumplings, 1 hour

Step-by-Step
1. Measure the powdered milk, flour and baking powder into a mixing bowl.
2. Cut the butter into the dry ingredients.
3. Using cold water, make a firm, elastic dough, without kneading too much.
4. Shape the dough into 1-inch balls, placing them on a plate as you make them.
5. Keep them covered with a damp cloth so they do not dry out as you shape the rest.
6. Place a paper towel lined platter next to the stove. Keep a slotted spoon handy too.
7. Heat oil in a saucepan or Dutch oven over a medium flame, till almost smoking.
8. Test the oil with a small bit of dough. If it rises to the top immediately, it is ready.
9. When all the dumplings are shaped, gently slide 3-5 at a time into the oil.
10. Fry them till golden brown, turning them over so they cook evenly. Do not cook them too fast or they will be brown on the outside but raw inside.
11. Drain the fried dumplings well against the side of the pan and place them on the platter to drain further.
12. Cook all the dumplings this way, adding more oil to the pan if needed.
13. Meanwhile, in a saucepan, combine the syrup ingredients.
14. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally.
15. Cook for 5 minutes before turning off the heat.
16. Gently add the dumplings to a serving dish so they can soak in the syrup.
17. Spoon some of the syrup over them so all sides of the dumplings are coated.
18. Cover the dish and allow the dumplings to soak for at least a ½ hour before serving.

Ingredients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dumplings:</th>
<th>Syrup:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 2 cups powdered milk</td>
<td>• 1 ½ cups sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¾ cup all purpose flour</td>
<td>• 1 ½ cups water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1 teaspoon baking powder</td>
<td>• 1 teaspoon ground cardamom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ½ cup butter</td>
<td>• 1 teaspoon rose water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4-6 tablespoons water</td>
<td>• 2-3 cups vegetable oil for frying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Kaumudi Marathé

Journalist and chef Kaumudi Marathé was born in India but raised on three continents. This led to a love of international flavors as well as a need to explore her own heritage through food. She shares her love of Indian cuisine through Un-Curry, her Los Angeles cooking school & catering company. She also writes cookbooks and reports on food for magazines like Saveur.