

Don't be afraid of cooking with curry

Contest time is over! Thank you to all the kids who participated in our recipe writing contest. Over the next couple of weeks, Gerry and I will be preparing and sampling the best of the recipes. We expect to have the winner's recipe featured in the April 21st edition.

Today's recipe is Chicken Curry. The preparation of this recipe is probably going to take you out of your regular grocery store in the quest of ingredients. Unfortunately, there is no substitute for the spices and no, you can't just use curry powder out of the bottle.

The essence of curry is the unique combination of spices and the method in which they are prepared that allows their full aroma to be released. For those who fear spicy foods and dive for the nearest box of macaroni and cheese as soon as the word curry is mentioned. It is false to assume that all curries are spicy. They absolutely are flavourful, but you can adjust the heat by controlling how much cayenne pepper and how many hot green chilies you put in. Prepared as shown, the dish will be mildly spicy, feel free to add more to really heat things up!

It is important also that your spices are fresh. Best case scenario is that after a period of time (about six months) the spices will lose their pungence. Worst case scenario is that many of the spices have natural oils in

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them and left unloved in the spice rack for long periods of time, the oil in the spices will go rancid and leave the spices with a nasty taste and smell.

Best to buy these fabulous additions to cooking at a busy bulk food store (where you know they are being rotated quickly and not sitting on the shelves for decades) so that you can buy a small amount and also because it will be much less money when you are not paying for the fancy bottle and packaging.

You can make this recipe with either chicken breasts or thighs— I personally prefer the thighs, as they have more flavour and moisture. You can also make the same recipe with pork, beef or shrimp. If you want to make the recipe with shrimp, then prepare the entire recipe and then toss the shrimp into the pot (raw, peeled and deveined) at the very end. They will only take a few minutes to cook in the hot sauce!

Have fun and keep cooking!
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Chicken Curry

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced thinly
- 1/2 green pepper, diced
- 1/2 red pepper, diced
- 1/2 pound white mushrooms, sliced
- 10 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cubed

Sauce Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2-inch piece gingerroot
- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 whole cardamom seeds
- 2 whole cloves
- 1/2 inch stick cinnamon
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup canned diced tomatoes, lightly drained
- 2 tbsp sour cream
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1/2 tsp tumeric
- 1 tsp ground coriander seeds
- 1 tsp ground cumin seeds
- 3/4 tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp fenugreek leaves
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh coriander
- 1 plum tomato
- 2 hot green chilies, seeded and finely chopped

Method

Warm oil in a deep non-stick skillet set over medium high heat and add the sliced onions. Sauté them until they are lightly browned.



Add the sweet peppers and sauté for another couple of minutes. Add the sliced mushrooms and sauté for another couple of minutes.

Transfer all vegetables to a serving platter.

In the same pan, sauté the chicken for 4-5 minutes until browned on all sides. Remove to a bowl (the chicken will be added back in to finish cooking later— it only needs to brown at this point).

Place the onion, garlic and ginger in a food processor. Pulse until a chunky paste consistency.

Warm the oil in the same skillet. Add the cumin seeds, whole cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and bay leaf. After 30 seconds, add the onion mixture.

Sauté the onion mixture, stirring occasionally until they are lightly browned. Reduce heat to medium and add the diced tomatoes.

Cook for about 6-7 minutes, mashing the tomatoes with the back of your spoon until the sauce thickens slightly. Stir in the sour cream and cook for another couple of minutes.

Add some salt and all the spices, reserving one quarter teaspoon of the garam masala. Cook for one minute. Add the water and mix well.

Add the reserved browned chicken and stir well to coat with sauce. Cover skillet and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium low and cook for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Uncover the skillet and fold in the reserved fried vegetables. Cover and cook again for about 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and gently fold in the lemon juice, coriander, chopped tomato, green chilies and remaining one quarter teaspoon of the garam masala. Serve over rice.

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