Batticaloa Delicacy

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Batticaloa lagoon crab curry is rather tangy because of the generous serving of a choice of spices.

The coastal town in the Eastern Province has many delights in its seas and shores, and its famous lagoon crab and the succulent prawn are a flavorsome treat you must try!

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Photographs Menaka Aravinda.

The beautiful seas of the East Coast invite visitors to the town of Batticaloa, but the gastronomic specialties unique to the locale make them come back for more. The famous lagoon crab and the fresh prawn of Batticaloa sea inspire authentically flavorful Sri Lankan dishes, with mouth-watering appeal and unforgettable savor.

Batticaloa lagoon crab curry is rather tangy in taste than the crab cooked in other regions of the island. This is owing to the generous serving of a choice of spices, which makes a unique dish that is rich in flavor.

The freshly harvested crab is cleaned thoroughly prior to the preparation. The process begins with heating coconut oil in a pan on medium heat. As the oil simmers, spices are added to the pan. Onion, curry leaves, curry powder, chili powder, tamarind, fenugreek seeds and Garcinia Cambogia (Goraka) provide flavor, while pandan leaves gives it a heady aroma, and turmeric powder accentuates the appetizing color of the curry. As the onion leaves gain a golden tinge, diluted coconut milk is added to the pan and soon after that, the succulent crab. As the crab slowly cooks, a ground paste of ginger and garlic along with salt to taste is stirred into the mix along with undiluted coconut milk. The ginger and garlic paste is to heighten the tangy flavor. Another paste of roasted and ground rice and coconut scrapings is mixed in to thicken the curry; crab needs a heavy gravy to accompany it to make a luscious relish. A generous serving of tomato slices serves to intensify the edgy savor, and as the finishing touch to the succulent crab curry, moringa leaves are sprinkled over the pan. Moringa is said to have medicinal properties and reduces the inherently ‘heaty’ quality of the crab.



The flavorsome prawn curry is prepared with prawns harvested from the seas in the area.

One simply cannot resist the temptation to get hands on and indulge on the well-cooked and seasoned meat of the Batticaloa lagoon crab curry. The aroma of the cooked dish is mouth-watering, and coupled with a few more Sri Lankan dishes, it makes for an unforgettable treat.

Second to none, the Batticaloa prawn dish is prepared in the same manner, but with a few cumin seeds sprinkled atop the tempered mixture of spices to gain an appetizing aroma. The thickening paste of roasted rice and coconut scrapings is not added to the curry; as the prawn is soft and tender, it mixes well with the gravy prepared with coconut milk and spices. Tomato slices or tamarind can heighten the tangy flavor. The prawn curry is cooked slowly on medium heat, and when the

gravy bubbles up and simmers, it is ready to be served.

Of the signature dishes in the Eastern Coast, the crab and the prawn are special; they are harvested from the sea and lagoons of the area itself. Coupled with the authentically Sri Lankan spices seasoned with the Batticaloa flavors, the crab and the prawn curries are a gastronomic treat that every islander and visitor should indulge in.