Recipes With A Difference!

Posted on



A dish of dhal and spinach curry (top), and chicken khorma

If you’re in the mood to experiment with a Sri Lankan take on Indian cuisine, or feel like jazzing up your regular dhal curry with something different, this is your chance. Koluu comes up with a variation on an Indian favourite; chicken khorma, and spices up a dhal curry by combining it with spinach and some interesting additions.

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Chicken Khorma

Chicken khorma is said to be a dish with an intriguing beginning; it’s reputed to have its origins in the Mughal cuisine of India. So in preparing this dish, you can be assured of being in good company. There are many techniques of making a khorma, but it generally refers to a dish where the meat is braised with water, stock, yoghurt or cream. A khorma can be vegetarian or non-vegetarian and in this case we use chicken.

Koluu identifies the khorma paste as being the key to the successful preparation of

this dish. Cashew nuts, ginger, garlic, coriander, grated coconut and green chillies are all combined and blended together to prepare the paste. “The paste is essential to get the flavour of the chicken khorma” says Koluu.

Yoghurt and tomato are two other ingredients that also go into this dish. Says Koluu, “The sourness of the yoghurt and the acidity of the tomato bring out all the flavours.” The versatile yoghurt is of course used for multiple purposes, as a stand-alone food item and in the preparation of meals. Among Westerners yoghurt is popular as a dessert or as a breakfast. In Indian cuisine it’s taken in liquid form as drinks such as lassi and also eaten with rice. Here, it’s used to bring out the flavours of the dish, and the chicken is combined with yoghurt and khorma paste prior to cooking.

When it comes to the serving of this dish, Koluu recommends simplicity. He describes it as “..a nice tasty dish of curry best served with steamed or saffron rice and perhaps a cucumber salad.” To avoid drowning out the taste of the khorma, Koluu advises against serving with multiple curries, thus keeping to the principle that ‘less is more’.

Recipe

1 kg boneless chicken

250 ml plain yogurt

A couple of cardamoms & cloves

A small piece of cinnamon

½ teaspoon of turmeric

2 teaspoons of chilli powder

2 teaspoons of coriander powder

1 teaspoon of unroasted curry powder

300 grams tomato chopped

2 onions chopped

3 tablespoons of vegetable oil

A sprig of curry leaves

Salt/ crushed pepper

Ingredients for the khorma paste;

50 grams of grated coconut

50 grams of coriander leaves

100 grams of cashew nuts

20 grams of green chillies

50 grams of peeled garlic

A chunk of ginger

Method

Blend the ingredients for the khorma paste. Combine the chicken and the blended paste along with the yoghurt, chilli, condiment powders and salt and set aside for half an hour.

Heat oil in a pan, add the curry leaves, onions, cloves, cardamoms and the cinnamon and sauté till light brown, then add the meat and continue to cook, lower the fire and cook till meat is almost done. Then add the chopped tomatoes, cook for a further 5 minutes and take off fire. Add the lime juice, check the seasoning and serve.

Dhal and Spinach curry

Dhal curry; for most people this conjures up the vision of a commonly eaten but relatively unexciting dish. Perhaps because of its very popularity, dhal curry doesn’t have the reputation of being the most exotic of dishes. But dhal should not be dismissed so easily. It can be combined with other ingredients and given a new lease of life as seen in this dhal and spinach curry. Dhal and spinach are combined and some ingredients tempered and added to the curry add more flavour to the

dish.

The nutritional value of a dhal curry should also not be underestimated. It is, as Koluu points out, a not only tasty but also healthy combination and a delight for vegetarians. Since dhal is a good source of protein, it's an specially useful dish for vegetarians. The word 'dhal' (also spelt dal) in fact refers to a preparation of pulses (dried lentils, peas or beans)which have been stripped of their outer hulls and split. It is said to derive from the Sanskrit verbal root dal, which means – 'to split'.

Sri Lankan *parippu* or Mysore dhal can be used in the preparation and different variations of this recipe can be tried – for example by varying the amount of chili powder to increase the spiciness. But the best way advises Koluu, is to serve it as a mild white curry to form a tasty and nutritious accompaniment to a rice dish.

Recipe

8 portions

200 grams lentils (soaked for 2 hours)

2 onions chopped

6 green chillies sliced

Water

1 teaspoon of turmeric

Salt

300 ml of thick coconut milk

300 grams of spinach leaves

Tempering ingredients

8 cloves of garlic sliced

8 dried red chillies deseeded and cut into small pieces

1 teaspoon of mustard seed

A sprig of curry leaves

2 onions finely sliced or chopped

3 tablespoons of oil or ghee

Method

Place soaked lentils into a pan, put in sufficient water, then add the curry leaves, green chillies, onions, turmeric and salt and bring to the boil till the lentils cook. Then add the coconut milk, cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the spinach leaves and take off the fire.

Heat oil in a pan. Add the ingredients for tempering, cook till onions are golden brown and add to the lentil and spinach curry.

Both these recipes are a reflection on how, with a little imagination well known dishes can be given a new twist. Chicken khorma is traditionally associated with Indian cuisine. This is however, in Koluu's words "Our version – the Sri Lankan version of the chicken khorma". With ingredients such as cashew nuts, coriander, ginger and garlic, it's a delicious variation on the dish and an example of how a dish can be adapted to suit the local palate.

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