The Taste Is In The Mix

Posted on



Brinjal Sambol

Good news for vegetarians, Koluu focuses on two dishes that make innovative use of vegetables; Brinjal (Aubergine) Sambol and Okra Salad. Says Koluu, “for rice and curry there’s nothing like having a nice salad or a sambol, as it’s called, and these are two very nice flavourful salads.”

Words Chiranthi Rajapakse Photographs Menaka Aravinda

Brinjal Sambol

A sambol encompasses a mixture of ingredients. The word ‘sambol’ itself, means mixture and sambols derive their flavour from mixing the right ingredients and blending together to form a tasty combination.

The key ingredient of this sambol is brinjal. Also known as aubergine (or eggplant), this oval shaped purple coloured vegetable can be found for sale at any wayside stall, and shows up in a variety of forms at Sri Lankan meals. When raw, it can have a somewhat bitter taste but develops a delicious multi textured flavour when cooked. Brinjal can be cooked with coconut milk to form a tasty curry or it can be deep fried. It is used in a variety of international cuisines as well; the French ratatouille is made with stewed brinjal and it’s also used in Middle Eastern and Turkish dishes. Another variation is that brinjals can also be stuffed with meat, rice or other fillings and baked.

In this recipe the brinjals are fried and then mixed with mustard, sliced onions, and green chillies, to form the sambol. The fried brinjals give the sambol a tasty crispy texture which adds a delicious flavour to any rice meal. Koluu recommends this dish be served with a fish or meat preparation and steamed rice, keeping the meal simple.“It’s better to bring out the flavour rather than have a range of curries,” he says.

Ingredients

250g brinjals

¼ tsp turmeric

200g onions

30g green chillies

1 tsp salt

1 tsp sugar

4 tsps coconut or white vinegar

½ tsp ground mustard

Method

Wash and slice the brinjals. Rub turmeric and fry till crisp. Slice the onions and green chilies.

Add salt, sugar, vinegar and mustard into a bowl and mix well. Add the mustard dressing to the fried brinjals, then add the sliced onions and green chillies and mix well.

Okra Salad

Okra or ladies fingers as it's also called is a vegetable that evokes mixed reactions; some swear by it while for others it's not always regarded as the most attractive of vegetables. The okra plant is mucilaginous therefore there is often a mucous texture when the okra is cooked, this is in fact due to a form of soluble fibre.

Okra is a part of the cuisine of many cultures; it can be used to make a thick stew with meat and vegetables; this is eaten in parts of the Mediterranean. In India okra is cut, stir fried and mixed with spices or else combined with gravy to form various preparations.

In this recipe for Okra Salad, the okra is cut and deep fried before mixing with the mustard, onions, green chillies and Maldive fish. It's important to achieve the correct texture when frying; "After frying drain as much oil as possible; as soon as it's fried, quickly drain on kitchen paper to get all the oil out," recommends Koluu. As with the Brinjal Salad, it's best to keep the serving simple and have the salad with steamed rice and one or two curries.

Ingredients

250g ladies fingers

200g onions

30g green chilies

1 ½ tsp lime

1 tsp sugar

1 ½ tsp salt

3 tbs of vinegar

Oil for frying

2 tsps Maldive fish

Method

Cut ladies fingers at a slant and deep fry. Finely slice onions and green chillies. Add the sugar, salt, vinegar, lime and mustard into a bowl and mix well. Then add the mustard dressing to the fried okra, add the sliced onions, green chillies and the Maldive fish and toss well together.

There’s more to a sambol than just the ingredients, the right preparation is vital too. Says Koluu “One of the secrets of putting a sambol or salad together is that it should be mixed at the end, just before it’s taken to the table; otherwise the fried vegetables can get very mushy. The whole purpose of frying is lost if you mix it and keep for a long time; mixing at the end preserves the nice crisp flavour”. Useful points for cooks to keep in mind.

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