

Indian Meal

Menu

- Saffron Rice with Ghee
 - Saag Paneer
 - Vegetable Curry
 - Mango Papaya Chutney
 - Raita
 - Lassi
 - Chai
-

Saag Paneer*

Serves: 4

Ingredients

For Paneer:

- 1½ quarts (6 cups) whole milk
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

For Saag (Spiced Spinach)

- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 fresh hot green chili, seeded
- 1 inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- ¼ cup whey (obtained from milk while making paneer)
- 4 tablespoons ghee, or sunflower oil
- 1½ teaspoons coriander
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon garam masala
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne
- ¾ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ cup heavy cream (or half-and-half if you prefer something a little less rich)
- 2 10-ounce packages frozen, chopped spinach, defrosted (or 2 pounds fresh spinach)

Instructions

Pour the 1½ quarts (6 cups) whole milk into a large heavy saucepan and place on high heat. Bring to a boil, uncovered, stirring constantly to prevent milk from sticking to bottom of pan and burning. Watch closely; as soon as milk begins to boil it will move quickly up the insides of the pan and may foam over the pot. As soon as it climbs upward, turn off the heat and add the lemon juice.

At this point the milk solids (curds) will separate from liquid (whey). It will take about 10-12 minutes for 8 cups milk to come to a boil another minute for curds to separate from whey. If not fully separate (the liquid should be clear) sparingly add a little more lemon until it does fully separate.

Drain curdled milk through a sieve or through layers of cheesecloth. Let sit for about ½ hour. Save whey (liquid) to use later in recipe.

After ½ hour, remove from the colander and cut into ½ inch square pieces.

Another version is to take the formed paneer and knead it until it is homogenous and smooth. Then, roll it into balls about ½ – ¾ inch and fry in ghee, or sunflower oil, until evenly golden. This occurs very quickly. Do not brown. Remove from the oil and drain on layers of paper towel.

In a blender or food processor, place 3 cloves chopped garlic, 1 seeded green chile and 1 inch peeled and chopped ginger along with ¼ cup whey. Blend.

Add 1½ teaspoon coriander, ½ teaspoon cumin, ¼ teaspoon garam masala, ⅛ teaspoon cayenne and ¼ teaspoon of sea salt. Blend again until thoroughly mixed. Pour into a small bowl and set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, warm 4 tablespoons of sunflower oil or ghee.

Add the spice mixture from the blender or food processor. (Careful, it can splatter.) Sauté spices, stirring constantly, for about 30 seconds.

Add spinach and ½ teaspoon sea salt. Stir gently for about 1 minute.

Reduce heat to low, cover saucepan and simmer for about 7 minutes (15 minutes if using fresh spinach), stirring occasionally.

Add a little whey if spinach begins to stick to bottom of saucepan.

Add ¼ cup cream to spinach mixture and mix well. Puree spinach and cream in a food processor if a smoother, creamier spinach is desired.

Place spinach back into saucepan if it has been pureed. Add the paneer pieces to the spinach mixture.

Stir in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whey. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring gently. Reduce heat to low.

Cover saucepan, and continue cooking for another 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Serve hot with Basmati rice (Saffron Rice with Ghee recipe below).

* Paneer can be made ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. Store submerged in water. Change water daily. Pat dry before serving. Paneer also freezes well.

Raita

Serves: 6 generously

Ingredients

2 green cucumbers

1 teaspoon sea salt

2 tablespoons green onion, finely chopped (use white and green parts)

1½ cups low fat yogurt, beaten with a fork until smooth

2-3 tablespoons lemon juice, or to taste

½ teaspoon cumin seeds

1 tablespoon cilantro, chopped; or mint, chopped

Instructions

Peel cucumbers, halve them lengthwise and remove seeds. Cut 1 cucumber into a small dice; grate the other cucumber to a small grate. Sprinkle with sea salt and let sit for 15 minutes. (This removes any bitterness.)

Rinse the cucumbers quickly in cold water. Drain well.

Combine cucumber with 2 tablespoons chopped green onion, 1½ cups yogurt and lemon juice, to taste. Add sea salt if needed.

Heat a small skillet on medium heat. Roast cumin seeds in dry skillet, shaking pan or stirring constantly, until lightly toasted.

Bruise or crush seeds with a rolling pin and sprinkle over yogurt mixture. Serve chilled, garnished with chopped cilantro, or mint.

Vegetable Curry

Serves: 3

Ingredients

3 cups vegetables (any combination preferred)

½ cup frozen peas

2 tablespoons ghee, or sunflower oil

½ teaspoon cumin

1 teaspoon coriander powder

½ teaspoon turmeric

¼ teaspoon cayenne, or to taste

1 teaspoon sea salt

½ teaspoon anise seed

1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped

½ cup tomato, peeled and diced

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Instructions

Peel and cut vegetables into ½ – ¾ inch pieces. If using root vegetables (e.g. carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets, potatoes), steam together in a steamer basket until crisp-tender. Separately steam other 'lighter' vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower; the exception is frozen peas, which are defrosted and added during last 2-3 minutes to prevent discoloration.)

Do not overcook vegetables.* Heat a large skillet on medium heat, adding 2 tablespoons ghee. Warm the ghee and add ½ teaspoon cumin, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, ½ teaspoon turmeric, ¼ teaspoon cayenne (or to taste), 1 teaspoon sea salt and ½ teaspoon anise seed. Lightly sauté but do not burn the spices. Ghee gets very hot quickly.

Add 1 chopped onion and sauté until almost translucent. Add ½ cup diced tomato and cook 5 minutes.

Add the vegetables and cook for about 7 minutes.

If desired, add a little water to thin sauce.

* This dish can be made easily ahead of time. If you are going to reheat, make sure the vegetables are steamed to about 90% of being done. That way when

you reheat they will not be overcooked. Also, add the defrosted peas during the last 2 minutes of reheating the dish.

Saffron Rice with Ghee

Serves: 4-5

Ingredients

Basmati rice

2 tablespoons ghee

½ teaspoon saffron threads

Instructions

Boil 6 cups of water.

Wash the rice by putting it in a bowl of water and massaging it until, after repeated washings, the water becomes clear.

Add the drained rice to the boiling water and keep the heat high so there is a light rolling boil for about 15 minutes.

Add 2 cups cold water and let the rice return to a rolling boil. Check the rice to see if it's done. If not, repeat this process. Again, test the rice. If not done, repeat the process again. Once done, drain the rice in a colander and immediately flush it with cold water. This entire process will insure that the rice is light, fluffy, and not sticky. Place the drained rice into a pan and add 2 tablespoons of ghee. Place the ½ teaspoon of saffron threads in the palm of your hand and crush it with your opposite thumb. Add this to the rice. Gently toss the rice to cover the saffron.

When you are ready to serve the rice, again toss it, to disperse the colored grains.

Chai

Makes 1 1/2 quarts

Ingredients

6 cups cold water

1 1/4 teaspoons peeled and grated fresh ginger

2 inch piece cinnamon stick

4 whole cloves

10 whole cardamom pods, lightly crushed

4 whole black peppercorns

7 tea bags (or 7 teaspoons loose) of Earl Grey, Darjeeling, or English Breakfast

4 tablespoons white sugar*, or to taste (can be added by individuals)

1 cup whole milk

Instructions

Put 6 cups cold water in a 2-quart stainless steel saucepan. Bring water to a boil.

Add 1 1/4 teaspoons ginger, 2 inch cinnamon stick, 4 cloves, 10 cardamom pods and 4 black peppercorns

Cover and simmer over low heat for 15 minutes. Add tea bags. Cover saucepan and remove from heat. Let steep for 3-5 minutes. With a fine strainer, strain out spices and tea.

Stir in sugar and milk. Serve hot.

Mango Papaya Chutney*

Approximately 3 cups

Ingredients

2 cups chopped, dried tropical fruits such as mango, papaya or pineapple (unsulphered and unsweetened) A blend of these 3 is best.

1 cup hot water

2 tablespoons fresh, grated ginger

2 ½ tablespoons lemon juice

½ teaspoon cayenne, or to taste

1 teaspoon sea salt

More water as needed

Instructions

Cover 2 cups tropical fruit pieces in 1 cup hot water, and set aside for ½ hour. Alternatively, if in a hurry, cook for a few minutes until dry fruit softens.

Combine softened fruit (with water they have soaked or cooked in), 2 tablespoons grated ginger, 2 ½ tablespoons lemon juice, ½ teaspoon cayenne and 1 teaspoon sea salt in a blender or food processor.

Puree, adding more water as needed to form a thick, pudding-like consistency or, if you prefer, leave it a little chunky.

Allow to stand for a few minutes. Serve or refrigerate.

* For purposes of this recipe, mango, papaya and pineapple are used. Any combination of dried tropical fruits can be used.

Lassi

Makes 3-4 cups

Ingredients and Instructions

Blend in a blender:

1 cup low fat plain yogurt

2 cups cold water

½ cup sugar (or honey, or agave)

4 ice cubes or 5 tablespoons water

⅛ teaspoon cardamom* (optional)

A few drops rosewater* (optional)

Serve well chilled

* Cardamom and rosewater are strong flavors. Adjust amounts, to taste, if making multiple batches.