

Indian Cooking Made Simple

The First Step

Beginner Course



with Ravi Pathak

Introduction

Indian Cooking Skills

This is a one day course covering simple recipes that will introduce you to the basics of Indian cooking. Some cooking experience would be useful but is not essential.

Aims: To provide learners with hands-on experience of learning to cook Indian food using fresh produce, herbs and spices. To also be able to recognise shortcuts, techniques and tips demonstrated by the Tutor during the practical sessions.

Objectives: To become familiar with and be able to list the main spices used in making the sauce for different curry dishes and be able to prepare a full Indian meal from starter to main dish to bread and rice using simple techniques and fresh ingredients.

What to bring: Please bring all the ingredients you need for each recipes, plus sealed containers to take your finished dishes home with you. Although utensils are provided, you may wish to bring your own and I recommend a heavy based saucepan.

Week 1 - Starters (Vegetarian)

Pakorras (Onion Bhajis)

Week 2 - Main Meals (Vegetarian)

Mutter Paneer

Kidney Bean Curry (Rajmah)

Week 3 - Main Meal (Meat)

Chicken Korma

Lamb Pataki

Week 4 - Main Meal (Meat/Fish)

Chicken Saag

Prawns Special

Week 5 - Indian Bread and Rice

Roti (Chapatti)

Puri

Special Rice

Pakoras

(Onion Bhajis)

Cooking Time: 90 mins



Ingredients:

- Oil for deep frying
- 2 medium onions, sliced thinly
- 100g spinach, chopped
- 2 medium potatoes, sliced thinly¹
- 1 aubergine, diced
- 1 red chilli or 1tsp chilli paste to taste
- 1tbsp cumin seeds
- 1tbsp coriander powder
- 1tbsp mustard seeds
- 2tsp fenugreek seed
- 2tsp turmeric powder
- 1tbsp chopped ginger
- 1tbsp red chilli powder
- 1 bunch fresh methi leaves, chopped or 1tbsp dry methi leaves
- 1tsp baking powder
- Salt to taste
- 2tbsp sunflower oil
- 150-300g Gram flour (varies*)
- 50-100g natural yoghurt

Note 1 – you can use sweet potatoes too if you want to experiment.

Method:

1. Put the oil on to heat in a shallow but wide wok or frying pan. (The optimum temperature is around 160-180°C – it's important not to let the oil get to smoke point as it can affect the flavour)
2. Chop the onions, aubergine, potatoes and spinach thinly and mix well in a bowl.
3. In another bowl (pref glass), mix all the dry ingredients together except the gram flour (including fresh chilli if using), then add them to the vegetables and mix really thoroughly. If you're using fresh methi leaves, chop them finely and add them now.
4. Add 2 tbsp oil to the vegetables and mix very thoroughly.
5. *Now add the flour – 150g to start with and mix really well – this step is important. All the vegetables should be coated by the flour to absorb as much moisture as possible. If necessary, keep adding flour a little at a time until all the vegetables are coated and the mixture is no longer wet.
6. Now add the yoghurt (or a small amount of water) and mix well. **The mixture is ready when the vegetables are "stiff" but not too wet or dry. To test, dip your hand in cold water, then take a small handful of the mix and make into a ball. If it sticks to your hands too much, add more flour. If it falls apart, add more yoghurt/water. If you can move the ball from one hand to another without it breaking up or sticking, then it's ready.**
7. Test the oil is the correct temperature by dropping a tiny amount of mix in. If it floats to the top immediately and starts to go crispy, it's hot enough. If it burns, it's too hot.
8. Once you've made your bhaji shapes, slip them gently into the oil. Don't drop them in! Let them simmer in the oil for a few minutes to seal them. Then turn them gently to get even cooking. Remove each batch when cooked through and start another batch. Around 6-8 minutes to cook depending on size. This mix will make around 25-30 bhajis.
9. Serve as hot as possible and with a dip if preferred.

Ravi's Top Tip!

Don't cook too many vegetables at once – give them enough swimming room! Once the batter is made, use it within 30 minutes or it will go very runny and the Bhajis will not stay together.

Mutter Paneer

Cooking Time: 75 mins



Ingredients:

- 2.25 litres full fat milk
- 4tbsp white distilled vinegar or lemon juice
- 4tbsp sunflower oil
- 1 medium onion, very finely diced
- 1tsp cumin seeds
- 2tsp turmeric powder
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 5cm ginger root, finely chopped
- 2 fresh green chillies, chopped finely
- 4-8 tbsp passata
- 1tsp ground coriander
- 1tsp garam masala
- 1tsp salt
- 110g frozen or fresh peas

Method:

1. Put the milk in a pan and bring to just before boil point, then reduce the heat slightly. Keep an eye on the milk so it doesn't burn the base of the pan or boil.
2. Add around 4-6 tbsp white vinegar (or lemon juice) whilst stirring continuously. Gradually increase the heat, stirring continuously until the milk starts to curdle and separate, then remove from the heat and set aside for 5 minutes.
3. Strain the curdled milk and leave the strainer over a pan while it drains.
4. Now add the oil to a wok or pan on a medium heat.
5. Once the oil is hot enough, add the chopped onions and fry gently until soft and golden brown.
6. Add the cumin seeds, keep stirring and cook for 2 minutes.
7. Now add the turmeric, garlic, ginger and fresh chillies and cook for a further 3 minutes, mixing well.
8. Add the passata and mix well, then add the ground coriander and garam masala.
9. Now check your paneer – use the back of a ladle to squeeze out as much moisture as you can, then put a fork through to mix it up and add it to the pan, together with your frozen peas. Mix well and add salt to taste.
10. Leave on a low heat and simmer for around 15 minutes.

Ravi's Top Tip!

To stop milk spilling over when boiling, before putting the milk in the pan, rub butter along the top edge and the inside lip – the milk will stop rising when it reaches the butter.

Kidney Bean Curry

Cooking Time: 45 mins



Ingredients:

- 4tbsp sunflower/vegetable oil
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 1tsp cumin seeds
- 5cm ginger, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 fresh green chillies, chopped
- 2tsp turmeric powder
- 1tbsp ground coriander
- 50g passata
- Salt to taste.
- 1 tin of kidney beans
- 1tsp garam masala

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan.
2. Once the oil is hot enough, add the onions until they turn brown.
3. Once browned, add the cumin seeds. Stir for a minute or two – don't let them burn.
4. Now add the ginger, garlic and green chillies, cover and cook for 2 minutes on a medium heat.
5. Add the turmeric, coriander and the passata. Cover again and cook for 3-4 minutes on a medium heat. Add salt to taste.
6. Drain the kidney beans and rinse thoroughly, then add them to the pan with enough water to get a nice sauce-like consistency. Simmer for 10-15 minutes.
7. Sprinkle in the garam masala and simmer for 5 further minutes.
8. Serve hot on a bed of basmati rice.

Ravi's Top Tip!

To save money and for ease of use, make your own ginger / garlic / tomato paste cubes – just spoon the paste into ice cube trays, freeze overnight, then transfer into plastic bags and keep in the freezer ready to use in your cooking.

Chicken Korma

Cooking Time: 45 mins



Ingredients:

- 600g chicken breasts, cubed
- 150g natural full fat yoghurt
- 2tsp turmeric powder
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4tbsp sunflower/vegetable oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1tsp cumin seeds
- 1tsp ground coriander
- 1tsp garam masala
- 2 fresh green chillies, chopped
- 5cm ginger, finely chopped
- 1tsp salt
- 100g passata
- Coriander leaves, chopped

Method:

1. Place the chicken pieces in a shallow dish, add the yoghurt, turmeric and garlic and mix well.
2. Cover the dish and leave to marinate in the fridge overnight.
3. Heat the oil in a large heavy-bottomed saucepan or a karahi. Add the onion and fry gently until soft – they should be caramelised, not browned.
4. Now add the cumin, coriander, garam masala, ginger, green chillies and salt and cook for a further 2-4 minutes.
5. Add the passata, stirring continuously and cook for a further 5 minutes.
6. Add the chicken pieces with the yoghurt marinade and mix well.
7. Cover the pan with a tightly-fitting lid and simmer gently for 20 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and tender.
8. Taste the mix and add more salt if necessary or more yoghurt to make it creamier (add a little at a time and mix continuously so it doesn't split).
9. Remove from heat, transfer to a serving dish and

Ravi's Top Tip!

If the dish is too salty or too hot, just add a tablespoon of lemon juice. This will reduce the effect of either.

Lamb Pataki

Cooking Time: 75 mins



Ingredients:

- 600g lamb, cubed (on the bone gives best taste)
- 4tbsp sunflower/vegetable oil
- 2tsp turmeric powder
- 1 onion, diced
- 5cm ginger, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1tbsp ground coriander
- 1tsp cumin seeds
- 2 fresh green chillies, chopped
- Salt to taste
- 100g passata
- 1tsp garam masala
- Coriander leaves

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a pan, add the turmeric and cook gently for 1 minute.
2. Add the onions, ginger, garlic, ground coriander, cumin seeds, chillies, salt and about 4oz / 150ml of water.
3. Add the lamb (including bone, if you have it) to the pan and cook on a medium heat with the lid on for around 30-45 minutes. It should be simmering well during this time.
4. Now remove the lid, add the passata and mix thoroughly.
5. Reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes or until the lamb is almost cooked. When it is fully cooked, you should see separation between the mix and the oils – a glaze-like consistency.
6. Now add the garam masala and leave on a low heat for a further 5 minutes.
7. Transfer it to a serving dish and garnish with coriander leaves.

Ravi's Top Tip!

To peel a garlic clove, place your knife flat on the clove and whack with your hand – the top skin will split open and the clove can be easily removed.

Chicken Saag

Cooking Time: 55 mins



Ingredients:

- 5 tbsp vegetable oil
- 450g chicken fillets, skinned and diced (thigh works best but breast is also ok if preferred)
- 150g spinach, washed and chopped
- 2 onions, diced finely
- Salt to taste
- 2 inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 x green chillies (optional) *
- 2 small tomatoes, chopped finely
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- 2 tsp coriander powder
- ½ tbsp turmeric
- 2 cloves
- 2 large whole black cardamom pods**
- 4 tbsp / 60ml milk
- 2 tsp garam masala
- 2 tbsp / 30g butter

* If you like a mild dish, leave the chillies out. If you prefer it medium, de-seed them first. If you prefer it hotter, include the seeds.

** Not the green ones – you can buy whole black pods from any Asian shop or online.

Method:

1. Fry the chicken lightly in 2 tbsp / 30 ml of vegetable oil for 3-4 minutes, until lightly sealed, then set aside in a dish.
2. Put the spinach into a deep pan with 250 ml water.
3. Bring to the boil and then remove from the heat and allow to cool.
4. When cooled, if you wish, you can either use a stick blender to blend the spinach, or leave it roughly chopped to be added to the dish later.
5. Heat the remaining oil and add the onions and salt. Sauté gently for just a few minutes until lightly softened.
6. Now add the ginger, garlic and chillies (if you are using them). Sauté for 5-8 minutes until the onions are caramelised/softened. **Keep an eye on the onions and stir continuously to stop them from burning.**
7. Add the tomatoes, cayenne pepper, coriander powder, turmeric, cloves and the cardamom pods. Sauté gently for a further 10 minutes until the tomatoes have become part of the sauce. **(If the sauce starts to stick to the pan, add a little water at a time to keep it moist).**
8. Now add the chicken and milk and simmer (with a lid on) until the chicken is tender. **(The chicken is just right when you can easily break up the chicken with a wooden spoon).**
9. Now add the spinach and mix thoroughly. Continue to cook gently for around 5 minutes.
10. Add the garam masala. Stir thoroughly and cook gently for a further 5 minutes. Remove from the heat.
11. Add the butter to the dish and mix well, then cover until ready to serve.

Ravi's Top Tip!

For the best taste, use chicken thighs. They take longer to cook but remain succulent and moist compared with breast.

Prawn Special

Cooking Time: 30 mins



Ingredients:

- 4tbsp sunflower/vegetable oil
- 2tsp cumin seeds
- 1tsp mustard seeds
- 5cm ginger, chopped finely
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2tsp coriander powder
- 1tsp paprika
- 1tsp turmeric powder
- ½tsp cayenne pepper
- 50g passata
- Salt to taste
- 4tbsp Greek yoghurt
- 100g uncooked large prawns (frozen if necessary)
- Juice of 1 small or half large lemon

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a pan, add the cumin and mustard seeds and cook for 2 minutes. **(Make sure you keep an eye on this at all times – otherwise the spices will burn and make the dish bitter. 2 mins only.)**
2. Add the ginger and garlic and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the coriander, paprika, turmeric, cayenne and mix thoroughly.
3. Add the passata and salt to taste and cook until you see a shiny film on the gravy – around 2 mins.
4. Remove from the heat and add the Greek yoghurt. Mix well.
5. Place back on a gentle heat, then add the prawns and simmer, stirring from time to time until the prawns change to pink. (If you're using cooked prawns, just heat them through gently for a few minutes).
6. Add the lemon juice and stir in.
7. Serve.

Ravi's Top Tip!

When cooking prawns/fish, add a generous pinch of paprika to the oil – once hot, the oil will take on a beautiful red colour.

Roti (Chapatti)

Cooking Time: 30 mins



Ingredients:

- 100g Chapatti flour
- Water

Method:

1. Put the chapatti flour in a bowl and add water a little at a time, stirring with a fork to form a stiff dough (like pizza dough). It needs to be stiff but pliable – not too soft.
2. Knead the dough for 5 minutes.
3. Get a hot skillet or dry frying pan ready – place on low heat on the hob.
4. Grab a plum-sized amount and mould into an approximate round shape with your hands.
5. Lightly sprinkle the rolling board with flour and roll the dough into a thin layer – approximate 15cm diameter.
6. Place the roti on the hot skillet or frying pan.
7. They should puff up, but getting them to puff up is all about timing – if they don't rise, they are too heavy.
8. Cook the first side for **7 seconds only**. Turn it over and cook the other side until bubbles appear on the surface - about 1cm in size.
9. Turn back over to the first side – they should now suddenly puff up completely.
10. Once you get the hang of it, you can be rolling one whilst cooking another.

Ravi's Top Tip!

To make softer roti's, just add a teaspoon of oil when making the dough.

Puri

Cooking Time: 30 mins



Ingredients:

- 100g Chapatti flour
- 1tbsp oil for mixing with the flour
- 500ml sunflower/vegetable oil for frying

Method:

1. Put the Chapatti flour in a bowl and add the oil. Mix thoroughly.
2. Add water a little at a time, and mix well until the dough is stiff and like pizza dough (not too soft).
3. Knead for about 5 minutes.
4. Leave to rest for 10 minutes.
5. Lightly oil your hands, then grab a small piece of dough and roll into a small ball – about 2cm diameter.
6. Repeat step 5 above until the dough is used up.
7. Lightly oil the pastry board and the rolling pin and roll out each ball into thin circular “pancakes” - about 10cm diameter.
8. Heat a pan of oil (to around 180 C) and deep fry the puris very quickly, turning them over once until deep golden in colour. This will take around 2 minutes.
9. Place on kitchen towel to drain and serve immediately.

Ravi's Top Tip!

For the best result, make the puri's as thin as possible.

Special Rice

Cooking Time: 30 mins



Ingredients:

- 100g basmati rice
- 2tbsp butter or oil
- 1tsp cumin seeds
- 1 onion, diced
- 100g frozen peas
- 200 ml water

Method:

1. In a strainer, thoroughly wash the rice under running water.
2. In a large saucepan, melt the butter/oil over a medium heat.
3. Add the cumin seeds and stir through for 1 minute.
4. Add the onion and sauté for 5 minutes, until soft.
5. Add the rice and stir through to thoroughly coat with the mixture.
6. Add the frozen peas.
7. Cook for a few minutes and mix well.
8. Now add 200ml of water, bring to the boil, cover pan tightly and reduce heat to very low.
9. Cook for 10 minutes precisely (**important - do not open the lid at any stage**).
10. Remove from heat, leave to rest for a further 5 minutes and then remove the lid.
11. Fluff the rice with a fork and serve.

Ravi's Top Tip!

Add a few drops of lemon juice to the rice – the grains will become bright white.