

October Dinner Club - Indian Cuisine

Appetizer: Spicy Lentil Dip with Naan Bread

Lentil Dip - serves 4-6

Ingredients

1 cup red lentils
1 onion, chopped
2 1/2 cups water
2 teaspoons curry powder
3/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 cloves crushed garlic
1 teaspoon cumin seeds

Directions

In a medium saucepan combine the lentils, onion and water. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 25 minutes or until lentils are soft. Pass lentils through a food mill or blend them in a blender.

Toast curry powder and cumin seeds in a small skillet over medium heat until fragrant. Add cayenne, oil and garlic. Saute for 1 minute.

Stir spice mixture into lentils and serve with Naan bread (**very comprehensive recipe from a blog below or you can buy**)

Naan bread - makes 8 Naan

Ingredients

4 cups all purpose flour
1.5 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon sugar
2.5 teaspoons active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water
5 tablespoons oil or ghee
1/8 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup or 10-12 heaping tablespoons of plain unflavored yogurt
few more tablespoons of water if needed
[ghee](#) or melted butter to brush on the naan

*Adjust amount of water used to make the dough. If you are using Greek yogurt, it has less water content than the regular yogurt. Use as much or as little water to make smooth but pliable and non sticky dough.

Preparation:

Dissolve the sugar in warm water (about 105 degree F). Add the dry yeast to the warm water and stir till the yeast is dissolved. Cover and leave aside for 10 minutes or until the mixture begins to froth and rise. This indicates the yeast is active. Set aside.

Sift flour, salt and baking soda. Add yogurt, 5 tablespoon oil/ghee, and activated yeast to the flour.

Use your fingers to mix all ingredients together till you can pull them into a soft dough. If you think you need more water, add a couple of tablespoons more, just enough to make a soft but NOT a sticky dough. Flour a flat surface like a large cutting board or kitchen counter and knead the dough till it is smooth and stretchy, for about 5 minutes.

Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl, brush the surface of the dough with some oil, cover with a towel and set it aside in a warm place for it to rise for about 2-4 hours; it will double in volume.

Punch the dough down, knead again for about 4 minutes, divide the dough into 8 parts (I usually slice it in triangles) and let it rise for another 30 – 45 minutes.

(I do not like rolling all of them at one time; if I am cooking the Naan on a skillet, which I usually do. I do them one at a time; as one goes on the skillet and cooks, I roll the next one)

Take one divided portion, dust it with flour and roll it out to a tear drop shape, (about 6-8 inches long) in a floured surface. Do not roll back and forth. Stretch the dough outward as you roll from the center. (If you have divided the dough into spheres, roll one of them between your palms to even out the ball and roll them out into elongated shapes.)

Brush one side of the Naan with water.

Tawa Naan / Skillet Method:

Heat a thick bottom skillet, preferably a good cast iron skillet/tawa, (or any kind of heavy bottom pan if you do not have an iron skillet). The skillet should be really hot. Place the Naan wet side down on the skillet and cover the skillet/pan with a lid.

Reduce the heat a tiny bit and allow it to cook for 30-45 seconds. The underside will

be golden to light brown and the Naan will be easily released from the pan. You will see big bubbles on the surface of the Naan.

Reduce the heat to medium, uncover and cook for another 30 seconds.

(Roll another Naan and get it ready, while this one is cooking)

Remove the skillet from the cook the other side of the Naan over direct flame of the gas burner (bubble side facing the fire) with tongs. The Naan usually puffs up, and some spots will get charred (which imparts the lovely smoky flavor). Remove from heat and brush it generously with melted butter or ghee.

(If you do not have gas stove, and is cooking on electric, you can cook the Naan on the skillet without fire roasting it. Once the bubbles form on the surface, flip it over on the skillet/pan, increase the heat to high and slowly press down on the Naan with the spatula at different spots. The Naan will start puffing up as it cooks. Remove from the skillet when the Naan is golden brown, unevenly, and with spots at some places)

Oven Method:

I should mention here that the Naan baked on the pre heated pizza stone at very high temperature, comes closest to the Naan made in the tandoor. If you do not have a pizza stone, pre heat your baking tray in the oven while the oven is heating. Try to adjust the oven temperature between 400 – 450 degree F. The cooking time will also be needed to be adjusted as each oven works differently. Look for the color and how it puffs.

Pre heat oven to 425 degree F. Place as many Naan as the stone/tray can hold with the wet side down. Cook the Naan for about 2 minutes; the top will be light golden and the Naan might start to puff. Flip the Naans over, cook for 2 minutes. If you want it lightly charred, set the oven to broil and cook till the top starts getting charred spots, for about 30 seconds to a minute.

Remove Naan(s) from the oven and brush generously with ghee or melted butter. Stack them, and keep them covered in aluminium foil and wrap the package with a kitchen towel to keep them warm.

Chicken Makhani - serves 4

Ingredients

1/3 cup plain nonfat yogurt
1 tablespoon tandoori masala powder
1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces
1/2 onion, chopped
1 (1 inch) piece fresh ginger
1 clove garlic
2 tablespoons water
3 tablespoons cooking oil, divided
2 teaspoons garam masala
1/4 teaspoon Indian chili powder
1 cup tomato sauce
1 cup half and half
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon dried fenugreek leaves
1 teaspoon salt

Directions

Stir the yogurt and tandoori masala powder together in a large bowl until thoroughly combined; add the chicken and toss to coat evenly. Marinate in refrigerator for 1 hour. Drain and discard any excess marinade.

Puree the onion, ginger, and garlic with the water in a blender until it forms a smooth paste; set aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook the chicken in the hot oil until lightly browned on all sides, about 5 minutes. Remove from skillet and set aside. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons in the skillet. Fry the onion paste in the hot oil until the moisture is mostly evaporated, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle the garam masala and chili powder over the mixture; cook 1 minute more. Pour the tomato sauce into the mixture, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook another 5 minutes. Return the chicken to the pan along with the half and half; bring to a boil. Add the butter, fenugreek leaves, and salt; reduce heat to low and simmer uncovered until the chicken pieces are no longer pink in the middle, 15 to 20 minutes.

Raita - serves 4

Ingredients

1 cup plain yogurt
1 cup sour cream
3 cucumbers, seeded and chopped
1 tomato, seeded and chopped
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon paprika
4 cloves crushed garlic
salt and pepper to taste

Directions

In a salad bowl, whisk together the yogurt, sour cream, cumin, paprika and garlic. Add cucumbers and tomatoes; toss and chill before serving.

Basmati Rice Pilaf - serves 4

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups chicken stock
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1/4 cup finely diced onion
1 bay leaf
1 cup uncooked basmati rice
salt to taste
1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Directions

Heat chicken stock in a saucepan until boiling; keep hot until ready to use.
Heat vegetable oil in a 2 quart saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook and stir onion and bay leaf in the hot oil until onion is tender, about 5 minutes.
Stir basmati rice into onion mixture until rice is coated with oil.
Pour hot chicken stock into the rice mixture. Season with salt; stir.
Bring rice mixture to a boil; cover and reduce heat to medium-low. Continue simmering until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed, about 20 minutes.
Remove saucepan from heat and discard bay leaf. Add butter and fluff the rice with a fork.

Indian Sabji - serves 4

You can substitute other vegetables into this recipe as well: eggplant and potato, or cauliflower and potato, or peas and carrots.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons canola oil
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon mustard seed
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
1/2 teaspoon red chile powder
1/2 head cabbage, sliced
2 potatoes, chopped
1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup water, or as needed
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, or to taste

Directions

Heat canola oil in a wok over medium heat. Cook and stir cumin and mustard seeds in the hot oil until they begin to dance, 1 to 2 minutes. Add coriander, turmeric, and cayenne pepper; cook about 1 minute.

Stir cabbage, potatoes, ginger-garlic paste, and salt into spice mixture; stir to coat. Pour enough water into wok to steam vegetables; cover and cook, stirring occasionally and adding more water as needed, until potatoes and cabbage are very tender, about 45 minutes. Remove from heat; sprinkle vegetables with cilantro.

Indian Pudding - serves 5

Description

This Indian pudding is a surprising mix of milk and corn meal. It is excellent served warm with vanilla ice cream.

Ingredients

4 1/2 cups milk
2/3 cup cornmeal
1/4 cup butter
1/2 cup dark molasses
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup white sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Grease a 1 1/2 quart baking dish. Scald 3 1/2 cups of milk in top of double boiler over direct heat. Remove milk from heat.

Mix cornmeal with remaining 1 cup of milk, and stir this mixture into the scalding milk, stirring constantly. Place the milk mixture into the top of the double boiler and cook for 20 minutes, stirring frequently.

Stir butter, molasses, salt, sugar and cinnamon into the mixture. Pour into the prepared baking dish.

Bake in the preheated 325 degrees F (165 degrees C) oven for 1 1/2 hours.

Chai Tea Latte

Description

It's more about choosing a good brand than a recipe. But here's the authentic way you would find it at an Indian restaurant. You can steam the milk first if you have an espresso machine or a milk steamer.

Ingredients

1 chai tea bag
7 fluid ounces boiling water
1 fluid ounce goats milk
1 tablespoon white sugar

1 pinch ground cardamom

Directions

Place the tea bag in a large mug and pour in the boiling water. Steep for 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the goats milk and sugar. Garnish with a pinch of cardamom.