



Recipes from South Asia

Taken from Mamma's Vegetarian Cookbook by Stephanie Ramurthy

Lemon Rice & Koottu with Green leafy Vegetables

(Moong Dal with green leaves)

A typical South Indian vegetarian meal consists of rice, lentils cooked with vegetables and spices, a vegetable dish and yoghurt.

The recipes below will make a festive meal. Prepare one of the rice recipes and a lentil dish, such as the koottu which is given here, together with a vegetable curry, and end the meal with rice and yoghurt mixed together. You can add cucumber and peanut salad as a side dish.

Sweetmeats, which often take quite a long time to prepare, are eaten only on special occasions, but I have included a microwave version of an old favourite, doodh peda

Different kinds of specially prepared rice are common in India. Here is a recipe for a favourite:

Lemon rice

Don't worry too much if you don't have all the seasoning ingredients. Nuts, ginger, turmeric and lemon juice will make the rice will be tasty.

Ingredients

- 220g/1 cup long grain rice
- 40g. ghee (clarified butter)
- 20 grams cashew nuts
- 20 grams peanuts
- 1 green or red chilli, cut into pieces
- ½ inch cube of fresh ginger, chopped small
- 1 teasp. black mustard seed
- 1 teasp. channa dahl (split chick peas)
- 1 teasp. urad dahl (split black gram)
- a few curry leaves
- ½ teasp. turmeric
- Juice of 1 lemon (1½ limes is even better)
- Salt to taste

Method

To cook the rice, put two cups of water in a large, heavy pan, bring to the boil, add the rice, cover tightly, then turn the heat down as low as possible. Leave undisturbed until the water is absorbed and the rice cooked and fluffy. This will take about 15 minutes, depending on the kind of rice.

Split the peanuts and cashew nuts into biggish pieces and fry them until golden brown in a large saucepan or wok (a frying pan isn't deep enough). Remove the nuts with a slotted spoon and set aside. In the ghee that is left fry the ginger and chilli, remove these and keep with the nuts, then fry the mustard seed, channa and urad dahls until they begin to change colour and finally the curry leaves. Remove from the pan as soon as cooked, so that they do not burn. You should have a little bit of ghee left, but if it has all been absorbed you may need to add about another tablespoonful to the pan.

When the rice has cooled enough to handle, break it up. Warm the leftover ghee in the pan, put in the turmeric then add the rice, one handful at a time, mixing well between each addition. Add salt and all the fried ingredients and finally add the lemon juice. Make sure the juice and all the ingredients are well mixed before serving.

Here is another rice dish.

Tomato rice

Koottu

Ingredients

- 200g red lentils or moong dahl (split green gram)
- 1 large bunch spinach or other green leaves (fenugreek leaves are very good)
- ½ teasp turmeric
- 1 teasp coarsely ground cumin
- 1 teasp coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 teasp black mustard seed
- 1 teasp urad dahl (split black gram)
- 1-2 red chillis or ½ teasp of chilli powder
- 1 pinch of asafoetida
- 2 tab oil
- Salt to taste
- 1-2 tab grated coconut (optional)

Method

Parboil the lentils or dahl. Chop the spinach, then heat the oil in a large, deep pan and cook the chopped leaves in it, turning frequently. Add turmeric and keep cooking on a low heat until the dahl is well cooked, but not mushy. Heat a little oil separately and fry the mustard seeds, urad dahl and asafoetida in it. Add this to the lentils and vegetable. Add salt and coconut if wanted. Stir well.

Green bean curry

You can cook carrots or cabbage in the same way, or try a mixture of carrots and beans.

Cucumber and peanut salad

The following is simple and can easily be done by children:

Doodh peda, or Pal koya

microwave version)

Ingredients

60g butter

1 400g tin condensed milk

150g milk powder

A few cardamom seeds

A few finely chopped pistachios or almonds

Method

Put the butter in a microwave safe bowl. Heat for 30 seconds. Add the condensed milk and milk powder. Stir well. Replace in the microwave and cook for two minutes. Mix again thoroughly and cook for another two minutes. The mixture should be quite firm, but malleable, like a fairly stiff pastry. If it is too soft, replace in the microwave for another 1-2 minutes. Allow the mixture to cool slightly. Add the crushed cardamom seeds and mix again. Divide into little balls (a bit smaller than a plum in size). Flatten slightly. If you have a pattern you can stamp on top, that's good. Otherwise just use a fork or the bottom of a glass. Decorate the pedas with the chopped pistachios or almonds.

Tandoori Chicken

(This dish can also be prepared using lamb, beef or fish with its skin on)

Ingredients

2½ lbs chicken pieces (remove skin, optional)

1 or 2 cloves garlic

½ an inch of ginger

½ a hot green chilli or white pepper

2 tsp garam masala

1 level tsp paprika or turmeric

½ medium onion (peeled and chopped)

500 ml pot of full fat yoghurt

Lemon juice

Salt

Skewers

Method

Cut the chicken into small pieces and thread them onto kebab skewers. Add lemon juice and salt and leave them to one side. Mix yoghurt, garlic, ginger, chilli (or white pepper) and garam masala together into a paste. Add a level teaspoon of turmeric or paprika for colour. Pour the mixture over the chicken and marinade for a minimum of two hours (if you are cooking with lamb or beef you will need to leave it to marinade overnight). Any leftover marinade can be frozen and used again.

Cook under a hot grill and turning the chicken frequently, (when making Tandoori fish, it is advised pour the mixture over and bake it in the oven).

Serving suggestions:

Serve with rice, naan (or pita bread if naan is difficult to get).

Ready-made poppadoms

Side dish

Tomato & Onion Salad

Ingredients

1 large red onion

4 tomatoes

1 large handful of coriander

Salt & pepper

Lime juice

Method

Dice the red onions and tomatoes and mix together with chopped coriander (making sure you use equal amounts). Add salt, pepper and lime juice.

Cucumber Raita

(Side dish)

Ingredients

1 cucumber

Yoghurt

Salt

Metho:

Chop cucumber and sprinkle with a little add salt. Once the juice is drawn out, drain. Mix the cucumber together with enough yoghurt to cover.

Dessert

South Indian Fruit Salad

Ingredients

Mango

Melon

Grapes

Peaches

Mint

A little salt & white pepper

Lemon (juice)

Sugar

Method

Chop the fruit and mix in a pinch of salt & white pepper, a handful of mint, the juice of half a lemon and sugar to taste. You can use any fruit except bananas as they will go brown. It can be made in advance and is best served chilled.