

Recipes From Celebrated Chefs featured in JLF Toronto 2020

ASMA KHAN

Zafran Murgh Korma

Saffron chicken korma

There are many ways to cook a korma. If you ever get the chance to try a Safed Korma from Hyderabad, grab it. The pale, almost bland, appearance is deceptive. The name Safed Korma, which means white, hides a fragrant and delicately spiced dish. For a dish to be called a korma it usually has to be meat, although it can sometimes be vegetable-based, and braised in a yogurt base. Used sparingly in Indian kitchens due to it being an expensive spice, the addition of saffron gives this dish a lovely colour and also makes it very special.

Serves 4 as a main course or 8 a part of a multi-course meal

500 g/1 lb 2 oz/1¾ cups Turkish or Greek yogurt (10% fat)

1 tbsp garlic paste

2 tbsp fresh ginger paste

8 medium skinless chicken thighs (on the bone) (approximately 1 kg/2 lb 4 oz)

2 tbsp whole milk

A large pinch of good-quality saffron strands

6 tbsp vegetable oil

3 medium white onions, evenly and thinly sliced into rings

Whole garam masala (2 Indian bay leaves, 1 piece cassia bark, 2.5 cm/1 inch long, 3 green cardamom pods and 1 clove)

1 tbsp ground coriander

¼ tsp chilli powder

1 tsp salt

2 tbsp ground almonds

1 tbsp sugar

A small handful of almond flakes, to garnish

In a small bowl, combine the yogurt with the garlic and ginger pastes.

Place the chicken thighs in a non-reactive container with a lid and spoon over the marinade, making sure that every surface of the chicken is covered. Cover the container and place in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Gently warm the milk in a pan. Do not boil the milk; it should only be tepid as you do not want to scald the saffron. Touch the surface of the milk to check the temperature, then when the milk is tepid add the saffron strands and leave to infuse.

In a deep pan or wok that has a lid, heat the vegetable oil over a medium– high heat. Add the onions to the pan and fry gently, stirring occasionally, until golden brown and caramelized. Using a slotted spoon, remove the onions from the pan, leaving as much of the oil in the pan as possible to cook the other ingredients, and place on a plate to drain.

Spread the onion rings across the plate so they crisp as they cool.

Add the whole garam masala to the same pan and oil used to fry the onions. After a few seconds, add the ground coriander and continue to cook, stirring. After 1 minute, add the marinated chicken to the pan along with the marinade from the container. Keeping the heat on medium–high, continue stirring gently. After 5 minutes, or when the oil separates from the yogurt and comes to the surface, add the chilli powder and salt. Lower the heat, cover the pan with the lid and simmer gently for 35 minutes. The chicken is ready when the edges have softened and are slightly curled.

Remove the pan from the heat. Add the saffron-infused milk, ground almonds and sugar. Stir the softened chicken gently to avoid breaking it up.

Before serving, taste to check the seasoning and adjust as necessary.
Garnish with the flaked almonds and the fried onions.

Coconut Japanese-Indian Green Bean Curry

In 2010, during the Vancouver Winter Olympics, Meeru hosted a lunch at Rangoli for a group of Japanese media people. Vikram served the food while Meeru joined our guests at the table. We served them half-sized portions of a large variety of our curries from both the Vij's and Rangoli menus. At the end of the meal, Meeru asked the photographer in the group two questions: (1) Why does the Japanese government support whale hunting? and (2) What is the most popular dish in Japan? His answer to the first question was that it's difficult for outsiders to understand. (He's right; we don't.) To the second question, he answered Japanese curry.

This was a revelation to our entire family, considering how much we love Japanese food and all of Hayao Miyazaki's anime films—all four of us in equal measure. Miyazaki films belong to the slim category of movies that celebrate the joys of being brave girls who don't understand why anyone would think they were any less capable than boys. This has been one of the most important messages we wish to instill in our daughters and, in fact, all of our staff. To hear the word “curry” added to “Japanese” was like feeling snow on our faces for the first time.

On Meeru's next trip to Singapore to visit Vikram's sister and her family, she booked an eight-hour layover at Narita Airport in Tokyo. With Nanaki and Shanik in tow, Meeru ordered one bowl of every “curry” on the menu at Narita Airport's restaurants (realizing that this was airport cuisine). There are two things the three of us will always remember about this day: the thrill the girls experienced being able to eat so many “thick white noodles” (udon) without Meeru worrying about them becoming constipated, and Shanik's nonstop insistence that Meeru buy her the Totoro Catbus stuffed animal that cost the equivalent of more than a hundred Canadian dollars. (Totoro Catbus is one of Shanik's favourite Miyazaki characters from childhood. And though Meeru refused, Shanik's aunt gave her the money to buy the Catbus during their return layover.) Though the Japanese curries were a bit off the Indian curry mark for Meeru and Nanaki, their sweet flavour and thick texture were a hit with Shanik. It was after this trip that Shanik started cooking Japanese food at home. And the Narita curries were good enough to lead us to cook Indo-Japanese.

This is the first recipe inspired by our Narita trip, and it's incredibly versatile. Shanik enjoys this dish as a complement to her homemade cucumber and avocado rolls. (Nanaki and Shanik, much to the bewilderment of their father, prefer to eat Indian curries on sushi rice instead of Basmati.) It can also be served as a soup to go with sushi or Basmati rice or, if you make it drier, as a side dish to accompany just about anything, including a grilled steak. To make a dinner entrée, just double all the ingredients in this recipe—except the green beans. Add 2 pounds of raw tofu or chicken or potatoes. The key is to keep the ratios roughly the same—too much Worcestershire sauce or ketchup can cover up the Indian spices. Be sure to add any extra or substitute ingredients according to their cooking time.

1/2 cup cooking oil
1 medium red onion, finely chopped
1/2 cup chopped green onions, white and green parts
3/4 cup unsweetened dried coconut flakes
1 1/2 cups finely chopped fresh tomatoes (6 medium)
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1/2 tablespoon turmeric
1 teaspoon crushed cayenne pepper
2 pounds green beans, trimmed and chopped into 1/2-inch pieces
2 tablespoons ketchup
1/2 to 1 1/2 cups water
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1/3 to 1/2 cup chopped cilantro, including stems
1 tablespoon soy sauce
salt to taste

Serves 8

Prep & cooking time: 45 minutes

In a large frying pan or a wok, heat the oil on medium heat.

Add the red onions and sauté for 5 minutes, or until they sweat but before they begin to turn golden at the edges. Stir in the green onions and sauté for 1 minute. Add the coconut flakes, stir well and sauté for 2 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and immediately add the coriander, turmeric and cayenne. Cook the masala for 4 to 5 minutes, or until the oil glistens on the tomatoes.

Stir in the green beans and cook for 3 minutes, stirring regularly. Add the ketchup and anywhere from 1/2 cup (for a drier style) to 1 1/2 cups water, stir well and continue cooking until the liquid is boiling and the green beans are cooked through, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the Worcestershire sauce and cilantro. Turn off the heat and stir in the soy sauce. Season with salt, if necessary.

TO SERVE Transfer the curry to a large bowl and serve family style.

JOSHNA MAHARAJ

Carrot Pineapple Muffins

These are the muffins that Debbie Lennox and I worked so hard to perfect. They're wholesome, delicious, easy to make, and perhaps the perfect thing to take to someone in the hospital!

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole wheat

1 cup granulated sugar

1 tsp baking soda

1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp salt

1 tsp cinnamon

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup vegetable oil

2 eggs

1 cup carrot, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup crushed pineapple

1 tsp vanilla

Makes 12

Preheat oven to 350F. Grease or line a muffin pan with paper liners and set aside.

Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon in a mixing bowl and set aside.

Combine oil, eggs, carrot, pineapple, and vanilla in another bowl. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and combine until mixture comes together and all flour has been incorporated.

Bake for 25 minutes, or when a tester inserted into a muffin in the center of the pan comes out clean.

Taste one, then write to your local government about how good these would be for hospital patients.