

DESHI MIX

BY SALINA PARVIN



# Mixed in Masalas

The word 'marinade' was derived from French, Spanish word 'marino', which means 'pickle in brine', in the late 17th century. Marinade is a versatile and indispensable technique. It boosts the flavour of lean cuts of meat and also works with vegetables and fruits. It does not require special equipment and involves simple step to produce unfussy but delicious food.

Marination is the process of soaking food in a seasoned, often acidic, and liquid before cooking. It refers to soaking food in a flavourful liquid called a marinade.

Marinating is a technique that has been around at least since the Renaissance, when acidic mixture was commonly used to help preserve food. Marinating is a great way to intensify the flavour of food with just a few basic ingredients.

So choose your favourite flavours and soak up the easy-to-follow tips in this guide. The purpose of marinating is not only to add flavour but also tenderise meat, chicken and fish. Marinades can even be used on some veggies, including eggplant, zucchini and artichoke. A marinade can be a paste, a liquid or a dry rub (such as a simple herb and spice mix). You can also mix and match flavours to create your own blends.

The concept of marinating food is quite ancient, and many cultures have some tradition of marination.

Meats have classically been marinated because they can be stringy and tough, and a marinade will tenderise the meat and improvise the flavour.

Many cultures have a tradition of eating meats from older animals, like mutton, which comes from adult sheep, and these meats would be rather unpleasant if they were not marinated and slowly cooked.

Flavourings in marinades vary widely. They can be spicy, smoky, sweet, bitter, and sour.

Once food has been marinated, it can be cooked in a variety of ways. Many people like to grill marinated food, but they can also be baked, roasted, broiled, fried, or stewed. Older meats tend to benefit from a slow, gentle stewing, which helps to break down the fibrous tissue of the meat even more, while cuts of chicken and steak can be quite excellent when they are cooked on a grill.

## WHAT TO USE IN A MARINADE -

Marinades vary from recipe to recipe but they generally contain three basic components: oil, acids and seasoning.

### OILS

The oil content in a marinade locks in the natural flavour of the food and prevents it from drying out. Some oils can also add flavour. Good oils for marinating include olive, sesame, peanut and infused oils (such as chilli, garlic).

### ACIDS

These ingredients tenderise meat by unravelling its proteins; this softens the surface and allows flavours to be absorbed. Acids include vinegar, yoghurt, citrus juice, wine, sherry, yoghurt and buttermilk. Yoghurt and buttermilk tend to keep foods moist, while a citrus-based marinade can 'cook' raw fish.

### SEASONINGS

These provide the unique flavour. Garlic, ginger and onion are great starting points but you can also use fresh herbs and chilli to spice things up, or honey and sugar to sweeten your food. Seasonings include citrus peel, soy

sauce, mustard, salt and pepper, and herbs and spices.

### EQUIPMENT

Many marinades are acidic, it's best to soak food in a non-reactive container like those made of glass, ceramic, plastic, or stainless steel. Reactive metals such as aluminium or copper will respond to acids by discolouring the food and giving it a metallic taste. For easy cleanup, a zip-top plastic bag works well.

### SAFETY CONCERNS

Always marinate meat and fish in the refrigerator. You can use some of the marinade for basting after removing the meat or fish from it only if you bring the marinade to a boil and cook for five minutes to kill any bacteria.

### SOAK TIME

The length of time you marinate food depends on both the food and the marinade. Delicate fish, shellfish, and fruit usually soak for a shorter period of time (from 20 minutes to a few hours), while meats can go longer (up to a day or two). If, however, meat is soaking in a highly acidic marinade, the texture may turn grainy if soaked too long (more than a couple of hours, in most cases).

### SEASON LAST

For our recipes that include added salt, we sprinkle it on after food is cooked instead of including salt in the marinade. That way, none of the salt is lost when the marinade is discarded.

Seasoning after the food is cooked also allows the small amount of salt we use to have a bigger impact on the overall taste.

One of the simplest ways to flavour food is to marinate it. That is, treat it like a sponge. All you have to do is pour sauce on the food, let it soak for a while and then cook it. There are many different types of marinades including a teriyaki marinade for Asian dishes, marinades for steak or a yoghurt-based marinade for Middle-Eastern dishes.

Marinate typically consist of an acidic ingredient, like vinegar, lemon juice, or yoghurt, plus oil and spices. The acidic ingredient softens the food, allowing it to absorb the flavour said of the sauce. Marinating works on all kinds of meat, as well as fish, tofu and vegetables.

How long should you marinate? Depends on what you want to marinate! Here are some pointers on poultry, beef and fish.

### POULTRY MARINADE

You can marinate an entire chicken or chicken part. Piercing the chicken with a fork, or cutting it into smaller pieces will help it absorb the marinade. Removing the skin from the chicken will help it absorb marinade. In general, two hours of marinating is long enough for the meat to soak up the flavour, but poultry can marinate for up to two days in the refrigerator.

### BEEF MARINADE

Marinating is best suited for the tougher steak cuts like flank, skirt, sirloin, round and hanger. These cuts can usually marinate up to 24 hours. You can actually ruin better-quality steaks, like porterhouse or rib-eye, by marinating them.

### FISH MARINADE

Fish and shellfish should marinate for only 30 minutes to

an hour, any longer and the flesh might start to cook and go mushy.

### MARINADE: DOS AND DON'TS

Do not reuse leftover marinade for other food.

Do cover containers containing marinating meats or others.

If possible, start marinating meat the night before, or in the morning before you leave for work.

Do marinate food in the refrigerator, rather than at room temperature.

Do marinate in re-sealable plastic bags, rather than in bowls or other container. They cut down on cleanup and allow you to evenly distribute the marinade. But you can marinate in plastic, stainless steel or glass containers too.

Do not marinate in aluminium containers or foil, because a chemical reaction could spoil the food.

For more on sauces and marinating see page 7 and 8

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