



DESHI MIX

BY SALINA PARVIN

Bitter recipes

Bitterness is perceived as an unpleasant, sharp, and disagreeable taste, but it is sometimes deliberately added in dishes to make them more palatable. They are packed with vitamins and minerals. In general, bitter greens are full of nutrients including vitamin A, C and K and minerals like calcium, potassium and magnesium. They are high in fiber and low in fat and sodium. They reduce blood sugar levels and it is recommended that adults consume at least one bitter fruit/vegetable in their daily meal. In addition of their medicinal benefits, many people, especially beauty conscious women, gulp bitter juice every morning and use neem paste on their faces just to enhance their complexion. Bitterness is also said to help absorb nutrients, balance taste buds and control sweet tooth, cleanse the body, stimulate metabolism and eliminate free radicals.

Bitter-tasting vegetable dishes are popular in Bengal. They are known to stimulate a failing appetite and pleasantly contrast with other taste.

NEEMPATAR CHOP

Chop is a popular dish in South Asia, basically made from potatoes and other ingredients.



The medicinal name of neem tree is *azadirachtaindica*, or Indian lilac and it belongs to the mahogany family - *meliaceae*. It is widely grown in tropical countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Neem leaves are quite bitter and are not enjoyed by all in this region. Neem gum is a rich source of protein.

Ingredients

1/4 cup chopped neem leaves
2 cup boiled potatoes
1/2 tsp black paper powder
1 tsp roasted cumin seeds
2 green chilli, chopped
1/2 tsp chat masala
2 tbsp corn flour
Salt to taste
Oil for deep frying

Method

Mash the potato and mix all ingredients except oil. Take small portions at a time and give them a nice round shape. Heat oil in a pan. Fry the chops until they turn golden brown. Remove from heat and serve hot.

CRISPY DICED EGGPLANT WITH JUTE LEAVES

Jute leaf is a green leafy vegetable rich in calcium, phosphorous, iron, potassium and lots of fiber. Jute leaves can be found everywhere throughout the year. It is easy to get and prepare and can be incorporated in various dishes that would allow individuals to benefit from its vitamins and mineral content.

Ingredients

1/4 cup jute leaves
1/2 kg eggplant, 1 tsp turmeric powder
1/4 tsp fenugreek seeds

4 green chilli
1/4 cup oil
Salt to taste

Method

Dice the eggplant and transfer to a bowl. Sprinkle with salt and turmeric, toss and set aside for 15 minutes. Toss again, then remove the eggplant with slotted spoon and pat dry with paper towels. In a frying pan, heat oil over moderately high heat until it is hot but not smoking. Add fenugreek seeds and cook for a few seconds. Add eggplant and stir-fry until browned and crisp. Now add jute leaves, green chilli and remaining salt. Toss well. Cook for 2-3 minutes. When it is done serve hot with plain rice.

METHI PARATHA (FENUGREEK LEAVES PARATHA)

Methi paratha is a Punjabi paratha recipe and is also popular across North Indian regions.

This healthy paratha recipe is made with whole wheat flour, fenugreek leaves, boiled potatoes and spiced with some spices. I have used fresh methi leaves here but, you can also use kasurimethi.

Ingredients

2 bunch of chopped fenugreek leaves
2 cups whole wheat flour
1/4 cup ghee
1/4 tsp cumin seeds
1 inch ginger grated
2 green chilli, finely chopped
1/2 tsp red chilli powder
2 boiled potatoes, peeled
1/2 tsp dry mango powder
Salt to taste



Method

Heat 1 tbsp ghee in a pan and add cumin seeds. When they are well browned, add ginger and green chilli. Mix well. Add fenugreek leaves, red chilli powder and salt. Mix and cook till all the moisture evaporates. Transfer into a bowl and allow it to cool down. Add mashed potatoes, some more salt and dried mango powder and mix well. Add wheat flour to the mixture and knead into a soft dough. Divide the dough into small portions and roll into balls. Roll a dough ball in flour and roll it into a roti. Spread little ghee on top and sprinkle some flour. Then fold it into a square and press lightly. Roll it out into a small thick paratha. Heat a non stick tawa. Place the paratha on the hot tawa and cook. Turn it over and apply some ghee. Turn over once again and apply some more ghee and cook till both sides are golden. Serve hot.

UCHCHE POSTO (BITTER GOURD CURRY WITH POPPY SEEDS PASTE)

"Momordicacharanta" is a Sanskrit word and in English refers to bitter melon, bitter gourd or bitter squash. It is widely grown in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean for its edible fruit, which is extremely bitter. Bitter gourd has originated in the Indian subcontinent and was introduced in China in the 14th century. This vegetable is often used in Chinese cooking for its bitter taste in stir-fries, soups and herbal tea. It is very popular throughout South Asia. In India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh bitter gourds are usually cooked



with onion, chilli, turmeric, salt and cumin seeds.

Ingredients

1 bitter gourd, diced
3 tbsp poppy seeds, 3 dry red chilli
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/2 tsp mustard seeds
3 green chilli
Salt to taste

Method

Grind poppy seeds in a spice grinder. Cut and wash the bitter gourd. Heat oil in a pan. Add dry red chilli and mustard seeds, once they start to splutter, add chopped onion. Sauté for a while. Now add bitter gourd and green chilli. Cook on low flame until completely cooked through and slightly browned around the edges. Add poppy seed powder and mix well so that the veggies are completely coated with the powder. Season with salt and cook for 5 minutes more or till the flavors meld. Serve with steamed rice.

KOI HELENCHA JUGOLBONDI (KOI FISH WITH HELENCHA SHAK)



Ingredient

1 bunch of helencha-shak (water cress)
6 pcs koi fish (climbing perch)
2 tbsp mustard oil
3 silted green chillies
Salt to taste
Spice for tempering:
1/4 tsp cumin seeds
2 bay leaves, 2 whole red chillies
Spice for gravy:
2 tbsp Onion paste
1/2 tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
1/2 tsp coriander powder
2 clove garlic paste

Method

Cut and wash the fish. Marinate the fish with a pinch of salt and turmeric powder. Set aside for 15 minutes. Cut and wash the helencha-shak. Blend all the gravy spices in a blender and make a smooth paste. Put a pan on high flame. Add 2 tablespoons of oil and fry the marinated koi fish until they turn light golden brown. Keep the fish aside. Heat the pan again with the fried fish infused oil, allow high heat until smoking point, now add the broken whole chilli, cumin seeds and bay leaves one after another. Add gravy spices paste, salt and fry a little. Now add little water and cook for a few minutes till oil floats to the top. Add helencha-shak, green chilli, and 1/2 cup of water. Add fried fish and cook for 5 minutes on medium flame. Serve with hot plain rice.

Photo: Collected

