



Bhog for puja

Durga Puja — the ceremonial worship of the mother goddess, is one of the most important festivals of Bengali Hindus. The first grand worship of goddess Durga in recorded history is said to have been celebrated in the late 1500s. Folklore says that zamindars of Dinajpur and Malda initiated the first Durga Puja in this region.

And what is a festival without the culinary delicacies? Bengalis are well known for their passion for good food, especially during the 5-day celebration in Durga's honour.

I bring you this year some exclusive entrees, main courses, sides and sweet dishes for the autumnal festival. I hope every culinary enthusiast will try the recipes at home to bring some magical delight to their dining spread.

BHAJA MUNG DAL KHICHURI

Bengali mung dal khichuri is a puja staple. This is served as Bhog to Durga along with some other regional delicacies. The mung dal is roasted first and this imparts a lovely warm aroma and taste to the khichuri. There is no onion or garlic used in this preparation. The consistency of the khichuri can be adjusted to one's preference. It is often served with begun bhaja or aloo bhaja.

Ingredients

2 cup aromatic rice
2 cup mung dal, 4 tbsp ghee
1-inch cinnamon, 2 green cardamom
4 cloves, 2 bay leaves
½ tsp cumin seeds
1-inch grated ginger
½ tsp turmeric powder
12 tsp red chilli powder, 1 pinch asafoetida
2 small tomatoes, chopped
2 green chillies, chopped

2 cups of chopped mix vegetables, like cauliflower, peas, potatoes and carrots
½ tsp sugar, Salt to taste
Water as required

Method

Rinse and soak rice in water for 30 minutes. In a pan slow roast the moong dal till the lentils turn light golden and aromatic. Keep on stirring to get uniform roasting and browning. When the lentils cool, rinse them in water. Sprinkle some water on them and keep aside. Heat ghee in a pan. Fry the whole spices till they become aromatic. Add grated ginger and sauté for 5-6 seconds. Add turmeric, red chilli powder and asafoetida and sauté for 2-3 seconds. Then add the tomatoes and green chillies and cook till soft. Add the mixed vegetables. Stir and sauté for a minute. Add the roasted mung dal and drained rice and stir well. Pour water, salt and sugar. Stir and cook for 10 minutes with the lid on. Add green chillies. Stir again and cook on very low heat for another 10 minutes. When it is done, remove from heat. Sprinkle some ghee on top. Serve hot with begun bhaja or aloo bhaja.

MACHER DOMPOKHT

Ingredients

10 pieces Rui fish
2 tbsp ghee
1 tbsp onion paste
1 tbsp poppy seed paste
2 tbsp chopped onion
1 tbsp chopped green chillies
1 tbsp ground almond paste
½ cup yoghurt
1 tbsp raisins

Method

Rub in the salt into the fish pieces and sauté lightly on low flame for a few minutes. Mix all the ingredients except the chopped onion in the yoghurt and pour over the fish and marinate well. Heat ghee in a pan and fry the chopped onions and add to the fish. Simmer for about 5-6 minutes and then add a tsp of ghee and remove from flame. Serve hot.

MOCHAR GHONTO (BANANA)

FLOWER CURRY)

Ingredients

1 medium mocha
½ cup chopped coconut
2 bay leaves
6-8 dry red chillies
½ tsp cumin seeds
2-3 clove
1-inch cinnamon stick
1 tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp red chilli powder
½ tsp cumin powder
½ tsp coriander powder
½ tsp garam masala powder
2 tbsp ghee, Salt to taste
Sugar to taste

Method

Clean and chop the mocha. Be careful while you are cleaning. Remove the leaves and tiny black stick inside the flowers. Wash and cook the flower in a pan with pinch of turmeric powder, salt, clove, cinnamon and 1 cup of water. Once flowers become tender, drain the water and keep the flower aside. Temper the hot oil with dry red chillies, bay leaves and cumin seeds. Don't forget to add a little sugar in the smoking hot oil. It will give the dish a nice caramelised colour.

When they start to crackle, add pre-cooked banana flowers and mix well. Sprinkle turmeric powder, red chilli powder, cumin powder, coriander powder and give it a good stir. After 2 minutes add coconut and continue mixing. Now add garam masala powder and ghee. Mix well. Mochar Ghonto is ready to be served with steaming-hot plain rice.

KALAKAND

Ingredients

1 kg milk
500g cottage cheese
250g sugar, powdered
1 tsp rose powder
½ tsp green cardamom powder
Almonds — shredded and roasted, to garnish

Method

Cook milk and cheese till excess liquid is dried up. Add sugar, cook till there is no excess liquid, but mixture is a wet consistency. Shut off the heat, add rose water and cardamom. Transfer to mould or serving dish, and leave to set. Cut into pieces and garnish with the almonds and serve.

BUNDIYAR PAYESH

Ingredients

200g bundiya
1 litre milk, thick
Sugar to taste
Few drops of rose water

Method

Boil milk on low flame, keep stirring for 15 minutes. Add the bundiya and sugar. Boil for another 10 minutes on low heat. Remove from flame. Cool and add in a little rose water. Serve chilled.



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