

DESHI MIX

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Chutney and achar

Come summer, it's time to stock up on pickles! So, don't lose this opportunity to add a jar of lip-smacking pickle to your store.

During the mango season, in summer, in our country, one can see at least two or three glass jars full of pickled raw mangoes maturing in the sun outside many homes. This typical mango pickle is most popular here. The combination of fennel seeds, nigella seeds with mustard and other pickling spices is what distinguishes this mango pickle from others, all over the country.

Chutney or achar is an all-time favourite accompaniment in every Indian regional cuisine. It is present in almost every Indian meal and adds its own refreshing flavour to any food that it is paired with. The best part about chutney is how you can play with different ingredients, be it with fruits, herbs or vegetables and always end up with a winning recipe.

Chutney is a fairly generic term, so your confusion isn't too surprising. As it is a loanword, the definition may also vary from region to region. It's generally defined as a condiment consisting of some combination of vegetables, fruits, herbs and spice. They could be chunky, finely chopped, or smooth, and often have enough liquids to be wet, but are sometimes dry. In English at least, they can be either fresh or pickled. Chutney is a blend of many things, usually with quite a sharp taste. It can be sweet or savoury, cooked or uncooked. Generally, it's a mash of spices and herbs. Sometimes thin yogurt may be added. Chutney used to be grounded with mortar and pestle made of stone. Nowadays, electric blenders or food processors can be used.

FRESH TURMERIC AND GINGER PICKLE

The soothing taste of fresh turmeric and spiky flavour of fresh ginger make for a fabulous pickle! While fresh and tender, you will find the texture and taste of ginger are very enjoyable. Although mild, you can still feel your test buds tingle when you bite into a piece. Turmeric too has a unique flavour, which has to be experienced to be understood. Together with a dash of lemon juice, the duo are sure to pleasantly surprise you. This pickle is not only tasty but also good for health.

Ingredients

¼ cup fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
¼ cup fresh turmeric, peeled and sliced
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp salt

Method

Combine all the ingredients in a deep bowl and mix well. Serve immediately or store refrigerated in an air-tight container or glass jar up-to 1 week.

STUFFED RED CHILLI PICKLE

This pickle from North India's state of Uttar Pradesh sound fiery but it is a classic case of more bark than bite! The best part is, it is easy to make, as you are basically creating a masala and then stuffing the peppers. After sitting in a jar in the sun for about a week,

you have spicy pickled peppers to enjoy as a snack or alongside a meal.

Ingredients

½ kg large red chilli
5 dry red chilli
2 tbsp cumin seeds
2 tbsp fennel seeds
5 tbsp mustard powder
¼ cup raw mango powder
½ cup salt
Juice of 3 limes
2 cups mustard oil
1 tsp asafoetida

Method:

Wash and dry the large chillies thoroughly. Trim the stems. Slit the chillies up to just under the stem. Do not cut right through them. Scoop out all the inner flesh and seeds and discard. Roast the dry red chillies, cumin seeds, mustard seeds and fennel seeds over low heat. Cool and grind in a food processor until coarse. Add the raw mango powder, lime juice and salt. Mix well and make a thick paste. Stuff each chilli well with the paste. Put the chillies in a dry, wide-mouthed glass pickle jar. Heat the mustard oil in a pan, add the asafoetida and immediately turn off the heat. Pour this oil over the chillies in the jar. Seal the jar and keep it in the sunlight for a week to 10 days. The longer you keep it out in the sun the better the pickle tastes. Shake gently each day to make sure the oil coats the chilli well. Serve with rice, khichuri or roti.

MANGO PICKLE

Ingredients

4 cups raw mangoes, cut into pieces
1 tsp turmeric powder
2 tbsp red chilli powder
¼ cup fennel seeds, coarsely ground
1 tbsp split fenugreek seeds
2 tbsp split mustard seeds
½ tsp nigella seeds
¼ tsp asafoetida
1 cup mustard oil
4 tbsp salt

Method

Combine the mangoes, turmeric powder and two tablespoons of salt and toss well. Place the mangoes on a sieve, cover and place under the sun for 4-6 hours. Combine the rest of the ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Add the mangoes and toss well. Bottle the pickle in a sterilised glass jar. Place the pickle under the sun for 6-7 days. This pickle can be stored for up to 1 year.

AMLOKI (GOOSEBERRY) ACHAR

Ingredients

500gm amloki

1 cup red chilli powder
1 cup salt
1 tsp turmeric powder
1 cup mustard oil
3 tbsp mustard powder
1 tsp asafoetida

Method

Cut each amloki into thin segments. Add half a cup of salt and half a teaspoon of turmeric powder, and keep covered in a glass bottle for two to three days. Shake the bottle daily a couple of times but do not use a spoon or stir with hand. Heat oil to smoking point and allow to cool. Take the remaining salt in a bowl and crush slightly. Add red chilli powder, remaining turmeric powder, mustard powder and mix well. Add amloki and mix well. When the oil has cooled slightly, add asafoetida. Cool the oil and add to the amloki mixture. Transfer the pickle into sterilised glass or porcelain bottles and keep covered tightly. Pickle will be ready in three to four days and will keep for at least three to four months.

SWEET RAISIN PICKLE

If you have never tried pickling raisins before, you have missed something all along! It is time to try it out, right away. Very different and addictively tasty, this is a unique sweet pickle made of raisins, sweetened with brown sugar and honey.

Ingredients

1 cup raisins (kishmish)
1 cup brown sugar
2 tbsp honey
A pinch of citric acid
¼ tsp salt

Method:

Combine the brown sugar and 1 cup of water in a deep non-stick pan, mix well and cook on a slow flame for 2 minutes, while stirring continuously till the sugar has dissolved completely. Add the raisins, mix well and cook a medium flame for 15 minutes, stir occasionally or till the syrup is of two string consistency. Switch off the flame, add the honey, citric acid and salt and mix well. Cool completely. Pour into a sterilized glass jar and store it in the refrigerator. Use as required.

SOUTH INDIAN LEMON PICKLE

Ingredients

1 kg lemon, washed, wiped and chopped
200g salt
100g chilli powder
50g fenugreek seeds
15g asafoetida
1 tbsp turmeric powder
1 cup sesame oil

Method

Heat oil in a pan. Add the lemons and sauté

for about 10 minutes over low heat. Add salt and chilli powder, sauté for another 10 minutes. Add fenugreek seeds, asafoetida and turmeric powder and remaining oil. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and cook for 10 minutes. Take it off the heat and store in a clean airtight jar when cool. Gets softer when matured for 10-15 days.

GREEN CHUTNEY

A green mint and coriander chutney which is great for sandwich spreads. Mint adds freshness to this chutney. The addition of lemon juice enhances the flavours of mint and coriander and prevents discolouration of the greens. Green chutney is probably the most favourite Indian accompaniment. Crispy samosas, shingara etc. are considered incomplete without this chutney. This chutney can be stored refrigerated for up to a week.

Ingredients

2 cups mint leaves chopped
1 cup coriander leaves chopped
1 large onion, sliced
2 clove garlic
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp sugar
4-5 green chillies
Salt to taste

Method

Combine all the ingredients and grind to smooth paste in a blender using very little water. Refrigerate and use as required.

OLIVE GUR CHUTNEY

Ingredients

2 cups of crushed olives
4 tbsp mustard oil
50g jaggery
1 tsp paanchphoron (five spice mix)
1 tsp chilli powder
2 tbsp roasted cumin powder
2 tbsp honey, Salt to taste

Method

Heat some oil into the pan. Add jaggery and mix it well on medium heat. Add olive and mix. Cook for few minutes. Then add salt, five spices, chilli powder, roasted cumin powder and cook for about 3-5 minutes. Finish it off by adding some honey.

RED ONION CHUTNEY

Ingredients

10 red onion
4 red chilli, de-seeded
2 bay leaves
¼ cup mustard oil, 200g sugar
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 cup vinegar

Method

Cut the onion and chilli into thin slices. Heat oil in a pan. Put them into a pan with bay leaves, cook gently over a low heat for about 20 minutes. When the onions are dark and sticky, add the sugar, vinegar and mustard seeds. Simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the chutney is thick and dark. Pour the chillies into a sterilised jar, seal and let chutney cool.

Photo: LS Archive

