



THE FEARLESS OLIVE
BY REEMA ISLAM



Timeless cuisines for the month of Baishakhi

Baishakh is the one celebration bringing all us Bengalis together, and the fearless Olive in Greece celebrated the day in spirit as well. Although Pahela Baishakh is just a renewal of business transactions and closing accounts, for the rest of the nation it is madness beyond belief and a celebration that is unparalleled.

This year, I bring to you some healthy recipes from my kitchen and as you gorge on everything delish throughout the month of Baishakh, only if to revisit the fun of the new year celebrations. While you do, remember my mantra, #healthyCANbdelicious.

Shubha Nababarsha from the Fearless Olive!

PAPAYA STUFFED WITH LOTUS STEM AND CHILI CHUTNEY

Ingredients

1 Naga Chilli
250g lotus stems, chopped
1 large green papaya
¼ cup chickpea powder or 'beshon mix' (add some salt and cumin powder to this)
1 tsp fenugreek (methi) seeds and mustard seeds
A pinch of turmeric and cumin powder
1 tomato (optional)
½ cup roughly ground peanuts (roast them then ground them up roughly, not into a powder)
A pinch of coriander powder
1 tsp chopped garlic
Salt
Any cooking oil can be used

CHILI CHUTNEY

Take a Naga Chilli and immerse it in white vinegar for about 5 days to 1 week. It loses a lot of its hotness so it is safe to mash this up, and add about 1 tablespoon tamarind mash. Add a pinch of rock salt and 1 teaspoon jaggery, or gur. You can make this into a paste and add more chilli to your preference.

Method

In hot oil, add fenugreek and mustard seeds and let it splatter. At this point add turmeric and garlic and sauté them for about 1 minute until turmeric loses its raw smell and the garlic has changed colour slightly. At this point, add peanuts and coriander powder, and cook for another 1-2 minutes.

Add lotus stems and cook till they are tender. The masala seems to be coming together as the oil will start separating. At this point add tomatoes, check for salt

halves and smear them with a thick coating of the beshon.

Note: I would not suggest frying this as I rarely ever promote deep fried food, but I leave this up to you. Alternately, stick it back into the oven and keep checking so it does not burn but the batter seems cooked.

Serving —

Cut the papaya up in round slices so you have a doughnut shaped vegetable with a lotus stem filling. Pour the chilli chutney on top of this and serve it cold.



and sauté for up to 30 seconds and if the stems look cooked you may take them off. Depending on the size of the stem, you might need to add some water and cover the pan with a lid for a few minutes.

Peel and de-seed papaya and cut it in half, along the length of the fruit, so you have 2-boat shaped pieces. Smear these with some olive oil and stick them into an oven until they are tender. You may alternately boil them till they are soft but do not fall apart at a touch. Sprinkle some salt on the papaya and stuff the hollow parts with the lotus stem mix. Join the two

LEAF WRAP WITH BANANA STEM OR KOLAR THOR AND POTATOES

Ingredients

200g chopped banana stem. You need to peel or rather, shave the extra layer from the stem, then chop into small cubes and leave in cold water with some salt and turmeric for about 15 minutes.
250g cabbage (big leaves; you can use spinach or even pumpkin leaves)
1-2 potatoes
Pinch of turmeric, mustard seeds, coriander powder, cumin powder, cumin seeds (roasted)

1 tbsp grated garlic and ginger
1 tbsp finely chopped green chilli and 1-2 bay leaves
2-3 tomatoes, chopped
200g shrimp (optional) or any small fish
¼ cup chopped, dried mango bar (aam shotto)
Oil and salt to your preference

Method

Add the mustard and cumin seeds in oil until they splutter then add the rest of the masala ingredients and cook until the kitchen starts smelling of all the goodness. Add the banana stem and potatoes and cook for another 3-4 minutes before adding the fish. Cook this for another 2 minutes. You can alternately sauté the shrimp or fish with a bit of garlic in another pan and add them to this mix then cook for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook another minute and cover with a bit of water, until the vegetables are well cooked.

Now take any of the leaves you have (spinach or cabbage) and blanch them for about 30 seconds in boiling water. The cabbage takes slightly longer, up to 1 minute. Make sure you cut the hard stem part of the cabbage after it is blanched, as this will cause an obstacle while wrapping.

Take the kolar thor mix and scoop it into the leaves and wrap them around making sure they will not split open.

Now, take a pot of boiling water and place a sieve on this. You can also use your bhap pitha earthen pot to steam the wraps. As the food inside is already cooked it will not take very long to steam the leaves, up to 2-3 minutes until the food inside is transparent.

Make a chutney of the mango bars. Fry them in minimal oil with some mustard seeds, and add 1 tablespoon tamarind (tetul) mix. Cook this till the oil separates. You may make it dilute or leave it thick. Adjust salt and spices.

Serve them with tomato chutney or the mango mix mentioned above.

Photo: Collected