

skin glow; even saffron water has amazing properties.

SHEERMAL (SAFFRON FLAVOURED NAAN)

Sheermal is a mildly-sweet, flavoured naan, popular in the sub-continent. While this Mughal delight is traditionally prepared in a tandoor, it can also be conveniently prepared in a tava or skillet.

Using warm milk and spices in the dough makes it rich in taste, which makes saffron flavoured naan an ideal companion to any main course, or even a snack with evening tea.

Do not forget to brush the sheermal with a little ghee before serving, as it accentuates the aroma manifold.

Ingredients

¼ tsp saffron strands
1½ cups plain flour
¼ cup ghee
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp cardamom powder
Salt to taste
½ cup milk
Plain flour for rolling
Ghee for brushing

Method

Combine the saffron and 1 tablespoon of hot water in a small bowl, mix well and keep aside. Combine the plain flour, ghee, sugar, baking powder, cardamom powder, saffron-water mixture and salt in a deep bowl and knead into a soft dough using milk.

Cover the dough with a wet muslin cloth and keep aside for 30 minutes. Divide the dough into 10 equal portions. Roll a portion of the dough into 100mm (4") diameter thick circle using a little plain flour for rolling.

Heat a non-stick tava and place the sheermal over it and cook it on one side till it puffs slightly and then turn over. Cook it on the other side till it puffs a little and then roast it on an open flame till it turns golden brown on both sides.

Repeat to make 9 more sheermal.

Brush each sheermal with ghee.

mal with little ghee and serve immediately.

STAR ANISE

Star anise is the dried, star shaped fruit of *Illicium verum*. This pretty, star shaped spice has an intensely sweet liquorice taste and smell, offering a notable counter point of flavour. The five spice powder mix, common in China, contains star anise. It is used to flavour vegetables, and to marinate meat.

It is used as a condiment for flavouring curries, confectionaries, spirits, and pickles. It is also used in perfumery.

HEALTH FACTS —

Star anise is rich in antioxidants and vitamin A and C, which help fight early ageing and diabetes.

It also helps improve digestion, alleviate cramps, and reduce nausea.

STAR ANISE TEA

Consuming star anise tea after meals help treat digestive ailments such as bloating, gas, and indigestion. Anise is also one of the main ingredients in masala tea.

Ingredients

3 cups water
2 tsp anise seeds
2 inch cinnamon sticks
½ tsp sugar
1½ tbsp lemon juice
2 tbsp honey
2 black tea bags

Method

In a small saucepan, combine all the ingredients except tea bags, and bring to a boil and strain. Pour liquid into serving cups with one tea bag and allow it to steep for three minutes or to desired strength. Serve hot.

NAGA CHILLI

The naga chilli, locally known as naga morich, is a chilli pepper cultivated in Bangladesh and Northeast India. It is one of the hottest known chilli peppers, and is closely related to the Bhut Jolokia.



Many specialists agree that the Naga chilli is as spicy as Refi and like Bhut Jolokia (ghost pepper), it has a sweet and slightly tart flavour, followed by slight undertones of woody, smoky flavours.

NAGA BHUT JOLOKIA CHICKEN CURRY

Ingredients

1 Naga chilli
6 green chillies, finely chopped
4 large chicken breasts, sliced into pieces
1 tsp ground cumin
3 onions, finely chopped
3 tbsp oil
4 large tomatoes, roughly chopped
1 tsp garam masala
1 tbsp ground ginger
1 tsp turmeric
3 cups water
2 tbsp salt
3 tbsp yoghurt
1 tbsp ground coriander

Method

Heat oil in a large pan over medium heat and add cumin. When heated, add onions. Fry for 3 minutes. Add the Naga chilli, green chillies, turmeric, ginger and garlic. Cook for 3-4 minutes. Add the tomatoes and the yoghurt. Stir and mix well.

Add chicken, salt and stir well. Fry for a few minutes. Add water and garam masala powder. Cover and cook for another 10 minutes. When done

remove from heat and serve hot.

PUMPKIN SPICE CAKE

Ingredients

1¾ cups whole wheat flour
1 cup brown sugar
½ tsp salt, ½ tsp baking soda
¼ tsp baking powder
1 tsp ground ginger
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground nutmeg
1 tsp vanilla extract
6 tbsp butter
1 cup pumpkin purée
½ cup milk or water
1 cup raisins, walnuts or cashew nuts

Method

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease an 8-inch square or 9-inch round pan. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, brown sugar, salt, baking soda, baking powder and spices. In a medium bowl, whisk together the vanilla, butter, pumpkin purée and water or milk. Stir the ingredients until evenly moistened.

Mix in the raisins, walnuts or cashew nuts. Transfer the batter to the prepared pan. Bake the cake for 30-35 minutes. Remove the cake from the oven and serve it warm from the pan, garnished with confectioners' sugar if desired. Cool completely, and store any leftovers, well wrapped, at room temperature for several days, or freeze for longer storage.

Photo: Collected

