



Spring greens

Spring is here! The days are getting longer, the air is getting fresher, and everyone seems to be in a good mood. This changing of the season marks a time for all things to come alive and experience renewal. Spring is the ultimate season for fresh produce. Bright and refreshing, these vegetable-forward dishes will awaken your taste buds after winter's heavy meals.

NEEM PATA-ER JHOL

Neem pata-er jhol is a light mixed vegetable stew with young neem leaves. Young Neem leaves play a significant role in Bengali cuisine during this time of the season, as it is known to have many medicinal benefits and handle the issues caused by seasonal change. The dish will have a bitter sweet taste, with a rich aroma of ghee and best enjoyed as the first course of the meal with plain white rice.

Ingredients

1 brinjal (aubergine)
½ green papaya
2 sweet potatoes
100gm drumstick
1 cup tender neem leaves
1 tsp ginger paste
1 tsp cumin powder
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tbsp mustard paste
2 tbsp ghee
2 bay leaves
Salt and sugar to taste

Method

Cut all the vegetables in approximately the same size. Heat a little oil in a pan, and sauté them with a pinch of salt. Keep aside. In the same pan, roast the tender neem leaves till crunchy. Keep aside. In a bowl, mix cumin and coriander powder, ginger paste, and mustard paste. Add half cup of water and mix well. In a deep pan, heat the ghee and add bay leaves. Now add the mixed masala and let it boil. Stir continu-



ously. When the oil comes out over it, add the sautéed vegetables and salt. Mix well and add a little water. Cook covered over low heat. When the water is reduced and the vegetables cooked well, add the fried neem leaves and give it a nice stir. Check the salt. Switch off the heat, and add a good dollop of ghee at the end. Keep covered for 10 minutes. Enjoy with rice.

AAMCHOORI KOROLA (BITTER GOURD WITH DRIED GREEN MANGO POWDER)

Unfortunately, bitter gourd is one of the most underrated vegetables across the globe, owing to its sharp bitter flavour. However, bitter gourd is widely used in Asian cuisine. An important point to keep in mind while cooking with the veggie is to ensure that one tones down the bitter flavour. Here are some tips:

- Scrape the vegetable properly.
- Remove all the seeds, especially the big ones.
- Wash properly, cut and marinate with salt, and leave aside for half an hour and squeeze the juice out.
- Wash properly, ensuring removal of excess salt.
- Soaking the vegetable in tamarind juice for about half an hour before cooking can



1 tsp lemon juice

Method

Wash the bitter gourd. Split lengthwise, remove the seeds and slice thinly. Transfer to a bowl, add turmeric, red chilli, salt and vinegar. Rub well with your hands to ensure that the gourd gets coated well with the spices. Keep for 30 minutes, then wash in running water, shake dry and keep aside. Add oil in a wok, increase to high heat until the oil starts to smoke. Reduce heat until smoking stops and oil reaches medium temperature. Fry the onions in the oil until golden brown, remove and transfer to absorbent paper to drain excess oil. Now fry the bitter gourd in the same oil on medium heat until it becomes crispy and golden brown. Remove and transfer to absorbent paper to remove excess oil. Transfer two tablespoons of the oil used for frying to a wok and bring to medium heat. Add cumin seeds, stir well and add ginger. Keep stirring. Add the fried bitter gourd, stir for a minute, then sprinkle amchoor powder and green chilli. Stir to mix well. Now add fried onions. Check the seasoning. Add lemon juice and mix well. Remove from fire and serve with plain rice.

PAAT SHAK ER CHORCHORI WITH KUMRO-ALOO BORI

Ingredients

2 cups jute leaves, chopped
1 cup pumpkin, cut into cubes
1 cup potato, cut into cubes
10 sun dried lentil dumplings (bori)
½ tsp panch-foron
1 dry red chilli
1 tsp turmeric powder
2 green chilli
1 tsp ginger paste
Salt to taste
Oil, as required

Method

Heat oil in a pan. Fry the lentil dumplings



also help.

Once the excess bitterness is dealt with, cooking with this vegetable becomes easy.

Ingredients

2 pcs medium bitter gourd
4 pcs medium onions
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
Salt to taste
2 tbsp malt vinegar
¼ cup mustard oil
1 tsp ginger
1 tsp aamchoor powder
1 tsp cumin seeds

and keep aside. Again heat oil in a pan. Add panch-foron and dry chilli for seasoning. Add pumpkin and potato and stir for some time. Add turmeric powder, salt, sugar, ginger paste, green chilli, stirring continuously. Add some water. Add jute leaves and fried lentil dumplings. Cover with lid and cook for 10 minutes on medium heat. When it is done, serve with rice.

SOJNE DAAL (DRUMSTICK WITH PIGEON PEA LENTILS)

Ingredients

2 drumsticks, rinsed, scraped, and cut into 2-2.5 inches
1 cup arhar daal or pigeon pea
¼ cup onions, chopped
¼ cup tomatoes, chopped
1 small green chilli, chopped
1 tsp ginger, finely chopped
1 tsp garlic, chopped
¼ tsp turmeric powder
¼ tsp cumin seeds
¼ tsp mustard seeds
1 tbsp ghee
Salt to taste
Water, as required

Method

Clean, wash and soak the arhar daal for 1-2 hours. In a pan, add the soaked daal, chopped onions, tomatoes, green chilli, ginger, garlic, turmeric powder, water and salt. Cook the daal until it is cooked. Now add drumstick and cook for another 5 minutes. In another pan, heat ghee, and add mustard seeds. When they start to pop, add the cumin seeds. Fry for few seconds. Do not burn. Pour the tadka immediately in the hot daal and cover with a lid. After some time, serve the delicious drumstick arhar daal with either rice or roti.

METHI SHAK BHAJI

Methi bhaji prepared with fresh and green methi leaves is one of the simple and healthiest recipes with fenugreek. This methi bhaji recipe uses garlic and minimal number of spices that helps bring out and enhance the flavour of fenugreek leaves.

Ingredients

2½ cups fenugreek leaves, chopped
4-5 cloves garlic, chopped
2 small sized onions, finely chopped
¼ tsp cumin seeds
3-4 green chilli
2 tbsp water
2 tbsp oil
Salt to taste

Method

Wash and chop the fenugreek leaves, drain and keep aside. Heat oil in a pan over medium flame. Add cumin seeds and sauté until cumin seeds turn light brown. Add chopped onion and sauté until it turns transparent. Add garlic and fry until light brown. Add chopped fenugreek leaves, salt and green chillies. Mix well, and cook over medium heat for 3-4 minutes with the lid on. Stir occasionally in-between. Remove the lid and stir. Cook for another 2 minutes. When it is done, remove from the heat. Transfer prepared bhaji to #serving bowl and serve.



Photo: Collected