

IN SEARCH OF COMFORT FOOD

BY SOBIA AMEEN

**MUSHROOM AND COCONUT MASALA**

A common dish from Kerala and easy to prepare. Perfect for vegans. It is a rich, creamy dish that goes great with polao or parathas.

Ingredients

For the coconut masala —

2-3 tbsp coconut oil
1 cup grated coconut
1½ tsp coriander powder
2 tbsp red chilli powder
¼ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp cumin powder
1 tsp fenugreek powder

For the gravy —

¼ cup water
1 tsp tamarind
2 tbsp coconut oil
¼ cup onions, chopped
1 tsp ginger, chopped
1 sprig curry leaves
½kg mushroom, halved
1½ tsp salt

**Method**

Soak the tamarind in a cup of warm water and set aside. Heat 2-3 tablespoons of coconut oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Fry the grated coconut until light brown and reduce the heat to low. Add the spices and fry until well combined. Set aside to cool. Once the coconut masala has cooled, grind it into a paste with a mortar and pestle, or food processor.

Over low heat, place a medium frying pan and heat the coconut oil. Once the oil is hot, sauté the onion and ginger until the onion is translucent. Add the coconut masala paste and keep stirring on low heat.

Add the mushrooms and salt to the masala along with the sprig of curry leaves.

Keep cooking until the mushrooms are well coated and add the tamarind water prepared earlier. Keep cooking until it has become a rich gravy. Water can be added if the gravy starts to dry and stick to the pan.

PERSIAN POMEGRANATE CHICKEN (FESSEJAN)

A rich and tangy slow cooked chicken stew drenched in velvety pomegranate molasses, and made buttery with the help of walnuts.

Ingredients

2 cups walnuts, halved
2 tbsp unsalted butter
3 tbsp olive oil
3 cups onion, chopped
5 tbsp pomegranate molasses (Simmer 1

The grand Eid feast

cup of pomegranate juice until reduced to 5 tbsp of syrup)

1 kg chicken, boneless
2 cups chicken stock
2 tbsp sugar
½ tsp turmeric
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg
¼ tsp ground pepper
½ cup fresh pomegranate arils to garnish (optional)
Salt to taste

Method

Toast and grind the walnuts. The walnuts can be spread out on a large skillet and toasted over medium heat, or it can be toasted in the oven for 8-10 minutes at 180° C.

Once the walnuts are toasted, leave aside to cool. Pulse in a food processor or blender until finely ground.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, add 1 tablespoon butter and 2 tablespoons of olive oil. When the butter has melted, place the chicken pieces and cook until golden brown, salt the chicken while it is cooking.

Remove the chicken and set aside. Add the remaining butter and oil to the pan on medium heat and add the chopped onions, sauté until translucent.

Add the chicken pieces to the pan and pour the chicken stock over the chicken and onion, and bring to a boil.

Reduce to a simmer and cover with a lid, cook on low heat for 30 minutes. Add the ground walnuts, pomegranate molasses, sugar and spices, stir well and cover to cook



over low heat for an hour.

Stir every 20 minutes to prevent ingredients from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Remove from heat and adjust the sugar and salt level to taste.

Garnish with pomegranate arils and serve with polao.

MAPLE AND CITRUS NARGISI KOFTA**Ingredients**

For the kofta —
8 large eggs
½ kg ground meat of your choice; beef, mutton, or lamb
½ cup onion, chopped
1 tbsp garlic, chopped
1 tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp garam masala powder
3 tbsp zest of an orange and lime



½ cup rice flour
6-8 cups vegetable oil; canola or sunflower

For the gravy —

1 tbsp ghee
2 tbsp olive oil
1 cup onion, chopped
2 tsp garlic paste
2 tsp ginger paste
3 medium tomatoes, ground to a smooth paste
2 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp cumin powder
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp garam masala powder
2 tsp salt
8 tbsp fresh yoghurt
2 tbsp maple syrup
½ cup water
Handful of fresh coriander leaves to garnish

Method

For the kofta —

Fill a medium sized pot halfway with water, and place over high heat. Cook 6 eggs for 10 minutes until hardboiled. Immediately immerse the boiled eggs in ice water and start to peel. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, add the ground meat, onion, garlic, turmeric, red chilli, garam masala powder, zest of an orange-lime, 1 egg, and salt to taste.

Mix well and form a mixture, divide into six equal portions (making balls works best).

Take a ball of the meat mixture and lay it flat to place a hardboiled egg, and wrap it fully to create a casing — use hands to create smooth koftas.

Repeat for the remaining meat mixture and hardboiled eggs.

Over high heat, pour vegetable oil to deep fry the koftas, while the oil heats up, sprinkle all of the coated eggs with rice flour. Whisk the last egg in a bowl and dip each kofta, shake the excess off and place each kofta carefully in hot oil to deep fry. Fry until golden brown and place on a plate with lined paper towels to remove excess oil.

For the gravy —

Heat ghee and olive oil in a deep pan over medium heat. Add the chopped onions and fry until light golden, add the ginger and garlic paste.

Cook for 2 to 3 minutes before adding the tomato paste and all the spices, including the salt. Keep stirring till the ghee and oil start separating from the spices.

Add the yoghurt and maple syrup and keep stirring. Pour the water and mix to combine with the gravy mixture, then gently place the koftas one by one. Coat them with the gravy and cook for another 5 minutes. Turn the heat off and cut the koftas horizontally before serving.

Garnish with chopped fresh coriander leaves.

Photo: Sobia Ameen