

DINA'S TABLE
BY DINA BEGUM



Easy-to-do recipes

British-Bangladeshi food writer and author of 'The Brick Lane Cookbook', Dina Begum shares traditional and modern recipes to take you from breakfast to dinner. From simple snacks to dishes fit for feasts, this is where the East occasionally meets the West.

CHAR MISHALI DAAL BHUNA

Our love of daal spans beyond the subcontinent, and most people I know love good lentil dishes, usually paired with rice or bread. I have put my own little twist on daal bhuna, and added four different types of lentils — masoor daal, mung daal for silky smoothness, and brown lentils and chana daal for a little added texture.

Instead of tempering at the end of the cooking process, the lentils are cooked separately, then combined with golden-brown fried onions and spices.

In my opinion, chillies are essential in a good daal, so I add whole green chillies and coriander for an aromatic finish.

Served with a wedge of lime and steaming plain rice, this meal is both simple and delicious; rich enough for a main meal, or a side dish.

Ingredients

Serving: 6-8

For the daal —

100g chana daal
100g mung daal

100g red split lentils (masoor)

100g brown lentils

½ tsp turmeric

½ tsp salt

1 bay leaf

For the masala —

2 tbsp ghee

2 tbsp vegetable oil

6 large cloves of garlic, finely chopped

2 medium onions, finely sliced

2 tsp ginger, finely chopped

1 tsp salt

1 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp turmeric

½ tsp garam masala

½ tsp ground coriander

2 green chillies, sliced lengthways

6 whole green chillies

2 tbsp chopped coriander

Method

First soak the lentils for an hour. Rinse a few times until the water runs clear. Drain and add to a pot with plenty of cold water which rises about 2" from the surface of the lentils. Bring to a boil with ½ tsp salt and turmeric, then simmer on low for about 45 minutes, partially covered with a lid — or until the dals are cooked, and have absorbed almost all the water.

While the daal is cooking, add the oil and ghee to a large and deep frying pan

over medium high heat. Add the garlic and cook for a minute until golden, then add the ginger and onions along with the salt. Fry for 12-15 minutes until the onions are golden brown. Add the ground spices and sliced chillies and sauté for a minute until the spices have cooked through. Add the cooked lentils to the onion mixture and stir through. Pour in 1 cup of water (around 250ml), the whole chillies and simmer for 10 minutes on low heat. After 10 minutes, add the coriander and turn off the heat. The daal should be thick and creamy. Serve with rice and lime.

EAST MEETS WEST: STRAWBERRIES AND YOGHURT

Strawberries are the quintessential fruit, or rather berries, of English summers. Sweet, soft, and fragrant, there's not much else I love during the warm weather. This super simple dessert is just the thing for hot summer days when you want something sweet that's also a little healthy.

Prepare it as part of a meal for guests as this is one of those recipes where maximum flavour meets minimum effort.

Seasons for strawberries vary around the world, so if you cannot get hold of any, you may substitute with another soft fruit of your choice. I recommend sweet plums, or mangoes.

Ingredients

Serving: 4

400g ripe strawberries

1 tsp rosewater

1 tbsp sugar

¼ tsp ground cardamom

400g thick yoghurt (preferably Greek yoghurt)

6-8 digestive biscuits, broken into small chunks

Method

Hull and wash the strawberries, cut into quarters and mix with the sugar and rosewater, and set aside. Mix the ground cardamom with the yoghurt and set aside. To assemble, take four bowls or glasses, and add a couple of spoons of the strawberries into each dish, top with a couple of spoons of yoghurt and add some biscuit chunks.

Repeat with strawberries, yoghurt and biscuits. Garnish with an extra whole strawberry on top if you like. Serve immediately.

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