

Mohabhoj thali: Durga Puja recipes

This thali represents a classic ceremonial meal served at Hindu households. A combination of vegetarian items, fish dishes and desserts, this platter is a wonderful medley of home-cooked delicacies. The variety of taste, spices and flavours makes the spread a comprehensive gastronomic experience of classic Bengali cuisine.

All dishes in this thali are prepared with the local ingredients of riverside Bengal in their traditional cooking style. Tempering is the most important step of conventional Hindu cooking and the art of precise tempering ensures the delicate flavour of the savoury items.

For the desserts, most recipes use milk, chhana, coconut, and jaggery.

CHHOLAR DAAL

Ingredients
Boot'er daal, small cubed coconut, raisin, turmeric powder, ginger paste, salt, sugar, garam masala powder, oil and ghee

Tempering spice —
Bay leaves, dry red chilli, cumin

Method

Boil the boot'er daal with salt. Add a pinch of turmeric powder, ginger paste, salt and sugar into the boiling daal. Meanwhile, fry the coconut pieces and raisin in ghee in a separate pan.

In a deep wok, heat oil. Temper with the tempering spices. Pour boiled daal into the wok and stir. Add the fried coconut and raisin. Taste, and adjust salt and sugar. Add 1 tsp pure ghee, garam masala powder and green chilli. Stir well and take off stove.

MOCHA GHONTO

Ingredients
Banana flower (*kola'r Mocha*, finely chopped), potato – small cubes, boiled chickpeas, grated coconut, raisins, green chilli

Tempering spice —
Bay leaves and whole cumin

Spice paste —

Make a paste of these with a little water: turmeric powder, chilli powder, cumin powder, coriander powder, ginger paste

Salt, sugar, oil, ghee and garam masala paste

Method

Boil chopped banana flower with salt, and drain. In a pan, heat oil. Temper with bay leaf and cumin. Add chickpeas and fry a little. Add potato cubes and fry a little. Add grated coconut and raisins and fry a little. Add spice paste and keep frying until oil separates. Add boiled banana flower and stir fry with the spice. Add salt and sugar. Lower the heat, cover and simmer. When it dries up to a goopy consistency, add ghee, garam masala paste and green chilli. Stir well and take off the stove.

CHHANABORA CURRY

Ingredients

Chhanabora —

Crumbled curd cheese (*chhana*), turmeric powder, chilli powder, ginger paste, baking soda, flour, oil, salt and sugar

Tempering spice —

Bay leaves, whole cardamom, cinnamon and clove

Spice paste —

Blend these into a paste: white sesame seed, poppy seed, green chilli, grated coconut, ginger paste

oil, ghee, salt and sugar

Method

Blend the 'chhanabora' ingredients into a fine paste. Make balls from this mound. Shallow fry them until brown. Place them on kitchen towel to soak off extra oil.

In a wok, heat oil and temper with tempering spice. Add the spice paste and fry until oil separates. Add boiling hot water, salt and sugar and boil until it thickens a little.



Add the fried cheese balls, whole green chilli and ghee. Simmer for 1 minute and take off stove.

SHORSHE-KASUNDI PABDA

Ingredients

Pabda fish – lightly fried with turmeric and salt, mustard seeds, slit green chilli, mustard oil and salt

Spice paste —

Mix together: mustard paste, kasundi, green chilli paste, ginger paste and turmeric powder

Method

In a pan, heat mustard oil. Temper with slit green chilli and mustard seeds. Add spice paste and a little water. Cook until oil separates. Add hot water and salt and stir. Add fish pieces. Cover and simmer for 2 minutes. Add whole green chilli and drizzle over 1 tbsp mustard oil. Take off stove.

RUI KALIA

Ingredients



Rui fish and potato wedges – lightly fried with turmeric and salt

Tempering spice —

Bay leaf, slit green chilli and whole cumin

Spice paste —

Blend together cashew paste, ginger paste, turmeric powder, chilli powder, cumin powder, coriander powder, raisin, yoghurt and a little water

Raisin, salt, sugar, oil, ghee and garam masala paste



Method

In a wok, heat oil and temper with tempering spices. Add spice paste and fry. Add raisin, fry a little and add salt, sugar and hot water. Add fried fish pieces and potato, cover and simmer. After the potato is done, add whole green chilli, ghee and garam masala paste. After 1 minute, take off the stove.

ILISH PATURI

Ingredients

Hilsha fish – freshly cut pieces, bottle gourd leaves — washed and deveined, whole green chilli, salt and mustard oil

Spice paste —

Mix together mustard paste, coconut paste, green chilli paste, turmeric powder and salt with ample mustard oil

Method

Smear the fish pieces thoroughly in the spice paste. Wrap each spiced fish piece and 1 whole green chilli neatly with a leaf (use 2 if needed) and pin with a toothpick. Steam or microwave them.

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