



COOKING
INDIAN
WITH A
MASTER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAKE STANGEL
RECIPES BY MADHUR JAFFREY
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We have a proposition for anyone seeking an exciting way to eat more vegetables: Try adding these classic Indian dishes to your repertoire. Each vibrant recipe comes courtesy of Delhi-born COOKBOOK AUTHOR AND CULINARY LEGEND MADHUR JAFFREY, who welcomed us into her upstate New York kitchen for a lively tutorial and plenty of myth-busting (she's heard them all). Our takeaway? If you have the right spices, and know how to chop, simmer, and stir-fry, Indian food doesn't have to be labor-intensive or complicated. These recipes, some of which take less than 30 minutes, are the healthy, flavor-packed proof.



3
FENUGREEK
SEEDS

2
DRIED RED
CHILES
AND CINNAMON
STICKS

1
ASAFETIDA

SPICE WORLD

Indian food calls for variety, but “don’t overwhelm yourself by buying 30 spices,” Jaffrey says. “Start with the most common ones.” These are her favorites.

4
CAYENNE
PEPPER

5
CORIANDER
SEEDS

6
CUMIN
SEEDS

7
CARDAMOM

8
BROWN
MUSTARD
SEEDS

9
GROUND
TURMERIC

1 / Extracted from the rhizome of the *Ferula* plant, **asafetida** adds a distinctive garlicky, truffle-like flavor kick to dals and other lentil dishes. 2 / Similar to dried Italian red pepperoncini, the most common Indian **dried red chiles** range from medium-hot to hot. (They’re milder when used whole.) **Cinnamon sticks** season savory meat and rice dishes. 3 / **Fenugreek seeds** have an earthy, slightly bitter taste that’s especially well suited to eggplant and potato dishes. 4 / **Cayenne pepper** is the powder made from ground dried Indian red chiles. 5 / Grind aromatic **coriander seeds**, then store the powder in a

tightly closed container and use within a month. 6 / Roasting brings out the nutty, perfumed flavor of **cumin seeds**; the spice is a common ingredient in many curries. 7 / Bleached whitish **cardamom** pods are less aromatic than the green ones. If a recipe calls for seeds, split them open and extract them. 8 / Indians use black or **brown mustard seeds**, but the yellow variety found in American grocery stores is a fine substitute. 9 / Bright **ground turmeric**, derived from a root in the ginger family, adds color to many dishes. Be careful: It stains clothes easily.

For Jaffrey, “cooking is almost cathartic,” she says. “Your body relaxes; your soul relaxes. It lulls you to a better place.” Here, the makings of a roasted eggplant-and-tomato dish.



There is probably no better place to be a vegetarian than India. But Madhur Jaffrey’s intimate, well-worn test kitchen in upstate New York is a close second. Standing at her old stove, the Delhi-born cookbook author is finishing up a *toovar dal*—a soupy, homey dish made with hulled and split yellow pigeon peas that whispers, “Comfort food,” when eaten over rice. “Watch this,” she says brightly, tossing a generous teaspoon of mustard seeds into a small pan of hot oil. As the seeds pop, Jaffrey sprinkles chiles, garlic, and fresh curry leaves into the pan, creating a dangerous sizzle and a knockout aroma. She lets the aromatics fry for a few brief seconds, then pours the infused oil over a waiting pot of warm, turmeric-tinged *dal*. “The oil transforms the dish, giving it a roasted, concentrated flavor,” explains Jaffrey, who adds that this technique, known as *tarka*, is common in Indian cooking. Legumes never had it so good.

When one is trying to incorporate more plants into one’s diet, it’s all too easy to fall into a salt, pepper, and olive-oil rut. But Indians have a totally different take on meatless cooking—one in which vegetables, grains, and pulses (seeded legumes) are jolted into vibrancy with lively spices and herbs. “Indian vegetarian cuisine is so rich and varied because it’s been developed over thousands of years in every region of the subcontinent. You can cook a potato a thousand ways,” says the 83-year-old culinary doyenne, who’s won seven James Beard Awards and published more than 20 books. (Her most recent is *Vegetarian India: A Journey Through the Best of Indian Home Cooking* [Knopf, 2015], from which many of these recipes came.) Another fun fact: She’s also an actress—her latest role is in the British TV drama *The Good Karma Hospital*.

Growing up in a wealthy, cosmopolitan family in Delhi, Jaffrey was raised on a diet typical to many northern Hindus, featuring produce they grew themselves: potatoes, onions, carrots, okra, eggplants, cauliflowers, cabbages, kohlrabi, peas, and tomatoes. “There was always a meat dish at dinner, but the emphasis was on the vegetarian dishes,” she says. Today, Jaffrey and her husband, violinist Sanford Allen, “eat pretty much the same way—fish at least twice a week, chicken perhaps once a week, and the rest of the time vegetarian.” The six recipes she shares here—five vegetable dishes and a succulent coconut-chicken curry—make a magnificent feast together, but for busy weeknight cooks, each is a quick and fragrant meal on its own.

5 TIPS FOR INDIAN COOKING

1

GRIND YOUR OWN SPICES FOR BOLDER FLAVOR.

“I have a dedicated grinder for this,” Jaffrey says. “Do small amounts, and save leftovers in airtight containers.”

2

LEARN ONE SKILL: TARKA.

“The technique of frying whole spices in hot oil takes just a few seconds,” she says. “It gives them a roasted, intense flavor.”

3

KNOW YOUR FRESH CHILES.

“Look for bird’s-eye chiles, which are thin-skinned, bright green, slim, and hot. If you can’t find them, use serrano.”

4

DON’T DROWN YOUR RICE.

The standby ratio of one cup of rice to two cups of water ends in gloppy grains, she says. “Wash and soak the rice, then use a proportion of one to one and one-third.”

5

MAKE IT AHEAD.

Most dishes are just fine refrigerated for a day or two, Jaffrey says. “And chicken curry tastes even better the next day.”

CHICKEN WITH ROASTED CORIANDER AND POTATOES WITH SESAME SEEDS RECIPES EXCERPTED FROM INDIAN COOKING, BY MADHUR JAFFREY, COPYRIGHT © 2002 MADHUR JAFFREY, PUBLISHED BY BARRON'S EDUCATIONAL SERIES, INC. OTHER RECIPES EXCERPTED FROM VEGETARIAN INDIA, BY MADHUR JAFFREY, COPYRIGHT © 2015 BY RANDOM HOUSE. EXCERPTED BY PERMISSION OF ALFRED A. KNOPF, A DIVISION OF RANDOM HOUSE LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NO PART OF THIS EXCERPT MAY BE REPRODUCED OR REPRINTED WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE PUBLISHER.

CHICKEN WITH ROASTED CORIANDER IN COCONUT-CURRY SAUCE

Flavored with roasted fenugreek and coriander seeds and coconut milk, this rich, succulent South Indian-style chicken dish is ideal for entertaining. Jaffrey serves it with raita (yogurt with cucumber and mint), rice, and fresh cilantro chutney.

For recipes, see page 113.



**TOOVAR
DAL**

Spooned over rice, this brothy dal is a classic home-cooked dish among the Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins, on India's southwestern coast.



▲ **DELHI-STYLE GREEN BEANS WITH GINGER AND GREEN CHILES**

Jaffrey cooks the beans until they are very tender, so they'll better absorb the spices.

▼ **POTATOES WITH SESAME SEEDS**

She recommends serving these cumin-spiked potatoes with roasted meat.



▲ **ROASTED EGGPLANT AND TOMATOES**

This light dish can be served at room temperature as a side dish or dip.

▼ **STIR-FRIED CARROTS WITH COCONUT**

Roasted urad dal gives the carrots a subtle, nutty flavor.

