

Roche Communications



Table of contents

SPICE & EASY

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1

Home cooking should be zesty, colourful and,
most importantly, a pleasure for all, says Vivek Singh

SPICE & EASY



Bangla Scotch eggs
Opposite page: Old Delhi-
style butter chicken



Home is where everyone first experiences food. It shapes their memories, likes and dislikes. Most people's understanding of family and community is shaped through their experiences of food, of celebrations big and small, so much so that food even shapes people's personalities to some extent. Most people's introduction to food and the joy it brings begins at home, but one thing I have begun

to appreciate more is how 'home cooking' is changing with the changes in lifestyle, with travel and migration, and the changing socio-economic climate.

For example, my home cooking is very different from my mother's. I still remember the time in the 1970s near Asansol, West Bengal, when she used to cook on a coal fire, three or four full meals for the five of us each day prepared from scratch using only the freshest ingredients from the market or the ▶

FOOD

sellers who sold produce at our doorstep. We didn't have a refrigerator, so shopping had to happen every day, sometimes twice a day. Guests, relatives and friends would also often arrive unannounced and stay on for weeks.

Fast-forward to today and cooking has changed significantly. When I think back to my mother's cooking when I was a child, I don't know how much of it was a pleasure and how much of it a challenge. But I know for sure that in the world we live in, where people work hard and have little time for themselves, the act of cooking for others, of entertaining, is an act of ultimate generosity and needs to be a pleasure for everyone involved.

I place much more importance on pleasure when cooking at home, so don't get too worked up about perfection or precision and get stuck in. ■

◆ *Spice At Home*, by Vivek Singh, with photography by Lara Holmes, is published by Absolute Press (£25).



BANGLA SCOTCH EGGS
Makes 8

- ◆ 18 quail's eggs or 8 regular free-range eggs, soft boiled
- ◆ 50g ghee or clarified butter
- ◆ ½ tsp black onion seeds
- ◆ ½ tsp fennel seeds
- ◆ ½ tsp cumin seeds
- ◆ 3 bay leaves
- ◆ 2 onions, finely chopped
- ◆ 2 carrots, finely chopped
- ◆ ¼ of a medium cauliflower, finely chopped
- ◆ 100g French beans, finely chopped
- ◆ 1 tsp red chilli powder
- ◆ 1 tsp ground cumin
- ◆ 1 beetroot, boiled, peeled and finely chopped
- ◆ 10g raisins
- ◆ 1 tsp salt
- ◆ ½ tsp sugar
- ◆ 2 potatoes, boiled, cooled and grated
- ◆ corn or vegetable oil, for frying

For the spice mix

- ◆ 1 tsp roasted coriander seeds
- ◆ 2 green cardamom pods

For crumbing

- ◆ 2 eggs, whisked
- ◆ 150g dried breadcrumbs

If using quail's eggs, place the eggs in a pan with just enough salted water to cover the eggs and bring to the boil. As soon as

the water comes to the boil, keep on the heat for just 45 seconds, then drain and chill the eggs in cold water. Allow to cool completely, then peel the eggs. Keep aside. If using regular eggs, lower the eggs into a pan of boiling salted water and cook for 6 minutes, then drain and chill in cold water.

To make the spice mix, pound the coriander and cardamom seeds coarsely using a pestle and mortar or in a food processor.

Heat the ghee in a deep, heavy-based wok. When hot, add the onion seeds, fennel seeds, cumin seeds and bay leaves. When they begin to crackle, add the onion and sauté for 6-8 minutes, until golden brown.

Now add all the vegetables, apart from the beetroot and the grated potato, as per the order of ingredients and sauté over a medium heat for a total of 4-6 minutes. Then add the red chilli powder, spice mix and the ground cumin and stir for an additional 5 minutes.

Add the raisins and diced beetroot and cook for another minute. Add the salt and sugar and stir well, then add in the grated potato and cook for 3-4 minutes until the mixture is evenly mixed, the colour turns reddish and the mixture becomes slightly shiny due to the ghee.

Cool the mixture, and when cold divide into 8 equal portions (or 18 portions if using quail's eggs). Roll them around the

cooled boiled eggs. Dip the balls in the whisked egg, then roll in the dried breadcrumbs. Let the coated eggs cool in the refrigerator before frying.

Deep fry the eggs in batches at 170C for 6-8 minutes until golden brown. Drain on kitchen paper. Serve hot with any mustard-based sauce mixed with tomato ketchup.



OLD DELHI-STYLE BUTTER CHICKEN

Serves 4

- ◆ 2 x 750g free-range young chickens (poussin), skinned and cut in half along the backbone (alternatively, use 800g boned chicken thighs, cut into two)
- For the ginger and garlic paste**
- ◆ 100g ginger, peeled
- ◆ 75g garlic, peeled
- For the marinade**
- ◆ 80g full-fat Greek yoghurt
- ◆ 1 tbsp ginger and garlic paste (see above)
- ◆ 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- ◆ 1½ tsp salt
- ◆ juice of 1 lemon
- ◆ 1 tbsp red chilli powder
- ◆ 1 tsp ground cumin
- ◆ ½ tsp garam masala
- For the sauce**
- ◆ 1kg tomatoes, halved
- ◆ 5cm piece of ginger, half crushed and half finely chopped
- ◆ 4 garlic cloves, peeled
- ◆ 4 green cardamom pods
- ◆ 5 cloves
- ◆ 1 bay leaf
- ◆ 1 tbsp red chilli powder
- ◆ 80g butter, diced
- ◆ 2 green chillies, slit lengthways
- ◆ 75ml single cream
- ◆ 1 tsp salt
- ◆ 1 tbsp dried fenugreek leaves, crushed between your fingertips
- ◆ ½ tsp garam masala
- ◆ 1 tbsp sugar

First, prepare the chicken. Make small cuts all over the chicken pieces with a sharp knife to help the marinade penetrate.

To prepare the ginger and garlic paste, chop up the ginger and garlic. Blend it to a fine, thick

paste with 175ml water. What is not used can be kept in the fridge for up to 1 week.

To prepare the marinade, mix all the ingredients together in a deep ovenproof dish. Smear the cut chicken with the marinade, cover and set aside in the fridge for 10 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 220C/ gas mark 7. Cook the chicken in the preheated oven for 13-15 minutes. You may need to turn the pieces after 8-10 minutes or so to ensure they colour evenly on both sides. The chicken does not need to be completely cooked at this point as it will continue to cook in the sauce. Cut the chicken halves into smaller pieces. Strain off the juices through a fine sieve and set aside.

For the sauce, place the tomatoes in a pan with 125ml water, the crushed ginger, garlic, cardamom, cloves and bay leaf and simmer for about 10 minutes over medium heat until the tomatoes have completely disintegrated. Pick out the larger spices, then blend the tomato broth with a hand-held blender and pass it through a sieve to obtain a smooth purée. Return the purée to a clean pan, add the chilli powder and simmer for 12-15 minutes. It should slowly begin to thicken.

When the sauce turns glossy, add the chicken pieces and the reserved roasting juices. Then add 200-250ml water and simmer for 3-5 minutes until the sauce turns glossy again and the water is absorbed (for a thicker sauce, either add slightly less water or simmer for a little longer).

Slowly whisk in the butter, a couple of pieces at a time, and simmer for 6-8 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce is beginning to acquire a glaze. Add the chopped ginger, green chillies and cream and simmer for a minute or two longer, taking care that the sauce does not split.

Stir in the salt, crushed fenugreek leaves and garam masala, then check the seasoning and add the sugar. Serve the butter chicken with naan bread or pilau rice.