

Guardian Online
8th February 2018
MUU 125,114,252

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian

theguardian



How to cook the perfect... vindaloo - recipe

Vindaloo is a tangy Goan dish with sweet spices, not the familiar British chilli-eating contest. If you want the real version, here's how to make it

Felicity Cloake

Thu 8 Feb 2018 12.00 GMT

The peculiar place of vindaloo, a fierily fragrant speciality of Goa in popular culture can be summed up by the 1998 World Cup football anthem of the same name, whose irritatingly catchy chorus references the curry no fewer than 11 times. As the Observer pointed out, its authors, the “prank art collective” Fat Les, “persuaded,

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/feb/08/how-to-cook-the-perfect-vindaloo-recipe>

1/8

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian

among others, a lot of xenophobic, racist Little England football supporters to celebrate an item of Indian cuisine as a quintessential expression of Englishness". This is despite Goa having been a former Portuguese colony and one of the few parts of India that never saw British rule.



Vivek Singh's vindaloo sticks to traditional pork leg. Photograph: Felicity Cloake for the Guardian.

Yet the vindaloo with which most Brits are most familiar - the hottest rung on the generic korma, tikka masala, madras ladder - bears little resemblance to the aromatic, pickle-sour original. Dan Toombs, author of *The Curry Guy*, dubs them "eight-pint vindaloos", after the amount of lager needed to finish one. As chef Vivek Singh observes, though vindaloo is probably one of the best-known Indian dishes, "it's also one of the most misunderstood".

Thought to be a corruption of the Portuguese *carne de vinha d'alhos*, or meat cooked in wine vinegar and garlic, an authentic, tangy vindaloo tingles the tongue with pepper, clove and other spices, rather than the one-dimensional heat of chilli powder. So unless you've got a Goan specialist nearby, if you want to try the real thing, your best bet is to make it at home.

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian



Madhur Jaffrey's vindaloo uses poultry. Photograph: Felicity Cloake for the Guardian

The meat

The Portuguese have long been big on pig, making vindaloo one of the few Indian curries that's traditionally made with pork, though Lizzie Collingham notes in her fascinating historical survey, *Curry: A Biography*, that the British liked it better with duck - "and so do I". Madhur Jaffrey also uses duck, noting that these "paddle freely in the thousands of flooded rice fields", and that using poultry allows Muslims and meat-eating Hindus to enjoy it, too. Rick Stein makes his with shin of beef, "because it matches the beef in India, which can be pretty tough" (as well as relatively hard to come by, being a sacred beast to the country's Hindu majority), while chef Cyrus Todiwala sticks with a mix of pork belly and shoulder, and Singh to pork leg, with a little of the bone left in for flavour.

Collingham's duck breast and the pork leg prove the least popular among testers - principally, I think, because of their relative leanness, which makes them prone to dryness after a lengthy bath in vinegar. Richer or better-marbled meats, such as Jaffrey's duck leg or Stein's shin, work a lot better, though I'm going to stay traditional and go for pork shoulder, which has enough marbling to remain juicy without the belly's large chunks of fat, which even a sauce as tangy as this can't quite cut through. If you must use chicken, go for thigh; lamb lovers will be well served by shoulder.

Many recipes call for the meat to be marinated overnight, but the high vinegar content of the marinade makes this a risky business: the acetic acid can begin to "cook" the proteins in much the same way as citrus does in a ceviche, thereby rendering it tough. A few hours should do the job in the flavour department.

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian



Lizzie Collingham says the British liked Vindaloo better with duck - 'and so do I'. Photograph: Felicity Cloake for the Guardian

The masala

Whether or not you use it to marinate the meat before cooking, every curry begins with a masala, or spice mix - and in this instance chilli is not the principal ingredient. Though they all use slightly different combinations and amounts, all the recipes I try contain an array of what we might think of as sweet spices - cinnamon, cloves and cardamom - plus a hefty hit of black pepper, and the earthy, nutty flavours of cumin, coriander and turmeric. Chilli powder is generally added for colour, rather than heat, with Jaffrey recommending “bright red paprika” and Stein and Todiwala specifying Kashmiri chilli powder, sold under that name by Indian brands and remarkable for its brick-like hue. According to one Goan of my acquaintance, vindaloo is defined by its “beautiful, deep-red masala”, so be liberal with the mild chilli for maximum authenticity. Jaffrey and Collingham also use mustard seeds, which win points both for their pleasing texture and the little pops of bitter warmth they release.



Rick Stein's vindaloo makes use of tamarind juice for tanginess. Photograph: Felicity Cloake for the Guardian

The vinegar

Though the Portuguese would have originally used wine vinegar (or, some speculate, simply wine that had soured on the long voyage over), the dish was quickly adapted to the local palm

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/feb/08/how-to-cook-the-perfect-vindaloo-recipe>

4/8

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian

vinegar, made from coconut toddy. Collingham notes that if you can get hold of it, “it will add a particularly Goan flavour” to the dish. I manage to source some coconut vinegar, probably made from coconut water, in an Indian grocers (many Oriental stockists may carry a Filipino brand), but as I’m reliably informed, “it’s really hard to find the legit stuff outside the state of Goa, let alone abroad”, I wouldn’t worry too much about hunting a bottle down. Singh uses a mixture of white and malt vinegar, and Stein white-wine vinegar, but the best substitute I find is Jaffrey’s cider vinegar, which has similar sweet notes to the coconut variety.

Todiwala, Stein and Collingham also add tamarind liquid, which is fruitier and less sharp than vinegar, and gives the dish a more rounded, less mouth-puckeringly acidic sour quality. I’m with Stein when he says that ready-made tamarind liquids seem to lack the punch of freshly soaked stuff; it’s not hard to prepare, after all.

The vegetables

Todiwala describes the dish as “a sort of meaty pickle, rich and intense in flavour”, which may explain the extraordinary number of onions in his recipe – but, in fact, their sweetness works brilliantly with the tangy vinegar and rich, slightly fatty meat. Much as I dislike chopping the things, it’s worthwhile labour here, especially if you can find the sweeter Indian pink onion; otherwise, yellow ones will work fine. Liberal amounts of garlic and ginger add to the chutney-like effect: rather than crushing them to a paste, however, slice them into thin rounds and strips as Singh suggests, so they don’t get lost in the whole.



Cyrus Todiwala's vindaloo uses Kashmiri chilli powder – for colour, rather than heat. Photograph: Felicity Cloake for the Guardian

Not everyone uses tomatoes, though their sweet and sour flavour seems a perfect fit, and they add a welcome touch of freshness, as do the green chillies most recipes stick in. If you like your curries hot, then feel free to mince them, but I prefer to add them whole, for a milder effect – remember to warn fellow diners about them, unless a younger sibling is coming round for dinner, in which case tell them they’re green peppers.

Jaffrey, Collingham and Todiwala’s recipes all call for curry leaves, a highly aromatic herb that’s particularly popular in south India. They’re hard to come by here if you don’t have an Indian specialist nearby, though you may find them in larger supermarkets – if you do, snap them up, because they freeze pretty well, and will lend your dish a bright herbaceous flavour.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/feb/08/how-to-cook-the-perfect-vindaloo-recipe>

5/8

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian

Finishing touches

Todiwala is of the belief that a vindaloo should be “sweet from the palm sugar, sour from the vinegar, and hot” - so don’t be shy to temper the sourness with a good spoonful of jaggery or soft brown sugar if you can’t find any. Season to taste and serve with something plain: basmati, pillowy flatbreads or, Jaffrey’s favourite, boiled potatoes and bitter greens. Lager strictly optional.

The perfect vindaloo

Prep **15-20 min**

Cook **2 hrs**

Serves **4-6**

75ml cider vinegar

700g pork shoulder, cut into 3cm chunks

4 tbsp ghee, neutral or coconut oil

500g onions, finely sliced (about 4 medium onions)

60g tamarind pulp

10 garlic cloves, finely sliced

5cm thick length of ginger, cut into slim matchsticks

4 ripe tomatoes, diced

2-4 small green chillies

10 curry leaves (optional)

1 tbsp jaggery or soft brown sugar

1 tsp salt

1 tsp black mustard seeds

For the masala

2 tbsp Kashmiri chilli powder or paprika

Seeds of 8 cardamom pods

1 tsp black peppercorns

8 cloves

1 tsp cumin seeds

½ tsp coriander seeds

½ tsp turmeric

5cm cinnamon stick

Grind together all the ingredients for the masala, then stir in the vinegar. Rub into the pork and leave to sit for three to four hours.

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian



1 Marinate the pork in the masala and vinegar mixture.
Photograph: Dan Matthews for the Guardian.

Heat the oil in a wide, lidded pan over a medium-low flame, and fry the onions until soft and golden. Meanwhile, soak the tamarind pulp in 120ml of hot water for 15 minutes, then gently rub any remaining pulp from the seeds and strain off the liquid, discarding the solids.

Stir the garlic and ginger into the onions and cook, stirring, for another five minutes, then add the tomatoes, chillies and curry leaves, if using, and cook until the tomatoes start to break down.



2 Stir the garlic and ginger into the onions, then the ginger and curry leaves. Photograph: Dan Matthews for the Guardian

Add the pork and marinade to the pan and turn the heat up to medium high. Stir well, add the jaggery, salt and mustard seeds, followed by the tamarind liquid. Bring to a simmer, cover tightly, turn the heat right down and cook gently for an hour.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/feb/08/how-to-cook-the-perfect-vindaloo-recipe>

7/8

2/9/2018

How to cook the perfect vindaloo | Felicity Cloake | Life and style | The Guardian

Partially remove the lid and cook for another 30 minutes, until the meat is very tender and the sauce has thickened.



3 Simmer to a rich, thick sauce. Photograph: Dan Matthews for the Guardian.

. Vindaloo, vindaloo: why does this Goan curry have such an iconic place in British culture, and where did the classic curry house version come from if not Goa? Is it best with pork, prawns or indeed tofu or pheasant, and what do you serve with it?

Food stylist: Jack Sargeson

Since you're here ...

... we have a small favour to ask. More people are reading the Guardian than ever but advertising revenues across the media are falling fast. And unlike many news organisations, we haven't put up a paywall - we want to keep our journalism as open as we can. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. The Guardian's independent, investigative journalism takes a lot of time, money and hard work to produce. But we do it because we believe our perspective matters - because it might well be your perspective, too.

I appreciate there not being a paywall: it is more democratic for the media to be available for all and not a commodity to be purchased by a few. I'm happy to make a contribution so others with less means still have access to information. Thomasine F-R.

If everyone who reads our reporting, who likes it, helps fund it, our future would be much more secure. **For as little as £1, you can support the Guardian - and it only takes a minute. Thank you.**

Support the Guardian



Topics

Food & drink

How to cook the perfect ...

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/feb/08/how-to-cook-the-perfect-vindaloo-recipe>

8/8