

Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

WEEK 2

India and Chicken Curry Recipe

Welcome to Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This year the theme is 'Building Leadership: Embrace the Cultural Values and Inclusion.' For week two, I have provided a brief introduction to the Republic of India and one of my favorite family recipes!

India is the seventh-largest country by area, the largest democracy, and the second most populated country in the world with over 1.2 billion people. It is home to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization and historic trade routes which identified it as a commercial and cultural region for much of its long history. India is the place of origin of four world religions-Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism and has been shaped by Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam which arrived in the 1st millennium CE. India was annexed by and brought under the administration of the British East India Company from the early 18th century until the mid-19th century. It gained its independence in 1947 after a long struggle which was marked by the non-violent resistance led by Mahatma Gandhi.

Agriculture has played a significant role in India's history. India is second worldwide in farm output, and while the economic contribution of agriculture to India's GDP is declining, it is still the broadest economic sector and plays a role in the socio-economic patterns of the country. There are accounts of agriculture in India as far back as 9000 BP due to early cultivation of plants and domestication of crops and animals. Around 2500 years ago, Indian farmers began growing sugarcane and a variety of spices. Sugar became popular in 18th century Europe, and became a human necessity around 19th century all over the world. This drove the migration of many people from Africa and India to various areas of the Caribbean, South America, and Indian Ocean and Pacific island nations. Today, India has made progress towards food security due to reform in the country's agriculture policy and the knowledge that they cannot rely on foreign aid and inputs for food security. While India's population has tripled in size since its independence, food-grain production has more than quadrupled increasing the available food-grain per capita.

Indian fare includes a variety of regional cuisines native to India. These cuisines vary from each other in use of spices, herbs, meats, vegetables and fruits. Indian cuisine reflects a 5000 year history of various groups, cultures and religions interacting with the subcontinent, leading to the diverse set of flavors and food that can be found in India today. The main staples of Indian cuisine are pearl millet, rice, wheat flour and a variety of lentils.

The Recipe

Indian Curry Chicken in Light Sauce

3 tbsp. tomato sauce

3 tbsp. plain yogurt

4 cloves garlic, peeled and coarsely chopped

A piece of fresh ginger, about 1 inch cube, peeled and coarsely chopped

4 chicken legs

1 whole chicken breast

6 tbsp. vegetable oil

1 cinnamon stick, about 2 ½ inches long

2 bay leaves

5 whole cardamom pods

5 whole cloves

2 hot dried red peppers

1 tsp. ground turmeric

1 tsp. salt

1/8 tsp. freshly ground pepper

1 tbsp. lemon juice

1. In a small bowl, combine tomato sauce, yogurt, and 1 cup of water. Mix well and set aside.
2. Put chopped garlic and ginger into the container of an electric blender, along with 2 tbsp. of water. Blend until you have a smooth paste.
3. Cut chicken in to serving portions: divide legs into drumstick and thigh, and quarter the breast. Remove skin from pieces of chicken and pat dry.
4. Heat oil in heavy-bottomed 10-12 inch casserole type pot over medium high heat. Put in chicken pieces, a few at a time, and brown on all sides. When each batch turns a golden brown, remove with slotted spoon and do the next batch. When all chicken pieces have been done, put the cinnamon, bay leaves, cardamom, cloves, and red pepper into the same oil. Stir once. The spices will darken immediately. Now pour in the paste from the blender (keep face averted as you do this) and add the turmeric. Stir and fry for about a minute.
5. Next, put in the browned chicken pieces, the mixture of tomato sauce, yogurt, and water salt, pepper and lemon juice. Bring to a boil. Cover, lower heat, and simmer gently 20-25 minutes, turning chicken pieces a few times.
6. Uncover pot, raise flame to medium, and cook 5-7 minutes or until sauce is reduced to half, turning the chicken pieces over gently.
7. To serve: Put contents of pot into a hot bowl and serve with plain boiled rice or hot pooris. As a relish, Tamarind Chutney with Bananas or Cucumber and Tomato with Lemon Juice could be served.

References:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_in_India

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_food