



Joan's Cooking Corner

Fijian Prawns with Sweet Potatoes in Coconut Curry

This dish from David Vera, a native Fijian, is a good example of the strong Indian influence prevalent in Fijian cooking.

Ingredients:

2 large sweet potatoes, peeled, 1-inch cubes	2 whole cloves
2 tablespoons vegetable oil	2 hot chiles, seeded and finely diced
2 onions, medium diced	3 tbsp curry powder
2 garlic cloves, minced	3 cups unsweetened coconut milk
1 tsp minced fresh ginger	1 # medium prawns, shelled and de-veined
¼ tsp mustard seeds	Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
6 fenugreek seeds	2 tsp chopped cilantro leaves for garnish
1 cinnamon stick	2 limes, cut into wedges, for garnish

Directions:

1. Boil the sweet potatoes in water to cover until they are just tender, not soft. Drain.
2. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions, garlic and ginger and sauté for about 10 minutes, or until the onions are translucent. Stirring constantly, add the mustard, fenugreek seeds, cinnamon, cloves, chiles and curry powder. Be careful the mixture doesn't burn.
3. Add the coconut milk and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the sweet potatoes and simmer for 5 minutes.

Serve with steamed white rice and garnish with lime wedges.



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Jalapeno Macaroni

Jacqueline McMahan, for the San Francisco Chronicle, gives a Latin twist to the all-American macaroni and cheese.

Ingredients:

8 ounces elbow macaroni	1 cup chopped tomatoes (fresh or canned)
1 tbsp butter	2 canned jalapeno chiles, minced
2 garlic cloves, minced	1 ½ cups milk
1 tsp salt	2 eggs
1 tsp Tabasco	¼ cup crumbled queso fresco (a soft Mexican cheese)
2 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese	
1 tbsp olive oil	
½ cup finely chopped onion	

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter a deep, 1 ½- quart-baking dish.
2. Bring 2 quarts salted water to a boil in a large pot over high heat. Add the pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain. Transfer to a bowl and add the butter, garlic, salt and Tabasco; toss to combine. Stir in the grated cheddar cheese.
3. Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté for about 10 minutes, or until softened. Add the tomatoes and jalapenos. Transfer to a bowl and add the butter, garlic, salt and Tabasco; toss to combine. Stir in the grated cheddar cheese.
4. Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for about 10 minutes, or until softened. Add the tomatoes and jalapenos. Simmer for 5 minutes, then add to the pasta and stir to combine. Spoon into the prepared baking dish.
5. Combine the milk and eggs in a blender, process until smooth, then pour over the pasta.
6. Bake for 25 minutes.
7. Remove from the oven and let stand for 10 minutes to absorb excess liquid.
8. Sprinkle with queso fresco.

Serves 6 to 8 people



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Pomegranate and Persimmon Relish

Pomegranate molasses, found in Middle Eastern food stores, gives this jewel-toned condiment a haunting sweet/sour note. This relish, from Garibaldi's On College in Oakland, is perfect with roasted or grilled birds of many persuasions: turkey, chicken, pheasant, duck, quail and Cornish hens.

Ingredients:

8 Fuyu persimmons, stemmed, peeled, seeded (if necessary) and finely diced (about 4 cups)
2 cups pomegranate seeds (about 1 ½ pomegranates)
1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, de-ribbed and finely diced
1 ½ cups walnuts, toasted and finely chopped
5 tbsp fresh mint, chopped
1 tsp red pepper flakes, or to taste
Pinch of salt and freshly ground pepper
10 tbsp pomegranate molasses

Directions:

1. Combine the persimmons, pomegranate seeds, bell pepper and walnuts in a large bowl. Add the mint, pepper flakes, salt and pepper; toss lightly to mix.
2. Drizzle the pomegranate molasses over the top and toss again until the ingredients are well mixed.
3. Serve at room temperature.

Yield: About 7 cups