

Beef Vindaloo with Fragrant Rice Pilaf

This is a recipe adaption of an old favourite that used Patak's Vindaloo curry paste. Em's Food has come a long way since then and I decided to make the Vindaloo from scratch and I am so glad I did. As much as we all like to take short cuts, making a curry from scratch requires little more than throwing a few spices together and the results are far more rewarding. The flavours are more intense, there is way less salt and it is a much healthier and economic option. Please feel free to continue the old method but I urge you to try the new one, you won't be sorry and like me, I am sure there will be no going back.

I actually made this in my pressure cooker and it literally took 30 minutes for melt-in-your-mouth beef. I browned and sauteed the ingredients before adding the liquid components of the dish.

Prep time: 20 Minutes
Low to Medium Budget

Cooking time: 2 1/2 Hours

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Serves 4 (with leftovers for lunch)

2 tbs of olive oil

1kg of chuck or gravy beef, diced into bite sized chunks

1 large brown onion, halved and sliced vertically

2 cloves of garlic, finely diced

2cm piece of ginger, finely grated

1 green chilli, seeds removed and finely chopped

1 sprig of curry leaves

1 tsp of ground cumin

1 tsp of ground coriander

1 tsp of turmeric

1 tsp of ground chilli

1 tsp of garam masala

1 tsp of ground black pepper

1tsp of ground cinnamon

4 fresh tomatoes, diced

1 cup of water

1/4 cup of apple cider vinegar

Juice of 1/2 a lemon

1 eggplant, cut into 2cm chunks

1 tbs of tomato paste

100gm of baby spinach leaves

1 cup of chopped fresh coriander

1 tsp of sugar

Sea salt and Pepper

Fresh, ripe tomato chunks for garnish (I use baby truss as they are super sweet)

1/4 cup of sliced almonds, toasted

4 tbs of natural yoghurt

For the Pilaf:

2 tbs of olive oil

20gm of butter

1 large brown onion, very finely diced

4 cloves

6 cardamom pods, bruised with the back of your knife

1 cinnamon stick

1 tsp of cumin seeds

2 cups of basmati rice

3 cups of chicken stock (I prefer salt reduced)

3 tbs of chopped fresh coriander

Sea salt and pepper

4 x Naan or Poppadoms to serve

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Place the eggplant chunks on a lined baking tray and drizzle with a little olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 20 minutes until golden and set aside for later.

Place the spices, ginger, lemon juice and a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in a mixing bowl and stir to combine. Add the beef and use your hands to

coat the beef in the spice mixture. Cover and allow to marinate for at least 1 hour.

Heat a frypan and add a tablespoon of oil. Fry the onion until it is just starting to soften and then add the beef with the spice mixture, searing for a few minutes until fragrant and changing to a nice golden colour. Add the chilli, garlic, tomatoes and curry leaves and continue to fry until the tomatoes break down before adding 1 cup of water, apple cider vinegar and seasoning with salt and sugar. If cooking on the stove top, cover the mixture with a piece of baking paper and a lid and simmer for 1 1/2-2 hours, stirring occasionally until the beef is tender. Once tender, remove the lid and stir in one tablespoon of tomato paste before adding the eggplant and spinach to the pan. Allow to simmer until the spinach has wilted and the eggplant is warmed through. Stir through fresh coriander just before serving.

Heat the oil and butter for the rice in a heavy based pan. Lightly fry the onion, cloves, cardamom pods, cinnamon stick and cumin seeds until the onion is soft and translucent. Stir in the rice and cook for 1-2 minutes making sure all the rice is nicely coated with the oily mixture. Add the stock, stir and bring to the boil. Once boiling, reduce to a low simmer and cover with a tight fitting lid. Allow to simmer for approximately 12 minutes, turn the heat off and allow to stand for 10 minutes before lifting the lid and fluffing with a fork. Stir through the chopped coriander.

To serve, lightly oil a cup sized ramekin and spoon in the rice mixture.

Press on top to make sure it is packed firmly and invert on to a serving plate. Repeat with the remaining 3 plates. Spoon the Vindaloo around and over the rice. Top with yoghurt, toasted almonds and a sprig of coriander.