

Recipes for the Waterstones Booklet

1. Bulgur Wheat Brunch (serves 2)

This is an easy single-dish meal that goes well with yoghurt.

1 cup bulgur wheat

1.5 cups water

2 medium sized onions, chopped

½ teaspoon turmeric

2/3 teaspoon chilli powder

½ teaspoon garam masala

Salt to taste

1 cup peas

2 tablespoons sunflower oil

1. Wash the bulgur wheat, twice, in a pan and drain.
2. Add the water to the pan and set on a medium flame.
3. When the water is almost completely soaked and holes start appearing in the wheat, lower the heat to a minimum and cover the pan.
4. Five minutes later, switch off the flame and leave to stand for at least five more minutes without uncovering the pan.

The next three steps can be done in parallel, while the bulgur wheat is being cooked.

5. Heat the oil in a pan and add the onions.
6. Sweat the onions until they are slightly brown and add all the spices and seasoning (turmeric, chilli powder, garam masala and salt).
7. Stir for a few seconds and add the peas. Continue stirring for a couple of more minutes.
8. Add the cooked bulgur wheat.
9. Mix everything together and cook for two more minutes.
10. Serve immediately with plain set yoghurt.

2. Brinjal Bharta (serves 2-3)

'I made mincemeat out of him' is what someone might say in English about an opponent. In India, the equivalent expression is 'I made a bharta out of him.' This flavourful side dish evokes memories of open fires and wood smoke and can even be eaten with naan or bread for a quick meal.

1 large purple brinjal

3 tablespoons sunflower oil

1 medium sized onion, chopped fine

2 green chillies, chopped fine

½ inch piece of ginger, grated finely

2 medium sized tomatoes, diced into small pieces

1. Wash the brinjal and pat dry. Roast the brinjal on a medium, open flame. Turn occasionally, so that all sides are evenly roasted.
2. In about fifteen minutes, the brinjal will become soft and floppy. When the skin starts peeling easily, the brinjal is roasted. Take it off the flame and leave for a few minutes.
3. Once it is cool, peel off the skin (put it back on the open flame if there are places where the skin doesn't come off easily). Remove the stalk and mash the flesh of the brinjal with a fork in a bowl.
4. Heat the oil in a wok over a medium heat. Add the onions, ginger and green chillies and stir-fry.
5. Once the onions are light brown, reduce the heat, add the tomatoes and continue frying.
6. When the oil starts separating from the onions and tomatoes, season with salt to taste and add the mashed up brinjal.
7. Mix thoroughly and cook on a medium heat for five more minutes.
8. Garnish with chopped coriander and serve hot.

I usually roast the brinjal and cook the onions simultaneously to reduce the total time, but it takes a bit of experience to have them both ready at the right instant for mixing.

3. Jeera Fried Rice (serves 4)

Cooking rice is one of those tasks that seem incredibly simple if you know how, but can be frustratingly difficult to get right by trial and error. The cumin seeds add a little touch of interest to a basic dish.

1 tablespoon sunflower oil (or ghee)

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

2 cups rice

3 cups water

½ teaspoon salt

1. Heat the oil in a large pan on a medium flame. Once the oil is hot, add the cumin seeds.
2. After half a minute, add the rice to the pan. Stir thoroughly until the oil coats all the rice and the cumin seeds are evenly distributed through the rice.
3. Add the water and run a spoon through to make sure that the rice is not sticking to the bottom. Add the salt to the dish.
4. When the water starts bubbling, reduce the flame.
5. Once the water sinks below the level of the rice and bubbles start popping in the rice, cover the pan and reduce the flame to a minimum.
6. After five minutes exactly, switch off the flame and leave the pan covered for a further five minutes.
7. The rice is ready to be served.

4. Kheema Cabbage (serves 4)

Brahmins, who are vegetarians, add coconut to make cabbage interesting. (See the next dish as an example) Carnivores, however, need more than coconut to stop complaining about cabbage.

1 inch piece of ginger

3 garlic cloves

500 g lamb mince

1 teaspoon turmeric

½ teaspoon red chilli powder

3 tablespoons oil

1 medium sized onion, chopped

1 green chilli, slit lengthwise

½ teaspoon garam masala powder

½ teaspoon salt

½ medium sized cabbage, sliced into strips

1. Mash the ginger and garlic together into a paste, either in a small blender or by hand.
2. Wash the mince thoroughly, to reduce the smell of the meat while cooking.
3. Add the ginger-garlic paste, chilli powder and half the turmeric to the mince and fry on a medium flame for about fifteen minutes until the mince is cooked and dry.
4. Heat the oil in a pan and stir-fry the onion and green chilli until the onion pieces turn light brown.
5. Add the rest of the turmeric, garam masala and salt to the onions and fry for a couple of minutes longer.
6. Add the cooked mince and stir well.
7. Add the cabbage, mix well and cover. Reduce the flame.
8. Stir occasionally until the cabbage is cooked. This will take about 10-15 minutes.

5. Beans Fry with Coconut (serves 4)

Tall coconut trees swaying in the wind like graceful dancers are a common sight all over south India.

1 tablespoon sunflower oil

¼ teaspoon mustard seeds

¼ teaspoon split mung beans

8 curry leaves

1 dried red chilli, split in half

250g greens, cut into inch long pieces

Salt to taste

2 tablespoons of fresh grated coconut (if fresh coconut is not available, 1 tablespoon dessicated coconut)

1. Heat the oil in a pan and add the mustard seeds. When they start splattering, add the mung beans, curry leaves and the red chilli. Stir-fry for half a minute.
2. Add the beans and salt.
3. Cover and cook on a low flame, stirring occasionally.
4. If using dessicated coconut, mix it into the beans while they are still half cooked. Otherwise, wait until the beans are fully cooked and then add the fresh coconut, mix well and stir-fry for a couple of minutes.

6. Cucumber Raitha (serves 4)

Yoghurt is supposed to cool the body and settle the stomach after a spicy curry. There are many different kinds of raithas. This recipe combines yoghurt with another cooling ingredient – cucumber.

1 cup plain bio yoghurt

¼ cup water

½ cucumber

Salt to taste

Pinch of roasted cumin powder

Pinch of red chilli powder

1. Beat the yoghurt and water in bowl.
2. Grate the cucumber with the skin into the yoghurt.
3. Mix and refrigerate, so it is nice and chilled.
4. Just before serving, mix salt to taste and sprinkle the roasted cumin powder and chilli powder on top.

The salt should not be added until just before serving, otherwise the cucumber will sweat.

In posh restaurants, people happily pay 30% more because they make clever designs with the brown cumin and the red chilli on the white yoghurt.

7. Chicken Korma (serves 4)

There are probably as many ways of making this dish as there are inventive cooks and the procedures range from simple to complicated. This recipe leans towards the simpler end of the spectrum.

1 inch piece of ginger

3 garlic cloves

¼ cup yoghurt

3 green chillies, slit

Salt to taste

8 Chicken thighs (or a whole chicken cut into eight pieces)

3 tablespoons sunflower oil

1.5 inches piece of cinnamon

3 green cardamom pods

5 cloves

4 medium sized onions, sliced

3 fresh tomatoes, sliced

½ teaspoon turmeric

1.5 heaped teaspoons of ground coriander seeds

A small handful of shredded green coriander leaves

Marinade

1. Mash the ginger and garlic together into a paste, either in a small blender or by hand.
2. Mix the yoghurt, salt, green chillies and the ginger-garlic paste into a large bowl.
3. Wash and score the chicken pieces with a knife and add them to the bowl.
4. Make sure that the chicken pieces are thoroughly coated with the yoghurt mix, including inside the gashes.
5. Cover the bowl and leave aside for at least an hour, or preferably longer (in the fridge)

Cooking

1. Heat the oil on a medium flame in a large pan. When the oil is heated (but not smoking hot), add the cinnamon, cardamom and cloves (in that order).
2. Stir the spices once; add the onions and sprinkle a little bit of salt.
3. Stir-fry until the onions are soft and golden brown.
4. Add the chicken (with its yoghurt paste), tomatoes, turmeric and coriander powder.
5. Stir well and leave to cook (stirring occasionally) until the oil separates and floats to the top.
6. Make sure the chicken is cooked through; switch off the flame, add the green coriander and mix in.

Kormas taste even better when warmed up the next day as the flavours continue developing overnight.

8. Carrot Halwa (serves 4)

This is a very popular north Indian dessert that I learnt from a neighbour who had lived in Delhi for some years.

50g ghee (clarified butter)

Handful of cashew nuts

1 tablespoon of raisins

500g Carrots, coarsely grated

200ml sweetened condensed milk

125ml full fat milk

3 heaped tablespoons sugar

3 pods green cardamom, powdered

1. Heat the ghee on a medium flame in a non-stick pan. Fry the cashew nuts until golden brown and take them out. Fry the raisins until they are puffed up and take them out.
2. Fry the carrots in the same ghee, stirring frequently, for about six to eight minutes until the carrots are dry.
3. Add the condensed milk, full fat milk and sugar to the carrots.
4. Keep the milk at a simmer for the next ten minutes, stirring frequently.
5. Add the cardamom powder. By now the mixture will be thickening, continue stirring for about five more minutes until the ghee separates.
6. Add the cashew nuts and raisins and mix in. Serve warm.

The carrots should retain their texture at the end. The halwa should not be mushy or milky.