

How to cook with Masalas ?

Written by W.J.Pais

You can cook with any masala. In Mangalorean and Goan cooking, there is Bafat Masala, which has a yellowish tinge, Indad Masala, which has a reddish-brown tinge. When ingredients of garam masala are added, it gives a warm flavor and is suited for meat. Vegetables can be cooked in plain oil and sliced masala of green chillies, and onions, which is called "Tel Piao";.

The quantity of the base ingredient like fish or meat, or vegetable, should have a proportionate amount of masala, to give a good balance.

You can bottle masala powders and pastes in a jar and store in the refrigerator. Use it when you want to cook, fish, prawns, meats or vegetables.

In general, for fish a sliced onion is fried, and curry leaves are added optionally. Onions ground with masala or coconut milk, thick and thin juice, give ballast and weight to the curries. Then fry one or two tablespoons of masala. You may also like to add some minced masala of a few green chillies, a piece of ginger, a few garlic flakes, and keep frying.

You can cook the stuff in warm water, or thin coconut milk, add thick juice, at the end, when you have to add the fish, or meat; this you can do, if you are making a bafat recipe. For indad, you should boil your meat in cinnamon and cloves, and then fry the meat and add the fried meat to the indad masala.

To give sour taste, you may add vinegar for fish and meats, and tamarind for vegetables.

Always add some salt to taste.

The basic ingredients of taste are: saltiness, sourness, bitterness, sweetness and pungency. The art of balancing these, is what makes a good cook, and for which you should use your imagination, sense of smell and taste.

Garam Masala which is made of cinnamon, cloves, cardamoms etc are generally used for meats.

Vegetables are cooked in South Indian recipes, in a simple masala with seasoning of curry leaves, and jeera, mustard or urid dhal.

Always change your quantities to suit your family's taste. Some like pungent, and others like

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less pungency. By trial and error, you will gradually get a right calibration, and become a wonderful cook, as you grow older. That is why people praise the grand mothers' cooking !

How to choose fresh fish and meat, you may find in the kitchen tips. You could also ask from your elders about their methods.