

RUSSAYOG STUDIO NORTH INDIAN COOKING LESSONS

RussaYog practice nourishes the mind and body. In addition to the physical practice of yoga, preparing foods that keep our bodies light and supple keep us in synch with the yoga lifestyle: foods that have minimal impact on Earth's ecosystem and are easy to prepare; foods that provide our bodies needed nutrients with no need of additional pharmaceuticals or drugs.

Increased openness to new tastes, concern about the environmental impact of meat-based eating and newly emerging research on health benefits of spices are driving interest in Indian cooking.

Indian cooking, with its use of spices, onions, ginger and garlic, can provide a light holistic meal. This cooking style is particularly suitable for those who want to experience a vegetarian lifestyle without sacrificing the nutrition needs of a healthy body. In the cooking lesson you will learn how to combine spices, onions, ginger, garlic, vegetables, lentils and yoghurt to create a delicious and complete meal. The focus will be on taste and nutrition.

Many people who take on a vegetarian lifestyle don't adequately learn about the way foods have to be prepared to make a complete and delicious meal. As a result they not only miss out on taste of the meal, but also don't get the right nutrition. Or they may just eat pasta and cheeses creating a heavy meal.

Each of us should decide what the best combination of foods is for our bodies and mind. The techniques you will learn can also be combined with non-vegetarian dishes.

The basis of Indian cooking is *tarhka*, which provides not only the taste to the food, but also key nutrients to the meal. *Tarhka* involves a subtle but intuitive use of spices (both ground and whole), onions, garlic and ginger. The addition of vegetables, lentils, etc., then adds the proteins, carbohydrates, needed fat, etc.

Just like the RussaYog workout we do in the studio, the cooking has to be flowing, empirical and intuitive. Initially you need the recipes that we give you but soon, with practice, you will feel the food as you cook it and prepare it with awareness and joy. The empirical nature of the cooking will allow you to make subtle modifications to suit your own body and mind.

A few key points to note as you learn the cooking style are the following:

- Avoid this common mistake: "If a little is good, more must be better." *That is not the case* with spices, onions, garlic and ginger. *Tarhka* should be subtle, not overwhelming.
- Stay present while the meal being cooked: Be aware of it. Even a covered dish is constantly talking to you. Since there is no baking-inside-an-oven-for-45-minutes type of cooking you can always look at the dish as it is coming along. Subtle adjustments are part of the meal preparation. This allows you to continually monitor the meal, adjust the condiments, water, etc.
- Certain vegetable combinations and lentil combinations go well together because of the way they cook and the way they enhance each other. Mixing something tender with something hard doesn't work. Here are some good vegetable combinations:

- Carrots and peas
- Potatoes and green beans
- Zucchini by itself
- Cauliflower and peas
- Eggplant & potatoes

- When eating the meal use the Yogic principle used during a RussaYog class. Eat sloooowly, feeling every morsel, enjoying the process. Don't gobble!

Once you learn the basic cooking style you can start experimenting and developing dishes that you enjoy. Cooking using vegetables and yoghurt you get from your neighborhood fresh markets is a great way to connect with your local fresh food growers and support local businesses. It is also a great way to spend a few hours with friends and family.

Indian cooking, like many other styles, should be a joyful affair. A meal

can be cooked in about 25 minutes or may take an hour. If done with friends or family it becomes effortless, the cooking time becoming a playful affair.

SPICES, ONIONS, GARLIC, GINGER...
FOUNDATION OF INDIAN COOKING

The heart of Indian cooking is the special use of spices, onions, garlic and ginger. These not only enhance the taste of the food, but now empirical research is beginning to verify the health benefits that these ingredients provide.

If you Google 'benefits of spices' (cumin, coriander, cinnamon, black pepper, turmeric, cardamom), onions, garlic, ginger and holy basil you will see numerous scientific studies showing a variety of benefits. The key benefits arise from the following properties:

- Anti-bacterial and anti-microbial properties: The spices preserve and keep the food healthy for our bodies without chemical preservatives.
- Anti-oxidant properties: Spices have many times greater anti-oxidant properties than even the most colorful vegetables and fruits.
- Anti-inflammation: By reducing inflammation coming from any source the spices help in blood flow, reduce or eliminate joint aches.
- Improved blood flow and purification of blood is another benefit of onions, ginger and garlic
- Ginger in particular has benefits for nausea, digestive problems, circulation and arthritis. Elimination or suppression of nausea caused during pregnancy or during traveling is one of the benefits of ginger. Stomach cramps can be eased and circulation can also be improved.
- Garlic promotes the well-being of the heart and immune systems with antioxidant properties and helps maintain healthy blood circulation. The ability to enhance the body's immune cell activity is an important property of garlic. It also cuts down on the gassy-feeling one can get from eating beans.
- As with garlic, onions also improve blood flow. They also suppress tumors and are highly anti-oxidant.
- Tulsi (holy basil) protects from the effects of stress by supporting the naturally occurring adaptive responses of the mind & body to psychological and physical challenges from the environment.

While the benefits given above are physical the spices also have a positive impact on our brains. Mental alertness and improved memory benefits of cinnamon and turmeric are now being confirmed by research. Turmeric is emerging as a key preserver of brain cells and its role in suppressing Alzheimer's disease is becoming clear. In comparative studies the incidence of Alzheimer's disease is only 25% in India compared to USA. As physical fitness regimens combined with drugs and chemicals improve our physical bodies and keep us walking and healthy into our 80's and 90's, it is clear that brain diseases will become the dominant form of illnesses in future. It is essential to learn about lifestyles that can minimize these unfortunate illnesses that rob humans of all humanity. Healthy foods, learning new things and active social lives are all tools in our arsenals.



One may ask, however, the following question: If Indian cooking is so healthy why is the overall health in India so poor? Indeed by most standards Indian health is poor in every strata of society. The wealthy suffer from diabetes and heart disease. Vigorous physical exercise is practically unknown to this group. The poor who work all day in blazing sun suffer from malnutrition. However, a combination of healthy Indian cooking style and vigorous physical exercise can lead to a healthful state.

In the cooking style we at RussaYog Studio advocate, the usual Indian cooking approach is modified by 1) Using spices sparsely; Often Indian cooking uses too much spices overwhelming the food and placing undue stress on digestion. Too much of everything can be bad; 2) Using healthy oils like olive oil instead of ghee (clarified butter) or trans fats to prepare the base.

CHAI

BLACK SPICED TEA WITH MILK LIGHTLY SWEETENED

Spice Mixture for 5 cups of chai

5 whole cloves

1 cinnamon stick

3 green cardamom pods, *crushed to open the pods*

1 Tablespoon peeled shredded fresh ginger root

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon turmeric

2 teaspoons black loose tea

$\frac{1}{4}$ can evaporated skim milk (or milk substitute)

Sugar or honey or agave nectar to taste

Step 1 Boil 5 cups of water with all the spices

Once it comes to a boil, turn the heat off

Step 2 Toss in the black tea & stir

Spoon in the sweetener

Brew for a minute or two (depending upon the strength of the tea leaves)

Step 3 Add the milk

Chai should look golden brown

Strain out the spices and tea leaves, pouring the chai into a teapot

You may add more sweetener to taste.

Drink hot!

MAKING ATTA

(WHOLE WHEAT DOUGH FOR PARANTHA & OTHER UNLEAVENED BREADS)

ATTA:

Use “chapatti flour” special flour made of durum wheat and wheat bran. Some common brands are ‘Golden Temple’ and ‘Raji’s.’ Available at Indian/Asian grocery stores. It’s a finely ground flour, light-colored. A cup of the flour will make about 3 chapattis or paranthas. Put the flour in a shallow pan. slowly add water to the flour, and hand knead the dough until it is the consistency of toothpaste. It should be kneaded until it does not stick to your hand. Let it rest for 20 minutes or so after kneading, covered with a damp paper towel.

CHAPATTI

(WHOLE WHEAT UNLEAVENED BREAD)

Chapattis are made individually. You will need a cutting board, or a clean counter on which to roll them, and a rolling pin. Indian rolling pins are shorter than Western ones, but either would work. Also place a bowl of a few Tablespoons of dry flour next to the cutting board. Heat a heavy pan (preferably iron) on med-high heat.

Take a golf-ball size chunk of atta (dough) in your hand. Dip it into the dry flour, just to lightly cover it. Flatten the dough and roll it into a ball in your palms. Once it is in a ball, flatten it in your palm, dip it into the flour again, then place it on the cutting board. Begin to roll the dough with the rolling pin. It takes time to become adept at rolling. Roll quickly, creating an even thickness of the chapatti. Turn the dough over to roll it out evenly until it is about 5-6 inches wide.

Place the chapatti on the pan.

After 45 seconds, turn the chapatti over allowing the other side to cook. As it cooks, use a spatula or folded cloth (being careful not to touch it to the flame) to press the edges of the chapatti, allowing the edges to be cooked. The chapatti is finished when the outer surface is browned, but soft. Flip it as often as needed, each time 30-40 seconds, until cooked.

Slide it off the pan onto a plate. Cover with a cloth until ready to eat. It’s best when it’s warm enough to hold comfortably with the fingers. To eat a chapatti, break off a bite-sized piece. You may use it as a little ‘container’ and spoon in some dal, or yoghurt for a delicious burst of flavor!

PREPARATIONS FOR TARHKA

BASE OF COOKING DAL'S AND SUBZEE'S (LENTILS AND VEGETABLES)

ONIONS:

Take off the skin of the onions.

Chop the onions into small pieces for dal and sabzee. For the pulao, slice the onion lengthwise in small strips. Use about 1/2 Tablespoon of the chopped onion per person.

GARLIC:

If the garlic has its skin, remove the skin first.

Chop the garlic fine. Use about 1/8 Tablespoon per person.

GINGER:

Scrape the skin of the ginger off.

For dal and subzee make thin strips of the ginger. About 1/4 Tablespoon per person.

For Chai, use a fine grater to shred the ginger. Use 1 Tablespoon for 4 cups of chai.

SERRANO CHILI:

Cut off the end of the chili after washing it.

You may use gloves for cutting.

Slice the chili lengthwise. You may take out the seeds if you don't want to include the seeds.

Cut the chili into 8 lengths.

Chop the pieces into bits.

Another option is to keep the chili whole through the cooking process, and take it out at the end if you don't want to eat it.

Use 1 chili for a dish which serves 6 people.

OTHER PREPS

GREENS:

wash and chop the greens. You may use any combination of spinach and chard, or spinach and mustard greens.

DAL:

Sort the dal, taking out any foreign pieces, measure and wash the dal (rinse with water). Drain the water. 1-1/2 cups make enough for 6 people. For chickpeas and kidney beans, soak overnight before cooking. You may also use a pressure cooker for the chickpeas or kidney beans to cut down on cooking time.

TARHKA

BASE OF COOKING DAL'S AND SUBZEE'S (LENTILS AND VEGETABLES)

Whole spices: cumin & celery seed (just cumin is OK if you don't have celery seed. You may also use whole mustard, yellow or black)

Ground spices: turmeric, black pepper, garam masala (mixture of spices), and salt.

Ingredients needed: (for 6 people)

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon crushed cumin seed

1 teaspoon crushed celery seed

1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric

1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

1/2 teaspoon ground garam masala

1/2 teaspoon ground salt

1/2 red onion (chopped)

3 garlic cloves (chopped)

1 inch ginger root (finely chopped)

1 medium tomato (chopped)

(optional) finely chopped Serrano chili (you may take out the seeds before chopping)

Using a mortar & pestle or a rolling pin, crush the whole spices.

Heat oil in a deep pot or wok or karahi on med/high heat

(You may add a teaspoon of butter for flavor, and to prevent the olive oil from smoking at the high heat)

Add in crushed cumin and celery seeds (Note: stand away from the opening of the pot, for the seeds may jump, especially the mustard seeds, if you are using them, and the oil may splatter)

Stir 30 seconds

Add chopped onion

Stir for a minute or two: onions should be starting to glisten

Add ground spices

Add chopped garlic and ginger

(optional: add finely chopped Serrano chili)

Stir one minute

Add tomato base (chopped tomatoes or tomato paste)

Let cook for 1-3 minutes before adding to the vegetables, or the lentils (whichever dish you are making)

DAL MAKHANI (SAVORY LENTILS)

• prep time: 15 minutes • Cook time: 20 minutes • Serves 4

• Soak time: 15 minutes

3/4 cup split channa dal (split gram lentils)

1/2 cup urid dal (split black lentil, also called matpe bean, a specialty of langar: community kitchen)

Salt to taste

3 Tbsp butter or ghee or olive oil

1 tsp cumin seeds (jeera)

1 serrano chili, slit or chopped

1/2 cup diced onion

1 tsp finely chopped ginger

1 tsp finely chopped garlic

1 tsp garam masala (mixture of spices)

1/4 tsp turmeric powder (haldi)

1/2 cup tomato puree or paste or chopped tomatoes

2 Tbsp chopped cilantro (dhania) and 1 Tbsp butter for the garnish

1. Clean, wash and soak the lentils for 15 minutes.
2. Drain water, add 2 cups of water and salt. Pressure cook for 5 minutes until the dal is not hard (and not too soft). You may alternately transfer the lentils into a crock pot and cook at low heat for several hours, or cook on the stove with a pot with a covered lid. It will take 3-4 times longer than a pressure cooker.
3. Allow the steam to escape before opening the pressure cooker lid.
4. Keep the dal aside.
5. Make Tarka: heat the butter, add cumin seeds.
6. When the cumin seeds crackle, add the serrano chili, onions and ginger, garlic and sauté till the onions turn golden brown in color.
7. Add the garam masala, turmeric powder and tomato paste and cook over a medium flame for 3-5 minutes.
8. Add the lentils and simmer for 10 minutes. (don't overcook)

Serve hot garnished with coriander and butter (optional).

RAITA

YOGHURT DISH

Yoghurt dishes are used as a cooling taste to counterbalance the hot dishes. It's also rich in protein and easy to digest.

2 cups of plain yoghurt (either whole or low fat)

½ peeled, shredded cucumber

pinch of ground black or white pepper

Stir all ingredients together

PREPARE TAMARIND SAUCE (or purchase prepared paste at store)

1 Tablespoon of tamarind paste

mix in 1 teaspoon of water- more if needed

mix in 1 teaspoon of sugar (or honey)

Consistency should be runny, so add more water if needed.

Should taste sour/sweet. Add sweetener to taste.

Drizzle on top of the yoghurt mixture

RICE PULLAO

BASMATI RICE WITH CHUNKS OF POTATO, ONIONS & WHOLE SPICES

Rinse 1 cup of Basmati Rice

Let it soak in water for 20 minutes, then drain the water. If you don't have time for soaking, increase the cooking time.

Heat 1 Tablespoon of olive oil on med/high in a pot

Put in cinnamon stick, 4 whole cloves, 4-5 whole black peppercorns, and if you have whole black cardamom, put it 2-4 pods.

Add 1 cup rice & 1 chopped, peeled potato

Add ½ teaspoon salt

Add 1½ cups water

Add a few strands of saffron or safflower if you have it.

Bring to boil

Turn heat to medium/low

Cook until water has boiled off and the rice is just soft (could be 10-15 minutes)

Mix in 1 teaspoon of butter

Serve hot with meal: take care not to bite into the whole peppercorns, cloves or cinnamon.

BAINGAN BHARTA

SPICED EGGPLANT

• prep time: 5 minutes • Cook time: 30 minutes • Serves 4

1 large eggplant (brinjal, baingan)

optional: 1/2 cup of peas (frozen or fresh)

1/2 tsp olive oil for greasing

1 Tbsp ghee or butter

1 tsp cumin seeds (jeera)

1/2 cup sliced onions

1-1/2 tsp grated ginger

1 tsp finely chopped green chillies (or sub. black pepper)

1/2 cup finely chopped tomatoes

1/2 tsp turmeric powder (haldi)

1 Tbsp coriander (dhania) powder

1/2 tsp garam masala (spice mix)

salt to taste

2 Tbsp chopped cilantro for garnish

1. Grease the eggplant with oil and roast it or broil it until it's soft/cooked.

2. Cool and peel the skin. Mash & set aside.

3. Heat the ghee in a pan and add the cumin seeds.

4. When they crackle add onions and saute til golden brown.

5. Add ginger, garlic and chillies: saute a few more seconds.

6. Add tomatoes, turmeric, coriander & cook for another 5 min.

7. Add the mashed eggplant, garam masala, and salt. You may also add frozen peas (or fresh if you find them). Mix well. Cook for 3-4 minutes.

Serve hot garnished with cilantro.

PRASHAD

“BLESSING” (SWEET ROASTED WHOLE WHEAT SAVORY DISH)

½ cup of Atta (Whole wheat Durum flour)
½ cup sugar
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1- ½ cups of water

Boil water and add sugar, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Set aside.

In a wok or karhai (similar to a wok shape), or if you don't have either, then a heavy-bottom pot will do, heat the pot and add the dry wheat. Use a long-handled spoon to continually move the wheat as it roasts in the pot. It will turn a golden brown as it is roasted. This will take about 3-5 minutes.

Add the oil and stir some more. The mixture will be bubbling. Continue mixing for 2-3 minutes.

Next, use an oven mitt to protect your hand, step back a bit, and pour in the sugar water mixture. Splattering will happen! Immediately stir, using the long-handled spoon. You'll need to use one hand (covered with a pot holder or oven mitt) to hold the pot steady, and the other to stir, scraping the mixture from the bottom of the pan to avoid sticking.

This will take some arm strength! Keep stirring until the mixture begins to glisten, and the edges start folding inward. You will see the oil emerge as the mixture is cooked. The mixture should be a solid mass when fully cooked, and some oil will be visible on the edges of the mass.

Quickly transfer the prashad to a serving bowl/dish.

When cooled enough to hold in your hand, serve a small bit to your guest.

Traditionally, you serve a small portion of prashad in your clean hand (traditionally in the right hand) to your guest who accepts the prashad in both of his/her hands, cupped together (showing respect). Guest may transfer the prashad to one hand (usually the left), and pick it up to eat it with the other (usually the right).

Local stores to purchase Indian groceries:

Pennywise Market
1121 E Montecito St
Santa Barbara, CA 93103
(805) 962-6001
1 block from Milpas near Scholaris grocery store

Indo-China Market
6831 Hollister Avenue
Goleta, CA 93117
(805) 968-3353
in the shopping plaza near KMart and Subway

Vices and spices
3558 State St
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
(805) 687-7196
bulk spices available

Asian Pantry
2483 E Main St,
Ventura, CA, USA, 93003
(805) 641-1794

Ann Arbor Groceries
Bombay Grocers
3022 Packard St,
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108-1935 USA
Phone : 734-971-7707

Foods of India
1168 Broadway, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105-1808 USA
Phone : 734-332-0500