

Egg curry

A TASTE OF SRI LANKA

IN HER NEW BOOK, *WELIGAMA: RECIPES FROM SRI LANKA*, EMILY DOBBS BRINGS THE VIBRANCY AND WARMTH OF COCONUT, CHILLI AND CURRY SPICES TO YOUR AUTUMN TABLE

Photography ISSY CROKER



EGG CURRY

Everybody will devour this mild and comforting curry. Frying the boiled eggs gives them a tofu-like exterior.

SERVES 4 (OR 4-6 AS A SIDE)

- 8 medium eggs
- 3 tsp ground turmeric
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp black mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 handful of fresh curry leaves
- 1 onion
- 15g garlic
- 2 small green chillies
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 1 tsp roasted curry powder (see note)
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 4 tinned anchovies
- 200ml coconut milk
- 1 whole nutmeg, for grating

1 Boil the eggs in a pan of water for 5 minutes, then remove with a slotted spoon; set aside. Once cool enough to handle, peel the eggs, pat dry, prick with a fork and roll in 2 teaspoons of turmeric.

2 Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the eggs in batches for a couple of minutes each, turning with a spoon until the outside has formed a crispy exterior and they are lightly golden all over. Lift out with a slotted spoon and set aside.

3 In a small pan, heat the oil until just smoking then add the mustard seeds swiftly followed by the cumin seeds and curry leaves. Peel the onion and garlic and finely chop along with the chillies, then add to the pan, followed by the salt. Fry for a couple of minutes.

4 Stir in the chilli powder, remaining turmeric, curry powder and cinnamon; chop and add the anchovies. Pour in the coconut milk with 100ml of water and simmer for 5 minutes, until the sauce has reduced and the flavours have combined. Season to taste.

5 Slice the eggs in half (or keep whole if you prefer), season each one with a little salt and black pepper, then add to the sauce. Simmer all together for a couple of minutes and finish with a few gratings of nutmeg before removing from the pan. Serve with string hoppers or rice.

Note Try to always make your own curry powder rather than buying it – it's like comparing instant coffee to freshly ground roasted beans. See the recipe on p66. Otherwise, use the very best quality you can find.

PER SERVING 358 cals, 29.7g fat (10.7g sat fats), 19.4g protein, 6.6g carbs, 4.2g sugars, 2.5g salt, 1.9g fibre



Gotu kola

ROASTED CURRY POWDER

Sri Lankans tend to use 'raw' curry powder for vegetable dishes and 'roasted' for meat and fish. To make things easier, I make a big supply of this and use it for all my curries.

MAKES 1 X 500ML JAR **DF GF V VG**

- 3 tbsp coriander seeds
- 2 tbsp cumin seeds
- 2 tbsp fennel seeds
- 1 tbsp black mustard seeds
- 2 tsp black peppercorns
- 2 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp whole cloves
- 2 tsp cardamom pods
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tbsp uncooked rice (optional)
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp chilli powder

1 In a large frying pan, gently dry-roast the whole spices and rice (if using) in batches over a medium heat for 2–3 minutes, until they start to colour. Before the pan starts to smoke, tip onto a plate or into a bowl, or they will carry on cooking. Don't let them burn!

2 Let the spices cool, then pound with a pestle and mortar, or use a grinder. Once it's a fine powder, stir in the turmeric and chilli. This will last for up to 3 months in an airtight glass jar.

PER SERVING 5 cals, 2.3g fat (0.2g sat fats), 2.3g protein, 1.3g carbs, 0.1g sugars, 0.1g salt, 3.3g fibre

GOTU KOLA

This salad is a sort of Sri Lankan tabbouleh, but the coconut replaces the bulgur wheat (which makes it gluten-free). You can adjust the flavours however you like with the optional ingredients. Gotu kola is a beautiful herb similar to pennywort. Highly nutritious and delicious, it is hard to find a substitute, but I have used a mix of parsley and mint which is just as good, if not better – this is a vibrant, coconutty and fresh.

SERVES 2 AS A SIDE DISH **DF GF**

- A bunch of flat-leaf parsley
- ½ bunch of mint
- 50g freshly grated coconut
- 1 lime
- ½ small red onion
- 1 handful of cherry tomatoes
- 2 anchovies

OPTIONAL

- 1 green chilli, deseeded and thinly sliced
- 1 spring onion, finely chopped
- 1 celery stick, thinly sliced
- 1 handful of pomegranate seeds

1 Finely chop the parsley and mint leaves and place in a bowl. In a separate bowl, add the coconut and season with lime juice, salt and black pepper. Stir well, then add to the herbs. Peel and thinly slice the onion, chop the tomatoes, and add to the bowl. Chop and stir in the anchovies (these are a must, if you aren't vegetarian).

2 Add in any of the optional ingredients you like. If you are serving with a spicy curry, avoid the green chilli and serve this as a refreshing salad, seasoned well with lime juice and salt.

PER SERVING 120 cals, 9.8g fat (8g sat fats), 3.1g protein, 5.3g carbs, 4.4g sugars, 1.47g salt, 3.2g fibre

ROAST SPICED CHICKEN WITH BROWN-SUGAR LIMES & COCONUT MILK

Spatchcocking the chicken quickens the cooking time and ensures it's evenly cooked, while marinating it with yoghurt tenderises the meat, making it extra juicy and succulent.

SERVES 4 **GF**

- 2kg whole chicken
- 800ml coconut milk
- Pomegranate seeds and chopped fresh herbs, to serve

MARINADE

- 50g fresh ginger
- 50g garlic
- 500g natural yoghurt or curd
- 1 tbsp chilli powder
- 1 tbsp ground turmeric
- 1 tbsp freshly ground black pepper



Roast spiced chicken with brown-sugar limes & coconut milk

“MY COOKING IS INFLUENCED AND INSPIRED BY THE PEOPLE I’VE WORKED WITH AND THE PLACES I’VE BEEN TO,” SAYS EMILY. “LEARNING TO COOK IS A LIFELONG JOURNEY – KEEP EXPLORING AND DON’T BE AFRAID TO TRY SOMETHING NEW.”



BROWN-SUGAR LIMES

- 4 limes
- 2 tbsp coconut oil, melted
- 2 tbsp brown sugar or grated jaggery

1 First, make the marinade. Peel and roughly chop the ginger, and peel the garlic. Blitz in a blender with the rest of the marinade ingredients, or simply grate the ginger and garlic into a bowl, and mix in the yoghurt and spices.

2 Next, spatchcock the chicken. Turn the bird over onto its back, with the cavity facing away from you. Cut each side of the chicken along the spine with strong kitchen scissors, then turn it over and press down hard on the breast with both hands, until you have flattened the chicken. Alternatively, ask your butcher to do this.

3 Cover the chicken with the marinade, inside and out, then leave overnight in the fridge or for at least a couple of hours.

4 Preheat the oven to 200C/gas 6 and find a roasting tin that fits the chicken snugly inside. Place the bird in the tin with the coconut milk, and cook on the middle shelf for 45-50 minutes, basting with the juices and coconut milk every 10 minutes or so. (A large 2kg chicken should cook perfectly during this time. For a slightly smaller bird, check if it’s cooked after 45 minutes by pulling gently on a leg and seeing whether the juices run clear).

5 Meanwhile, make the brown-sugar limes. Halve the limes and, in a bowl, mix in the oil and sugar or jaggery, so most of the sugar coats the flesh, then place skin-side down on a baking tray. Place on the top shelf of the oven for the last 20 minutes of cooking.

6 Check the chicken is cooked by slicing the skin between the leg and breast – if the juices run clear, it’s ready. Sieve the pan juices into a serving jug and season to taste with more salt or brown sugar, if needed.

7 Transfer the chicken to a warm serving plate and leave to rest for at least 20 and up to 40 minutes uncovered, then serve with the sauce and brown-sugar limes. Scatter over chopped fresh herbs and pomegranate seeds to finish.

PER SERVING 1180 cals, 92.9g fat (58.6g sat fats), 62.7g protein, 26.5g carbs, 21.2g sugars, 2g salt, 2.8g fibre

MUSSELS, LIME & CHILLI BUTTER IN ARRACK

Although this recipe is not native to Sri Lanka – you can’t get mussels there – it is super cheap, quick and easy to make. Buy your mussels live and shut tight from your local fishmonger. Store before use in a cool, damp place – the sink. This way you can clean them, by removing the barnacles and beards, in a self-contained, no-mess cool-box.

SERVES 4

- 1kg mussels
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 10g garlic
- 1 large shallot
- 20g coriander stalks
- 1 handful of fresh curry leaves
- 250ml arrack (see note)



- 3 tsp kithul treacle (see note)
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tbsp chilli butter (see right)
- 1 lime
- 1 pinch of sea salt
- 1 handful of coriander leaves

1 Rinse the mussels under cold running water, removing the beards as you go by pulling them sharply towards you. Discard any mussels that don’t close when tapped with a knife.

2 Heat the coconut oil in a large lidded pan. Peel and thinly slice the garlic and shallot, and finely chop the coriander stalks. Once the oil is hot, add the garlic, shallot, coriander stalks and curry leaves, and sizzle for a couple of minutes. Add the mussels, shake the pan and cook for 1 minute. Add the arrack, treacle or syrup, and turmeric, then cover the pan with a lid to let it steam.

3 Cook for 5 minutes, giving the pan a good shake. Check the mussels have opened (discard any that haven’t), then add the chilli butter to emulsify the liquid, followed by the lime juice and salt. Tear the coriander leaves over the mussels, then serve with fresh pol roti (coconut flatbreads), if you like.

Note Arrack is a South Asian aniseed-flavoured spirit – buy it from online drinks retailers, or use a similar tasting spirit, such as Pernod. Kithul treacle is made from the sap of a Sri Lankan palm – if you can’t get hold of any, you can use maple syrup.

PER SERVING 407 cals, 11.9g fat (7.9g sat fats), 19g protein, 22.8g carbs, 18.1g sugars, 1.7g salt, 0.3g fibre



Mussels, lime & chilli butter in arrack

CHILLI BUTTER

This is great for so many things: try it with eggs, stir-fried mushrooms, roast sea bass or corn on the cob.

MAKES 250–300G GF V

- 4 red bird’s-eye chillies
- 15g garlic (optional)
- 250g soft salted butter
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 2 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp smoked paprika

1 Deseed and finely chop the chillies, peel the garlic (if using), and blitz in a blender with the rest of the ingredients. Alternatively, whisk everything together in a bowl until combined. Store in a plastic container in the fridge – this can keep for weeks and the flavour only deepens and improves. □

Per serving 84 cals, 9.2g fat (5.9g sat fats), 0.2g protein, 0.3g carbs, 0.2g sugars, 0.2g salt, 0.1g fibre



Recipes adapted from Weligama: Recipes from Sri Lanka by Emily Dobbs (£25, Seven Dials), on sale 16 November.