

Murgh Bharta

'Bharta' is a comfort food in households across India, made with roasted and mashed aubergine and flavoured with simple spices.

Prep time – 20-25 minutes
Cooking time – 45-50 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients:

600 gms diced chicken thigh fillets, 2 medium onions, finely chopped, 1 tin of chopped tomatoes, 2 aubergines, 2-3 courgettes, 1 tbsp ginger paste, 1 tsp cumin seeds, 3 tsp Kashmiri chilli powder, 1 tbsp coriander powder, ½ inch piece of root ginger julienne, salt to taste.

Method:

Preheat the oven to 180C. Place the aubergines and courgettes on a baking tray and roast for 30-40 minutes. Turn occasionally to make sure the skin is evenly charred. When the skin appears to be getting crispy, turn off the grill. Remove the aubergines and courgettes and place them in a plastic bag. Tie a knot and leave the vegetables to sweat. Sprinkle a pinch of salt and 1 tsp of Kashmiri chilli powder on the chicken and rub it in well. Leave to rest while the sauce gets ready.

In a pan, heat 2-3 tbsp of oil. Add the cumin, onions and ginger paste. Fry till onions are softened and translucent. Add the tinned tomatoes, stir well and allow the tomatoes to cook. When they have reduced to nearly half their quantity, you should have a thick curry paste - similar to ones you can buy at the supermarket. Now, add the ground coriander, turmeric, chilli powder, and salt to taste. Mix well, and allow to cook further for 5-6 minutes. The spices will start to release some oil. At this time, add the chicken thighs and seal all over. Cover the pan and allow the chicken to cook.

Carefully undo the knot on the plastic bag and allow the vegetables to cool. Use a spoon to make an incision into the skin. It should start to come away fairly easily from the flesh. Flake all the skin away from the aubergines and courgettes, reserving only the flesh in a large bowl. Discard the skin.

Use a potato masher to mash the aubergine and courgettes to a pulp. Add it to the pan, mix well and cover once more to cook till chicken has cooked through. Stir occasionally. When the chicken is ready, you should see a thin film of oil on top of the curry. Check to make sure the chicken is, indeed, cooked, and turn off the heat. Garnish with ginger julienne and fresh coriander.

Serve with rotis or parathas.