

Lamb Chop Curry Recipe

Ingredients:

300g French-trimmed lamb cutlets
2 tablespoons yogurt
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1 tablespoon lime (calamansi) juice

Spice Paste:

1 tablespoon oil
2 teaspoon coriander (cilantro) seeds
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
3 cloves
2.5cm cassia bark or cinnamons stick
2 green cardamom pods
1 medium onion, finely sliced
1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste* (refer below)
2 tomatoes, roughly chopped
4 green chilies, finely chopped
4 tablespoons coriander (cilantro) leaves, finely chopped

Seasoning:

2 1/2 tablespoons oil
2 bay leaves
2.5 cm cassia bark or cinnamon stick
1 green cardamom pod
1 clove
2 medium onions, sliced

Garnish:

Chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves
Ginger julienne

Method:

Flatten the lamb chops with a wooden mallet and place in a shallow dish. Combine the yogurt, turmeric and salt. Coat the lamb chops with the spiced yogurt and set aside in a cool place to marinate for 1 hour.

To make the spice paste, heat the 1 tablespoon oil in a frying pan, add the whole spices and sauté until they crackle. Add the sliced onion and sauté until softened and golden brown. Add the ginger-garlic paste and cook for a few minutes to lose the raw aroma. Add the tomatoes and green chilies and cook until the fat separates from the mixture. Stir in the chopped coriander and set aside for 5 minutes to cool slightly. Transfer to a blender and process to a fine paste. Tip into a bowl and set aside.

For the seasoning, heat the oil in a deep sauté pan and sauté the bay leaves, cassia or cinnamon, cardamom pod and clove for 1 minute. Add the sliced onions and cook until translucent. Add the spice paste and sauté until golden in color. Add the lamb chops and continue cooking until the oil begins to separate from the spice paste. Add the lime juice, check the seasoning and continue to cook until the chops are tender.

Arrange the chops in a warmed serving dish and garnish with chopped coriander leaves and ginger julienne to serve.

***Ginger-garlic paste:**

This is widely used in Indian recipes. To prepare, blend equal quantities of peeled garlic and ginger with 10% of the total weight in water, using a blender or mini-processor. The paste should be smooth and very fine. Store in a sealed container in the fridge. If you wish to keep the ginger-garlic paste for longer, add 5% vegetable oil and 2% lemon juice as you blend the paste; this improves the keeping quality and lightens the color of the paste. You can always freeze ginger-garlic paste in an ice-cube tray for future use.

This recipe belongs to a region where I would like to be born again. The cuisine is so intricate that it is said you must be born Chettiar to be able to cook the food properly. Nattulkotai Chettiars were a nomadic trading community that once roamed and sailed through south India and south-east Asian countries assimilating local foods, such as sticky red rice, into their own cuisine. Their unusual spices are kalpasi, stone fungus, and marathi mukka, buds from a local tree akin to cloves. These give characteristic flavor to Chettinad dishes, but they are not available here, so I have developed a similar flavor profile using simple spices.

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