



Appam

A popular breakfast dish in Kerala and Sri Lanka, these pancakes are made from a fermented batter of rice flour and coconut milk. Wafer thin appam are usually cooked in small woks with side handles known as “karahi” but a regular wok or non stick pan is fine for this cooking this dish at home. You can also make your batter a little thicker and cook them as drop scones. Appam are served with curries, soups and sambals and are sometimes cooked with an egg in the centre. Sweet appam are served with chopped mango or bananas and drizzled with condensed milk. You can make instant unfermented appam using bicarbonate of soda in place of the yeast.

Makes about 10 pancakes

250g fine rice flour
½ tsp dried yeast
2 teaspoons sugar
½ teaspoon salt
200ml can of coconut milk
100g water

1. Put rice flour, yeast and salt into a large bowl and combine with 200ml coconut milk and 200ml water
2. Stir to form a smooth, thick batter and allow it to ferment for a minimum of 4 hours in a warm place.
3. The batter should be of a thick pouring consistency, but thin enough to cover the sides of the pan with an almost transparent coating when the batter is swirled. It may be necessary to add extra water. A little practice will tell you when you have achieved the perfect consistency, and so much depends on the absorbency of the flour (which is variable) that it is not possible to give an accurate measurement.
4. Heat the pan over low heat until evenly hot, rub the inside surface with a piece of folded paper towels dipped in oil and pour in a small ladle of the batter. Immediately swirl it around so that the batter coats the pan and goes two-thirds of the way up if using a wok or karahi.
5. Cover the pan and cook on very low heat for about 3 minutes.
6. When the upper edges begin to turn a pale toasty colour, the appam is ready. Where the batter has run down the sides to the centre there will be a little circle of spongy mixture, rather like a crumpet, while the curved edge is very thin, crisp and wafer-like. With a flexible metal spatula, loosen edges and slip the appam from the pan on to a wire rack. Wipe pan again with oiled paper and repeat





Dosa – Uttapam - Idli

This is an all-purpose batter made from fermented rice and lentils suitable for making Dosa, Uttapam and Idli. One finds variations of this batter throughout India, but it originates from South India. A Dosa is a crispy wafer like pancake often served stuffed with spiced potatoes and accompanied by a coconut chutney and sambar. An Uttapam is a thicker spongier version of a Dosa, often topped with sliced onions and tomatoes. Idli are steamed dumplings made from the same batter. These dishes are gluten free and the combination of rice and lentils make them a good source of protein and complex carbohydrate.

3 cups long grain rice

1 cup skinless split urad dal (skinless black lentils)

½ tsp fenugreek seeds

Salt to taste

1. Soak the rice and urad & fenugreek separately overnight or for 6 – 8 hours
2. Once soaked, drain the water from both and start by blending the dal and fenugreek in a food processor to a semi - smooth paste, adding a little water at a time until you have a thick paste.
3. Separately blend the rice in the same way
4. When both mixtures are ground, place both into a large mixing bowl and add enough water to form a batter. The consistency of the batter should be like thick yoghurt
5. Put the batter aside in a warm (30°C), dark place, covered with a cloth, for 8 - 12 hours to ferment. When it has developed some bubbles and a slightly sour smell, it is ready to use. Add salt to taste and thin down with water to a workable consistency

Idli: You want your batter quite stiff, like spongy thick cream. Idli are usually steamed in special steamers with round or oval moulds into which one spoons the batter before steaming. If you don't have an Idli mould and steamer then oil a conventional steamer and spoon 2 cm of the batter onto the steamer. Smooth down and steam for 10 minutes. Cut up into diamond shapes before serving.

Uttapam: You want your batter looser than for Idli, more like thick pouring cream. Heat a non-stick large frying pan over a medium heat. Oil this well and ladle or pour about 4 tbsp of batter into the centre of the pan. Using the back of the spoon, smooth this out to cover 2/3rds of the pan. Top this with sliced onions, chopped tomatoes, chopped green chilli and chopped coriander. Pour over a little more oil and cook for about 2 minutes or until golden underneath. Flip over and cook for a further minute on the other side.

Dosa: Thin out the batter to the consistency of single cream. Heat a large, flat non-stick pan to a medium-high heat and brush with a light coating of oil. Pour about 75ml of batter or 2/3rds of a soup ladle, gently into the centre of the pan. Using the rounded end of the ladle spread the batter in a sweeping, circular motion to form a pancake of 25 cm diameter. Drizzle extra oil all over the surface of the dosa and also around its edges. Little holes will appear as the batter cooks. When the upper surface is no longer wet or runny, the Dosa is done. Cool the pan a little before starting the next one.





Sambar

This is one of the most popular dishes in South Indian cuisine. It is a peppery lentil and vegetable soup with a tamarind twang. It's often made with the delicious vegetable known as Drumstick, the giant seed pod of the Maringa tree, and served with fermented rice dishes such as Dosa & Idli. You can find good readymade sambar powder in most south Asian shops. Making your own involved roasting and grinding 5tbsp of Thoor and Channa dals with 1tbsp each of roasted black pepper, coriander & fenugreek seeds.

1 cup tuvar dal - pigeon pea lentils, red lentils work fine as well
2 cups of chopped mixed vegetables – drumstick or okra, carrots, French beans, squash etc.
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 good size tomatoes, chopped
1 tbsp tamarind syrup
1 to 1.5 tbsp sambar powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
½ tsp turmeric
a pinch of asafoetida/hing
cooking oil
salt to taste

2 to 3 dry red chillies
1 tsp mustard seeds
a pinch or two of asafoetida / hing
12 to 15 curry leaves

Method

1. First wash and drain the lentils. Mix with 3 times the volume of water, plus the turmeric and cook until soft and mushy.
2. In a separate pot, heat 1 tbsp of oil and stir fry your onions for a few minutes until they start to soften. Then add the vegetables and tomatoes and keep cooking for about five minutes more. Add the lentils, 3 cups of water, salt, chilli and a pinch of hing and bring to a slow simmer. Cook and stir regularly for 20 minutes then add the sambar powder & tamarind and simmer for 10 minutes on a low heat.
3. To finish, make a tarka or tempering – heat 1 tbsp of oil and add the mustard seeds, when they start to pop add the red chilli and hing, followed by the curry leaves. Cook this hot and fast for 30 seconds then pour the whole tempering over the sambar. Cover and serve after 10 minutes





Avial

A quintessentially South Indian dish of vegetables, coconut and curd. It is usually served with rice and is a dish shared by the cuisines of Kerala, Tamil and Udipi. It is reputed to have its origin in the Indian epic, the Mahabharata and is often served at weddings and other communal feasts.

2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tsp cumin seeds
½ medium onion, sliced
1-2 green chillies, sliced in half lengthwise
¾ tsp ground turmeric
Salt, to taste

2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
2 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1 handful green beans, topped, tailed and chopped into thirds
2 small handfuls frozen peas

2 shallots, peeled and halved
1 tbsp grated fresh ginger,
8tbsp freshly grated coconut or 4 tbsp desiccated coconut, soaked in warm water

12 fresh or dried curry leaves
5-6 tbsp plain yoghurt

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a large non-stick pan. Add the cumin, onion and chillies and cook until the onions are soft and beginning to colour.
2. When the onions are cooked, stir in the turmeric, salt, carrots and potatoes. Add a cup of water and cook over a low heat, stirring often for about 15 minutes
3. Now add the beans. Cover the pan again and cook for a further 5-10 minutes until all the vegetables are tender.
4. Meanwhile, place the shallots, ginger and coconut (complete with its soaking liquid) into a blender. Blend to a fine paste before adding to the pan, along with the peas.
5. Tear the curry leaves into the pan and stir in the yoghurt. Cook for a further five minutes, stirring thoroughly.





Cabbage & Carrot Thoran

Thorans are a dry curry from Kerala in the south of India. They are generally stir fried, laced with fresh or dried coconut and spiced with curry leaves and mustard seeds. They are very quick to make and perfect for those who like milder flavours. Serves 4 – 6

½ small white cabbage, fine sliced
2 large carrots, fine diced or julienned
4 shallots, finely chopped
12 curry leaves, fresh or dried
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tbsp sunflower or coconut oil
4 tbsp fresh grated coconut or 2 tbsp desiccated coconut, soaked in hot water
½ tsp salt

Method:

1. Prepare the carrots, cabbage and shallot. Grate the coconut
2. At a medium temperature, heat the oil in a wok or deep frying pan. When hot, add the mustard seeds and cook them very briefly.
3. Add the shallots, followed by the cabbage and carrots and stir fry for a few minutes.
4. Make a well in the bottom of the pan and add a little more oil, add the curry leaves and cook them briefly before adding the coconut and salt.
5. Mix well, cover, turn the temperature down and cook for a further 10 minutes before serving.





Lemon Rice

350g freshly cooked basmati rice
2 tbsp vegetable or coconut oil
½ tsp mustard seeds
2-3 dried red chillies, left whole
1 rounded tsp chopped fresh ginger
¼ tsp ground turmeric
4 tbsp roasted cashew nuts
10 curry leaves, torn in half
Salt, to taste
3 tbsp lemon juice, or to taste

Method:

1. Cook your rice using twice the volume of water to rice.
2. Heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan and add the mustard seeds and the chillies and stir fry for a moment or two.
3. Add the ginger, ground turmeric, curry leaves and salt, to taste, and cook for about 30 seconds.
4. Stir in the lemon juice and cook for another minute before adding the rice. Stir fry to heat through, being careful not to break up the grains too much.
5. Add the roasted cashew nuts before serving.

Coconut Chutney

1 tbsp sunflower or coconut oil
4 tbsp freshly grated coconut or 2 tbsp desiccated coconut soaked in warm water
2 small green chillies, finely chopped
1 tsp mustard seeds
6 curry leaves

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a pan over a medium heat and add the mustard seeds followed shortly by the curry leaves, the chilli and then the coconut.
2. Cook gently for a few minutes and season to taste.

