



Paratha

Paratha are fried, oil enriched flatbreads made with unrefined wholemeal flour. They are characteristic of North India and are often served for breakfast with yoghurt and spicy pickle. Paratha are often stuffed with leftover curry, paneer cheese or potatoes. Makes 8 breads

500g wholemeal flour, sieved
250ml water
50ml gee or sunflower oil
5g salt
Gee or sunflower oil frying
Flour for rolling

Dough:

Mix the flour, water oil and salt to form smooth dough. Knead this for a few minutes to develop the gluten then cover and allow it to rest for 30 minutes.

Shaping:

Divide the dough into 8 pieces, each about 100g and roll these into balls. Rest these for another 10 minutes before rolling them out as disks about 20 cm diameters.

Cooking:

Pre-heat a large flat frying pan or skillet to a medium temperature. Brush this with a little oil or gee then place the disk of dough on the skillet and cook for about a minute. Turn this over and add a little ghee or oil around the edges of the paratha. At this stage paratha often puff up with steam. Encourage this by pressing lightly down on the breads with a spatula or tea towel. After a minute, deflate the bread a bit, turn again and fry the other side. When brown patches appear on both sides, the paratha is ready. Repeat for the rest of the paratha dough.

Variations:

Paratwala paratha: a laminated flatbread also known as Lachha paratha. To make these follow the same recipe but use up to 50% white plain flour. Roll out the dough as instructed. Brush with gee or oil and dust liberally with rice flour or semolina. Fold the disk in half, brush and dust again and fold in half again. You will have a fan shape. Pinch the open end together and roll out on a well-floured surface to double the size. Brush with oil and cook per basic recipe

Aloo Paratha: a potato stuffed flatbread. Boil, cool and smash 4 large potatoes. Add ½ tsp of chilli powder and 1 tsp each of salt and cumin powder or fried cumin seeds. Add a good amount of fresh chopped coriander and some chopped green chilli. Mix well! Roll out the dough balls, two at a time. Take a quarter of the potato mix and spread it over the dough, but not right to the edges. Place the second disk over this and seal the edges. Brush with oil and cook per basic recipe





Samosa

The Samosa is possibly the most iconic Indian snack. This deep fried triangular parcel of seasonal vegetables or ground meat is found throughout the Indian sub-continent, but its roots are firmly in Persia and the Middle East, where variations are known as *Borekas* or *Sanbosag* which translates as crescent pastry. This recipe is for Punjabi style samosa which reveals its Persian roots through the addition of ajwain and pomegranate seeds. The filling is a simple one of potatoes and peas, but the variations are endless. Makes 8 large samosa

Pastry:

250g plain flour or ½ plain and ½ sieved whole meal flour
50g sunflower oil or gee
½ tsp salt
½ tsp ajwain (Indian caraway seeds)
150ml cold water

Rub the oil into the flour, salt and caraway then add the water. Mix and knead lightly to make a stiff dough. Allow this to rest in the fridge for about an hour before using

Filling:

2 tbsp gee or sunflower oil
400g potatoes, boiled and smashed
100g frozen peas
½ tbsp grated ginger
½ tsp red chilli powder
2 tsp coriander seeds
2 tsp dried pomegranate seeds (Anardana)
1 tsp garam masala
1 tsp salt

Heat a pan and dry fry the coriander and pomegranate seeds until they are fragrant and start to pop. Cool these and then rough grind with a pestle and mortar. Heat the oil or gee and quick fry the ginger then add potatoes, peas, chilli powder and salt. Sauté this for a few minutes then add the ground coriander and pomegranate seeds. Finish off with the garam masala and cool before the next stage.

Assembling:

Divide the dough into 4 equal pieces and roll into balls. Roll these out to form an oval about 15cm by 10cm. Cut the oval in half so you have two pocket shapes from each one. Brush water along the cut side and draw the edges over to form a cone shape. This will be higher on one side than the other. At this highest point create a little pleat to use up some of the extra dough. Now stuff with about 2 tbsp of the filling and fold the higher edge over and crimp together. This is the base of the samosa. Place base down on a floured tray. Fill all in the same way and refrigerate for at least an hour.

Cooking:

Heat 500ml of sunflower oil in a deep pan – the ideal temperature for the oil is around 160°C. Gently lower the samosa into the oil and fry for 5 – 7 minutes until golden. Remove from the oil and drain on paper towel.





Shahi Paneer

A celebratory dish from the Punjab reveals its Persian roots in the name - **Shahi** being the Parsi word for royalty. Paneer is a hard cheese found all over India, but also in Turkey and the Middle East. Shop bought paneer is quite robust and fries without melting. This dish is very rich and delicious due to the cashew nut and cream rich sauce. Serves 4

250g paneer, cut into cubes

1 large onion, chopped

3 tbsp gee or sunflower oil

4 tbsp tomato puree or 400 ml passata

2-3 green chillies, as per taste

3-4 cloves garlic

2 inch ginger, peeled and chopped

1 tsp each cumin and coriander powder

1/2 tsp cardamom powder

1 tbsp sugar

1 tsp salt

200ml cashew cream - soak 100g cashew pieces in boiling water or hot milk and grind)

200g double cream

Salt to taste

1. Soak cashews in hot water or milk for about 15 min and then grind into a cream
2. Heat 2 tbsp oil in a medium size wok or pan on medium to high heat. Add the onions and fry until they soften then add ginger, garlic and green chili and cook for 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Add the cumin, cardamom and coriander powders and fry for a moment before adding passata or tomato puree, plus 1 cup of water, stir well and cook until the oil separates.
4. Add cashew cream, half the double cream, salt and sugar and slowly bring to a boil
5. In a separate pan, sauté cubed paneer in 1 tbsp oil, on medium to high heat. Once the paneer is light gold/brown in color, take it out on a paper towel to drain excess oil.
6. Add the paneer to the gravy and cook gently for 10 – 15 minutes
7. Garnish with fresh coriander and toasted broken cashews.





Rajma

One of the most popular Punjabi vegetarian dishes, Rajma is characteristic of the simple hearty food often served in roadside cafes or dhabba houses. It is usually accompanied with rice or flatbreads and hot pickle or chutney. While red kidney beans are not native to India, they have been successfully grown in the Northern states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh since the 17th century. If you have the time and inclination, this dish is best done with dried beans, soaked overnight and pressure cooked, with the bean liquor used as stock. Tinned beans are fine as well. Serves 4

2 tbsp butter + 1 tbsp sunflower oil

1 large onion

½ tsp cumin seeds

2 tins kidney beans, drained and rinsed

2 medium to large tomatoes

4 cloves garlic + 1 tbsp grated ginger + 1 green chili – crushed to a paste in a mortar-pestle

1 tsp coriander powder

½ tsp red chili powder

¼ tsp turmeric powder

¼ tsp asafoetida

½ tsp garam masala powder

1 tsp dry fenugreek leaves, crushed

3 tbsp cream

3 tbsp chopped fresh coriander

Salt to taste

1. Heat the oil and butter in a large pan and add cumin seeds followed shortly by the onions. Cook these slowly until caramelized
2. Add the ginger, garlic & chili paste, stir and sauté for 30 seconds on a low heat then add the tomatoes and sauté until soft.
3. Make a well in the middle of the pan and add all the spice powders one by one – turmeric powder, red chili powder, coriander powder, asafoetida and garam masala powder. Stir and sauté the masala mixture until the oil separates to the sides.
4. Now add the beans and enough water to cover. Bring to the boil then reduce the heat right down and cook gently for up to an hour.
5. Add salt to taste and serve with a swirl of cream and chopped coriander





Naan bread - yeasted

Naan breads are one of the quickest and easiest flatbreads to make from scratch. It is traditionally eaten in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan but one also finds versions of this bread in the Middle East and in some Mediterranean countries. This naan bread recipe is inspired by the types of breads I've had in "Indian" restaurants in the UK, I've personally never found this style of bread in India, but I'm sure it exists . . . makes 6 breads

150ml warm milk
2 tsp caster sugar
2 tsp dried yeast
450g plain flour (strong flour will work, but the bread will be less soft and cakey)
½ tsp salt
1 tsp baking powder
2 tbsp vegetable oil, plus a little extra
150ml natural yogurt
1 large egg, lightly beaten

Method:

1. Dissolve the sugar and the yeast in the warm milk and set aside for 15-20 minutes or until the mixture is frothy.
2. Sift the flour, salt and baking powder into a large bowl. Add the yeast mixture, 2 tbsp vegetable oil and the yogurt and egg. Mix and form sticky dough.
3. Empty the dough on to a clean surface and knead it for 10 minutes or more, until it is smooth and satiny. Form into a ball and place into an oiled bowl. Cover the bowl with a piece of cling film and set aside in a warm, draught-free place for an hour or until the dough has doubled in bulk.
4. Pre-heat your oven to the highest temperature. Put a heavy baking tray in to heat in the oven. Pre-heat your grill.
5. Punch down the dough and knead it again. Divide into 6 equal balls. Keep 5 of them covered while you work with the sixth. Roll this ball into a tear-shaped naan, about 25cm in length and about 13cm at its widest.
6. Remove the hot baking tray from the oven and slap the naan on to it. Put it immediately into the oven for 3 minutes. It should puff up in an irregular way.
7. Now place the baking tray and naan under the grill, about 10cm away from the heat, for about 30 seconds or until the top of the naan browns slightly. Wrap the naan in a clean tea towel. Make all the naans this way and serve hot.





Kheer

Kheer is a delicious rice pudding made with slow cooked, thickened milk. Like its Persian cousin, Shole Zard, kheer is sweetened with raw sugar or jaggery and flavored with cardamom and rose water. It is delicious hot, but more often served cold with pistachios or toasted almonds on top.

1 litre whole milk
4 tbsp long-grain rice, such as basmati
4 whole green cardamom pods, lightly crushed
2 tbsp raw sugar/ jaggery
4 tbsp unsalted pistachios, chopped
1 tsp rose water

1. Pour the milk into a heavy-based pan, add the cardamom and slowly bring to the boil then lower the heat and simmer rapidly, stirring from time to time to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the milk is reduced by about half; this may take as long as 1¼ hours. (You can also do this in a fraction of the time using a pressure cooker)
2. When the milk has reduced by half remove and discard the cardamom pods.
3. Add the sugar, rose water and ¾ of the chopped pistachios, stir well, and leave to cool.
4. When ready to serve, spoon into individual serving bowls and sprinkle a few more chopped pistachios on top.

