

Spice up Your Fall and Winter

Curry, a combination of spices that may help ward off disease and serve as an antioxidant, is a tasty way to spice up your fall and winter dishes. In addition, it may help curb the appetite according to Ayurveda, the medicinal sister science of yoga. Ayurveda recognizes 6 tastes; sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent. Because curry satisfies all 6 tastes, it may help you eat less at each meal. Curry is common in Indian as well as many other Asian cuisines, Thai being one of the most popular.

Though there are many different combinations of curry powder, the 3 main spices are cumin, turmeric, and coriander. Adding other spices creates unique flavors as well as varying degrees of heat so you may need to experiment or search to find your favorite.

Cumin and coriander aid in digestion and may benefit conditions like irritable bowel syndrome, bloating, gas, and abdominal cramps. However, turmeric is the real "star" of curry powder. It has antioxidant, antiseptic, and anti-inflammatory properties and has been clinically shown to help relieve inflammation associated with arthritis. It may help speed the healing of wounds and research is looking into its role in the prevention of Alzheimer's. In India, where curry is a daily part of the diet, the rate of Alzheimer's is quite low. I have used turmeric in very small amounts sprinkled in my neti pot solution when I feel a sinus infection coming on and had great results.

Curry powder is easily incorporated into any diet. Cooked with food or sprinkled on top of salads, veggies or meat. Try grinding your own spices if you decide to make your own and you'll never go back to those glass bottles on the grocery store shelf. But like all spices, buying from the bulk section in small amounts, is less expensive and the spices are fresher.

Curry dishes warm you from the inside out in the fall and winter. Here are a couple of my favorite curry recipes. If you have a favorite to share, we'd love to hear from you!

Curried Pinwheels

These appetizers can be made 2 days in advance and are great for holiday get-togethers, parties and as an accompaniment to soups or salads.

6 pieces luncheon size Lavosh bread (5-in) or 2-3 larger pieces. (Lavosh is Armenian flat bread that can be rolled like a tortilla. I like Trader Joe's whole wheat brand).

1 ½ packages of fat-free cream cheese, softened or 1 tub of Tofutti "cream cheese"

2 tbsp. low fat mayo or 2 tbsp. "Nayonaise" (vegetarian mayo)

1-2 tsp. spicy brown mustard

1 clove garlic, minced

1-1½ tsp. curry powder

½ tsp. ground cumin

Dash to ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (depending on degree of heat you want)

1 cup finely chopped cored apple (your favorite seasonal variety)

¼- ½ cup chopped celery

¼ cup finely chopped green onions w/tops

¼ - ½ cup chopped dry-roasted peanuts

¾ cup store-bought or homemade chutney (mango or cranberry is good)

Brush bread very lightly with water and place between damp kitchen towels until slightly softened, about 20-30 min.

Mix cream cheese, mayo, mustard, garlic, curry, cumin & cayenne in small bowl.

Spread about 3 tablespoons on each Lavosh. Use more for large Lavosh.

Combine remaining ingredients, except chutney, and sprinkle over filling.

Roll Lavosh tightly; wrap each in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to 2 days.

Cut each roll into 6—10 pieces, arrange on plate, serve with chutney.

Makes about 3-4 dozen

Curried Sweet Potato Bisque

This hearty, vegan soup is perfect served with rustic bread and salad for a satisfying meal

2 tbsp. vegetable/olive oil
1 cup onion, chopped
1 tbsp. fresh ginger root, grated
1 tbsp. curry powder
2 small carrots, peeled and chopped
2 medium sized Garnet yams (about 1-1 ¼ pound) peeled & cut into 1" cubes
4 cups veggie broth
One 15 oz. can coconut milk (low-fat) more can be added if you like
¼ cup orange juice
Salt & pepper to taste
½ cup toasted coconut flakes
¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped

Heat oil in soup pot over med-high heat and add onions.

Sauté onions until soft and translucent, about 5-7 minutes.

Add ginger and curry powder, cook for another minute to release oils & flavor of ginger & curry.

Add carrots and cook 2-3 minutes. Add yams and veggie broth. Bring to boil then reduce to simmer. Cook partially covered until veggies are soft about 15 minutes.

Puree soup with hand blender or food processor (in small batches if using food processor), until completely smooth.

Stir in coconut milk and orange juice.

Reheat to serving temp & season with salt and pepper to taste. Can add more coconut milk and/or OJ to taste.

Serve immediately garnished with toasted coconut flakes and cilantro.

If making ahead of time, don't reheat after adding juice. Let cool slightly and store in fridge. Reheat over medium until temp reaches about 165 degrees then garnish with coconut and cilantro. I personally like it made one day ahead of time so flavors really develop.

Serves about 6-8

Bonus Recipe

Simple Salad Dressing

1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

2 tbsp toasted sesame oil

3 tbsp apple cider vinegar or brown rice vinegar

1 1/2 tbsp or less agave syrup

2 tsp Dijon mustard

1/2 tsp salt

2tsp chia seeds, poppy seeds or ground flax (opt)

Mix ingredients in jar or dressing bottle & shake to mix. Can add more or less of any ingredient to your taste.