

PURISTS MAY ARGUE THAT CURRY POWDER IS NOT A proper ingredient for dedicated cooks. I demur. I have dined at several Indian tables both in private homes and in restaurants where the food has been something to marvel at. And yet I see nothing wrong with a first-rate commercially blended curry powder, if it is not used on a static, day-by-day basis.

As a matter of fact, there are numerous brands of curry powder on the market that vary considerably both in strength and flavor, and if you are not out to cook pure Indian, it might be wise to shop around and experiment with several to find a blend that pleases you.

The method I use for preparing curries is as uncomplicated as I believe it to be good and it is one that I have used since my earliest days (a good many years ago) as a qualified chef in Paris. It consists of sautéing meats or poultry or seafood quickly, adding a bit of garlic, cubed apple and banana among other things, the curry powder and chicken broth, and cooking until tender. It may not be what you find in New Delhi but it is delicious nonetheless. The sauce, pushed through a sieve, is smooth and, if desired, enriched with a touch of heavy cream.

At times I have been served curries in Western homes where various side dishes-peanuts, deep-fried coconut shavings, raisins-were served to be sprinkled on the main dish. It is a question of personal taste, but I find this is bothersome and unnecessary.

The curry that I have in mind does go well, however, with a simple and quickly made rice dish that contains among its ingredients both a few raisins and almonds. It is a nice complement for the curry dish.

A salad may or may not go well with this curry: that is up to your individual taste. Cold yogurt would be an excellent accompaniment. And, again Western style, so would bottled chutney.

Poulet au Kari (*Curried chicken*)

¾ pounds boneless chicken breasts	2 tablespoons curry powder
Salt to taste	1 bay leaf
Freshly ground pepper to taste	1 cup chopped apples
2 tablespoons butter	1/3 cup chopped banana
¾ cup chopped onion	2 teaspoons tomato paste
½ cup chopped celery	1 ½ cups chicken broth
1 teaspoon minced garlic	½ cup heavy cream.

1. Sprinkle the chicken pieces with salt and pepper.
2. Heat the butter in a heavy skillet and add the chicken pieces skin side down. Cook until golden on one side, about 4 minutes
3. Scrape browned bits from bottom of the pan. Add the onion, celery and garlic. Cook briefly and sprinkle with curry powder.
4. Add the bay leaf, apples, and bananas. If pan seems too dry, add some of the chicken stock. Cook about 4 minutes
5. Add the tomato paste, stirring it around. Add the chicken broth and stir to blend. Cover and cook 10 minutes longer or until chicken is tender.
6. Remove the chicken pieces, and the bay leaf. Purée the sauce in a cuisinart. Warning - for a double recipe, this will overflow my cuisinart!
7. Reheat and add the cream. Return the chicken to sauce, bring to the boil and serve hot with rice.

Yield: Two servings.

Riz Orientale (*Rice with almonds and raisins*)

1 tablespoon butter	¼ cup blanched almonds (NOTE - better with toasted slivered almonds)
1/3 cup finely chopped onion	1 ½ cups chicken broth
1 cup raw rice	Salt to taste
2 teaspoons white or black raisins	Freshly ground pepper to taste.

1. Melt butter in a small saucepan and add the onions. Cook, stirring, until wilted. Add the rice, raisins, and almonds and stir.
2. Add the broth, salt and pepper. Bring to the boil. Cover and simmer 20 minutes or until rice is tender and all the liquid is absorbed.

Yield: Four servings.

Source: Pierre Franey cookbook

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DOUBLE RECIPE

Poulet au Kari (*Curried chicken*)

1 ½ pounds boneless chicken breasts	4 tablespoons curry powder
Salt to taste	2 bay leaves
Freshly ground pepper to taste	2 cups chopped apples
4 tablespoons butter	2/3 cup chopped banana
1 ½ cup chopped onion	4 teaspoons tomato paste
1 cup chopped celery	3 cups chicken broth
2 teaspoons minced garlic	1 cup heavy cream.

1. Sprinkle the chicken pieces with salt and pepper.
2. Heat the butter in a heavy skillet and add the chicken pieces skin side down. Cook until golden on one side, about 4 minutes
3. Scrape browned bits from bottom of the pan. Add the onion, celery and garlic. Cook briefly and sprinkle with curry powder.
4. Add the bay leaf, apples, and bananas. If pan seems too dry, add some of the chicken stock. Cook about 4 minutes
5. Add the tomato paste, stirring it around. Add the chicken broth and stir to blend. Cover and cook 10 minutes longer or until chicken is tender.
6. Remove the chicken pieces, and the bay leaf. Purée the sauce in a cuisinart. Warning - for a double recipe, this will overflow my cuisinart!
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