

April Spice Club:

Madras Curry Powder



Earthy and fragrant, Madras curry powder is a hotter curry powder blend than basic Hannaford offerings. It is popular in many parts of the world, including in Indian cuisine and those countries belonging to the Indian subcontinent; as well as Malaysian, Chinese, and Singaporean cuisines. If you've been collecting Spice Club kits, you'll know that garam masala and curry powder are both spice mixes that vary not only by region but even household to household. Madras curry is named after its city of origin in Southern India, which has since been renamed to Chennai.

Our recipes this month were given to us by a neighbor, a cultural exchange we consider very precious. Fish head curry may be met with trepidation by some, but a low-waste approach to eating animals is both thrifty, wholesome, and delicious. But don't take our word for it — look into this famous Singaporean dish yourself!

Lalah's Madras Curry Powder is a proprietary blend of spices that includes coriander, turmeric, mustard, chilis, Bengal gram, cumin, fenugreek, pepper, garlic, salt, fennel, poppy seeds, and curry leaves. Transfer to an airtight container to preserve its freshness. Best by July 2023.

Curry Puff / Ga Li Jiao / 咖哩饺

Joy Huang, The Cooking of Joy

“Taste-wise, I like the Pillsbury brand. These [curry puffs] taste best once they’ve cooled down and aren’t piping hot anymore.” Makes ~50 puffs.

1 lb. lean ground beef
1 tablespoon cooking oil
1 yellow onion, diced (or use red onion for more flavor)
1 large potato, diced into small ¼” cubes
1 + 3 tablespoons curry powder
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 to 1 ½ teaspoons salt
2 packs refrigerated pie crusts (4 crusts), softened and cut into 3” circles
1-2 egg yolk, beaten (can add 1 tablespoon water if necessary)

Unwrap the pie crusts and, using a cookie cutter or bottom of a cup, cut out 3” circles. Re-roll the excess pie crusts and cut some more. You should end up with 50ish circles. Put the circles on a plate and stick them back in the fridge while you prepare the filling.

In a small pot with water, cook your potatoes until just tender. You don’t want them to fall apart while mixing them later. Drain water and set aside.

In a large skillet, sauté the onions in oil and 1 tablespoon of curry powder. Cook until beef is browned. Add in your drained potatoes and mix well until all is combined. Take off the heat and preheat your oven to 450.

Lightly spray 2 cookie sheets with spray oil. Take your circles out of the fridge and start assembling your pockets. Put about a tablespoon of filling in the center of the circle. Fold in half to seal it, but don’t pinch them shut yet. To seal the pockets, starting on one end, pinch and “tuck,” pinch and “tuck,” and repeat until you get to the other end, reshaping if needed.

Place curry puffs on a greased cookie sheet and take your beaten egg yolk mixture and a pastry brush and brush the tops of the pockets with the yolk.

Bake for about 12-15 minutes, until golden brown. Let them cool on the cookie sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer them to a cooling rack.

Fish Head Curry with Just the Right Amount of Heat

Connie Veneracion, The Spruce Eats

“The cooking time is based on the weight of the fish head. You may need to adjust ingredient proportions if fish head weighs more than half a kilogram.” Serves 2.

- 1 salmon head (about 500 grams), split into halves
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 knob ginger, peeled and grated
- 1 tomato, diced
- 1 bird's eye chili pepper, chopped, or more to taste
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce, or to taste
- 3-4 heaping tablespoons curry paste OR same amount of curry powder mixed into the coconut milk
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons fried onion slices
- 2 tablespoons toasted garlic
- Cilantro for serving

Rinse the salmon head halves and pat dry. Pry or scrap off as much of the scales as you can without damaging the skin. Remove the gills. (If your fish head is a little stinky, try one of these remedies: soak fish in milk 10-20 minutes; rub with turmeric and let it set for 30 minutes, then rinse or use as is; or drizzle fresh lemon juice over cleaned fish and let sit for a few minutes before patting dry.)

Heat the cooking oil in a wide frying pan. Sauté the shallots, ginger, garlic, tomato and chilis with a little fish sauce, until fragrant and softened, about 2 minutes. Stir in the curry paste, then pour in the coconut milk (if using curry powder, mix it with the coconut milk before adding to the pan). Season with more fish sauce. Bring to a boil.

Lower the fish head halves into the sauce. Ladle some of the sauce over them. Cover the pan, lower the heat and simmer for 12-15 minutes or until just done. Taste the sauce occasionally and add more fish sauce, if needed.

Scoop out the fish head halves and transfer to a shallow bowl (or two shallow bowls). Pour the sauce over them. Garnish with fried onion slices, toasted garlic, and snipped cilantro before serving.