NNWA · NUTRITION & WELLNESS ACADEMY

50 Indian Recipes

Real regional recipes, a nutrition note on every one, and the NNWA course behind each — nnwa.in/recipes/

EAST INDIAN

Aloo Posto (Bengali Potato & Poppy Seed Curry)

Side dish · 35 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian

Aloo posto is a Bengali side dish from West Bengal made by simmering cubed potatoes in a ground white poppy seed paste with minimal spicing. NNWA includes it as a classic example of Bengali home cooking's restraint, where a single ground seed paste, not a long spice list, defines the dish's flavour and texture.

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp white poppy seeds (posto), soaked 30 minutes
- 2-3 green chillies
- 3 medium potatoes, cubed
- 3 tbsp mustard oil
- 1/2 tsp nigella seeds (kalonji)
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- Water, as needed

Method

1. Grind the soaked poppy seeds with one or two green chillies and a little water into a smooth paste.
2. Heat mustard oil in a pan and temper with nigella seeds until they sputter.
3. Add the cubed potatoes and turmeric, and stir-fry for a few minutes until lightly coated.
4. Add salt and a splash of water, cover, and cook the potatoes until nearly tender.
5. Stir in the poppy seed paste and mix well, coating the potatoes evenly.
6. Add a slit green chilli and a little more water if needed for a light gravy.
7. Cook uncovered on low heat, stirring occasionally, until the raw smell of the poppy seeds disappears and the oil separates slightly.
8. Serve warm with steamed rice and dal.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

The dish uses potato as its main vegetable, so portion size matters more than any inherent property of the dish for those managing carbohydrate intake. Poppy seeds contribute plant fats and some minerals, and because the recipe uses very few whole spices, it is a useful example of how flavour can come from technique rather than a long ingredient list.

EAST INDIAN

Bengali Shukto (Mixed Vegetable Bitter Curry)

Main course · 50 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Vegan · Weight-management

Shukto is a traditional Bengali mixed vegetable curry from West Bengal, built on bitter gourd and a medley of seasonal vegetables in a light, mildly spiced milk or ghee-based gravy. NNWA includes it as a savoury opener eaten early in a Bengali meal, valued for its vegetable diversity and low-calorie profile.

Ingredients

- 1 medium bitter gourd (karela), thinly sliced
- 1 raw banana (green plantain), peeled and cubed
- 1 small aubergine (brinjal), cubed
- 1 medium potato, cubed
- 100g pumpkin, cubed
- 2 drumsticks, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 tsp panch phoron (Bengali five-spice)
- 2 dried red chillies
- 1 tbsp ghee or mustard oil
- 1 tbsp poppy seed and mustard seed paste
- 1 tsp ginger paste
- 1 tsp sugar
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp milk (optional, for a lighter gravy)

Method

1. Lightly fry the bitter gourd slices in a little oil until they soften and turn light brown; set aside.
2. Heat ghee or mustard oil in a heavy-bottomed pan and temper with panch phoron and dried red chillies until fragrant.
3. Add the potato, pumpkin, aubergine and drumstick pieces and sauté briefly.
4. Stir in ginger paste and the poppy seed-mustard paste, coating the vegetables evenly.
5. Pour in enough water to just cover the vegetables, add salt and sugar, and simmer until nearly tender.
6. Add the raw banana and the fried bitter gourd, and continue cooking until all the vegetables are soft.
7. Stir in milk if using, for a lighter, slightly rounded finish, and simmer for two more minutes.
8. Adjust seasoning and serve warm as the first course of a Bengali meal, with steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Shukto's wide mix of vegetables, including bitter gourd, drumstick, potato and plantain,

delivers fibre and micronutrients from a single dish, while its minimal oil and thin gravy keep calories modest. Bitter gourd is traditionally valued in Indian diets for its low glycaemic load, making the dish a light, vegetable-forward course rather than a heavy main.

EAST INDIAN

Cholar Dal (Bengali Bengal Gram Lentil)

Main course · 45 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · High-protein

Cholar dal is a Bengali lentil preparation from West Bengal made from split Bengal gram (chana dal), cooked until tender and finished with coconut slivers, raisins and a fragrant ghee tempering. NNWA features it as a protein-rich, slightly sweet dal traditionally served at festive and Sunday meals rather than as a plain everyday lentil dish.

Ingredients

- 1 cup chana dal (split Bengal gram), soaked 30 minutes
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- 3 tbsp ghee, divided
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 dried red chilli
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2-3 cloves
- 1-inch cinnamon stick
- 2 green cardamom pods
- 1 tbsp raisins
- 2 tbsp coconut slivers
- 1 tsp sugar

Method

1. Drain the soaked chana dal and pressure-cook it with turmeric, salt and enough water until soft but still holding its shape, about 3-4 whistles.
2. Lightly mash the dal with the back of a spoon to a coarse, thick consistency, and set aside.
3. Heat some of the ghee in a pan and fry the coconut slivers until golden, then remove and set aside.
4. In the same pan, temper the bay leaf, dried red chilli, cumin seeds, cloves, cinnamon and cardamom in the remaining ghee until fragrant.
5. Add the cooked dal to the tempering along with sugar and raisins, and simmer for five minutes to let the flavours combine.
6. Adjust the consistency with a little hot water if the dal is too thick, and check the seasoning.
7. Top with the fried coconut slivers just before serving.
8. Serve warm with luchi (fried puffed bread) or steamed rice.

Chana dal is notably higher in protein and fibre than many other lentils, and its lower glycaemic index helps produce a steadier release of energy after eating. The coconut and ghee tempering is used sparingly relative to the volume of lentils, so the dish remains protein-dense rather than fat-dominant.

EAST INDIAN

Dahi Bara (Odisha Lentil Fritters in Spiced Yoghurt)

Snack · 40 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health · High-protein

Dahi bara is a popular Odisha snack of deep-fried black gram lentil fritters (bara) soaked in whisked, spiced yoghurt and finished with a tempering of roasted spices. NNWA highlights it as a fermented-lentil, yoghurt-based snack, traditionally paired with spiced potato (aloo dum) at Odisha street stalls.

Ingredients

- 1 cup split black gram (urad dal), soaked 4-5 hours
- 1 tsp ginger, finely chopped
- 1-2 green chillies, finely chopped
- Salt to taste
- Oil, for deep-frying
- 2 cups plain yoghurt, whisked smooth
- 1/2 tsp roasted cumin powder
- 1/2 tsp black salt
- 1/2 tsp red chilli powder
- Water, to adjust yoghurt consistency
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- A light sprinkle of spice mix, for garnish (optional)

Method

1. Drain the soaked urad dal and grind it with minimal water into a thick, fluffy batter.
2. Whisk in the chopped ginger, green chillies and salt, and beat the batter well to incorporate air.
3. Heat oil for deep-frying and drop spoonfuls of batter in, shaping them into small discs, frying until golden and cooked through.
4. Drain the fried baras and immediately soak them in warm water for ten minutes to soften them.
5. Meanwhile, whisk the yoghurt with roasted cumin powder, black salt, chilli powder and a little water until smooth and pourable.
6. Gently squeeze the softened baras to remove excess water, then place them in the spiced yoghurt to soak for at least 20 minutes.
7. Chill briefly if time allows, then top with fresh coriander and a light sprinkle of spice mix before serving.
8. Serve cold or at room temperature, traditionally alongside spiced potato curry (aloo dum).

The lentil batter is traditionally rested briefly before frying, which supports the growth of beneficial bacteria, and the yoghurt base adds further live cultures once the fried fritters are soaked in it. Black gram (urad dal) is also a good source of plant protein, so despite being fried, the dish delivers meaningful protein alongside a gut-supportive fermented element.

EAST INDIAN

Litti Chokha (Bihari Baked Wheat Balls with Mashed Vegetables)

Main course · 1 hr 10 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · High-protein

Litti chokha is a Bihari main course consisting of roasted whole wheat balls stuffed with spiced roasted chana (Bengal gram) flour, served with a smoky mashed vegetable mix called chokha. NNWA notes that litti is wheat-based, so despite common belief it is not gluten-free; the sattu stuffing is what gives the dish its notable protein content.

Ingredients

- 2 cups whole wheat flour (atta)
- 3 tbsp ghee (for dough and basting)
- Salt to taste
- Water, to knead and cook
- 1.5 cups sattu (roasted chana flour)
- 2 tbsp mustard oil (for stuffing and chokha)
- 1 tsp ajwain (carom seeds)
- 1 tsp nigella seeds (kalonji)
- 2 tbsp chopped mango pickle or a squeeze of lemon
- 2 onions, finely chopped, divided
- 3 green chillies, finely chopped, divided
- 1 tbsp chopped garlic, divided
- 1 large aubergine, 4 tomatoes and 2 potatoes, for the chokha
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

Method

1. Knead the wheat flour with a little ghee, salt and water into a firm dough, and rest it for 20 minutes.
2. For the stuffing, mix sattu with mustard oil, ajwain, nigella seeds, chopped pickle or lemon juice, half the onion, green chillies and garlic into a crumbly, well-combined filling.
3. Divide the dough into balls, flatten each into a small cup, fill generously with the sattu mixture, and seal the edges to enclose the filling completely.
4. Roast the stuffed balls (littis) in a preheated oven or over low charcoal embers, turning occasionally, until the crust is firm and lightly charred, about 25-30 minutes.
5. Baste the roasted littis with melted ghee before serving.
6. Meanwhile, roast the aubergine, tomatoes and potatoes directly over an open flame or in the oven until the skins char and the flesh softens.
7. Peel the charred vegetables, mash them together, and mix with the remaining onion, garlic and green chillies, coriander,

and a generous drizzle of mustard oil and salt.

8. Serve the littis hot, split open or whole, with a generous serving of chokha and a side of ghee.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

The sattu (roasted chana flour) stuffing is a genuinely good source of plant protein and fibre, which is what earns litti chokha its high-protein tag rather than the wheat shell itself. Because littis are traditionally baked or roasted over embers rather than deep-fried, the dish carries less added fat than many other stuffed Indian breads.

EAST INDIAN

Macher Jhol (Bengali Everyday Fish Curry)

Main course · 40 min · 4 servings

High-protein · Heart-healthy

Macher jhol is the everyday Bengali fish curry from West Bengal, a thin, turmeric-forward gravy built around a light-fleshed freshwater fish such as rohu or katla, simmered with potatoes in minimal oil. NNWA presents it as a lean, protein-rich staple that shows how Bengali cooking favours simplicity over heaviness for daily meals.

Ingredients

- 500g rohu or katla fish, cut into steaks
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder, for marinating the fish
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- 1 tsp nigella seeds (kalonji)
- 2 medium potatoes, halved
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 tsp ginger paste
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder, for the gravy
- 1/2 tsp red chilli powder
- 2 green chillies, slit
- Water, as needed
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

Method

1. Rub the fish steaks with turmeric and salt, and leave to rest for 10 minutes.
2. Heat mustard oil in a pan until it just starts to smoke, then shallow-fry the fish pieces briefly on both sides and set aside.
3. In the same oil, temper nigella seeds until fragrant.
4. Add the potatoes and fry lightly until they pick up some colour.
5. Add ginger paste, cumin powder, turmeric and chilli powder, and stir for a minute with a splash of water so the spices do not catch.
6. Add the chopped tomato and cook until it softens into the masala.
7. Pour in water to make a thin gravy, add salt, and simmer until the potatoes are nearly cooked through.
8. Slide in the fried fish and green chillies, and simmer gently for five to seven minutes without stirring vigorously, so the fish stays intact.
9. Finish with fresh coriander and serve hot with steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Freshwater fish such as rohu is a lean source of complete protein, and macher jhol's thin, minimally oiled gravy keeps the dish light compared with cream or coconut-based curries. Because it is simmered rather than fried in a heavy batter, more of the fish's protein content is preserved without added saturated fat, making it a practical everyday protein option.

EAST INDIAN

Mishti Doi (Bengali Sweetened Fermented Yoghurt)

Dessert · 35 min · 6 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health

Mishti doi is a Bengali dessert from West Bengal made by fermenting milk sweetened with caramelised sugar or jaggery in earthen pots, producing a thick, custard-like set yoghurt with a distinctive caramel colour. NNWA includes it as a naturally fermented sweet, valued for its live cultures alongside its role as a classic Bengali dessert.

Ingredients

- 1 litre full-fat milk
- 3/4 cup sugar, divided
- 2 tbsp water (to help caramelise the sugar)
- 2-3 tbsp plain yoghurt (as a starter culture)
- A pinch of ground cardamom (optional)
- A pinch of salt (optional, to balance sweetness)

Method

1. Boil the milk in a heavy-bottomed pan and simmer, stirring occasionally, until it reduces to about three-quarters of its original volume.
2. In a separate pan, melt half the sugar with the water over low heat until it turns a deep caramel colour.
3. Carefully stir the caramelised sugar into the reduced milk, along with the remaining sugar and cardamom if using, and mix until fully dissolved.
4. Allow the sweetened milk to cool to lukewarm, warm enough to touch comfortably but not hot.
5. Whisk the yoghurt starter into the lukewarm milk until evenly combined.
6. Pour the mixture into an earthen pot or a similar container and cover.
7. Leave undisturbed in a warm place for 6-8 hours, or until fully set.
8. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours before serving.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Like other set yoghurts, mishti doi is fermented by live bacterial cultures, which is the basis for its gut-health association, though the added sugar means it should still be treated as

a dessert rather than a health food. The traditional earthen pot helps draw out excess moisture during fermentation, giving a thicker, more concentrated yoghurt than one set in a standard container.

EAST INDIAN

Pakhala Bhata (Odisha Fermented Rice)

Main course · 25 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Vegan · Gut-health

Pakhala bhata is a traditional Odisha dish of cooked rice soaked in water and left to ferment overnight, then served cold with a tempering of curry leaves and mustard seeds, alongside vegetables and fried accompaniments. NNWA presents it as a summer staple across Odisha, prized for being naturally fermented and cooling in hot weather.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked rice
- 3 cups water, plus extra for soaking
- 1 tbsp yoghurt or a splash of leftover pakhala water (as a starter, optional)
- Salt to taste
- 1 tbsp mustard oil
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- A few curry leaves
- 1-2 dried red chillies
- 1 small onion, sliced, for serving
- 1 green chilli, sliced, for serving
- Fried fish or vegetable fritters, to serve (optional)

Method

1. Place the cooked rice in a large bowl and add enough water to submerge it completely.
2. Stir in a spoonful of yoghurt or a little leftover pakhala water if available, to help start the fermentation.
3. Cover the bowl and leave it to ferment at room temperature overnight, or for at least 8 hours.
4. The next day, check that the rice has developed a mild, pleasantly sour aroma, which signals it has fermented properly.
5. Heat mustard oil in a small pan and temper with mustard seeds, curry leaves and dried red chillies until fragrant.
6. Pour the tempering over the fermented rice and mix in salt to taste.
7. Serve cold, topped with sliced raw onion and green chilli, alongside simple sides such as fried potato, saag or a piece of fried fish.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Overnight fermentation of the soaked rice encourages the growth of lactic acid bacteria, similar in principle to other fermented Indian staples, which is the basis for pakhala's

association with gut comfort. Served cold and lightly tempered, it is also a low-fat, easily digestible dish that Odisha households traditionally favour during the hottest months.

NORTH INDIAN

Aloo Gobi (Potato & Cauliflower Dry Curry)

Side dish · 40 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Vegan

Aloo gobi is a North Indian dry curry of potatoes and cauliflower cooked together with turmeric, cumin and a light blend of spices until tender but not mushy. NNWA includes this everyday vegetarian side dish, found in households and restaurants across northern India, as a simple, plant-based example of vegetable cookery that needs no dairy or meat to be satisfying.

Ingredients

- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 medium cauliflower, cut into florets
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger, grated
- 1 green chilli, chopped
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1/2 teaspoon coriander powder
- 1/4 teaspoon red chilli powder
- 1/4 teaspoon garam masala
- 2 tablespoons oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Heat oil in a wide pan and temper with cumin seeds.
2. Add the chopped onion, ginger and green chilli, sauteing until the onion softens.
3. Add the tomato, turmeric, coriander powder and chilli powder, cooking until the tomato breaks down.
4. Add the cubed potatoes, stirring to coat with the masala, and cook covered for 5-6 minutes.
5. Add the cauliflower florets, mix well, and cook covered on low heat, stirring occasionally, until both vegetables are tender, about 12-15 minutes.
6. Cook uncovered for the final few minutes if any excess moisture needs to evaporate, so the dish stays dry rather than watery.
7. Sprinkle in the garam masala and adjust salt.
8. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve as a side with roti or dal-rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

This dish is entirely plant-based, and cauliflower in particular contributes fibre and

vitamin C alongside the starchier potato, giving the plate a more varied nutrient profile than potato alone would. Because it is typically dry-cooked with a modest quantity of oil rather than simmered in a rich gravy, aloo gobi tends to carry less added fat than many North Indian curries while still being genuinely flavourful.

NORTH INDIAN

Bajra Khichdi (Pearl Millet & Lentil Khichdi)

Main course · 50 min · 4 servings

Gluten-free · Diabetic-friendly · Weight-management

Bajra khichdi is a North Indian one-pot dish made by simmering pearl millet with split moong lentils, vegetables and mild spices into a soft, porridge-like meal. NNWA includes this Rajasthani and Haryanvi staple as an example of a gluten-free, fibre-rich grain traditionally used in home cooking across the drier regions of northern India.

Ingredients

- 1 cup pearl millet (bajra), soaked for 4-6 hours
- 1/2 cup split yellow moong lentils
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1/2 cup chopped bottle gourd or pumpkin
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon ginger, grated
- 1 tablespoon ghee
- Salt to taste
- 4 cups water, adjusted for consistency

Method

1. Drain the soaked bajra and rinse the moong lentils together.
2. Heat ghee in a pressure cooker and temper with cumin seeds.
3. Add the chopped onion and grated ginger, sauteing until the onion softens.
4. Add the tomato, turmeric and diced vegetables, cooking for 2-3 minutes.
5. Add the drained bajra and moong lentils, stirring to coat with the spices.
6. Add water and salt, then pressure-cook for 4-5 whistles until the millet and lentils are completely soft.
7. Allow the pressure to release naturally, then stir well, mashing lightly to reach a soft, khichdi-like consistency.
8. Adjust water for consistency and serve hot with a spoon of ghee on top and a side of curd.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Pearl millet has a lower glycaemic impact than polished rice and contributes more fibre and magnesium, which is one reason it has long featured in the diets of drought-prone regions of Rajasthan. Combined with lentils and vegetables in a single pot, the dish delivers a balanced ratio of complex carbohydrate, plant protein and fibre in modest portions, suiting those managing blood sugar or watching overall calorie intake.

NORTH INDIAN

Besan Chilla (Gram Flour Savoury Pancake)

Breakfast · 25 min · 2 servings

High-protein · Gluten-free · Diabetic-friendly

Besan chilla is a North Indian savoury pancake made from a spiced batter of gram flour, or besan, milled from chickpeas. NNWA includes this quick, protein-forward breakfast, popular from Punjab to Uttar Pradesh, as a gluten-free alternative to wheat-based flatbreads, cooked fresh on a griddle much like a savoury crepe.

Ingredients

- 1 cup besan (gram flour)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 small tomato, finely chopped
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons coriander leaves, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1/4 teaspoon carom seeds (ajwain)
- 1/4 teaspoon red chilli powder
- Water, as needed
- Salt to taste
- Oil, for cooking

Method

1. Whisk the besan with turmeric, chilli powder, carom seeds and salt, gradually adding water to form a smooth, lump-free batter of pouring consistency.
2. Stir in the chopped onion, tomato, green chilli and coriander leaves.
3. Rest the batter for 10 minutes to let the besan hydrate fully.
4. Heat a flat griddle or non-stick pan and lightly grease with oil.
5. Pour a ladleful of batter onto the griddle and spread it into a thin, even circle.
6. Drizzle a little oil around the edges and cook on medium heat until the underside is golden and set.
7. Flip carefully and cook the other side until golden with light brown spots.
8. Serve hot with mint or coriander chutney.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Gram flour is made from ground chickpeas and carries their protein and fibre content forward into a naturally gluten-free batter, without the refined starch typical of many quick breakfasts. Because the batter is high in protein and fibre relative to its carbohydrate content, it tends to produce a steadier post-meal blood sugar response than a plain refined-flour pancake.

NORTH INDIAN

Chole (Punjabi Chickpea Curry)

Main course · 1 hr · 4 servings

Vegetarian · High-protein · Gut-health

Chole is a spiced chickpea curry from Punjab in North India, simmered with onions, tomatoes and a roasted whole-spice blend until thick and deeply flavoured. NNWA includes it as a staple example of a plant-based, high-protein main course, traditionally eaten with bhature or steamed rice across northern Indian households.

Ingredients

- 2 cups dried chickpeas, soaked overnight
- 2 black tea bags or a muslin pouch of tea leaves
- 2 large onions, finely chopped
- 3 tomatoes, pureed
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- 2 green chillies, slit
- 2 tablespoons chole masala powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon asafoetida
- 1 teaspoon red chilli powder
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 3 tablespoons ghee or oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves and julienned ginger, to garnish

Method

1. Pressure-cook the soaked chickpeas with the tea bags and a pinch of salt until soft, about 25-30 minutes; discard the tea bags and reserve the cooking liquid.
2. Heat ghee in a heavy-bottomed pan and temper with cumin seeds and asafoetida until fragrant.
3. Add the chopped onions and saute until deep golden brown.
4. Stir in the ginger-garlic paste and green chillies, cooking until the raw smell disappears.
5. Add the pureed tomatoes, turmeric, chilli powder and chole masala, and cook until the oil separates from the masala.
6. Add the cooked chickpeas along with the reserved cooking liquid and simmer for 15-20 minutes, mashing a few chickpeas to thicken the gravy.
7. Adjust salt and consistency, then finish with a final tempering of ghee if desired.
8. Garnish with coriander leaves and julienned ginger before serving.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Chickpeas are a dense source of plant protein and soluble fibre, which slows glucose absorption and supports steady digestion. The long simmer and the asafoetida used in tempering are traditional aids to reducing the gas-forming compounds in legumes,

making the dish easier on the gut than raw pulses would be.

NORTH INDIAN

Lauki Chana Dal (Bottle Gourd & Split Chickpea Lentil)

Main course · 50 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Weight-management

Lauki chana dal is a North Indian lentil preparation of split chickpea lentils simmered together with bottle gourd, a mild, water-rich vegetable, in a lightly spiced tempering. NNWA includes this everyday household dish, common across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab, as a filling, low-fat main course built around a modest quantity of oil and a high proportion of vegetables and pulses.

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup split chana dal, soaked for 30 minutes
- 2 cups bottle gourd (lauki), peeled and diced
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger-garlic paste
- 1 green chilli, chopped
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1/2 teaspoon coriander powder
- 1 tablespoon oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Pressure-cook the soaked chana dal with turmeric and enough water until soft but still holding its shape, about 3-4 whistles.
2. Heat oil in a pan and temper with cumin seeds.
3. Add the chopped onion and saute until translucent, then add the ginger-garlic paste and green chilli, cooking until fragrant.
4. Add the chopped tomato and coriander powder, cooking until the tomato softens.
5. Add the diced bottle gourd and a splash of water, cover and cook until the gourd is nearly tender, about 8-10 minutes.
6. Add the cooked chana dal along with its cooking liquid, and simmer together for 10 minutes so the flavours combine.
7. Adjust the salt and consistency, mashing lightly if a thicker dal is preferred.
8. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve with roti or steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Bottle gourd is very low in calories and high in water content, which adds volume and

satiety to the meal without contributing much energy, while the chana dal supplies protein and fibre that help slow digestion. Together they make a dish that is genuinely filling relative to its calorie count, a useful example when discussing portion-friendly, weight-conscious vegetarian meals that do not rely on being bland or restrictive.

NORTH INDIAN

Moong Dal Cheela (Sprouted Yellow Lentil Pancake)

Breakfast · 35 min · 2 servings

High-protein · PCOS-friendly

Moong dal cheela is a North Indian savoury pancake made from soaked and ground split yellow lentils, spiced and cooked on a griddle like a crepe. NNWA includes this light, protein-rich breakfast, common across Uttar Pradesh and Delhi households, as a naturally protein-forward alternative to a standard wheat-flour breakfast.

Ingredients

- 1 cup split yellow moong dal, soaked for 3-4 hours
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 small tomato, finely chopped
- 1 green chilli
- 1/2 inch ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 2 tablespoons coriander leaves, chopped
- Water, as needed for grinding
- Salt to taste
- Oil, for cooking

Method

1. Drain the soaked moong dal and blend with ginger, green chilli and a little water into a smooth, thick, pourable batter.
2. Stir in cumin seeds, turmeric and salt, and rest the batter for 10 minutes.
3. Fold in the chopped onion, tomato and coriander leaves.
4. Heat a flat griddle and lightly grease with oil.
5. Pour a ladleful of batter onto the griddle and spread thinly into a round.
6. Drizzle a little oil around the edges and cook on medium heat until the base turns golden and firm.
7. Flip gently and cook the other side until golden with light brown spots.
8. Serve hot with mint chutney or plain yoghurt.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Split yellow moong lentils are a lean, easily digestible source of plant protein with a relatively low fat content, which makes this pancake a filling but light breakfast option. The dish's high protein-to-carbohydrate ratio, along with the fibre from the whole lentil, tends to produce a more gradual rise in blood sugar than a starch-heavy breakfast, a pattern relevant to those managing PCOS-related insulin resistance.

NORTH INDIAN

Palak Paneer (Spinach & Cottage Cheese Curry)

Main course · 45 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Iron-rich

Palak paneer is a North Indian curry of fresh spinach pureed into a smooth gravy and simmered with cubes of paneer, a fresh Indian cottage cheese. NNWA includes this widely loved dish, popular from Punjab to Delhi, as an example of pairing iron-rich leafy greens with a dairy-based protein in one everyday main course.

Ingredients

- 2 large bunches spinach, roughly chopped
- 250 grams paneer, cubed
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- 2 green chillies
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon garam masala
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 2 tablespoons ghee or oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh cream (optional)
- Salt to taste

Method

1. Blanch the spinach in boiling water for 2 minutes, then plunge into cold water and drain.
2. Blend the blanched spinach with the green chillies into a smooth puree.
3. Heat ghee in a pan and temper with cumin seeds.
4. Add the chopped onion and saute until translucent, then add the ginger-garlic paste and cook until fragrant.
5. Add the chopped tomatoes and turmeric, cooking until the tomatoes soften and break down.
6. Stir in the spinach puree and simmer gently for 5-7 minutes, adjusting consistency with a little water if needed.
7. Add the paneer cubes and garam masala, and simmer for a further 3-4 minutes without letting it boil hard.
8. Finish with cream if using, adjust salt, and serve warm with roti or rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Spinach contributes non-haem iron along with vitamin C-bearing accompaniments like tomato and lemon, which improve how well that iron is absorbed by the body. Paneer adds calcium and a complete protein, making this a dish nutrition students can use to

illustrate how a leafy green and a dairy protein combine into a nutrient-dense vegetarian plate.

NORTH INDIAN

Punjabi Kadhi Pakora (Yogurt Curry with Fritters)

Main course · 1 hr · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health

Punjabi kadhi pakora is a North Indian curry of spiced, simmered yogurt thickened with gram flour and studded with deep-fried gram flour fritters called pakoras. NNWA includes this Punjab household staple, usually served over steamed rice, as an example of fermented dairy used as the base of a savoury main course rather than a side condiment.

Ingredients

- 2 cups sour yogurt, whisked
- 1/2 cup besan (gram flour), divided
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger-garlic paste
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon asafoetida
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 2 dried red chillies
- 1 teaspoon red chilli powder
- 2 tablespoons oil, plus more for frying
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Whisk the yogurt with 1/4 cup besan, turmeric and water to form a smooth, thin batter for the kadhi base.
2. For the pakoras, mix the remaining besan with a little chopped onion, chilli powder and salt, add water to form a thick batter, and deep-fry small spoonfuls until golden; set aside.
3. Heat oil in a pot and temper with cumin seeds, fenugreek seeds, asafoetida and dried red chillies.
4. Add the chopped onion and ginger-garlic paste, sauteing until softened.
5. Pour in the yogurt-besan mixture, stirring continuously to prevent curdling, and bring to a gentle simmer.
6. Reduce the heat and let the kadhi simmer for 25-30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it thickens and the raw besan taste disappears.
7. Add the fried pakoras to the simmering kadhi about 10 minutes before serving so they soften slightly while absorbing the flavour.
8. Adjust salt, garnish with coriander

leaves, and serve hot with steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Yogurt naturally carries live cultures that support a healthy population of gut bacteria, and slow-simmering it in this dish, rather than serving it raw, still retains much of its digestive benefit while making it more suitable for a warm main course. The gram flour used both in the curry base and the pakoras adds plant protein and fibre, rounding out a dish that is otherwise centred on dairy.

NORTH INDIAN

Rajma Chawal (Kidney Bean Curry with Rice)

Main course · 1 hr 5 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · High-protein · Heart-healthy

Rajma chawal is a North Indian meal of red kidney beans simmered in a spiced onion-tomato gravy, served over steamed rice. Rajma refers to the kidney beans and chawal to the rice; NNWA includes this Punjabi and Kashmiri household staple as a classic plant-based, high-protein comfort meal eaten across northern India, especially on Sundays.

Ingredients

- 2 cups dried red kidney beans (rajma), soaked overnight
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 3 tomatoes, pureed
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- 2 green chillies, chopped
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon coriander powder
- 1 teaspoon red chilli powder
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 2 tablespoons oil or ghee
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves and 2 cups steamed rice, to serve

Method

1. Pressure-cook the soaked kidney beans with salt and enough water until completely soft, roughly 25-30 minutes.
2. Heat oil in a pan and temper with cumin seeds and the bay leaf.
3. Add the chopped onions and cook until golden brown.
4. Stir in the ginger-garlic paste and green chillies, cooking until fragrant.
5. Add the pureed tomatoes along with turmeric, coriander powder and chilli powder, cooking until the masala thickens and the oil separates.
6. Add the cooked kidney beans with their cooking liquid and simmer for 15-20 minutes, mashing a few beans against the side of the pan to thicken the gravy.
7. Sprinkle in the garam masala and adjust the salt and consistency.
8. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot over steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Kidney beans are rich in soluble fibre and potassium while being low in saturated fat, a combination generally associated with supporting healthy blood pressure and

cholesterol levels. Pairing the beans with rice, as this dish traditionally does, forms a complementary plant-protein combination that is a useful reference point when teaching balanced vegetarian meal planning.

NORTH INDIAN

Sarson Ka Saag with Makki di Roti (Mustard Greens with Cornmeal Flatbread)

Main course · 1 hr 30 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Iron-rich · Heart-healthy

Sarson ka saag is a Punjabi winter dish of slow-cooked mustard greens, traditionally served with makki di roti, a flatbread made from maize flour. NNWA includes this Punjab and Haryana classic as a seasonal, iron-rich vegetable main course, historically eaten by farming communities through the cold winter months of North India.

Ingredients

- 500 grams mustard greens (sarson), chopped
- 200 grams spinach, chopped
- 100 grams bathua or additional spinach, chopped
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- 2 green chillies
- 2 tablespoons maize flour (makki atta)
- 3 tablespoons ghee, divided
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- Salt to taste
- 2 cups maize flour, for the roti
- Warm water, for kneading

Method

1. Boil the mustard greens, spinach and bathua with the green chillies until completely soft, about 20-25 minutes.
2. Blend the boiled greens coarsely, retaining some texture rather than a completely smooth puree.
3. Heat 2 tablespoons of ghee in a pan and temper with cumin seeds.
4. Add the chopped onions and saute until golden, then stir in the ginger-garlic paste.
5. Add the chopped tomatoes and cook until soft and the oil separates.
6. Add the blended greens and maize flour to thicken, and simmer for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking.
7. Adjust salt and finish with the remaining ghee on top.
8. Knead the maize flour with warm water into a soft dough, and pat or roll into small flatbreads, cooking each on a hot griddle with a little ghee until browned on both sides; serve alongside the saag.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Mustard greens are a good source of iron, calcium and vitamin A, and the small amount of ghee traditionally used to finish the dish helps the body absorb these fat-soluble vitamins. The dish's mix of leafy greens rather than a single vegetable also supports a wider variety of plant compounds in one meal, a principle worth noting when discussing seasonal, whole-food eating patterns.

NORTHEAST INDIAN

Assamese Khar (Alkaline Raw Papaya & Lentil Dish)

Main course · 50 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Vegan · Gut-health

Khar is an Assamese main course, and also the name of its defining ingredient: a filtered alkaline water traditionally made from banana-peel ash, simmered here with raw papaya and moong dal (split yellow lentils). NNWA presents it as a modern, food-safe version of the dish that opens a traditional Assamese meal.

Ingredients

- 250g raw (green) papaya, peeled, deseeded and cubed
- 100g split yellow moong dal, lightly dry-roasted
- 1/4 teaspoon food-grade sodium bicarbonate dissolved in 500ml water (a safe modern substitute for filtered banana-peel-ash water, or kolakhar)
- 2 tablespoons mustard oil
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1-inch piece ginger, crushed
- 2-3 green chillies, slit lengthways
- Salt, to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped, to finish

Method

1. Heat the mustard oil in a heavy-bottomed kadhai until it just begins to smoke, then lower the heat.
2. Add the sliced onion and sauté for 2-3 minutes until softened and translucent.
3. Stir in the crushed garlic, ginger and slit green chillies, and cook for a minute until fragrant.
4. Add the roasted moong dal and stir for two minutes to coat it in the oil.
5. Add the papaya cubes and stir well to combine.
6. Pour in the bicarbonate solution (or filtered kolakhar), adding a little plain water if needed to just cover the vegetables.
7. Cover and simmer on low heat for 20-25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the papaya and dal are completely soft.
8. Season with salt, then lightly mash with the back of the ladle so the dish takes on a loose, semi-thick texture.
9. Simmer uncovered for a further 5 minutes, scatter over the coriander, and serve hot as the first course of the meal.

Raw papaya contributes fibre and the digestive enzyme papain, while moong dal adds plant protein and B vitamins, making this a light, easily digested course. Cooking with a mild alkaline agent is a distinctive regional technique rather than a health intervention, and using a measured pinch of food-grade sodium bicarbonate keeps the process safe and controllable at home.

NORTHEAST INDIAN

Assamese Masor Tenga (Tangy Fish Curry)

Main course · 40 min · 4 servings

High-protein · Heart-healthy

Masor tenga is an Assamese fish curry from Assam, a light, sour-tasting broth built around a freshwater fish and soured with ingredients such as tomato, lemon or the local elephant apple (outenga). NNWA highlights it as a minimally oiled, tomato- or citrus-soured curry typical of Northeast Indian home cooking's preference for light, tangy broths over heavy gravies.

Ingredients

- 500g rohu or any freshwater fish, cut into pieces
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder, for marinating the fish
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- 1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp panch phoron or a mix of mustard and cumin seeds
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- 2-3 pieces elephant apple (outenga), or extra tomato if unavailable
- 1 green chilli, slit
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder, for the gravy
- Water, as needed
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

Method

1. Rub the fish pieces with turmeric and salt, and leave to rest for ten minutes.
2. Heat mustard oil in a pan and lightly shallow-fry the fish pieces on both sides, then set aside.
3. In the same oil, temper with fenugreek seeds and panch phoron until they crackle.
4. Add the chopped tomato and elephant apple, or extra tomato, and cook until they soften and break down.
5. Add turmeric and a little water, and simmer until the souring agents have released their tang into the broth.
6. Season with salt and add the slit green chilli.
7. Slide in the fried fish pieces and simmer gently for five to seven minutes without vigorous stirring.
8. Garnish with fresh coriander and serve hot with steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Masor tenga uses very little oil compared with most Indian fish curries, relying instead on natural souring agents for flavour, which keeps the dish lower in added fat. The freshwater fish provides lean protein, and the light broth format means the dish can be a substantial

protein source without a heavy calorie load.

NORTHEAST INDIAN

Manipuri Eromba (Fermented Fish & Vegetable Mash)

Main course · 45 min · 4 servings

High-protein · Gut-health

Eromba is a Manipuri main course of boiled vegetables mashed together with ngari, a fermented fish paste, and roasted chillies. NNWA features it as a hallmark of Meitei home cooking, where the pungent, savoury depth of the fermented fish carries the whole dish rather than any single spice or sauce.

Ingredients

- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and boiled
- 150g soft-boiled or steamed pumpkin, cubed
- 100g yongchak (tree bean) or green beans, boiled
- 2-3 tablespoons ngari (fermented fish), roasted directly on a dry pan or wrapped in leaf over a flame
- 4-5 dried red chillies, roasted
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon mustard oil (optional, for finishing)

Method

1. Boil the potatoes, pumpkin and yongchak or green beans separately until fully tender, then drain well.
2. Roast the ngari on a dry tawa over low heat for a few minutes on each side until it releases its aroma and turns slightly crisp at the edges.
3. Dry-roast the red chillies for a minute until fragrant, then crush them coarsely.
4. In a large mixing bowl, mash the boiled potato, pumpkin and yongchak together roughly with a spoon or your hand, leaving some texture rather than a smooth puree.
5. Flake the roasted ngari into the mash, discarding any bones, and mix through.
6. Add the crushed roasted chillies, chopped onion, garlic and salt.
7. Mix everything thoroughly by hand until well combined; this hands-on mixing is traditional and helps distribute the ngari evenly.
8. Finish with the chopped coriander and a thin drizzle of mustard oil if using, then serve at room temperature with steamed rice.

Ngari, the fermented fish central to this dish, is fermented over weeks by natural bacterial cultures, a process that can support a more varied gut microbiome and delivers concentrated protein in small quantities. The boiled potato and greens add fibre and micronutrients, while the mash is naturally low in added fat since no oil is used in preparation.

NORTHEAST INDIAN

Naga-style Bamboo Shoot Curry

Side dish · 45 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Vegan · Gut-health

Naga-style bamboo shoot curry is a Northeast Indian side dish from Nagaland, made by simmering fermented or fresh bamboo shoot with minimal spices, often alongside local beans, in the distinctive, smoky, boiled-rather-than-tempered style of Naga cooking. NNWA includes it to represent the region's characteristic use of fermented bamboo shoot as a defining pantry staple.

Ingredients

- 200g fermented bamboo shoot, sliced (or fresh bamboo shoot, boiled and sliced)
- 1 cup soaked and boiled black-eyed beans or local beans (optional)
- 1 tbsp mustard oil
- 2-3 dried red chillies, or to taste
- 1 tsp ginger, roughly crushed
- 1 tsp garlic, roughly crushed
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Water, as needed
- A small piece of dried chilli, used sparingly, for extra heat (optional)

Method

1. If using dried fermented bamboo shoot, soak it in water for a couple of hours to soften before slicing.
2. If using fresh bamboo shoot, boil it in plenty of water for 20-25 minutes to remove any bitterness, then drain and slice.
3. Heat a little mustard oil in a pan and lightly crush in the ginger and garlic.
4. Add the chopped tomato and cook until it softens.
5. Add the sliced bamboo shoot, beans if using, dried red chillies and salt.
6. Pour in enough water to just cover the ingredients and bring to a simmer.
7. Cook uncovered on low heat until the bamboo shoot is tender and the flavours have combined, stirring occasionally.
8. Adjust seasoning, and serve warm as a side alongside steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Fermented bamboo shoot, a Naga kitchen staple, undergoes a natural lactic acid fermentation similar to other fermented vegetables, which is the basis for its gut-health association. The curry itself uses very little oil, in keeping with the boiling and simmering techniques that dominate traditional Naga cooking, rather than the frying-based tempering common in many other Indian regions.

NORTHEAST INDIAN

Sikkimese Gundruk Soup (Fermented Leafy Green Soup)

Side dish · 40 min · 4 servings

Vegan · Gut-health · Iron-rich

Gundruk soup is a Sikkimese side dish made from gundruk, sun-dried and fermented mustard or radish leaves, simmered into a thin, tangy broth with potato and tomato. NNWA includes it as a staple of Himalayan foothill cooking, traditionally eaten to accompany rice on cold days.

Ingredients

- 50g dried gundruk (fermented mustard or radish leaves), soaked in warm water for 15 minutes
- 1 medium potato, peeled and diced
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1-inch piece ginger, finely chopped
- 1-2 dried red chillies
- 1 teaspoon mustard oil
- 1/2 teaspoon Sichuan pepper (timur) or ordinary black pepper, lightly crushed
- Salt, to taste
- 500ml water

Method

1. Drain the soaked gundruk, squeeze out excess water, and roughly chop it.
2. Heat the mustard oil in a pan until it shimmers, then add the dried red chillies and let them sizzle for a few seconds.
3. Add the chopped onion, garlic and ginger, and sauté until the onion softens and turns golden.
4. Stir in the chopped tomato and cook until it breaks down into a soft pulp.
5. Add the chopped gundruk and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes to let it absorb the aromatics.
6. Add the diced potato and the water, then bring to a boil.
7. Reduce the heat and simmer for 15-18 minutes, until the potato is tender and the soup has taken on the gundruk's characteristic tang.
8. Season with salt and the crushed timur or black pepper, simmer for a further two minutes, and serve hot as a side alongside steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

The fermentation process that produces gundruk encourages naturally occurring lactic

acid bacteria, similar in principle to sauerkraut or kimchi, which can contribute to a more diverse gut microbiome. The leafy greens used are also a good source of dietary iron and other micronutrients, and the dish is entirely plant-based with no dairy or animal fat in its traditional preparation.

PAN-INDIAN

Dal Tadka (Tempered Yellow Lentils)

Main course · 35 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · High-protein

Dal tadka is a dish of boiled yellow lentils, usually toor dal, finished with a hot tempering of ghee or oil, cumin, garlic and dried red chilli poured over just before serving. NNWA includes it as a staple example of an accessible, everyday plant-protein source that appears on lunch and dinner tables across the whole country.

Ingredients

- 1 cup toor dal (split pigeon pea)
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt, to taste
- 3 cups water
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 4-5 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 dried red chillies
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 green chilli, slit
- A pinch of asafoetida
- Chopped coriander leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Wash the toor dal and pressure-cook with turmeric, salt and water until soft and fully mashed.
2. Whisk the cooked dal until smooth, adjusting consistency with hot water if it is too thick.
3. Heat ghee or oil in a small pan for the tempering.
4. Add cumin seeds and let them sputter, then add the chopped garlic and dried red chillies.
5. Once the garlic turns light golden, add the asafoetida, chopped onion and green chilli, and saute until the onion softens.
6. Add the chopped tomato and cook until it breaks down slightly.
7. Pour the hot tempering over the simmering dal and stir it in.
8. Simmer for another 2-3 minutes to let the flavours combine, then garnish with coriander leaves before serving.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Toor dal and other split pulses used in dal tadka are a concentrated source of plant protein and dietary fibre, and pairing them with rice or roti over the course of a day helps build a more complete amino acid intake. The tempering step adds flavour compounds from the spices without needing large amounts of oil, since a small quantity poured at the end goes a long way. Regularly including a lentil dish like this is one of the simplest

ways to raise protein intake in a predominantly vegetarian Indian diet.

PAN-INDIAN

Fruit Chaat (Spiced Mixed Fruit Salad)

Snack · 15 min · 4 servings

Vegan · Kid-friendly · Weight-management

Fruit chaat is a mixed fruit salad tossed with lemon juice, chaat masala and a little black salt, giving sweet seasonal fruit a tangy, savoury edge. NNWA includes it as a naturally vegan, low-calorie snack that makes fruit more appealing to children by borrowing the familiar chaat seasoning used across Indian street food.

Ingredients

- 1 apple, chopped
- 1 banana, sliced
- 1 cup papaya, chopped
- 1 guava, chopped
- 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds
- 1/2 cup grapes, halved
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp chaat masala
- 1/4 tsp black salt
- 1/4 tsp roasted cumin powder
- A few mint leaves, chopped (optional)
- A pinch of red chilli powder (optional)

Method

1. Wash and chop all the fruits into bite-sized pieces, keeping banana and apple for last so they do not brown while other fruit is prepared.
2. Combine all the chopped fruit and pomegranate seeds in a large bowl.
3. Squeeze the lemon juice over the fruit and toss gently to coat and prevent browning.
4. Sprinkle the chaat masala, black salt, roasted cumin powder and chilli powder, if using, over the fruit.
5. Toss everything together gently so the fruit is evenly coated without being crushed.
6. Garnish with chopped mint leaves and serve immediately.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Because fruit chaat is essentially a bowl of whole fruit with a light seasoning and no added sugar, cream or fried element, it delivers fibre, vitamins and natural sweetness at a low calorie density, making it a satisfying option for anyone watching their weight. Using a variety of fruits also broadens the range of vitamins and antioxidant compounds in a single serving compared with eating one fruit alone.

PAN-INDIAN

Masala Chaas (Spiced Buttermilk)

Beverage · 10 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health · Diabetic-friendly

Masala chaas is a spiced, diluted yoghurt drink made by whisking curd (yoghurt) with water, roasted cumin, ginger, curry leaves and a little salt until frothy. NNWA includes it as a cooling, low-sugar beverage that draws on curd's naturally fermented base, a familiar way to introduce the idea of fermented dairy and gut health.

Ingredients

- 1 cup thick curd (yoghurt)
- 2-3 cups chilled water
- 1/2 tsp roasted cumin powder
- 1/2-inch piece ginger
- 1 green chilli
- A few curry leaves
- 1 tbsp chopped coriander leaves
- 1/4 tsp black salt
- Salt, to taste

Method

1. Whisk the curd well in a large bowl or blender until smooth and lump-free.
2. Add the water gradually, whisking continuously, until the mixture reaches a thin, drinkable consistency.
3. Crush the ginger and green chilli together, or blend them briefly with a little of the curd mixture.
4. Add the crushed ginger-chilli paste, curry leaves, roasted cumin powder, black salt and regular salt to the chaas.
5. Whisk or blend again until everything is well combined and slightly frothy on top.
6. Chill the chaas in the refrigerator, or serve immediately over ice.
7. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves before serving.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Chaas is made from curd, a fermented dairy product that contains live bacterial cultures associated with a healthy gut microbiome, along with a modest amount of protein and calcium. Diluting the curd with water lowers the calorie and fat density of the drink compared with plain lassi. Because it is unsweetened and seasoned with spices rather than sugar, it remains a suitable everyday drink for people watching their blood sugar.

PAN-INDIAN

Masala Chai (Spiced Milk Tea)

Beverage · 15 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian

Masala chai is a spiced milk tea made by simmering black tea leaves with milk, water and a blend of whole spices such as ginger, cardamom and cloves. NNWA includes it as a starting point for understanding how everyday spices contribute plant compounds and antioxidants to the Indian diet, well beyond their role as flavouring.

Ingredients

- 3 cups water
- 1.5 cups whole milk
- 2-3 tsp loose black tea leaves (CTC)
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, crushed
- 4-5 green cardamom pods, crushed
- 3-4 cloves, crushed
- 1-inch cinnamon stick, crushed
- 4-5 black peppercorns, crushed
- Sugar or jaggery, to taste

Method

1. Crush the ginger, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and peppercorns coarsely with a mortar and pestle or the back of a knife.
2. Bring the water to a boil in a saucepan and add the crushed spices.
3. Simmer for 2-3 minutes to let the spices infuse the water.
4. Add the tea leaves and boil for another 2 minutes until the water turns a deep reddish-brown.
5. Pour in the milk and bring the mixture back to a boil.
6. Reduce the heat and simmer for 3-4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the chai reaches the desired strength and colour.
7. Add sugar or jaggery to taste and stir to dissolve.
8. Strain the chai through a fine sieve directly into cups and serve hot.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

The ginger, cardamom, cloves and cinnamon used in masala chai contain polyphenols and other plant compounds that fall under the broader antioxidant and phytochemical category studied in nutrition science for their role against oxidative stress. The milk adds a modest amount of protein and calcium, while sugar should be used sparingly to keep the drink appropriate for regular, everyday consumption.

PAN-INDIAN

Multigrain Roti (Mixed-Flour Flatbread)

Side dish · 35 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Diabetic-friendly

Multigrain roti is an unleavened flatbread made by combining wheat flour with other flours such as jowar (sorghum), bajra (pearl millet) or ragi (finger millet), then rolling and cooking it on a hot griddle. NNWA includes it as a fibre-rich alternative to plain wheat roti, useful for anyone wanting more variety and fibre in their daily bread.

Ingredients

- 1 cup whole wheat flour (atta)
- 1/4 cup jowar (sorghum) flour
- 1/4 cup bajra (pearl millet) flour
- 1/4 cup ragi (finger millet) flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp carom seeds (ajwain), optional
- Warm water, as needed
- Ghee or oil, for cooking

Method

1. Combine the wheat flour, jowar flour, bajra flour and ragi flour in a large bowl.
2. Add the salt and ajwain, if using, and mix well.
3. Gradually add warm water and knead into a soft, pliable dough, adding water a little at a time.
4. Cover the dough and let it rest for 15-20 minutes.
5. Divide the dough into equal portions and roll each into a ball.
6. Dust with flour and roll each ball into a roti, using a little extra flour to prevent sticking, as the millet flours make the dough less elastic than pure wheat.
7. Heat a griddle or tawa and cook the roti on both sides until light brown spots appear.
8. Smear a little ghee or oil on each side and press gently with a cloth or spatula until the roti puffs and is fully cooked.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Blending wheat flour with millet flours such as jowar, bajra or ragi increases the overall fibre content of the roti compared with using wheat alone, which can slow the rate at which the meal raises blood glucose. Millets also contribute additional minerals such as iron and calcium, depending on which grains are used, though because this version still contains wheat flour, it is not suitable for anyone who needs to avoid gluten entirely.

PAN-INDIAN

Paneer Bhurji (Scrambled Cottage Cheese)

Breakfast · 25 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · High-protein

Paneer bhurji is a quick, scrambled dish made by crumbling fresh paneer, Indian cottage cheese, and cooking it with sauteed onion, tomato and mild spices. NNWA includes it as a fast, high-protein breakfast option that pairs well with roti or bread, since paneer's dense protein content and short cooking time make it practical for a busy morning.

Ingredients

- 250 g fresh paneer, crumbled
- 2 tbsp oil or ghee
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1-2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped capsicum (optional)
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp red chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp garam masala
- Salt, to taste
- Chopped coriander leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Crumble the paneer into small, even pieces using your hands or a fork.
2. Heat oil or ghee in a pan and add the cumin seeds.
3. Once the cumin sputters, add the chopped onion and saute until translucent.
4. Add the ginger-garlic paste and green chillies, and cook briefly until the raw smell fades.
5. Add the chopped tomato and capsicum, if using, and cook until the tomato softens.
6. Add the turmeric, red chilli powder, garam masala and salt, and stir well.
7. Add the crumbled paneer and mix gently to coat it in the masala.
8. Cook for 3-4 minutes on low heat, stirring occasionally, taking care not to overcook the paneer.
9. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and serve hot with roti or bread.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Paneer is a fresh, unfermented dairy cheese with a notably high protein content relative to its volume, which makes paneer bhurji an efficient way to add protein to a meal in a

short cooking time. Cooking it with onion, tomato and turmeric adds fibre and other plant compounds to what would otherwise be a dairy-only dish. A protein-rich, moderate-carbohydrate breakfast like this is often suggested as part of general dietary approaches to conditions such as PCOS, though it should be seen as one part of a broader eating pattern rather than a treatment on its own.

PAN-INDIAN

Roasted Makhana (Fox Nuts / Lotus Seeds)

Snack · 20 min · 4 servings

Gluten-free · Weight-management · Post-workout

Roasted makhana is a light, crunchy snack made by dry- or ghee-roasting fox nuts, the seeds of the prickly water lily, with a little salt and spice until crisp. NNWA includes it as a low-calorie, gluten-free snack option that is easy to prepare in bulk and keeps well for several days.

Ingredients

- 3 cups raw makhana (fox nuts)
- 1.5 tbsp ghee or oil
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder (optional)
- 1/4 tsp red chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp roasted cumin powder
- A pinch of black pepper
- 1/2 tsp chaat masala (optional, added after roasting)

Method

1. Sort through the makhana and discard any that feel unusually heavy or discoloured.
2. Heat ghee or oil in a wide, heavy-bottomed pan over medium-low heat.
3. Add the makhana and roast, stirring frequently, for 10-12 minutes until they turn crisp and lightly golden.
4. Reduce the heat if the makhana start browning too quickly, since they burn easily once they begin to colour.
5. Sprinkle in the salt, turmeric, red chilli powder, roasted cumin powder and black pepper, and toss well to coat evenly.
6. Continue roasting for another minute so the spices adhere and lose their raw smell.
7. Remove from heat, sprinkle with chaat masala if using, and let cool completely before serving or storing.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Makhana is largely starch and water by weight once roasted, with a relatively low fat content and no gluten, which makes it a light option for those managing calorie intake or avoiding wheat-based snacks. Roasting rather than deep-frying keeps the added fat to a minimum, and the airy, crisp texture makes a modest handful feel more satisfying than its calorie count alone would suggest, which is useful as a between-meal or post-exercise

snack.

PAN-INDIAN

Sprouts Salad (Moong or Chana Sprout Salad)

Snack · 20 min · 4 servings

Vegan · High-protein · Weight-management

Sprouts salad is a fresh, no-cook dish made from sprouted moong beans or chickpeas tossed with chopped onion, tomato, cucumber, lemon juice and light spices. NNWA includes it as a simple, high-protein snack that shows how sprouting a legume changes its nutrient profile and texture without any cooking required.

Ingredients

- 2 cups sprouted moong beans or chana (or a mix)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, finely chopped
- 1/2 cucumber, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp chaat masala
- 1/4 tsp roasted cumin powder
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped (optional)
- 2 tbsp chopped coriander leaves
- Salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp pomegranate seeds (optional)

Method

1. Rinse the sprouted moong or chana thoroughly under running water.
2. If a softer texture is preferred, steam the sprouts for 3-4 minutes, then cool completely; otherwise use them raw.
3. In a mixing bowl, combine the sprouts with chopped onion, tomato and cucumber.
4. Add the lemon juice, chaat masala, roasted cumin powder and salt.
5. Add the chopped green chilli, if using, and toss everything together well.
6. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and pomegranate seeds, if using, and serve immediately.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Sprouting a legume activates enzymes that partially break down some of the starches and anti-nutrient compounds present in the dry seed, which can make the sprouted form easier to digest for many people. Sprouted moong or chana retain their protein and fibre content while adding vitamin C from the sprouting process itself, and the raw, high-fibre, low-calorie-density preparation makes this salad a satisfying snack for anyone managing their weight.

PAN-INDIAN

Vegetable Khichdi (Rice & Lentil Comfort Dish)

Main course · 35 min · 4 servings

Gluten-free · Diabetic-friendly · Kid-friendly

Vegetable khichdi is a one-pot dish of rice and split moong or toor dal cooked together with mixed vegetables and mild spices until soft and porridge-like. NNWA features it as an easily digestible, well-balanced meal that combines carbohydrate and plant protein in a single pan, making it a reliable option from infant weaning age through to convalescence.

Ingredients

- 1 cup rice, washed
- 1/2 cup split yellow moong dal
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- A pinch of asafoetida
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 cup mixed chopped vegetables (carrot, beans, peas, potato)
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 1-2 green chillies, slit (optional)
- Salt, to taste
- 4-5 cups water
- Chopped coriander leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Wash the rice and dal together until the water runs clear, then soak for 10-15 minutes.
2. Heat ghee in a pressure cooker or heavy-bottomed pot and add cumin seeds and asafoetida.
3. Once the cumin sputters, add ginger and green chilli, if using, and saute briefly.
4. Add the mixed vegetables and turmeric powder, and stir for a minute.
5. Add the soaked rice and dal along with salt, and mix well.
6. Pour in the water and bring to a boil.
7. Cover and cook until the rice and dal turn soft and the mixture reaches a thick, porridge-like consistency, adding more hot water if needed.
8. Finish with a spoon of ghee and chopped coriander before serving hot.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Rice and lentils cooked together supply a fuller amino acid profile than either eaten alone, since the dal's lysine complements the cereal's methionine. The soft texture and gentle spicing make khichdi easy to digest, which is why it is commonly used to introduce solids to children and to feed convalescing adults. Using seasonal vegetables also adds fibre

and micronutrients without heavy fat or refined ingredients, keeping it appropriate for blood sugar management when portioned sensibly.

PAN-INDIAN

Vegetable Pulao (Spiced Rice with Mixed Vegetables)

Main course · 40 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Kid-friendly

Vegetable pulao is a one-pot rice dish cooked with mixed vegetables and whole spices such as bay leaf, cinnamon and cloves, giving the rice a mild aromatic flavour without a heavy sauce or excess oil. NNWA includes it as an approachable way to add vegetables to a familiar rice-based meal that most children and adults already enjoy.

Ingredients

- 1.5 cups basmati rice
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil
- 1 bay leaf
- 1-inch cinnamon stick
- 2-3 cloves
- 2 green cardamom pods
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1-2 green chillies, slit
- 1.5 cups mixed chopped vegetables (carrot, beans, peas, potato)
- Salt, to taste
- 2.5 cups water
- Chopped coriander or mint leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Wash the basmati rice and soak it in water for 20-30 minutes, then drain.
2. Heat ghee or oil in a heavy-bottomed pot and add the bay leaf, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom and cumin seeds.
3. Once the spices release their aroma, add the sliced onion and saute until lightly golden.
4. Add the ginger-garlic paste and green chillies, and saute briefly until the raw smell fades.
5. Add the mixed vegetables and cook for 3-4 minutes.
6. Add the drained rice and gently mix, taking care not to break the grains.
7. Pour in the water, add salt, and bring to a boil.
8. Cover, reduce the heat, and cook until the rice is tender and the water is fully absorbed.
9. Let the pulao rest, covered, for 5 minutes before fluffing gently with a fork and garnishing with coriander or mint.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Cooking rice together with a mix of vegetables such as carrot, peas, beans and potato

increases the fibre, vitamin and mineral content of the plate compared with plain rice, without changing the dish's essentially mild, familiar flavour. Because the vegetables are cut small and cooked into the rice itself rather than served separately, vegetable pulao is often an easier way to get children who are selective about vegetables to eat a reasonable variety in one meal.

SOUTH INDIAN

Avial (Kerala Mixed Vegetable Curry in Coconut-Yoghurt Sauce)

Main course · 40 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health

Avial is a Kerala main course of mixed vegetables simmered in a coconut and green chilli paste and finished with a spoonful of yoghurt and raw coconut oil, traditionally served as part of the Onam sadya feast and everyday Kerala meals. NNWA highlights it as a vegetable-forward dish built on healthy fats from coconut and live cultures from yoghurt.

Ingredients

- 1 raw plantain, cut into batons
- 1 carrot, cut into batons
- 100g pumpkin, cut into batons
- 100g yam, cut into batons
- 1 drumstick, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 100g green beans, halved
- 1 small aubergine, cut into batons
- 1 cup fresh grated coconut
- 2-3 green chillies
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 cup thick yoghurt (curd), whisked
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- Salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons raw (unrefined) coconut oil, plus a few curry leaves

Method

1. Cook the harder vegetables — yam, pumpkin, carrot and drumstick — in a heavy pot with a little water, turmeric and salt until just tender.
2. Add the softer vegetables — beans, aubergine and plantain — and continue cooking until all the vegetables are tender but still holding their shape.
3. Coarsely grind the grated coconut, green chillies and cumin seeds with a little water to a thick, slightly grainy paste.
4. Stir the coconut paste into the cooked vegetables and simmer gently for 3-4 minutes, adding only a little water if needed.
5. Remove from the heat and fold in the whisked yoghurt, taking care the mixture does not boil once the yoghurt is added.
6. Finish with a generous drizzle of raw coconut oil and a few curry leaves, stirred through without further cooking.
7. Serve warm alongside steamed rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Avial packs five or more vegetables into a single dish, giving a wide spread of fibre,

vitamins and minerals in one serving, while the coconut paste supplies medium-chain fats that carry the fat-soluble vitamins in those vegetables. The yoghurt stirred in at the end adds beneficial bacteria, which is why avial is traditionally finished off the heat rather than boiled further.

SOUTH INDIAN

Chettinad Vegetable Kurma

Main course · 45 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Vegan

Chettinad vegetable kurma is a South Indian main course from Tamil Nadu's Chettinad region, in which mixed vegetables are simmered in a spiced coconut gravy built on roasted whole spices such as star anise, fennel and cinnamon. NNWA presents it as an example of how varied whole spices contribute antioxidant plant compounds to everyday cooking.

Ingredients

- 2 cups mixed vegetables (carrot, beans, potato, peas), chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh grated coconut
- 1 tablespoon roasted chana dal
- 4-5 dried red chillies
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 small cinnamon stick
- 1 star anise
- 2-3 cloves
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 2 tablespoons oil
- A few curry leaves and salt, to taste

Method

1. Grind the grated coconut, roasted chana dal, dried red chillies, fennel seeds, cinnamon, star anise and cloves with a little water to a smooth paste.
2. Boil the mixed vegetables in salted water until just tender, then drain and set aside.
3. Heat oil in a pan and sauté the onion until golden.
4. Add the ginger-garlic paste and cook until the raw smell disappears, then add the tomatoes and turmeric powder and cook until soft.
5. Stir in the ground coconut-spice paste and cook for 4-5 minutes, adding a splash of water to prevent sticking.
6. Add the cooked vegetables and enough water to reach a gravy consistency, and simmer for 8-10 minutes.
7. Adjust the salt, add curry leaves and simmer for 2 more minutes before serving.
8. Serve hot with idiyappam, chapati or rice.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

The gravy's whole spices — star anise, fennel, cinnamon and dried red chillies among them — contain a range of plant polyphenols and volatile compounds associated with

antioxidant activity, alongside the vegetables' own vitamin and mineral content. Using several vegetables and a spice-forward, coconut-based gravy rather than a cream- or ghee-heavy one keeps the dish plant-based while still full-flavoured.

SOUTH INDIAN

Curd Rice (Thayir Sadam)

Main course · 25 min · 3 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health · PCOS-friendly

Curd rice, known as thayir sadam in Tamil, is a South Indian dish of cooked rice mixed with yoghurt and finished with a mustard-seed tempering, traditionally eaten as a cooling final course of a meal or as a light standalone dish. NNWA features it as an accessible, everyday source of live bacterial cultures in the Indian diet.

Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked rice, cooled
- 1 cup thick yoghurt (curd)
- 1/4 cup milk (optional, for consistency)
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon oil or ghee
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon urad dal
- 1 dried red chilli
- A few curry leaves
- 1/2 inch ginger, finely grated
- 1 tablespoon pomegranate seeds or grated carrot, to garnish (optional)
- A few coriander leaves, chopped

Method

1. Mash the cooled cooked rice lightly with a spoon or your hand until slightly broken but not a paste.
2. Whisk the yoghurt with the milk and salt until smooth, then mix it thoroughly into the rice.
3. Heat oil in a small pan and splutter the mustard seeds and urad dal until the dal turns golden.
4. Add the dried red chilli, curry leaves and grated ginger, and sauté for a few seconds.
5. Pour the tempering over the curd rice and mix well.
6. Garnish with pomegranate seeds or grated carrot and coriander leaves, and chill briefly before serving.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Yoghurt's live bacterial cultures support a healthy gut microbiome and can help ease digestion after a heavier meal, which is why curd rice is traditionally served last. Its cooling, low-spice profile and moderate glycaemic load also make it a gentle option within a broader anti-inflammatory or PCOS-conscious eating pattern, though it should be seen as one component of a varied diet rather than a treatment in itself.

SOUTH INDIAN

Idli Sambar (Steamed Rice Cakes with Lentil Vegetable Stew)

Breakfast · 45 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health · Gluten-free · Diabetic-friendly

Idli sambar is a South Indian breakfast from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka pairing steamed, fermented rice-and-lentil cakes (idli) with a tangy lentil and vegetable stew (sambar) flavoured with tamarind and a spice blend. NNWA includes it as an example of natural fermentation improving digestibility and nutrient availability in an everyday plant-based meal.

Ingredients

- 2 cups idli rice (parboiled short-grain rice)
- 1/2 cup whole urad dal (split black gram, skinned)
- 1/2 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- Salt, to taste
- 1 cup toor dal (split pigeon peas)
- 1 small aubergine, cubed
- 1 drumstick, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 small carrot, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 tablespoon tamarind pulp
- 2 tablespoons sambar powder
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds, a few curry leaves and a pinch of asafoetida for tempering

Method

1. Soak the idli rice and urad dal (with fenugreek seeds) separately in water for 4-6 hours, then grind each to a smooth batter and combine.
2. Leave the batter to ferment overnight, or 8-10 hours, in a warm place until it doubles in volume and turns slightly sour.
3. Season the batter with salt, pour into greased idli moulds and steam for 10-12 minutes until a skewer comes out clean.
4. Meanwhile, pressure-cook the toor dal with turmeric until soft, then mash it lightly.
5. Simmer the aubergine, drumstick and carrot in water with tamarind pulp and sambar powder until the vegetables are tender.
6. Stir the mashed dal into the vegetable mixture, add the tomato and simmer for 5-7 minutes, adjusting salt.
7. Heat oil in a small pan, splutter the mustard seeds, curry leaves and asafoetida, and pour this tempering over the sambar.
8. Serve the hot idlis with a generous ladle of sambar.

Fermentation of the idli batter partially breaks down phytic acid and raises B-vitamin content, making the rice and urad dal combination easier to digest than an unfermented grain-lentil mix. Sambar adds soluble fibre and a slow-digesting lentil protein, which together with the low-fat steaming method keep the meal gentle on blood sugar.

SOUTH INDIAN

Kerala Fish Curry (Coconut & Kokum Fish Curry)

Main course · 45 min · 4 servings

High-protein · Heart-healthy

Kerala fish curry is a coastal South Indian main course in which fish, typically a firm variety such as kingfish or pomfret, is simmered in a tangy, coconut-based gravy soured with kokum or tamarind and cooked in a traditional clay pot. NNWA presents it as a naturally omega-3-rich dish central to Kerala's coastal diet.

Ingredients

- 500g kingfish or pomfret, cut into steaks
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- 2 green chillies, slit
- 2 teaspoons Kashmiri red chilli powder
- 1 teaspoon coriander powder
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1/2 teaspoon fenugreek powder
- 3-4 pieces kokum (or 1 tablespoon tamarind pulp)
- 1 cup thin coconut milk
- 1/2 cup thick coconut milk
- A few curry leaves and salt, to taste

Method

1. Soak the kokum pieces in a little warm water for 15 minutes.
2. Heat coconut oil in a clay pot or heavy pan and splutter the mustard seeds.
3. Add the onion and sauté until softened, then stir in the ginger-garlic paste and green chillies and cook until fragrant.
4. Add the chilli powder, coriander powder, turmeric and fenugreek powder, and stir briefly over low heat to cook out the rawness.
5. Pour in the thin coconut milk and the soaked kokum with its water, and bring to a gentle simmer.
6. Slide in the fish pieces and simmer, without stirring vigorously, for 10-12 minutes until the fish is cooked through.
7. Stir in the thick coconut milk and curry leaves, and simmer for 2-3 minutes without boiling.
8. Rest the curry for a few hours or overnight before reheating gently, as the flavour deepens with time.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Fish such as kingfish and sardine are strong sources of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids,

which are associated with supporting healthy blood lipid levels as part of an overall heart-conscious diet. Kokum, the traditional souring agent in this curry, is low in fat and adds tang without the need for extra oil, keeping the dish's overall fat content moderate despite its rich flavour.

SOUTH INDIAN

Masala Dosa (Fermented Rice & Lentil Crepe with Potato Filling)

Breakfast · 50 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gluten-free

Masala dosa is a South Indian dish from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu made from a fermented rice-and-lentil batter cooked into a thin, crisp crepe and filled with a spiced potato mixture. NNWA features it to show how fermentation, a traditional Indian food-processing technique, improves the nutritional quality of a simple rice-and-lentil base.

Ingredients

- 2 cups dosa rice (or idli rice)
- 1/2 cup whole urad dal
- 1/4 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- Salt, to taste
- Oil or ghee, for cooking
- 4 medium potatoes, boiled and mashed coarsely
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 green chillies, slit
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon chana dal
- A few curry leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 tablespoon oil, for the filling

Method

1. Soak the rice and urad dal (with fenugreek) separately for 4-6 hours, grind to a smooth batter, combine and ferment overnight until doubled and slightly sour.
2. For the filling, heat oil and splutter mustard seeds and chana dal, then add curry leaves, green chillies and onion, and sauté until the onion softens.
3. Add turmeric powder and the mashed potatoes, mix well, season with salt and cook for 3-4 minutes until the flavours combine.
4. Season the dosa batter with salt and thin it with a little water to a pourable consistency.
5. Heat a flat griddle, pour a ladle of batter and spread it in a thin circular motion from the centre outward.
6. Drizzle a little oil or ghee around the edges and cook until the base turns golden and crisp.
7. Place a portion of the potato filling on one half of the dosa and fold it over.
8. Serve immediately with coconut chutney and sambar.

The fermented batter shares the same digestibility and B-vitamin benefits as idli, while the thin-cooked crepe uses very little oil compared with deep-fried breakfast options. The potato filling, tempered with mustard seeds, turmeric and curry leaves, contributes potassium and a modest amount of fibre from the onions and green chillies used in the masala.

SOUTH INDIAN

Pesarattu (Whole Green Gram Dosa)

Breakfast · 35 min · 4 servings

Vegan · High-protein · Diabetic-friendly

Pesarattu is an Andhra Pradesh breakfast crepe made from a batter of whole green gram (moong dal), ground with ginger and green chillies and cooked thin on a griddle, usually without fermentation. NNWA highlights it as a naturally vegan, high-protein dosa alternative well suited to an active or post-workout breakfast.

Ingredients

- 1 cup whole green gram (moong dal), soaked 4-6 hours
- 1 inch ginger, roughly chopped
- 2 green chillies, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- Salt, to taste
- Water, as needed
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- A few curry leaves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons coriander leaves, chopped
- Oil, for cooking

Method

1. Drain the soaked green gram and grind it with ginger, green chillies, cumin seeds and salt, adding just enough water to form a smooth, thick-ish batter.
2. Stir the chopped onion, curry leaves and coriander leaves into the batter.
3. Thin the batter with a little more water to a pourable, dosa-like consistency.
4. Heat a flat griddle and pour a ladle of batter, spreading it thinly in a circular motion from the centre outward.
5. Drizzle a little oil around the edges and cook on medium heat until the base turns golden and crisp.
6. Flip briefly to finish cooking the second side, or leave it to cook through for a fully crisp pesarattu.
7. Serve hot, traditionally with upma folded inside or ginger chutney on the side.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Whole green gram is a good source of plant protein and fibre, and because pesarattu uses the whole lentil rather than a rice-heavy batter, it delivers considerably more protein per serving than a standard rice-and-urad-dal dosa. Its slow-digesting carbohydrate and protein combination also make it a steadier, longer-lasting breakfast for someone training regularly.

SOUTH INDIAN

Ragi Dosa (Finger Millet Crepe)

Breakfast · 35 min · 4 servings

Gluten-free · High-protein · Diabetic-friendly · Iron-rich

Ragi dosa is a South Indian breakfast crepe made from finger millet (ragi) flour, rice flour and buttermilk, cooked thin and crisp on a griddle without the need for fermentation. NNWA highlights it as a millet-based alternative to rice dosa, valued for its fibre, iron and slower-releasing carbohydrate content.

Ingredients

- 1 cup ragi (finger millet) flour
- 1/2 cup rice flour
- 2 tablespoons semolina (rava), fine variety
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1-2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1/2 inch ginger, grated
- A few curry leaves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons coriander leaves, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- Salt, to taste
- Water, as needed
- Oil, for cooking

Method

1. Whisk the ragi flour, rice flour and semolina together with the buttermilk and enough water to form a thin, watery batter.
2. Stir in the onion, green chillies, ginger, curry leaves, coriander leaves, cumin seeds and salt, and rest the batter for 15-20 minutes.
3. Adjust the consistency with more water if needed; the batter should be much thinner than idli batter.
4. Heat a flat griddle and pour the batter from the edge inward in a circular motion, or spread it thinly with the back of a ladle.
5. Drizzle a little oil around the edges and cook on medium heat until the dosa turns crisp and the edges lift.
6. Flip if a softer texture is preferred, or leave it to cook through on one side for a fully crisp dosa.
7. Serve hot with coconut chutney or a simple vegetable sambar.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Finger millet has a lower glycaemic index than polished rice and contributes notably more dietary fibre and calcium, which together support steadier post-meal blood glucose. It is also a comparatively good plant source of iron among Indian grains, making ragi dosa a useful addition to a diet needing more of both iron and slow-digesting carbohydrate.

SOUTH INDIAN

Rava Upma (Semolina Savoury Porridge)

Breakfast · 25 min · 3 servings

Vegetarian · Weight-management

Rava upma is a South Indian breakfast made by roasting semolina (rava, also called sooji) and simmering it with tempered spices, vegetables and water into a soft, savoury porridge. NNWA includes it as a low-fat, portion-controlled breakfast option that is quick to prepare and easy to bulk up with vegetables.

Ingredients

- 1 cup rava (semolina), coarse variety
- 2 tablespoons oil or ghee
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon urad dal
- 1 teaspoon chana dal
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1-2 green chillies, chopped
- A few curry leaves
- 1/2 inch ginger, grated
- 1/2 cup mixed vegetables (carrot, peas, beans), finely chopped
- 2.5 cups water
- Salt, to taste
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 2 tablespoons fresh coriander, chopped

Method

1. Dry roast the rava in a pan over low heat for 4-5 minutes until fragrant and lightly golden, then set aside.
2. Heat oil in the same pan and splutter the mustard seeds, urad dal and chana dal until the dals turn golden.
3. Add the curry leaves, green chillies, ginger and onion, and sauté until the onion turns translucent.
4. Add the mixed vegetables and cook for 2-3 minutes until slightly softened.
5. Pour in the water and salt, and bring to a rolling boil.
6. Lower the heat and slowly add the roasted rava in a steady stream, stirring continuously to avoid lumps.
7. Cover and cook on low heat for 3-4 minutes until the water is absorbed and the rava is soft.
8. Stir in the lemon juice and coriander before serving hot.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Upma is cooked with minimal oil and a fixed ratio of semolina to water, which naturally caps the portion size and calorie density compared with fried breakfast items. Adding vegetables such as carrot, peas and beans increases the fibre and micronutrient content

of the dish for very few additional calories, supporting a filling but energy-moderate meal.

SOUTH INDIAN

Sambar (Lentil & Vegetable Stew)

Main course · 45 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · High-protein · Gut-health

Sambar is a South Indian lentil and vegetable stew, simmered with tamarind, a roasted spice blend and seasonal vegetables, and eaten across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh with rice, idli or dosa. NNWA presents it as a staple example of a legume-based dish built around toor dal, a strong plant protein source.

Ingredients

- 1 cup toor dal (split pigeon peas)
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 drumstick, cut into pieces
- 1 small aubergine, cubed
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 100g pumpkin, cubed
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons tamarind pulp
- 2-3 tablespoons sambar powder
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- A few curry leaves and a pinch of asafoetida

Method

1. Pressure-cook the toor dal with turmeric powder and enough water until soft, then mash lightly.
2. Soak the tamarind pulp in warm water and extract the juice, discarding the fibre.
3. Simmer the drumstick, aubergine, carrot, pumpkin and onion in a pot with a little water and salt until nearly tender.
4. Add the tamarind extract and sambar powder to the vegetables and simmer for 8-10 minutes until the raw smell disappears.
5. Stir in the mashed dal and tomato, and simmer for a further 8-10 minutes, adjusting the consistency with water.
6. Heat oil in a small pan, splutter the mustard seeds, then add curry leaves and asafoetida.
7. Pour the tempering over the sambar and simmer for 2 more minutes before serving.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Toor dal (split pigeon peas) forms the protein base of sambar and, combined with a wide mix of vegetables, contributes both protein and soluble fibre that supports regular digestion and a healthy gut microbiome. Tamarind and the roasted sambar powder also add polyphenol compounds along with their characteristic tang and depth of flavour.

WEST INDIAN

Dhokla (Steamed Fermented Gram Flour Cake)

Snack · 40 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gluten-free · High-protein

Dhokla is a Gujarati snack made from besan (gram flour) batter that is lightly fermented, steamed into a soft spongy cake, and finished with a mustard-seed tempering. NNWA highlights it as one of Indian cuisine's few genuinely steamed, oil-free savoury snacks rather than a fried one.

Ingredients

- 2 cups besan (gram flour), sieved
- 1 cup plain yoghurt, whisked
- 3/4 cup water, or as needed
- 1 tablespoon semolina (optional, for texture)
- 1-inch piece ginger, grated
- 1-2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon Eno fruit salt or 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- Salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons oil, divided
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds
- A pinch of asafoetida
- 8-10 curry leaves
- 1-2 slit green chillies (for tempering)
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped, to garnish

Method

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the besan, yoghurt, water, semolina, ginger, chopped green chillies, turmeric, sugar and salt to a smooth, lump-free batter of thick pouring consistency.
2. Set the batter aside to rest for 15-20 minutes, allowing a light natural fermentation to begin.
3. Set up a steamer with water and bring it to a boil; grease a shallow steaming tin or thali.
4. Just before steaming, sprinkle the Eno fruit salt or baking soda over the batter and add a teaspoon of water; stir gently in one direction as it froths up.
5. Immediately pour the aerated batter into the greased tin and place it in the steamer.
6. Steam on medium heat for 15-18 minutes, until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
7. Remove and let it cool for a few minutes, then cut into squares or diamonds while still in the tin.
8. For the tempering, heat the remaining oil in a small pan, add the mustard seeds

and let them splutter, then add the sesame seeds, asafoetida, curry leaves and slit green chillies.

9. Pour the hot tempering evenly over the cut dhokla, garnish with chopped coriander, and serve.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Besan is naturally gluten-free and provides more protein and fibre than a refined wheat flour equivalent, so dhokla offers a comparatively protein-dense, low-fat snack once steamed rather than fried. The brief fermentation of the batter also produces some of the lactic acid activity associated with improved digestibility, similar in principle to idli or dosa batter.

WEST INDIAN

Goan Fish Curry (Coconut & Kokum Fish Curry)

Main course · 45 min · 4 servings

High-protein · Heart-healthy

Goan fish curry is a coastal main course of fish simmered in a ground coconut and red chilli gravy, soured with kokum, a dried fruit native to the Western Ghats. NNWA includes it as a defining dish of Goan Hindu home cooking, distinct from the vinegar-based curries of the region's Catholic tradition.

Ingredients

- 500g fish (pomfret, kingfish or mackerel), cleaned and cut into pieces
- 1 cup fresh grated coconut
- 4-5 dried Kashmiri red chillies, soaked
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 4-5 black peppercorns
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 4-5 cloves garlic
- 1-inch piece ginger
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 4-5 pieces dried kokum, soaked in a little warm water
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- Salt, to taste
- Water, as needed

Method

1. Grind the grated coconut, soaked red chillies, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, peppercorns, turmeric, garlic and ginger with a little water into a smooth, thick paste.
2. Heat the coconut oil in a clay pot or heavy pan, add the chopped onion and sauté until translucent.
3. Add the chopped tomato and cook until it softens and breaks down.
4. Add the ground coconut-spice paste and cook for 5-6 minutes, stirring often, until the oil begins to separate at the edges.
5. Add enough water to reach a curry consistency and bring it to a gentle boil.
6. Add the soaked kokum along with its soaking water, and simmer for 5 minutes to let the sourness infuse the gravy.
7. Season with salt, then slide in the fish pieces gently so they don't break.
8. Simmer uncovered on medium-low heat for 8-10 minutes, without stirring vigorously, until the fish is just cooked through.
9. Rest for a few minutes off the heat before serving hot with steamed rice.

Fish such as pomfret, kingfish or mackerel provide omega-3 fatty acids alongside high-quality protein, both associated with cardiovascular health when eaten regularly as part of a varied diet. Kokum contributes tartness without needing tamarind or excess salt, and coconut, while calorie-dense, supplies flavour and body from a whole-food source rather than a processed fat.

WEST INDIAN

Gujarati Kadhi (Sweet-Sour Yoghurt Curry)

Main course · 35 min · 4 servings

Vegetarian · Gut-health

Gujarati kadhi is a thin, sweet-and-sour main course made from whisked yoghurt and besan (gram flour), simmered gently and tempered with curry leaves, mustard seeds and cloves. NNWA includes it as a defining accompaniment of the Gujarati thali, served alongside rice or khichdi.

Ingredients

- 1 cup plain yoghurt, whisked smooth
- 2 tablespoons besan (gram flour)
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon ghee or oil
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- 2-3 cloves
- 1-inch cinnamon stick
- 1 dried red chilli
- 8-10 curry leaves
- 1-inch piece ginger, grated
- 1-2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon jaggery or sugar
- A pinch of asafoetida
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- Salt, to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped, to garnish

Method

1. Whisk the yoghurt and besan together thoroughly in a bowl, ensuring there are no lumps, then whisk in the water to make a smooth, thin mixture.
2. Heat the ghee or oil in a heavy-bottomed pan over medium heat.
3. Add the mustard seeds, cumin seeds and fenugreek seeds, and let them splutter.
4. Add the cloves, cinnamon stick, dried red chilli and curry leaves, and sauté for a few seconds until fragrant.
5. Add the grated ginger, chopped green chillies and asafoetida, and sauté briefly.
6. Reduce the heat to low, then pour in the yoghurt-besan mixture slowly, stirring constantly to prevent curdling.
7. Add the turmeric and salt, and bring the kadhi to a gentle simmer, stirring frequently.
8. Simmer on low heat for 12-15 minutes, stirring often, until it thickens slightly and loses its raw besan taste.
9. Stir in the jaggery or sugar and simmer for a further two minutes.
10. Garnish with chopped coriander and serve hot with steamed rice or khichdi.

The yoghurt base contributes live cultures that can support gut bacteria, along with calcium and easily digestible protein, while the small amount of besan used to thicken it adds a little extra plant protein. The characteristic sweet-sour balance comes from a modest amount of jaggery or sugar against the yoghurt's natural tang, rather than from any heavy addition of fat.

WEST INDIAN

Kokum Sherbet (Cooling Kokum Fruit Drink)

Beverage · 15 min · 4 servings

Vegan · Gut-health

Kokum sherbet is a chilled Western Indian beverage made from the tart, dried rind of the kokum fruit, sweetened and spiced with roasted cumin. NNWA features it as a traditional coastal Maharashtrian and Goan cooling drink, typically served in the hotter months to accompany a meal.

Ingredients

- 15-20 pieces dried kokum rind
- 3 cups water, divided
- 3-4 tablespoons jaggery or sugar, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon roasted cumin powder
- A pinch of black salt
- A pinch of regular salt
- Ice cubes, to serve
- Fresh mint leaves, to garnish

Method

1. Soak the dried kokum rinds in 1 cup of warm water for 20-30 minutes until softened.
2. Blend the soaked kokum with its soaking water into a smooth, deep-pink pulp.
3. Strain the pulp through a fine sieve into a bowl, pressing well to extract all the liquid and discarding the fibrous solids.
4. Stir the jaggery or sugar into the strained kokum extract until fully dissolved; warming it slightly can help if using jaggery.
5. Add the roasted cumin powder, black salt and regular salt, and mix well.
6. Add the remaining 2 cups of water and stir to combine into a thin, pourable sherbet base.
7. Taste and adjust the sweetness, tartness and salt as needed.
8. Chill in the refrigerator for at least an hour, then serve over ice, garnished with fresh mint leaves.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Kokum's natural tartness comes from organic acids rather than added citrus, and it is traditionally used to aid digestion after a meal in the regions where it grows. As a chilled

water-based drink rather than a dairy or sugar-heavy one, it also supports hydration in hot weather without relying on artificial flavouring.

WEST INDIAN

Misal Pav (Maharashtrian Sprouted Lentil Curry with Bread)

Main course · 1 hr · 4 servings

High-protein · Vegetarian

Misal pav is a Maharashtrian main course of spiced sprouted moth bean curry, called usal, topped with crunchy farsan, onion and lime, and served with soft pav bread. NNWA highlights it as one of the country's most widely eaten sprouted-legume dishes, particularly popular in Pune and Mumbai.

Ingredients

- 2 cups sprouted moth beans (matki)
- 2 medium onions, one finely chopped and one for garnish
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- 2 tablespoons goda masala or a mild curry powder
- 1 tablespoon red chilli powder, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- A few curry leaves
- Salt, to taste
- 1 cup fine sev (crunchy gram flour noodles)
- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- 6-8 pav (soft dinner rolls), warmed and buttered

Method

1. Boil the sprouted moth beans in salted water for 10-12 minutes until just tender but not mushy, then drain and set aside, reserving the cooking liquid.
2. Heat the oil in a pan, add the mustard and cumin seeds, and let them splutter.
3. Add the curry leaves and finely chopped onion, and sauté until golden brown.
4. Stir in the ginger-garlic paste and cook for a minute until the raw smell fades.
5. Add the chopped tomatoes, turmeric, red chilli powder and goda masala, and cook until the tomatoes break down into a thick masala.
6. Add the boiled moth beans along with enough of the reserved cooking liquid to make a fairly thin, spicy curry (usal).
7. Simmer for 10-12 minutes, seasoning with salt, until the flavours come together.
8. To serve, ladle the hot usal into a bowl, top generously with sev, raw chopped onion and coriander.
9. Serve immediately with a lime wedge and warm, buttered pav on the side, adding the sev just before eating so it stays crisp.

Sprouting the moth beans before cooking increases their vitamin content and makes their nutrients more accessible, while the beans themselves are a good source of plant protein and fibre. Combined with pav bread, the dish delivers a fuller protein-and-carbohydrate profile than the curry alone, which is part of why it is popular as a substantial breakfast or lunch in Maharashtra.

WEST INDIAN

Sabudana Khichdi (Tapioca Pearl Khichdi)

Breakfast · 4 hr 20 min · 3 servings

Gluten-free · Vegetarian

Sabudana khichdi is a Maharashtrian breakfast made from soaked tapioca pearls (sago) stir-fried with roasted peanuts, cumin and green chilli. NNWA includes it as the best-known fasting-day (vrat) dish in West Indian cooking, traditionally eaten during religious fasts as well as as an everyday breakfast.

Ingredients

- 1.5 cups sabudana (tapioca pearls), rinsed and soaked overnight or for at least 4-6 hours
- 1/2 cup roasted peanuts, coarsely crushed
- 2 medium potatoes, boiled and cubed
- 2 tablespoons ghee or oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1-inch piece ginger, grated
- 8-10 curry leaves
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- Juice of 1 lime
- Rock salt (sendha namak) or regular salt, to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped, to garnish

Method

1. Rinse the soaked sabudana in a colander and drain thoroughly, then let it sit for 10-15 minutes so any excess water drains off; the pearls should separate easily and not feel wet.
2. Mix the crushed roasted peanuts, sugar and salt into the drained sabudana and set aside.
3. Heat the ghee or oil in a wide, heavy pan over medium heat.
4. Add the cumin seeds and let them sizzle, then add the chopped green chillies, grated ginger and curry leaves.
5. Add the boiled potato cubes and sauté for 2-3 minutes until lightly golden at the edges.
6. Reduce the heat to low, add the sabudana-peanut mixture, and toss gently to combine without crushing the pearls.
7. Cook on low heat, stirring frequently, for 6-8 minutes until the pearls turn translucent and glossy.
8. Squeeze over the lime juice, toss once more, and garnish with fresh coriander before serving hot.

Tapioca pearls are almost entirely starch and provide quick, easily digested energy, while the roasted peanuts included in the dish add plant protein, healthy fats and a meaningful amount of fibre that the pearls alone lack. Because it is naturally free of grains and lentils, the dish fits the specific dietary rules observed during many Hindu fasting days, alongside its everyday role as a light breakfast.

WEST INDIAN

Undhiyu (Gujarati Mixed Winter Vegetable Casserole)

Main course · 1 hr 35 min · 6 servings

Vegetarian · Vegan

Undhiyu is a Gujarati main course of mixed winter vegetables, including purple yam, sweet potato and surti papdi beans, slow-cooked together with spiced fenugreek dumplings called muthia. NNWA includes it as the season's signature dish, traditionally prepared around the Uttarayan and Makar Sankranti festival period.

Ingredients

- 200g purple yam (ratalu), peeled and cubed
- 200g sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 150g surti papdi beans (or broad beans), trimmed
- 150g baby potatoes, halved
- 100g brinjal (small purple aubergines), quartered
- 1 raw banana, peeled and cut into thick rounds
- 1 cup besan (gram flour)
- 1 cup chopped fresh fenugreek (methi) leaves
- 2 tablespoons semolina
- 1 tablespoon oil, plus extra for shallow-frying muthia
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 tablespoons grated coconut
- 2 tablespoons chopped coriander
- 1 tablespoon ginger-green chilli paste
- 1 tablespoon sugar or jaggery
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon each mustard seeds and cumin seeds
- A pinch of asafoetida
- 1 tablespoon coriander-cumin powder

- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder, plus red chilli powder to taste
- Salt, to taste

Method

1. For the muthia, mix the chopped fenugreek leaves, besan, semolina, half the ginger-green chilli paste, a little sugar, oil, baking soda and salt into a firm dough, adding water only if needed.
2. Shape the dough into small cylindrical dumplings and either steam them for 12-15 minutes or shallow-fry them until golden, then set aside.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the grated coconut, chopped coriander, remaining ginger-green chilli paste, sugar or jaggery, lemon juice, coriander-cumin powder and a little salt to make a stuffing.
4. Make small slits in the brinjal pieces and stuff each with a portion of this coconut mixture; keep the remaining mixture aside.
5. Heat oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot, add the mustard and cumin seeds and let them splutter, then add the asafoetida and turmeric.
6. Add the purple yam, sweet potato, baby potatoes and raw banana, along with the turmeric, chilli powder and salt; stir well to coat.
7. Layer in the surti papdi beans and

stuffed brinjal on top, sprinkle over the remaining coconut-coriander mixture, and add a splash of water.

8. Cover tightly and cook on low heat for 30-35 minutes, stirring gently once or twice, until the vegetables are tender but still holding their shape.

9. Add the cooked muthia in the last 8-10 minutes so they absorb the flavours without breaking apart.

10. Finish with a squeeze of lemon and extra coriander, and serve hot, traditionally with puri and shrikhand.

NNWA HEALTH NOTE

Because it brings together root vegetables, legumes and leafy fenugreek in one pot, undhiyu delivers a broad spread of fibre, plant protein and micronutrients rather than relying on a single vegetable. Cooked without dairy, as it traditionally is in many households, it also remains fully plant-based while still being substantial enough to serve as a main course.