

Creamy Vegetable Curry

Moody Mondays: When the view out of the window is of a bleak frozen tundra (be it urban or suburban), and has been seemingly forever, it's time for a warming curry. Creamy, coconut-y and as spicy as you want it to be, this rich curry leans on an Indian spice blend and is packed with easy-to-find vegetables that cook down into a lush stew. It's bright and colorful and looks as good as it tastes spooned over steamed basmati rice. Dial the heat up or down depending on how moody you are, and turn up the tunes. This is a moment you'll want to curate. Just be careful with the turmeric; it's loaded with health benefits but stains everything it touches a bright, fluorescent yellow.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons coconut or canola oil
1/2 onion, diced cut into 1/4-inch squares, about 3/4 cup
1 carrot, cut into 1/4-inch rounds, about 1/2 cup
Kosher salt
4 large cloves of garlic, grated on a rasp, or minced
2 teaspoons ginger grated on a rasp, or minced
2 tablespoons tomato paste
2 cups water
1 (13.5 ounce) can coconut milk (regular, not light)
1 small eggplant, about 8 ounces, peeled and diced into 1/4-inch cubes, about 1 cup
1 sweet potato, cut into 1/4-inch cubes, about 2 cups
1 russet potato, cut into 1/4-inch cubes, about 1½ cups
1 teaspoon garam masala
1/4 teaspoon turmeric
1 pinch chili powder, or to taste (see Cook's Note)
1 medium zucchini, quartered, sliced 1/4-inch thick
1/2 red bell pepper, cut into thin strips, about 3/4 cup
1/2 yellow bell pepper, cut into thin strips, about 3/4 cup
Steamed basmati rice
Cilantro leaves, to garnish

Directions

Place the oil in a Dutch oven or large pot over medium heat. When it begins to shimmer, add the onion and carrot. Season with a pinch of salt. Cook until onions are translucent, stirring occasionally and adjusting the heat so they don't brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and ginger and stir for about a minute. Mix in the tomato paste and spread it into a layer across the whole pan. You do want it to brown, so let it go for a minute or two. If the tomato paste begins to burn, but is still bright red on top, stir everything and spread it out again for another layer of caramelization. This builds a lot of flavor.

When the mixture has taken on a mostly brown color, add the water and coconut milk, making sure to scrape everything off the bottom of the pan. Stir in eggplant, sweet potato, potato, spices and 1 teaspoon of salt. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove cover, reduce heat and simmer until the vegetables are soft and can be smashed easily with a fork, about 20 minutes.

While the potatoes cook down, prep the rest of the vegetables. Try to make everything about the same size. When the potatoes have softened, add zucchini and peppers and cook until they are soft, about 5 minutes. Season to taste. Serve over steamed basmati rice and garnish each dish with cilantro leaves.

Cook's Notes

The amount of heat, color and flavor vary considerably from chili powder to chili powder. Darker chili powders that have darker chiles, such as ancho, will taste great but won't be as vibrant as some lighter-colored Indian blends. To control the heat, start with a pinch and add more a little at a time until it's where you want it. After each addition, let the curry cook for a minute or two to allow the spices and flavors to meld. If you add too much, don't worry — a pinch of salt and/or garam masala will tone it back down. You can find chili powders and garam masala at well-stocked stores, but Indian grocery stores will have the best blends. Stop in if there's one in your area — it will probably have an amazing selection of spices, so you can stock up.

total time: 1 hour 10 minutes

active prep: 45 minutes

serves: 4 servings

difficulty: easy