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Meghna Lamore



As the leaves start to turn colour, we shake of the laziness and long, hazy days of summer to welcome autumn. Much as we may miss summer, there are plenty of autumn goodies to look forward to, not the least of which is that ubiquitous emblem of the season: the pumpkin!

All around my little town the various farms and farmer's markets have already begun selling pumpkins of all shapes and sizes: from the tiny, inedible but incredibly pretty little decorative gourds to the huge jack'o'lanterns which I can barely lift to the front of my porch. The pumpkins

we're going to talk about today, however, are the small pie type: much easier to cut into than the larger ones, and very tasty.

Pumpkins in general are a very, very healthy vegetable: rich in antioxidants like beta-carotene (hence the deep orange colour of the pulp), vitamins A and C, potassium and zinc, and also incredibly high in fibre. I read somewhere recently that pumpkin keeps for up to six months whole, so I've bought a good number to store in our cellar and feed us through the winter.

For some reason, I seem to hear about pumpkin being used only in desserts and soups, which is rather strange to me, as one of my favourite treats growing up was curried pumpkin. My mentioning this at the local market set off quite a series of exclamations from my fellow shoppers, who apparently were too used to sweet preparations of pumpkin exclusively. And so, to celebrate the season and to add to our pumpkin repertoire, I've begged the recipe away from my mother to share with you all. Enjoy!

Kumro'r Tarkari (Pumpkin Curry)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tsp. Panch Phoron (Bengali Five-Spice: this is a mixture of equal parts of fenugreek, black caraway, cumin seed, mustard and fennel. Since most of us don't usually have all these in our pantries, try substituting all cumin seed or nigella).
- 4 Dried Red Chillies (you can substitute red chili pepper flakes if you haven't the whole variety on hand)
- 2 Tbsp Oil (traditional Bengali cuisine calls for mustard oil, but I usually use canola or olive oil).
- 1 Onion, large, sliced or diced
- 1 Pie Pumpkin, Diced
- 1 tsp. Turmeric
- 1 Tbsp Sugar
- 1 tsp. Red Chili Powder
- Salt, to taste

METHOD:

- 1- Heat oil in deep pan, then add in the Panch Phoron or your chosen substitute, and the dried red chillies.
- 2- When the spices start popping in the oil (make sure you don't get splashed!), add the sliced onion and sauté for a minute. If you're not using the five-spice mixture, then wait until the spice you're using grows fragrant, and then add the onion.
- 3- Add the pumpkin and fry together with everything else on medium-high for about 5 minutes.
- 4- Reduce the heat to low and add the salt, turmeric, sugar and the red chili powder.
- 5- Continue to cook on low until oil starts seeping out of the pumpkin. Mind you, I can never quite tell when oil starts "seeping", so my husband taught me to watch for when the pumpkin starts getting "shiny".
- 6- And there you are! Your curried pumpkin is done! It is traditionally eaten with Indian breads like roti or chapati, but I also like it with plain rice, and even on its own as a snack or a diet-friendly meal.

Bon Appétit and HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

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