

Tempering technique

Tempering is a common technique in South Indian cooking that lends flavor and taste to the dish. Spices are fried in oil or ghee (clarified butter) and heated to a high temperature to release their essential flavors and aromas. Use an oil with a high smoke point (ex., canola, coconut, sesame). A dish can be tempered at the start or end of the cooking process. Some spices that can be tempered in this way are mustard seeds, chickpeas, cumin seeds, red peppers, curry leaves, and asafoetida.

POTATO CURRY**Ingredients**

1 Tbsp oil
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp urad dal
1 red hot pepper
1 tsp chana dal
3-4 curry leaves
Pinch of asafoetida
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 green hot pepper, finely chopped
1 inch fresh ginger, finely chopped
4 potatoes, boiled and peeled
½ tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp lemon juice
1 stem cilantro leaves, finely chopped
Salt to taste

Steps

1. Prepare all ingredients (boil and peel potatoes, chop and slice vegetables as indicated)
2. In a pan, heat 1 Tbsp oil. Add cumin seeds, mustard seeds, urad dal, red pepper, and chana dal. Wait till mustard seeds splutter.
3. Add curry leaves and asafoetida. Lightly fry for a minute.
4. Add thinly sliced onion and fry till it turns translucent. Then add in finely chopped hot green peppers and ginger. Fry lightly till the raw smell of ginger goes away.
5. Add boiled potatoes and turmeric.
6. Mash the potatoes and add 3 Tbsp water to get a smooth gravy paste. Cook 3 min.
7. Add lemon juice and chopped cilantro leaves. Mix well.
8. Serve hot with masala dosa, rice, vada, or upma.

COCONUT CHUTNEY**Ingredients**

1 cup shredded fresh coconut
½ cup roasted split chickpeas
2 hot green peppers finely chopped
½-inch piece fresh ginger, finely chopped
1 tsp salt
½ cup water
2 tsp canola oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
¼ tsp asafoetida
1 curry leaf sprig

Steps

1. In a blender, combine the coconut, roasted split chickpeas, hot green peppers, ginger, and salt. Pulse until the chickpeas are coarsely ground.
2. Add ½ cup water and blend to a smooth paste.
3. Add oil to a small skillet and heat at medium level.
4. Add the mustard seeds, asafoetida, and curry leaves. Cook until the mustard seeds begin to sputter. Turn off the heat.
5. Stir the spice mix into the chutney.

SAMBAR

Ingredients

8 ½ cups split pigeon peas, rinsed in water	¼ tsp cumin seeds
4 ½ cups water	¼ cup shredded fresh coconut
3 tsp tamarind	1 tsp mustard seeds
½ tsp ghee	2 curry leaf sprigs
5 dry hot red peppers	¼ tsp asafoetida
3 Tbsp coriander seeds	1 cup mixed vegetables (e.g., diced okra, eggplant, carrots, radish)
1 ½ Tbsp chickpeas	1 Tbsp salt
1 onion, roughly chopped	1 tsp brown sugar
2 tsp black lentils	½ tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp fenugreek seeds, divided	

Steps

1. Boil pigeon peas in 2 cups of water until soft. Mash and set aside.
2. Stir the tamarind and the water it has been soaking in.
3. In a large skillet or wok over medium heat, heat the canola oil.
4. Add the red peppers, coriander seeds, chickpeas, chopped onions, lentils, some of the fenugreek seeds and cumin seeds. Dry-roast for 2-3 minutes until fragrant and the lentils turn light brown.
5. Stir in the coconut and dry-roast for 30 seconds. Cool the mixture.
6. Transfer the mixture to a blender. Pulse a few times to grind. With the blender running, add ½ cup of water until a smooth batter forms. Set it aside.
7. In the same skillet over medium heat, heat the canola oil.
8. Add the remaining fenugreek seeds, mustard seeds, curry leaves, and asafoetida. Cook until the mustard seeds begin to sputter.
9. Add the roughly chopped onion and cook for about 5 minutes until the onion is soft and translucent. Add the mixed vegetables and cook for 1 minute.
10. Stir in the tamarind mix, salt, brown sugar, and turmeric. Simmer the mixture for 10 minutes until the vegetables are soft and tender.
11. Stir in the coconut-spice mix and 1 cup of water. Simmer for 3-4 minutes.
12. Add the mashed pigeon peas and remaining 1 cup of water.
13. Simmer for 5 minutes. When the sambar starts to boil, turn off the heat.

DOSA

Prep time: 20 minutes, plus 6-8 hours to soak and 8-10 hours to ferment.

Ingredients:

2 cups rice grains, rinsed in cold water and drained well
½ cup whole black lentils, rinsed in cold water and drained well
½ tsp fenugreek seeds
3 ice cubes (1 in.)
2 ¼ cups cold water
1 tsp salt
½ cup water
8 tsp canola oil

Steps

1. In a large bowl, soak rice, lentils, and fenugreek seeds in cold water (2 in. deep) for 6-8 hours.
2. Add ice cubes and blend the mix to a thick and smooth batter, adding ½ cup water at a time.
3. Cover the bowl with a lid or plastic wrap and let it ferment in a warm place (e.g., an oven with just the light on) for 8-10 hours. When done, the batter should double in size and look frothy.
4. Stir in ½ cup water until the batter has a pouring consistency (like pancake batter).
5. Heat a round cast iron or nonstick griddle over medium heat.
6. Reduce the heat to low and pour a ladleful of batter onto the griddle. Using the back of the ladle, spread the batter around the griddle, starting from the middle and moving out toward the edges.
7. Spread 1 tsp of oil around the edges of the dosa.
8. Increase the heat to medium and cook the dosa for 45-50 seconds.
9. Using a flat spatula, loosen the edges and carefully flip the dosa. Cook for 25-30 seconds before removing it from the griddle repeat with the remaining batter and oil.
10. Serve hot.

UPMA

Ingredients

1 Tbsp canola oil
½ tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp black lentils
1 tsp chickpeas
2 dry hot peppers, finely chopped
1 tsp asafoetida
1 curry leaf sprig
2 cups water
1 ¼ tsp salt
1 cup roasted semolina, or cream of wheat
1 tsp ghee
Coconut chutney, for serving

Steps

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat the canola oil.
2. Add the mustard seeds, black lentils, and chickpeas. Cook until the mustard seeds begin to sputter, about 1 minute.
3. Add the hot green peppers, asafoetida, and curry leaves. Cook for 45 seconds.
4. Add the water and salt. Bring the water to a rolling boil.
5. Reduce the heat to medium-low and slowly add the semolina, stirring constantly to avoid lumps. Once all the semolina has been added, stir vigorously to avoid lumps and achieve a consistent texture throughout. Partially cover the skillet and cook for 2 minutes.
6. Turn off the heat. Stir in ghee and mix thoroughly.
7. Partially re-cover the skillet and let sit for 5 minutes. Serve hot with coconut chutney.

VADA

Ingredients

1 cup/200 grams urad dal (husked and split or whole black gram)
2 ½ - 3 cups water, for soaking
3-4 Tbsp water, for grinding and blending lentils
½ tsp cumin seeds
½ tsp black peppercorns, whole or crushed
7-8 curry leaves
1/3 cup finely chopped onions
1-2 chopped hot green peppers
1 tsp finely chopped ginger
1 pinch asafoetida
5-6 cups canola oil (for frying)

Steps

1. Soak the urad dal for 4 hours or overnight.
2. Rinse the dal.
3. Blend the soaked lentils with 1 cup water to a smooth batter. Batter should be thicker than pancake batter.
4. Add all the spices, herbs, and salt. Mix well.
5. Heat the canola oil in a fryer until it appears blurry.
6. Take some batter and form into a doughnut shape. This is the raw vada.
7. Gently slide the raw vada into the oil and fry until it turns golden.
8. Remove with a slotted spoon and pat dry with a paper towel.
9. Serve hot with coconut chutney and sambar.

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