

Parsnip, Aubergine, and Cashew Biryani

Full of the flavours of India, this hearty supper dish is great for chilly winter evenings. (It's a lot of work to make.)

Ingredients

1 small aubergine, sliced
275g / 10oz / 1 ½ cups basmati rice
3 parsnips
3 onions
2 garlic cloves
2.5cm / 1 in piece of fresh root ginger, peeled
about 60ml / 4 tbsp vegetable oil
175g / 6oz / 1 cup unsalted cashew nuts
40g / 1 ½ oz / ¼ cup sultanas
1 red pepper, seeded and sliced
5ml / 1 tsp ground cumin
5ml / 1 tsp ground coriander
2.5ml / ½ tsp chilli powder
120ml / 4 fl oz / ½ cup natural yogurt
300ml / ½ pint / 1 ¼ cups vegetable stock
25g / 1oz / 2 tbsp butter
salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 hard-boiled eggs, quartered, and sprigs of fresh coriander, to garnish

Serves 4-6

Step One

Sprinkle the aubergine with salt and leave for 30 minutes. Rinse, pat dry, and cut into bite-size pieces.

Step Two

Soak the rice in a bowl of cold water for 40 minutes. Peel and core the parsnips. Cut into 1cm / ½ in pieces. Process 1 onion, the garlic and ginger in a food processor. Add 30-45ml / 2-3 tbsp water and process to a paste.

Step Three

Finely slice the remaining onions. Heat 45ml / 3 tbsp of the oil in a large flameproof casserole and fry the onions gently for 10-15 minutes until they are soft and deep golden brown. Remove and drain.

Step Four

Add 40g / 1 ½ oz / ¼ cup of the cashew nuts and stir-fry for 2 minutes, but do not burn them.

Step Five

Add the sultanas and fry until they swell. Remove and drain on kitchen paper.

Step Six

Add the aubergine and pepper to the pan and stir-fry for 4-5 minutes. Drain on kitchen paper. Fry the parsnips for 4-5 minutes. Stir in the remaining cashew nuts and fry for 1 minute. Transfer to the plate with the aubergine and set aside.

Step Seven

Add the remaining 15ml / 1 tbsp of oil to the pan. Add the onion paste. Cook, stirring, over a moderate heat for 4-5 minutes, until the mixture turns golden. Stir in the cumin, coriander, and chilli powder. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute, then reduce the heat and add the yogurt.

Step Eight

Bring the mixture slowly to the boil and stir in the stock, parsnips, aubergine, and peppers. Season with salt and pepper, cover and simmer for 30-40 minutes, until the parsnips are tender and then transfer to an ovenproof casserole.

Step Nine

Preheat the oven to 150 degrees C / 300 degrees F. Drain the rice and add to 300ml / ½ pint / 1 ¼ cups salted boiling water. Cook gently for 5-6 minutes, until the rice is tender but slightly undercooked.

Step Ten

Drain the rice and pile it in a mound on top of the vegetables. Make a hole from the top to the base using the handle of a wooden spoon. Scatter the reserved fried onions, cashew nuts, and sultanas over the rice and dot with butter. Cover with a double layer of foil and then secure in place with a lid.

Step Eleven

Cook in the oven for 35-40 minutes. To serve, spoon the mixture on to a warmed serving dish and garnish with quartered eggs and sprigs of fresh coriander.