

CURRY HOUSE COOKERY

AN UPDATE BY BRUCE EDWARDS

“PARTS 1-4”

In our first magazine for 1993, we welcome back one of our popular authors, Bruce Edwards, whose three part feature, "Curry House Cookery" appeared in our winter 1990 Curry Magazine and the subsequent two issues. Photocopies of the original three part feature available at £2.00 for the full set of nine pages from PO Box 7, Haslemere (full address on page 3). Now, three years on, Bruce feels he has learned so much more that he just has to tell us all. Bruce starts his fascinating illustrated four part feature with a review of the equipment you'll need. He then goes on to reveal the secrets of the restaurant masala, pre-cooked main ingredients and curry gravy. In our next edition Bruce will examine standard curries such as Korma, Medium, Madras and Phall and some well known side dishes. In magazine no. 35 he'll examine specialist curries such as Rogan Josh, Jalfrezi, Tandoori/Tikka Masala and Pilau Rice and Tandoori. In the final part, in magazine no. 36, he'll tackle the celebrated Onion Bhaji. It is all fascinating essential reading, so don't forget to renew your membership during the year. Meanwhile read on to begin your Curry House Cookery Update.

Just about everything described in Curry House Cookery was arrived at by deduction and experiment. The methods worked reasonably well, but after a while I became dissatisfied with the results I was producing in the kitchen. The problem was that I could tell the difference between my cooking and that of a typical Indian restaurant. I needed to find out about the finer points of the restaurant method. As anyone who has tried to extract information from restaurant staff will know, this is not easy. I suspected that this was a communication problem rather than a matter of secrecy. After all, how would you explain your job to a complete stranger (Who you assumed knew nothing about it) in a few sentences of a language you don't speak too well, while several other people are demanding your attention? So it was down to how I asked. It seems I was right; I was very quickly invited into the kitchen of my regular takeaway. (Possibly this had something to do with the fact that I annually contribute around a thousand pounds to their turnover.) In the course of several sessions the staff showed me everything I wanted to know. (This was just about everything.) This is not an article on traditional Indian cookery, I will be concentrating on the restaurant style and how it differs.

ONIONS:

Indian restaurants use a lot of onions. In fact they use them by the sack full. And just to confuse matters. Only one type of onion will do, and (strangely) this is the Spanish onion. Not the really large ones, what is used is the tennis ball sized variety. Costs could be cut considerably by using any old onions, but the result just doesn't justify the saving. Also, it is far easier if you have to peel 30lbs of onions to use fairly large ones.

AJOWAN SEED:

(Also known as AJWAIN, LOVAGE, CAROM.) This lesser used (Traditionally) spice is an essential ingredient of the universal sauce known as Curry Gravy in the restaurant trade. (Curry Base in Curry House Cookery.)

CURRY POWDERS:

These have a lot to answer for, but they are used by restaurants (in conjunction with other spices). Not the corner-shop or supermarket variety, the sort that are imported from India and sold by Asian shops.

BAY LEAVES:

The ones sold by Asian shops are different from the usual English bay leaf. They are much larger, have three veins along the back instead of the usual one, and have a much stronger flavour.

KITCHEN EQUIPMENT:

If you have a kitchen with all the usual equipment, you should have everything you need to produce the majority of restaurant style dishes. If, however, you are really serious about this type of cooking, there are things that you probably haven't got that would make life easier. The single most essential piece of equipment is a blender. If you are considering replacing your current one, it would be a good idea to look for one that is easy to clean; it is going to be used to puree some oily mixtures. I use a large hand-held one for making curry gravy. It makes short work of the contents of a 4 or 8 litre cooking pot, in fact it is supposed to be able to cope with 20 gallons at one go. Most people would find this rather excessive though.

Ordinary domestic sauce pans will of course do, but if you are prepared to invest in at least one 4 litre catering style 'boiling pot' so much the better. These don't have long handles to get in your way, and that makes storage easier. I'm not keen on Aluminium pots I don't like leaving mixtures standing in them for long periods, especially if the mixtures are mildly acidic (as anything that contains lemon will be). Stainless steel looks better, wears better, and has a price to match.

If you have ever sat in an Indian restaurant waiting for your meal to be served while wondering what all the clanking and clanging noises coming from the kitchen mean, you are not alone. This puzzled me for years. It is the sound of a large, long handled stainless steel spoon hitting the side of a frying pan. The reason for this is that when a chef prepares a dish, he first adds the ingredients to the pan with this spoon, striking the side to shake them off, and then he uses it to stir the contents of the pan. As he will probably be working on several dishes at once, and using only one spoon, he will need to keep hitting the side of a pan to clean his spoon before transferring his attention to another one. The point of this is to try to convince you that the ideal implement for stirring your curry is a stainless steel spoon. It should be equivalent in capacity to about 4 tablespoons. No Indian chef would be without his spoon. Try using one and you will soon wonder how you did without it. When I explain how to make the standard restaurant curries, I will frequently refer to a 'portion' of curry gravy. By this I mean a 7oz. ladle full (The cook's spoon and the ladle are the usual measures in the restaurant kitchen). Of course, you can make do with a measuring jug or even a mug dipped in a cooking pot, but this can be a messy business, especially if you drop it. So a ladle is a very useful addition to your kitchen.

If you use a metal spoon, you won't be able to use it with a non stick frying pan. The ideal curry pan is a stainless steel omelette pan 8-9 inches in diameter (widest part) and without a heavy base.

Some dishes will call for ingredients to be deep fried before being added to the pan, so an electric deep fryer is useful. Restaurants use a large karat type of vessel full of oil permanently on a gas ring to serve a dual purpose; it is used for deep frying (using a small chip basket) and it provides ready heated oil for the cooking of other dishes. The chef simply places a spoonful of this in a pan before adding the other ingredients. You should have at least one good quality kitchen knife. I only mention this because chopping large quantities of onions with a carving knife might put you off curries permanently.

PREPARATION OF RESTAURANT MASALA AND PRE COOKING OF INGREDIENTS:

A large part of the work done in the kitchen has to be completed before the doors open. Even then, the staff will be hard pressed to keep up with demand at busy times. And work does not stop when the doors are finally locked. There is cleaning up that must be done, and tomorrow to think of. If there have been any quiet times during the evening, anyone not preparing dishes for customers will have been doing other things such as chopping onions. When I was shown how to make curry gravy, I was told to arrive at midnight. Work started at about 12.30, and I didn't leave until after 4.00 A.M. Of course, other things were going on all the time, but this serves to show something of how an Indian restaurant functions. When I start cooking from scratch, the first thing I normally do is deal with the garlic and ginger. This is used mostly in the form of a puree. The restaurant chef will make two separate purees, but the home curry cook will probably find it easier to combine the two.

GARLIC AND GINGER PUREE:

Peel and chop a whole bulb of garlic. It need not be finely chopped. Now peel and chop an equal amount of ginger. Add just enough water to make blending to a fine puree possible. When you have finished, it may look as though you have made a lot, but any that is not used can be frozen. This is best done in a microwave oven tray, so that when you want some more, you don't have to thaw it all, just ease it out of the tray, and cut a piece off.

Just four spices are essential to the mixture that is used in just about every restaurant dish. One more is optional. They are pre-mixed for use in preparing the dishes as served, but chefs tend to use them individually when making large quantities of anything. See below.

SPICE MIXTURE: (RESTAURANT MASALA)

Ground Coriander 8 Parts by volume

Turmeric 7 Parts

Ground Cumin 5 Parts

Curry Powder 4 Parts

Paprika 4 Parts: (Optional, used for colour only.)

My advice is to avoid it as problems can arise if it is not completely fresh. When a chef is using these spices individually, he uses the proportions:

2 Spoons coriander

1³/₄ Spoons turmeric

1¹/₄ Spoons cumin

1 Spoon curry powder

You will see that the proportions are identical in both cases.

It would no doubt come as a surprise to the average curry house diner to learn that the meat in his or her Madras or Vindaloo was previously cooked in a more traditional kind of curry. But this is how it is usually done. The same is true of some vegetables such as potatoes and cauliflower.

PRE COOKED MEAT:

If you want meat, use leg of lamb, cut into cubes. Alternatively, use chicken. I use only breast portions and medium sized ones I cut into three pieces for cooking. Later, when it is added to a curry sauce, it can be 'chopped' into smaller pieces using the cooks' spoon. But before you cut up the meat, do the following: Add plenty of oil (About 5 fl. oz. will do.) to a 4 litre cooking pot, (or large sauce pan) and place on the cooker at moderate heat. Add some finely chopped onion, two or three handfuls, to give a 'layer' in the pot. Add plenty of bay leaves, three or four good sized pieces of cinnamon (Cassia) bark, and five or six cardamoms. Let this start to fry, and now you can get to work on the meat but don't forget to give the pot a stir from time to time. When the onions show signs of frying, add a tablespoon of garlic and ginger puree, stir it for a few moments, and then do the same with a tablespoon of yogurt. Now add a chopped tomato or half a tablespoon of tomato puree straight from the can (the kind that is meant to be diluted) and stir a little longer. Add three or four good pinches of salt. By now the mixture should be getting quite dry so add about half a cupful of water. Allow this to simmer briskly while you work on the meat. The purpose of this is to extract as much flavour as possible from the whole spices. You can let it cook for quite a long time; half an hour isn't too long. Add water, a little at a time to keep it from drying up.

PRE COOKED VEGETABLES: Some vegetables are cooked in the deep fryer before being added to a sauce. Examples of this are aubergine and okra. Others are treated in essentially the same way as meat.

POTATOES AND CAULIFLOWER:

Proceed as for meat, but add about half a teaspoon of panch poran to the pot along with the whole spices. Cut the potatoes (or cauliflower) into suitably sized pieces while the pot is simmering, and add along with three or four tablespoons of water. A little extra salt should also be added

MIXED VEGETABLES:

As above, but use a mixture of chopped vegetables and only a pinch of panch poran. Use sliced carrots, green beans, white cabbage, tinned chick peas and kidney beans etc. See what's at the of the freezer

THE RESTAURANT METHOD - CURRY GRAVY, A GENERAL PURPOSE SAUCE:

First of all let me say that I do not like the name curry gravy. Gravy implies something thickened with flour, is stodgy and probably comes out of a packet. What we are dealing with here is nothing like that, but I am using the name that the restaurant trade uses for it in order to avoid any possible confusion. I think of it more as a curry base. In the kitchen of any high street curry house there will be a pot of this sauce on the cooker. It is kept warm, in order to speed up the process of making a curry. But keeping it warm for too long spoils the flavour, so the amount heated up will depend on how busy the staff expects things to get. When an order for a curry reaches the kitchen the chef will first add some hot oil to a pan. He will then add spices and other ingredients such as tomato puree and chilli, allow it to sizzle for a few seconds, pour in a ladle full of curry gravy, stir it in. and finally add cooked meat and let it simmer for a few minutes. Before serving, some coriander leaves are added. So almost instantly, a curry is made. Restaurants tend to make curry gravy in the largest pot they have and then transfer it to a smaller one to be reheated with a tarka of oil and tomato puree when the previous pot is getting low.

MAKING CURRY GRAVY: - Quantities for 4 litre pot

INGREDIENTS (1)

5 fl. oz. Oil (Approximately)
 2 Tbsp Garlic and ginger puree
 6-8 Medium Spanish onion chopped
 4 large carrots Sliced
 2 Celery sticks chopped
 6 Large radishes chopped
 1/4 Lemon chopped
 1 Fresh tomato chopped
 1/2 Red pepper chopped
 1/2 Green pepper chopped
 4 Green chilies chopped
 4 tsp Salt
 1tsp Ajowan seed
 4oz. Vegetable ghee
 1/4 Bunch fresh Coriander chopped

INGREDIENTS (2)

1 Tin of Tomatoes
 2 tsp Tomato puree (straight from can)
 1 Tbsp Yogurt
 3Tbsp Spice mixture
 2 tsp Tumeric

METHOD:

First, peel the onions. Add the oil with the garlic and ginger to the pot and place on the cooker to fry. Now start chopping the onions, keeping an eye on the pot, and giving it an occasional stir. When the garlic and ginger has turned light brown, throw in a couple of handfuls of onion. Pour in 2 pints of water and bring to the boil (the onion was added first to stop the oil spitting). Carry on adding onion until the pot is filled to within three inches of the top.

Next, slice the carrots (There is no need to peel them) and add to the pot. Similarly treat the celery, radishes, lemon, fresh tomato, peppers and chilies. Add the salt, Ajowan seed and vegetable ghee. Now add the chopped coriander. Add more chopped onion until the pot is filled almost to the top. Cover and leave to simmer for about an hour. Cooking time is not critical, a little longer won't hurt, it is simply necessary for the vegetables to be well cooked.

Now you can start to clean up the kitchen. When ready, add the remaining ingredients (2) and give the pot a stir. Cover again, and leave to cook for another 15-20 minutes, then turn off the heat. It is now necessary to blend the contents of the pot. This can be done straight away or later. If done straight away the tarka must be added immediately afterwards and then the sauce cooled by standing the pot in cold water, unless it is to be used right away. This is because the flavour of hot, blended sauce will deteriorate. Before blending, remove as much of the ghee and oil that is floating on the surface as you can. A ladle is ideal for doing this. Now blend as finely as possible and return to the pot. Replace the ghee and oil that you removed, and add cold water to bring the level up to where it was when you had finished adding onions.

THE TARKA:

A tarka is simply something that is fried and added to something else. It is usual for a tarka of tomato puree to be added to curry gravy, which is watered down at the same time. Some restaurants seem to water heavily, resulting in thin sauces. I find that 1 part of water to 3 parts of curry gravy gives good results. If you have made 4litres, put 1 litre aside (you could freeze it for future use) and the remaining 3 litres in another vessel. Heat a minimum of a quarter of a pint of oil in the cooking pot. Add a level tablespoon of tomato puree, stirring until it has completely broken up and the oil is red. Now add the 3 litres of curry gravy and 1 litre of hot water. Stir well, bring to the boil and simmer until oil begins to rise to the surface. The sauce will turn a slightly darker colour. Don't keep stirring at this stage the oil won't separate if you do. Use at once or remove from the cooker and stand in cold water.

Once cool, it will keep in the fridge for about a week. The tarka isn't essential, but it does improve the flavour and appearance of a curry. More oil than the quarter pint I have specified will make the curry gravy look more attractive, but serves no other useful purpose.

THE RESTAURANT METHOD:

STANDARD CURRIES:

I am going to start this section by explaining how to make a medium curry. Not a particularly interesting dish, which is probably why many restaurants add ingredients such as fruit and nuts. Medium curries are probably ordered more by the occasional curry diner than by the enthusiast.

MEDIUM CURRY:

INGREDIENTS:

1 cook's spoon or about 4 Tbsp of Oil
1 small finely sliced red or green pepper (Or both)
1 Tsp. spice mixture
¼ tsp. chilli
¼ tsp. fenugreek leaves
2 pinches of salt
1 portion (7 oz.) curry gravy
Cooked meat or chicken
Coriander leaves.

METHOD:

Heat the oil in a frying pan and add the sliced pepper. When this starts to sizzle, add spice mixture, chilli, fenugreek leaves and salt. Add them all at once, or at least in quick succession, otherwise the first in the pan may fry too long and start to burn. Stir the contents of the pan for a few seconds then add the curry gravy and mix well. Next some meat along with a little of the sauce it was cooked in, and stir well. Simmer for two or three minutes; a lot of oil will rise to the surface, this can be spooned off before you add the chopped coriander leaves and serve.

Next, I am going to show how to make a korma. Traditionally this is a braised meat dish which can be as hot as you want. But in restaurant language, korma has come to mean a very mild dish enriched with coconut, cream and ground nuts. First a few words about coconut. You don't have to use it fresh; it is sold processed into blocks bound together by coconut oil (usually called creamed coconut.) Place the block on a chopping board, and using a sharp knife, attempt to cut a few slices. You will find that it will crumble, and in this state will dissolve easily.

KORMA CURRY:

INGREDIENTS:

1 cook's spoon or about 4 Tbsp of Oil

1 little finely sliced red pepper

1 Tsp. spice mixture

3 pinches of salt

1 portion (7 oz.) curry gravy

1 Tbsp. coconut

1 Tbsp. ground almonds

Cooked meat or chicken

2 fl. oz. single cream

Coriander leaves

Almost the same as the medium curry. Heat the oil and add red pepper. When this sizzles, add the spice mixture and salt. Stir for a few seconds, then add curry gravy, and keep stirring. Add coconut, ground almonds, and mix well. Now add cooked meat and simmer for a couple of minutes. Next is the cream and finally the coriander leaves before serving.

Next come some hotter curries. First is Madras, which is often described on the restaurant menu as being hot and sour. The sourness comes from lemon, either juice added to the sauce, or a piece of lemon cooked in it, and removed before serving. But as I am not keen on lemon in ordinary curries, I will treat this as an option.

MADRAS CURRY:

INGREDIENTS:

1 cook's spoon or about 4 Tbsp of Oil
1 little finely sliced red or green pepper
½ tsp. tomato puree
1 tsp. spice mixture
1 level tsp. (Max.) chilli
½ tsp. fenugreek leaves
2 pinches of salt
1 portion (7 oz.) curry gravy
Lemon (Either juice or a small piece Optional.)
Cooked meat or chicken
Coriander leaves

METHOD:

As before heat the oil and add the pepper. When it starts to fry, add tomato puree, spice mixture, chilli, fenugreek and salt. Fry for a few seconds before adding curry gravy and lemon, if used. Simmer for a couple of minutes before adding meat. Allow to heat through, then add coriander and serve. If you used a piece of lemon, it can of course be removed or left in.

Moving up the heat scale, the next curry to look at is vindaloo. Traditionally this is made with pork marinated in vinegar. To the restaurateur, it is simply a fairly hot curry containing meat or seafood and probably some potato, and cooked in the restaurant style. But it is none the worse for that.

VINDALOO CURRY:

INGREDIENTS:

1 cook's spoon or about 4 Tbsp of Oil
 1 little finely sliced red or green pepper (or both)
 1 rounded tsp. tomato puree
 1 rounded tsp. spice mixture
 2 tsp. chilli
 1 tsp. fenugreek leaves
 2 pinches of salt
 1 portion (7 oz.) curry gravy
 Some cooked potato
 Cooked meat or chicken
 Coriander leaves

METHOD:

Same as Madras. Heat the oil and add the pepper. When it starts to fry, add tomato puree, spice mixture, chilli, fenugreek and salt. Fry for a few seconds before adding curry gravy. Simmer for a couple of minutes before adding meat and potatoes. Allow to heat through, then add coriander and serve. If you used a piece of lemon, it can of course be removed or left in.

At some point, vindaloo becomes pall (Or phall) although there is no formula which makes a distinction between them. In fact, a vindaloo at one restaurant may be as hot as or even hotter than a pall at another. There is no traditional dish called pall, it is an invention of the Indian restaurant.

PALL ORPHALL (Sometimes Bangalore Phall) There is no need for a recipe for pall, if you want to make this dish, simply follow the vindaloo recipe leaving out the potato (If you want to) and increasing the chilli to 3 rounded tsp. Also, you can afford to be quite heavy handed with coriander, tomato puree and spice mixture. In this respect, the hotter a curry is, the more robust it is. The secret is to experiment until you get it the way you want it. This, of course goes for all of these dishes.

ANOTHER HOT ONE:

Chilli Masala is similar to pall in that it is another dish invented by restaurants, and is normally one of the hottest dishes they serve. There is no right way to make it, though, and as it tends to depart from the usual format of the typical restaurant curry, my idea of how it should be is probably totally different from yours. The following recipe was demonstrated to me by a restaurant chef. If you try it, I suggest that you don't use tomato puree from a tube, use the tinned variety (There does seem to be a difference in flavour) and mix it with its own volume of water.

CHILLI MASALA CURRY:**INGREDIENTS:**

1¹/₂ cook's spoon or about 6 Tbsp of Oil
 A handful of finely chopped onions
 Some red and green Peppers
 12 (or more) green chillies (sliced lengthwise)
 1 anise seed (in pod)
 1 rounded Tbsp. tomato puree
 1 rounded tsp. spice mixture
 1 rounded Tbsp. chilli Curry gravy
 Cooked meat or chicken
 Coriander leaves

METHOD:

Put oil, onion, green chillies, peppers and anise seed in pan on fairly high heat, and leave for a few minutes, but stir occasionally. When the onions start to soften, add tomato puree, spice mixture and chilli. Stir for a few moments, and then add half a portion of curry gravy. Allow this to cook well. When the sauce has reduced a little, add a little more curry gravy, the cooked meat, and cook for a few minutes more. Before serving, drain off some oil and add plenty of coriander leaves. Total cooking time should be about ten minutes, and the result should be a curry with a thick, dark red sauce.

There is a traditional Indian dish called Rogan Josh. The restaurant has a lot of scope for variation, its version will somewhere between 'very similar' and 'no resemblance'. But most manage to get the colour right, it should be red. Bhoona is a reference to the method of cooking; it means fried. This isn't much help in defining what a bhoona is, however, as most of our dishes will be fried at some stage in their preparation. The only thing that is certain is that there is no right way of producing these (or any other) dishes. Some restaurants may cheat and serve a medium curry, calling it whatever the customer ordered. Fortunately, this sort of practice seems far less common than it used to be, probably a result of increased competition and most restaurants having to try harder. But one person's Bhoona could easily be another's Rogan Josh.

ROGAN JOSH:

This version uses a pre cooked sauce in addition to curry gravy. It is worth a restaurant's while to produce an extra sauce as this is a very popular dish.

ROGAN SAUCE:

1 red pepper, chopped
 1 green pepper, chopped
 2 tinned tomatoes
 2 inch piece ginger, chopped
 4 plump cloves garlic, chopped
 Coriander leaves and stalks

Place all of these ingredients in a blender and puree as finely as possible. Pour the result into a bowl, and stir in tomato puree, straight from the can, until the mixture starts to look red. Now pour oil into a large cooking pot to a depth of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, and place on the cooker to heat up. Skin and finely slice four more cloves of garlic, and add to the oil. Stir until the garlic turns brown, and then pour in the contents of the bowl, and cover quickly to contain the spray from the hot oil. All that remains to do now is to simmer the mixture for a few minutes. When cool, it can be kept in the fridge for two or three days before the flavour deteriorates.

ROGAN JOSH INGREDIENTS:

1 Cook's spoon or about 4 Tbsp Oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fenugreek leaves
 2 Pinches salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ Cook's spoon or 2 rounded Tbsp. Curry gravy
 1 tsp Spice Mixture
 4 oz. approx Cooked meat
 Coriander leaves, chopped

METHOD:

Heat oil and add spice mixture, fenugreek leaves and salt. Stir it around for a few seconds, and add Rogan sauce followed by the curry gravy. Bring to the boil, add the meat and simmer for a few minutes. Garnish with coriander leaves before serving. Although meat is specified and is the usual main ingredient, there is no reason why you shouldn't use something else. Why not try Rogan chicken?

BHOONA:

The average restaurant menu usually lists several Bhoona dishes. The only difference between them will be the main ingredient. Apart from the basic sauce, there should be one or more ingredients such as peppers that have obviously been fried.

INGREDIENTS:

1 handful of coarsely chopped peppers or onion; preferably both

1 cook's spoon or 4 Tbsp Oil

1 tsp. spice mixture

½ tsp. fenugreek leaves

1 rounded tsp. tomato puree

2 pinches of salt

Curry gravy

Finely chopped coriander stalks

Cooked meat or chicken (or seafood)

Chopped coriander leaves

METHOD:

You should already have the deep fryer at working temperature. Heat the oil in the pan. Drop the pepper and onion into the deep fryer. When it looks fried, transfer to the pan and stir. Add the spice mixture, fenugreek leaves, tomato puree and salt, sizzle for a few seconds, then add roughly a half portion of curry gravy and simmer for a couple of minutes. Add another half portion of curry gravy, coriander stalks and main ingredient, and simmer for another minute. Add coriander leaves and drain excess oil before serving.

JALFREZI:

Jal frezzi is another invention of the Indian restaurant trade; you won't find a recipe in any traditional cookery book. It usually contains peppers, fried onion, chillies and coriander; in fact the only thing that distinguishes it from Bhoona is that it contains chillies. The version given here is quite hot, but it doesn't have to be, it is entirely up to you.

Ingredients as for Bhoona with the addition of green chillies sliced lengthwise, and half to one teaspoon of chilli powder. Also, you can use more salt and / or more tomato puree for a more robust flavour. Add the green chillies to the pan right from the start, and the chilli powder along with the other spices.

TANDOORI AND TIKKA:

Tandoori cooked meats are sometimes used in curries. As these meats can be a main dish in their own right, some attempt is usually made to make the sauce they are in do justice to them. They go very well in Jalfrezi, or they may be served in a modified version of the standard curry, usually containing cream.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cook's spoon or 4 Tbsp. Oil
A little finely sliced red and green pepper
1 tsp. spice mixture
Pinch of chilli
¼ tsp. fenugreek leaves
2 tsp. tomato puree
3 pinches salt
1 portion (7 oz.) curry gravy
1 portion tandoori cooked meat (See Tandoori Cooking)
2 oz. single cream
Chopped coriander leaves

METHOD: As for a standard curry. When ready to serve, add cream, stir in and heat, then drain excess oil and add chopped coriander

TANDOORI COOKING:

First the bad news - in the absence of a tandoor you are not going to produce tandoori dishes the way a typical restaurant can. Having said that, you will be able to cook something that is quite acceptable. If you want to do better than that, you could consider the possibility of installing a domestic-size tandoor. This is a major undertaking; it is not suitable for use in a domestic kitchen without a very efficient extractor system. A cooker hood is not good enough. Also, you would have to consider where you were going to store your charcoal. Gas tandoors are available, but you may just as well use the oven as one of these. The problem is that charcoal, when first lit, produces lots of smoke and dust. And cooking produces smoke, too. Oil in marinades and fat from meat burns on the charcoal. There are also the exhaust fumes to consider. I have a domestic tandoor. It is a cube of slightly under two feet per side; it is mounted on castors, and needs two strong men to lift it. It is in a utility room with two doors opening outside for ventilation. I have fitted a sink and work surface with cupboard and drawers under for use with it, and dust isn't too much of a problem. Since installing it I haven't looked back. The cost? About half that of a good domestic cooker.

PRINCIPLE OF TANDOORI COOKING:

The commonly held belief is that the tandoor must be made of clay, and this helps to flavour the food cooked in it. This is no doubt because in India tandoors are made of clay, and food cooked in them is different from that cooked in a conventional oven. The tandoor can in fact be made of any earthenware material. All that matters is that it gets very hot and bread dough will stick to it. The unique flavour is the result of fat and oil burning on the charcoal, producing smoke which flavours it. (Incidentally, you won't notice the smokey flavour if you stand over the tandoor while the meat cooks.) It is rather like barbeque cooking, enhanced by the enclosed fire. In the tandoor, meat is cooked on long thick skewers or rods by a combination of very intense radiated heat and convective heat. Naan is cooked by conducted heat on one side, and the same radiated and convective heat on the other. Meat to be cooked in the tandoor is marinated in yogurt, spices, and other ingredients. It is usually brightly coloured. This, of course, doesn't affect the flavour, it is just to make it look more attractive. (And thereby, maybe, enhance enjoyment.) Without the colouring, it would be a dull, greyish colour. Naan dough is rolled into a flat round and slapped on to the side of the tandoor. Keema nan is stuffed with raw sheek kebab. It doesn't taste much like sheek kebab, though, because it doesn't cook so long or so fiercely. Tandoori cookery really took off in restaurants in Britain in the late 1960's, but there is a reference to it in a book by James Herriot so maybe it was not unknown much earlier. The recipes that follow are 'Authentic Restaurant Tandoori', if there is such a thing; they work in a tandoor, they will work in your oven, but then they won't taste as though they were cooked in a tandoor. The difference won't be that great with meat, it will lack the smokey, barbeque flavour. Naan, however, will be noticeably different.

TANDOORI CHICKEN / CHICKEN TIKKA:

Prepared chicken - see below

- 1 pinch chilli powder
- 2 pinches garam masala
- 2 pinches cumin seed
- 1 pinch fennel seed
- ¹/₂ tsp. fenugreek leaves
- ¹/₃ tsp. salt
- 2 heaped Tsp. garlic and ginger puree
- 1 rounded Tbsp. spice mixture
- 3 Tbsp. P.L.J. (straight from bottle)
- 8 Tbsp. Mustard oil
- Food colouring as necessary
- 250 gm. tub Yogurt (mild type)
- Poppy seeds
- Coriander leaves

(The above quantities will marinate up to 10 portions.)

METHOD:

Prepare the chicken. For tikka, skin and bone. Leave small breast fillets whole, large ones can be cut lengthwise into two strips. The rest of the meat should be cut into strips about 1¹/₂ inches wide. For tandoori chicken, skin and cut into joints, and make deep cuts in the flesh so that the marinade can penetrate. Place the chicken along with the rest of the ingredients except the poppy seeds and coriander, in a bowl, and mix thoroughly, working the marinade into the meat. Sprinkle with poppy seeds until the surface is covered, then add plenty of coriander leaves. The mixture is now left to marinate, the longer the better. It can be refrigerated for two days, but remember that it is not a good idea to cook meat straight from the fridge, as the temperature may be only just above

freezing, and it may not cook all the way through. When ready to cook, stir well, so that the meat is coated with the poppy seeds and coriander leaves.

COOKING IT:

Heat the oven to a very high temperature. Tikka should be threaded on to thick skewers, tandoori portions skewered at their thickest point. Place in the oven, as high as possible, over a tray to catch the drips, but avoid resting the skewers on the tray as this will inhibit the circulation of hot air and increase the cooking time. Tikka should be done in about 20 minutes, tandoori about 5 minutes longer. It should have some black spots. Tikka is cut into pieces after it is removed from the skewers.

MEAT TIKKA:

Leg of lamb is the most suitable meat. Beef I have found to produce generally disappointing results, usually tough and fibrous. Even fillet steak seems to produce a result that doesn't match up to lamb.

METHOD:

Remove the meat from the bone, and cut into suitably sized pieces with as little membrane and fat as possible. The marinade is basically the same as for chicken but additionally contains 2 rounded Tsp. of Colman's Bottled Mint Sauce. This gives a totally different flavour and smell. Also, it is a good idea to use a different colouring for meat. I use deep orange for chicken tikka and red for meat. To cook, proceed as for chicken. It will probably be done sooner, about 15 minutes.

SHEEK KEBAB:

Sheek kebab is quick and easy to make, and cooks well in the oven or under the grill. In the tandoor it only takes about 5 minutes, and produces large quantities of smoke as fat drips onto the charcoal. Minced beef is totally unsuitable for this dish, not because there is anything wrong with the flavour, but because it doesn't bind together, and won't stay on a skewer. This isn't too bad if it is being cooked on a tray under the grill, (Even then the texture will be wrong) but very embarrassing if you try to cook it in a tandoor. Minced lamb is really the only meat to use. Butchers often don't stock this, but will usually supply it to order.

INGREDIENTS:

½ Lb. Minced Lamb

1 rounded Tsp. spice mixture

1/3 tsp. salt

1 small clove garlic, crushed and finely chopped

¾ inch cube ginger, sliced, crushed and finely chopped

½ tsp. fenugreek leaves

1 pinch each, chilli, garam masala and cumin seed

Finely chopped coriander leaves and stalks

Food colouring – optional

(The above quantities will make 2 good sized kebabs. I find it convenient to make up the mixture in multiples of ½ lb.) Mix all the ingredients thoroughly, kneading like dough. Divide into two portions, and roll into 'sausages', about an inch in diameter. These can now be grilled, turning several times, or skewered and cooked in the oven over a tray in the same way as tikka and tandoori.

SIDE DISHES: VEGETABLES

Side dishes are produced as easily and quickly as the standard curry by using similar methods. The ingredients are basically the same, but there tends to be less variation between individual dishes, the flavour being influenced more by the main ingredient than is the case with curries. For instance, the method of cooking potato and cauliflower I have given uses panch poran. Not much, but enough to slightly flavour the vegetable, and this will be noticeable in the end result. If you didn't know it was there, you probably wouldn't recognise it, but you would notice it. I am going to start this section with Bombay potato. This particular version of that restaurant favourite doesn't use chilli it is completely mild.

BOMBAY POTATO:

INGREDIENTS:

1 cook's spoon or 4 Tbsp Oil
 Some finely sliced red and green pepper
 Some finely chopped onion
 ½ tsp. spice mixture
 ½ tsp. fenugreek leaves
 1 good pinch of salt
 Curry gravy
 Cooked potato

METHOD:

Heat the oil and add the pepper and onion. When this is sizzling, add the spice mixture, fenugreek leaves and salt, and stir it around for a few seconds. Next add some curry gravy, about 1 (Cook's) spoon, or 4 Tbsp but use your judgement; you know what Bombay potato should look like. Stir this, and then let the sauce reduce a little, stirring occasionally. Lastly, add the potato and some more curry gravy to give the consistency you want, keep stirring until it is well heated. At this stage, excessive cooking **will** spoil the flavour. Drain the excess oil and serve.

METHI ALOO:

This is a totally different dish, yet you wouldn't think so from looking at a recipe for it. The flavour comes from fenugreek leaves, lots of them. So, simply follow the recipe for Bombay potato, but increase the quantity of fenugreek to 1 Tbsp. and double the amount of salt.

CAULIFLOWER BHAJI:

As for Bombay potato, just use cooked cauliflower in place potato. You will find that the flavours are completely different.

CAULIFLOWER AND POTATO - ALOO GOBI:

Same again but using both vegetables.

A SLIGHT VARIATION:

When preparing fresh coriander, the restaurant chef will use it all, except the roots. (Even these are used in Thai "cookery.") But sometimes, the leaves and stalks are used separately: The leaves are chopped and used mainly as a garnish for finished dishes, the stalks chopped very finely, and added slightly earlier, but not cooked too long, as this destroys their flavour.

CHICK PEA BHAJI:

Use the same method as for Bombay potato, but add about 1/3 tsp. tomato puree along with the spices. Instead of cooked potato, use cooked tinned chick peas. Add finely chopped coriander stalks towards the end of cooking, and garnish with coriander leaves before serving.

CHICK PEA AND POTATO - ALOO CHANNA:

Channa, of course, is really another kind of pulse, but that doesn't stop many restaurants from using the name to include the chick pea. Again, similar to Bombay potato, with a little tomato puree added with the spices.

ANOTHER VARIATION: You can add a halved or quartered fresh tomato to any of these dishes. This goes particularly well 1 with methi aloo. The aubergine is another favourite served as a side dish. It is not cooked in advance, but deep fried when needed. With practice, you can do this while preparing the sauce.

AUBERGINE (BRINJAL) BHAJI:

1 cook's spoon or 4 Tbsp oil
 Some finely sliced red and green pepper
 Some finely chopped onion
 ½ tsp. spice mixture
 ½ tsp. fenugreek leaves
 ½ tsp. tomato puree
 1 good pinch of salt
 Curry gravy
 1 inch cubes Aubergine - As much as you think you will need
 1 fresh tomato, quartered
 Coriander leaves.

METHOD:

You should have the deep fryer already up to working temperature. Drop the aubergine in, and then start to fry the peppers and onion. Add the spice mixture, fenugreek leaves, tomato puree, salt, and stir for a few seconds. Add some curry gravy, stir it around, and leave to simmer briskly. Now check the aubergine, if it looks cooked, i.e. quite wrinkled, tip it into the pan. With the sauce reduced a little, add some more curry gravy along with the quartered tomato and stir, gently, taking care not to break up the Vegetable. Add coriander leaves before serving.

OKRA KRA - BHINDI BHAJI:

Cut the okra into suitable pieces and treat in the same way as aubergine. When preparing this dish, I like to add plenty of coriander stalks. The method remains the same, of course.

MUSHROOM BHAJI:

Treat as aubergine. It is up to you whether or not you use fresh tomato or coriander stalks.

Side dishes aren't always dry; sometimes they consist of a mild or medium curry with one or more vegetables as the main ingredient. Portions, however, are normally smaller than they are for main dishes. Most restaurants are quite happy for you to specify a side dish as a main course, in which case you will get a little more.

MIXED VEGETABLE CURRY:

1 cook's spoon or about 4 Tbsp of Oil

A little finely sliced red and green pepper

1 Tsp. spice mixture

¼ tsp. chilli

¼ tsp. fenugreek leaves

1/3 tsp. tomato puree

1 good pinch of salt

Small (About 5 oz.) portion curry gravy

Cooked mixed vegetables

Chopped coriander leaves

METHOD:

As for any curry:

Of course, any cooked vegetable can be used to make a curry, served either as a side dish or as a main course. A mixture of vegetables such as sliced carrot, white cabbage, beans etc. as used above is particularly good as a Bhaji, especially if made very dry. (No doubt you have seen Dry Mixed Vegetable Bhaji on the restaurant menu.)

SIDE DISHES LENTILS:

The split red lentil or Masoor dal is the one most commonly used by the Indian restaurant. Channa or Gram dal is also used widely. Others are used, and these are treated in the same way as Channa. You can cook several different types together.

COOKING RED LENTILS:

Carefully examine the lentils for stones. When you are satisfied, wash them and place in a cooking pot or saucepan with some bay leaves, cinnamon and water and bring to the boil. (Initially the water level can be about an inch above the lentils.) Remove the scum that floats to the surface. Very quickly the water will be absorbed, so you can add some more, preferably hot, so that cooking is not interrupted. Keep on adding water when necessary. After about an hour, you should have a thick starchy mixture. Before using, the whole spices can be removed, but leave them in for as long as possible, as they will continue to add flavour.

COOKING CHANNA DAL:

As before, check for stones, then wash. Before cooking, Channa needs to be soaked for several hours. Leaving it overnight is quite usual. Then simply boil briskly for about half an hour. Do not eat under cooked pulses; they may have some thoroughly unpleasant effects. (Remember the scare with red kidney beans?) It is also quite usual to cook Channa dal' with red lentils. Soak the Channa only. (Red lentils that have been soaked stay whole).

LENTIL SIDE DISHES:

The most common (And simplest.) seems to be Tarka dal. Tarka means that something has been fried (The tarka) and added to something else. In this case, a garlic tarka is used.

TARKA DAL:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 medium clove garlic - finely sliced
- Oil - enough to easily fry the garlic
- 1 ladle (7 oz.) Cooked red lentils (Soupy consistency)
- 3 Good pinches of salt.

METHOD:

Heat oil in a pan to a fairly high temperature. Add garlic and stir until it has turned light brown. Add the cooked lentils. (The result will be quite violent with oil spraying from the pan. This may ignite to produce a sheet of flame, an effect which Indian chefs seem to have great fun with.) Add the salt and bring the dal to the boil before serving.

MASALA DALL CURRY:

A popular lentil side dish is Masala Dal. This varies a lot from one restaurant to another, but the usual version (And my favourite) is a mixture of curry sauce and cooked lentils. Most other versions seem to be the result of attempts to economise on ingredients or time.

INGREDIENTS:

Oil 1 1/2 cook's spoons or about 6 Tbsp

Finely sliced red and green pepper

Sliced green chillies (Optional)

1t sp. spice mixture

½ tsp. chilli

½ tsp. fenugreek leaves

1 Tsp. tomato puree

3 good pinches of salt

1 portion (7 oz.) curry gravy

1 cook's spoon cooked lentils

Finely chopped coriander stalk.

Chopped coriander leaves

METHOD:

Fry the red and green peppers and chillies if using. Add the spice mixture, chilli, fenugreek leaves, tomato puree and salt, and stir fry for a few seconds. Add the curry gravy and cooked lentils, and simmer for a couple of minutes. Add the coriander stalks, continue to simmer. Before serving, add the coriander leaves.

STARTERS:

Onion Bhaji:

This must be one of the most popular starters. Like most things on the standard Indian restaurant menu, there is no right way to make it. You won't find a recipe for it in a book of traditional cookery, but it does appear that it isn't totally a restaurant invention. It seems to be based on the pakora. Pakoras are deep fried pieces of vegetable coated in a batter made from spiced gram flour. The Onion Bhaji is chopped onion in a similar batter. But apart from that, there is little similarity. Onion Bhajis come in two shapes, round and flat. I prefer the flat ones, because with these the batter cooks all the way through. With the round ones, particularly if they are very large, there is often a lump of uncooked batter in the middle. If possible, it is a help if you can arrange to have the deep fryer next to the sink when making them. Failing this, have a bowl of water near by. (This is because it is much easier to mould them into shape with wet hands.) Making Onion Bhajis is easy and fun, but may take a little practice. It is a skill well worth mastering - they are the sort of snack which takes a lot of beating, especially if made on the spur of the moment.

INGREDIENTS:

1lb. finely chopped onion
1 rounded Tbsp. spice mixture
3 rounded Tbsp. fenugreek leaves
¹/₂ tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. yogurt
Chopped coriander leaves and stalks
1 small egg
8 rounded Tbsp. Gram Flour

METHOD:

Turn on the deep fryer. Mix all of the ingredients except the gram flour with one hand, keeping the other one clean if possible. Squeeze the mixture through your fingers to make sure that it is well mixed. Now add the gram flour and work it in until you have a stiff, sticky, dough like batter. If the mixture seems wet, add some more dough. The deep fryer should be up to working temperature by now. Wet your hands and roll a lump of the mixture, the size of a golf ball, until it is smooth. Place in the deep fryer, rinse your hands, and do the same again until you have 4 - 6 bhajis frying. They mustn't be allowed to cook too much at this stage, so if you find it slow going, only make two or three initially. They should not be in the hot oil for more than about a minute. Now remove them, place on a flat surface, and squash them with the palm of your hand (It won't burn.) and pat them in at the edges so that they look something like beef burgers. Return them to the deep fryer and cook them for about 3 minutes, until they are crisp on the outside. (The initial cooking was to firm up the mixture.) They can be dried by laying them on kitchen paper. Serve immediately, or re-heat later in the deep fryer for about half a minute.

RICE

PILAU RICE:

INGREDIENTS:

2lb. Basmati rice

A little oil

1Tbsp. salt

1Heaped Tbsp. garlic and ginger puree

½tsp. fennel seeds

¾ tsp. cumin seeds

WHOLE SPICES:

Bay leaves

Cassia bark

Cardamoms

3 or 4 anise seeds (In pod, as removed from 'star'.)

METHOD:

(Using 4 litres, 8 inch boiling pot.) Place the rice in the pot and fill with cold water and stir. The water will go cloudy with starch. Drain, and keep repeating until the water stays clear. Don't be surprised if this takes ten or twelve changes of water. Now leave the pot under running cold water (Allowing it to overflow.) for a few minutes, giving it an occasional stir. Drain. Add cold water to the pot until the level is $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{8}$ inch above the rice. Add the rest of the ingredients, place on the cooker and bring to the boil. Cover, and reduce heat to an absolute minimum. The rice should be cooked after fifteen minutes. It can then be given a stir, taking care not to break too many grains, and placed in the oven to keep warm. If allowed to cool, it can be reheated in individual portions in a microwave oven. It is a good idea to cook a large batch for freezing, to be used when required. This actually seems to improve the texture.

PLAIN RICE:

Use exactly the same method as above, leaving out the spices but not the oil, as this helps to keep the grains separate.

One of the advantages of this method is that the flavour of the rice is not lost as it is with the "Boil and Wash" method. The end result is quite dry and firm. If it seems that very little water is used, don't worry quite a lot is absorbed during the washing process.

USEFUL TIPS:

The secret of cooking rice successfully by absorption is thorough washing. Use only Basmati rice with this method. If you want multicoloured rice, don't try to colour it when freshly cooked, you'll only make a mess. Use previously cooked rice, place in small portions in cups, add food colouring and a little water, then rinse and dry. You can add this to your freshly cooked rice.

BREADS:

I have developed a method of cooking Nan that attempts to simulate the conditions found in the tandoor. It gives a better result than simply baking or grilling.

NAAN INGREDIENTS:

1 Lb. plain flour
4 Tbsp. sugar
¹/₂ tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. kalonji
2 Oz. vegetable ghee
Water
Melted ghee to brush with

METHOD:

Thoroughly mix all the ingredients, and then add water, a little at a time until you have pliable dough. Knead for a minute or so, then divide into four portions, and roll them by hand until smooth. Leave to stand for at least two hours.

TO COOK:

This is done in two stages. First light the grill. Now, lightly oil a large, heavy frying pan and place on the gas to get really hot. Take a portion of Naan, and roll it into the familiar Naan shape, and place this in the pan. This is to cook the underside by contact, as would happen in the tandoor. You will have to keep pressing it down, so that it stays in contact with the pan. After a couple of minutes, have a look. If the underside looks cooked, transfer the Nan to the grill to cook the upper surface. It is done when brown spots appear. Lastly, brush with plenty of melted ghee. This method will produce a passable imitation Naan cooked in a tandoor. If all you want is a perfectly acceptable Naan, then you may prefer to simply bake it in the oven.

KEEMA NAAN:

I am including a description of how to make Keema Nan, but this must be treated with caution when not cooked in a tandoor. The reason for this is that it is stuffed with a filling made from raw meat, and you must make sure that this cooks properly. (It always seems to in the tandoor, not so readily on the cooker.) Keema Naan seems to vary a lot from one restaurant to another, some seem to use the minimum of stuffing, and a few seem to want to see how much they can get in. A recent development seems to have been the 'Super Naan' which is absolutely loaded with gingery minced lamb and drips melted ghee.

This looks better if the stuffing is brightly coloured, either red or orange. That's my opinion, anyway. Use 2 - 3 oz. of sheek kebab mixture to stuff one Naan. Simply place the dough on a lightly floured surface, and make an indentation in it. Place the stuffing in this, pull the edges of the dough around it and squeeze them together. Sprinkle some flour on top, and roll it out using a rolling pin, keeping it as round as possible. The edges can be left a little thicker. The restaurant chef will now slap it from hand to hand until the shape is just right. Cook as before, but remember to make sure that the filling is properly cooked. This may take a little practice to perfect, but it is not as difficult as it sounds.

SUNDRIES:

ONION SALAD:

The ingredients of this aren't as obvious as you would think. The reason for this is that something has to be added to subdue the flavour of the onions. Maybe you have wondered why your homemade onion salad tastes only of raw onions. This is about to change.

INGREDIENTS:

Very finely chopped onion.

Some tomato, de-seed, chop very finely and squeeze out excess juice.

Very finely chopped cucumber.

A light sprinkling of salt.

P.L.J., just enough to moisten.

Thoroughly mix, and leave to stand for several hours. Before serving

Add chopped coriander leaves.

HINTS AND TIPS

- When preparing fresh coriander, the restaurant chef will use it all, except the roots. (Even these are used in Thai "cooking.") But sometimes, the leaves and stalks are used separately: The leaves are chopped and used mainly as a garnish for finished dishes, the stalks chopped very finely, and added slightly earlier, but not cooked too long, as this destroys their flavour.
- A 'portion' of curry gravy = 7oz. ladle full
- The ideal curry pan is a stainless steel omelette pan 8-9 inches in diameter (widest part) and **without** a heavy base.
- Panch Poran literally means 5 spice or condiment. This wonderful masala is made up of a blend of whole seeds containing, cumin, fenugreek, fennel, mustard, and black onion seeds. It is excellent for flavoring when used in vegetable dishes, but can be used in dal or fish.

Panch Poran Spice Mix:

2 T fenugreek seeds
2 T kalongi, kalogeera or Nigella (Black onion seeds)
2 T black mustard seeds
2 T cumin seeds
2 T fennel seeds

Mix all of the above spices together. Save the spice mixture for use in your Bengali dishes. Most recipes call for about a teaspoon of the mixture. Pre mixed Panch Poran can be purchased at your Indian Grocer or online.

- The secret of cooking rice successfully by absorption is thorough washing. Use only Basmati rice with this method. If you want multicoloured rice, don't try to colour it when freshly cooked, you'll only make a mess. Use previously cooked rice, place in small portions in cups, add food colouring and a little water, then rinse and dry. You can add this to your freshly cooked rice.

CONCLUSION:

The flavour of curry gravy is modified by cooking - it tends mellow. So a useful way of varying the dishes I have described is to prolong their cooking. If you are going to do this, make the curry gravy thinner; add more water with the tarka. Instead of one part water to three parts curry gravy, make the proportion one to two. This will obviously produce a thinner sauce. When a dish is prepared, simmer it for longer until it thickens. (For standard curries use about 1¹/₃ ladles of curry gravy to allow for evaporation. Simmer for 5 + minute.)

In the time that I have been an enthusiast, the restaurant curry has changed almost out of all recognition; it is still changing. Mastering this method will take a little practice, but should be worth it. Nothing comes easily, does it? If you are totally familiar with the ingredients and techniques, you won't need recipes; you will just 'cook'. If you are a regular customer and are known at an Indian restaurant, you could ask if you could see the kitchen in operation. If you do, though, pick a quiet day such as a Sunday or Monday, certainly not Friday or Saturday. Finally, without too much effort, you can have a curry- whenever you want. With curry gravy in the fridge, cooked meat and rice in the freezer, a microwave oven to thaw them, and some fresh vegetables, you have quite a choice.

*The Curry Club is indebted to Bruce Edwards (and his curry eating Labrador) for his Curry House Cooking and the Update which has been carried in this and the last three editions of the Curry Magazine.

I would like to add the editor's personal thanks to along with the many other received from our readers, such as the one from Vic Edwards (no relation, below)

In our next two issues we are covering curries from an excellent book, shortly to be published in May by Indian gourmet Camillia Panjabi.

Dear Bruce,

Congratulations on an excellent series - at last a method that produces truly authentic restaurant results!

However, there are a couple of points I'd like to raise and I'd appreciate your comments: The first is in your Bhoona which I find satisfactory but suspect that the majority of restaurants use the same method they use for vegetable bhajis to produce this dish.

The second is onions which my greengrocer says are large English (size 60/80) not Spanish for Indian restaurants use - what is your opinion on this?

Yours Sincerely,

Victor Edwards, Aldridge.