

South Indian Recipes

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INTRODUCTION

India is truly a mosaic of varied cultures, and no aspect of culture asserts this fact as strongly as cuisine! The stark difference in ingredients, procedures and practices followed in different parts of India is a typical example and every cuisine has its share of unique features and abundant charm.

South Indian cuisine is no different. The subtle Keralite blends of coconuts and condiments coexist with the spicy curries of Chettinad, just as the fiery pickles of Andhra Pradesh complement the slightly sweetish cuisine of Karnataka.

A complete South Indian spread served traditionally, with love and care, on a plantain leaf, is – to many – worth a kingdom! Why would it not be when the food is prepared with exacting precision, and sans any shortcuts (well, if you wish for the authentic taste, you have to have the patience to slow-cook most of the dishes!)

In fact, in South India, serving food is considered as much an art as cooking – there is even a particular order for serving dishes (for e.g., first a drop of payasam is placed on the plate, followed by the pachadi, and then the curries, and so on) and each dish has a specific place reserved for it on the plantain leaf – this order perhaps evolved through trial and error over the ages because it is so convenient to the diner!

However, much as people all across the country like South Indian food, I find that many do not know the precise procedure to make each dish and end up with a rather different tasting dish, wondering why it just doesn't taste like what they had at a South Indian hotel or home! The reason is that each South Indian recipe is characterised by some unique ingredient or way of cooking, and there are no shortcuts... so unless you know really how to make a dish, it is quite natural to end up with a 'so-so' version. In order to avoid such fiascos we researched authentic recipes; whilst of course modifying them a bit to suit today's fast lifestyle and scanty time available for cooking. Even South Indians might find some of the recipes which I collected during my travels in South India (such as the chutneys, page 64) interesting and unique.

Like all other parts of India, South India too has a large repertoire of recipes to its credit, ranging from breakfast and the quintessential "tiffin" to main course dishes, snacks, festival or fasting foods, pickles, and the lot! In this book, which is designed to provide readers a glimpse into South Indian cooking, we have included recipes from different States including Tamilnadu (e.g., Medu Vada/Wada, page 16, Capsicum Poriyal, page 27 and Sambhar, page 54), Kerala (such as Plantain Erisery, page 24, and Avial, page 37), Andhra Pradesh (such as Vankaya Muddha Korra, page 30) and Karnataka (like Chitrana Rice, page 82, and Bisi Bele Bhaat, page 80).

Transport yourself across South India with these recipes, and enjoy yourself discovering the unique features of this cuisine.

Warm regards,

Tenda Dalal

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RAWA DOSA

An easy to make counterpart of the traditional *dosa*! These crisp *dosas* are made with a batter of semolina and buttermilk. Since the batter does not have to be fermented for long, this is an ideal dish to serve the sudden guest!

Preparation Time: 30 minutes.

Cooking Time: 12-15 minutes.

Makes 6 *dosas*.

Fermenting Time: 15 to 20 minutes.

1 cup semolina (*rawa*)
2 tsp *maida* (plain flour)
½ cup fresh curds (*dahi*)
1 tsp finely chopped green chillies
½ tsp cumin seeds (*jeera*)
2 tbsp thinly sliced fresh coconut
2 tbsp broken cashewnuts (*kaju*)
Salt to taste
2 tsp coconut oil / any other oil for the tempering
Coconut oil / any other oil for greasing and cooking
Fried coconut *chutney*, page 66, for serving
Sambhar, page 54, for serving

1. Combine the semolina, flour, curds and ½

cup of water together in a bowl and mix well to get a smooth batter.

2. Cover and allow it to ferment in a warm place for at least 15 to 20 minutes.
3. Add the green chillies, cumin seeds, coconut, cashewnuts and salt and mix well.
4. Add more water as required and mix well to a very thin batter.
5. Heat a non-stick *tava* (griddle) and sprinkle a little water on it. It should steam immediately.
6. Grease it lightly with oil and wipe hard with a slice of onion or potato.
7. Pour ½ cup of the batter from a little height so that holes are made and tilt the *tava* quickly in all directions so that it forms a thin circle.
8. Smear a little oil on the sides, cook till both sides are golden brown in colour and fold over to make a semi-circle.
9. Repeat with the remaining batter to make 5 more *dosas*.

Serve hot with fried coconut *chutney* and *sambhar*.



COCONUT RICE

The generous use of coconuts is a characteristic feature of South Indian cooking. Coconut rice is a typical dish that is sure to be relished by all those who like the rich, creamy flavour and texture of coconuts.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes.

Cooking Time: 25 minutes.

Serves 4.

2 tbsp sesame seeds (*til*)
½ cup freshly grated coconut, page 92
2 tsp ghee
3 tbsp broken cashewnuts (*kaju*)
2 tsp coconut oil/ any other oil
1 tsp mustard seeds (*rai/ sarson*)
1 tsp cumin seeds (*jeera*)
1 tsp *urad dal* (split black gram)
1 tsp *chana dal* (split Bengal gram)
1 whole dry Kashmiri red chilli, broken into pieces
7 to 8 curry leaves (*kadi patta*)
½ tsp asafoetida (*hing*)
2 tsp finely chopped green chillies
2½ cups cooked rice (*chawal*), page 93
Salt to taste

1. Heat a small pan, add the sesame seeds and dry roast on a slow flame for 3 to 4 minutes, while stirring continuously.
2. When cool, blend in a mixer or pound in a mortar-pestle (*khalbhatta*) to a coarse powder and keep aside.
3. In the same pan, add the coconut and sauté on a medium flame till it turns golden brown in colour, while stirring continuously. Remove and keep aside.
4. Heat the ghee in the *kadhái*, add the cashewnuts and sauté on a medium flame till they turn golden brown in colour, while stirring continuously. Remove and keep aside.
5. Heat the oil to the same *kadhái* and add the mustard seeds.
6. When the mustard seeds crackle, add the

cumin seeds, *urad dal*, *chana dal*, red chillies, curry leaves and asafoetida and sauté on a medium flame for 2 to 3 minutes, while stirring continuously.

7. Add the sesame seeds powder, green chillies, rice, sautéed coconut and salt and mix well.

Serve hot garnished with the fried cashewnuts.





Vankaya Muddha Korra

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ISBN 978-81-89491-79-6



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