



GET SP

CHICKPEA CURRY
(CHHOLE)



BY CHERYL
STERNMAN RULE

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY
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LOCATION PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JODY HORTON

TWO TEXAS
SISTERS SHOW
YOU HOW TO
COOK THE
INDIAN
CUISINE THEY
GREW UP WITH
ANY NIGHT OF
THE WEEK

RECIPES BY SHEFALY RAVULA AND AMEE MEGHANI



TONIGHT

It's a typical Tuesday night at Shefaly Ravula's house in Austin, Texas. The busy 41-year-old mom of two (*above left*) enters the kitchen, ties back her hair and immediately reaches for the masala dabba, a stainless-steel spice caddy filled with turmeric, cumin seed, mustard seed and coriander. She scans her weekly meal chart and pops outside to her garden for a few fresh curry leaves. Now she's ready to slam out a flavorful, from-scratch Indian meal.

Indian food has a reputation for being intimidating, but Ravula, a cooking teacher, has an approach that is so streamlined, her recipes so doable, that cooking for her is practically as fast as takeout. Her secrets? Forethought, a refrigerator filled with make-ahead condiments and an arsenal of go-to meals designed for a multitasking mom.

Ravula's younger sister, Amee Meghani (*above right*), 37, who lives with her husband and 2-year-old twins in Dallas, has dinnertime down too. The sisters' need for speed grew out of their busy lives, but the inspiration for the cuisine came from three key women: their mom and their mothers-in-law.

Though the sisters grew up in Houston, their mother, Aarti Shah, raised them mostly on her native cuisine from the western Indian state of Gujarat as well as a handful of typical American dishes. She would pull out the chickpea flour and make *bhajia*—batter-fried onions, bell peppers or even bananas—for the girls' after-school snacks. Or she'd roll chickpea dough into balls, tucking in a fenugreek leaf before sizzling them in oil.

After the two sisters got married, they learned other Indian flavors from their respective mothers-in-law. As a new bride, Ravula got a crash course in the regional cooking of her mother-in-law, Sesherakha, who is from Andhra

ICY
LEMON RICE (CHITRANNA)



Okra Fry (Bhindi Masala)

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 30 min

To avoid the sliminess that turns many people off okra, Indians cook it over high heat in a lot of oil. Here we get similar results with less oil in a nonstick pan. For an authentic taste, use a hot, smoky Indian chili powder, such as reshampatti.

- 2 tablespoons safflower oil or grapeseed oil
- ½ teaspoon black or brown mustard seeds
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
- 8-10 fresh curry leaves (optional)
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- 1¼ pounds okra, trimmed and sliced ½ inch thick (about 5 cups sliced), or two 10-ounce bags frozen sliced okra, thawed
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½-1 teaspoon hot Indian chili powder, such as reshampatti, or ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

“Just because a dish uses a lot of spices doesn’t mean it’s going to be difficult to make.”

Pradesh in south India. The food there is fiery-hot, with an intense use of garlic, ginger and onions. It was distinctly different from her mother’s milder cooking. She took notes as Sesherakha cooked dishes like a peanut-and-lentil-strewn rice with lemon, curry leaves and spices.

Meghani’s mother-in-law also cooks Gujarati foods like her mom’s, but includes dishes to satisfy her husband’s taste for the flavors of Ethiopia, where he spent much of his childhood.

Today, both sisters helm the stoves in their respective Texas homes. Besides raising her children, Ravula regularly teaches health-focused cooking classes in Austin. She covers foods of all cuisines, but her Indian cooking classes always sell out. Her favorite meals to cook at home include the okra stir-fry of her youth (above), cashew butter chicken masala (page 118) and a simple egg curry (page 116).

For Meghani, cooking remains a pleasure that she balances with her demanding work as a 3D CAD applications engineer. She plans her family’s meals a week in advance, doing the shopping and prep on the weekends.

She relies heavily on both her slow cooker

(page 115) and her freezer. She also uses her food processor more nights than not. “Use the equipment you have. That’s the engineer in me talking!”

“If you stock your spice shelf well,” Meghani says, “you shouldn’t have to run to the store every time you make Indian food.” And, she adds, don’t be afraid of the number of spices in a given recipe. Indian spices add depth of flavor, not necessarily heat. “Just because a dish uses a lot of spices doesn’t mean it’s going to be spicy or difficult to make.”

Her meals, like the superfast chickpea-based *chhole* (see page 121), are uncomplicated but thoughtful. “I really try to adhere to good ingredients and homemade food,” she says. “That’s my mom’s influence. I learned from her that a home-cooked meal is one of the most loving things you can do for your family.”

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1. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking. Sprinkle in a few mustard seeds to test the oil—it’s hot enough when the seeds sizzle and pop. Quickly add the remaining mustard seeds, cumin seeds and curry leaves (if using);

cook, stirring, until very fragrant, about 1 minute, covering the pan as needed to contain any splattering.

2. Reduce heat to medium, add onion and cook, stirring, until it is starting to brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Add okra, increase heat to medium-high and cook, stirring often, until the “goo” or mucilage from the okra starts to release and the onion darkens, 4 to 6 minutes more.

3. Add coriander, paprika, salt, turmeric and chili powder to taste (or cayenne); cook, stirring often, until the okra is browned in spots and the vegetables look very dry, 6 to 10 minutes more.

SERVES 4: about ¾ cup each

CAL 131 / **FAT** 8G (SAT 1G) / **CHOL** 0MG / **CARBS** 15G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G (ADDED 0G) / **PROTEIN** 4G / **FIBER** 6G / **SODIUM** 223MG / **POTASSIUM** 504MG.



Shafaly Ravula (above) and her sister Ameer Meghani have harder-to-find ingredients like curry leaves growing in their backyards. The leaves, unrelated to curry spice blends, have a citrusy aroma and are a favorite in Southern and Western Indian cooking. You can buy them fresh (or dried) at Indian markets and some better produce markets.



Slow-Cooker Dal Makhani

ACTIVE: 10 min

(plus 8-12 hrs soaking time)

SLOW-COOKER TIME: 10 hrs

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 6 months.

EQUIPMENT: 4½- to 6-quart slow cooker

This slow-cooker curry is like a particularly aromatic chili; it pairs well with rice, Cilantro Chutney (right) and a side of plain yogurt. For the most creamy results use whole urad dal (versus split), which you can get online or at Indian markets. This particular bean breaks down beautifully, giving the dish its rich, creamy texture. For a stovetop variation, see below.

- 6 cups water
- 1½ cups dry whole urad dal, rinsed
- ⅓ cup dried red kidney beans, rinsed
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- ¾ teaspoons kosher salt
- 10 whole cardamom pods
- 8 whole cloves
- 2 teaspoons ground turmeric
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup canned crushed tomatoes
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for garnish

1. Combine water, urad dal and kidney beans in a 4½- to 6-quart slow cooker. Soak for 8 to 12 hours.
2. Turn the slow cooker to Low. Stir in onion, garlic, ginger, salt, cardamom, cloves, turmeric, cumin, garam masala and cayenne. Cover and cook for 10 hours.

3. Remove the cardamom pods, if desired. Stir in tomatoes and cilantro. Serve with more cilantro, if desired.

SERVES 8: about ¾ cup each

CAL 149 / **FAT** 1G (SAT 0G) / **CHOL** 0MG / **CARBS** 27G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G (ADDED 0G) / **PROTEIN** 10G / **FIBER** 11G / **SODIUM** 318MG / **POTASSIUM** 266MG.

Stovetop Dal Makhani: In Step 1, soak the dal and beans in 7 cups of water in a large pot. In Step 2, stir in the flavorings and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, cover and cook for 2 hours. Remove from heat. Finish with step 3.

Tools like a food processor make preparing sophisticated sauces like this cilantro chutney quick.



Cilantro Chutney (Kothmiri Chatni)

ACTIVE: 10 min **TOTAL:** 10 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate for up to 5 days or freeze airtight for up to 6 months.

Indian chutneys (or chatnis) are savory, vibrant and exploding with flavor, with a thin, saucy consistency. This raw cilantro sauce is a basic condiment for many Indian snacks, street foods and sandwiches. The serrano chile gives it quite a blast of heat, so use less if you like a tamer sauce. Try this chutney with the Savory Summer Squash Muffins (page 120) or Scrambled Egg Curry (page 116) or use in place of your favorite hot sauce.

- ¼ cup unsalted raw peanuts
- 1 large bunch fresh cilantro
- ½ cup water
- ½-1 serrano chile, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar

1. Place peanuts in a blender or food processor. Pulse a few times to grind to a medium-fine powder, scraping down the sides as needed.

2. Trim the bottom 2 inches of stem off the cilantro and discard; coarsely chop the rest and add to the blender (or food processor) along with water, serrano to taste, ginger, lime juice, salt and sugar. Blend or process, scraping down the sides as needed, until it's the consistency of a thin sauce, adding more water by the tablespoon as needed.

MAKES: about 1 cup (1-Tbsp. serving)

CAL 15 / **FAT** 1G (SAT 0G) / **CHOL** 0MG / **CARBS** 1G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 0G (ADDED 0G) / **PROTEIN** 1G / **FIBER** 0G / **SODIUM** 71MG / **POTASSIUM** 29MG.



Scrambled Egg Curry

ACTIVE: 25 min TOTAL: 25 min

These mildly spiced scrambled eggs make a great light lunch or light dinner. Tuck them into a warm whole-wheat tortilla or an Indian flatbread, like paratha, which can be found in the freezer case at Indian markets. Serve with a dollop of yogurt.

- 4 medium cloves garlic, finely grated or minced
- 1 ½-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated or minced
- 2 tablespoons safflower oil or grapeseed oil
- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon Kashmiri chili powder (see Tip, page 128)
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- 6 tablespoons water
- 8 large eggs, beaten
- 4 warm paratha breads or whole-wheat tortillas
- Fresh cilantro for garnish

1. Combine garlic and ginger in a bowl; press with a spoon to make a paste.
2. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion, reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring, until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in turmeric; cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is light brown, 5 to 7 minutes more. Stir in the garlic-ginger paste, coriander, chili powder and salt. Stir in water, partially cover and cook until the water evaporates, about 5 minutes.
3. Add eggs and cook, stirring constantly, until almost set, 4 to 6 minutes. Serve rolled in paratha (or tortillas) with cilantro, if desired.

SERVES 4: about ¾ cup each

CAL 298 / **FAT** 17G (SAT 4G) / **CHOL** 372MG / **CARBS** 25G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G (ADDED 0G) / **PROTEIN** 16G / **FIBER** 3G / **SODIUM** 526MG / **POTASSIUM** 279MG.



Cashew Butter Chicken Masala

ACTIVE: 1 hr **TOTAL:** 3 hrs (including 2 hrs marinating time)

TO MAKE AHEAD: Marinate chicken (Step 1) for up to 1 day.

Butter or even heavy cream usually gives this popular Indian curry its rich, satisfying quality. This version is made equally luxurious with the healthier fat in cashew butter. Chickpea flour thickens the sauce, but is optional if you don't have it on hand. For weeknight speed, marinate the chicken ahead of time and you can have this dish on the table in about 30 minutes. Serve with steamed spinach and basmati rice.

CHICKEN

- 6 cloves garlic, finely grated or minced
- 1 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated or minced
- 1 cup plain yogurt, preferably not Greek
- 1 serrano chile, minced
- 2 tablespoons chickpea flour (optional)
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon Kashmiri chili powder (see Tip, TK)
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon crushed saffron
- 1 ½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces

SAUCE

- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 6 whole cardamom pods, lightly crushed
- 4 whole cloves
- 3 2-inch cinnamon sticks
- 1 large white onion, finely chopped
- 1 serrano chile, julienned, plus more for garnish
- 2 tablespoons dried fenugreek leaves
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- ½ teaspoon Kashmiri chili powder
- 1 cup no-salt-added tomato sauce
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- ⅔ cup water
- 2 tablespoons cashew butter

1. To marinate chicken: Combine garlic and ginger in a bowl. Press with a spoon to make a paste. Transfer 2 packed tablespoons to a large bowl and add yogurt, serrano, chickpea flour (if using), 1 tablespoon coriander, 1 teaspoon chili powder, garam masala, ground cinnamon, cumin, turmeric, ½ teaspoon salt and saffron; whisk until well combined. Add chicken and stir to coat. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours and up to 1 day. Refrigerate the remaining garlic-ginger paste.

2. To prepare chicken: Position a rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler to high. Line a baking sheet with foil.

3. Spread the chicken on the prepared baking sheet. Broil until the chicken is cooked through and starting to brown, 10 to 12 minutes.

4. To prepare sauce: Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add cardamom, cloves and cinnamon sticks; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in serrano, fenugreek, coriander, garam masala, chili powder and the reserved garlic-ginger paste. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Stir in tomato sauce and salt; cook for 2 minutes more. Add water and cashew butter; increase heat to medium-high and cook, stirring often, until the sauce looks creamy, about 5 minutes. Add the chicken and any accumulated juice to the sauce. Cook, stirring, until heated through, 2 to 3 minutes. Serve with slice serrano chile, if desired.

SERVES 5: 1 cup each

CAL 353 / FAT 20G (SAT 9G) / CHOL 94MG / CARBS 14G / TOTAL SUGARS 7G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 30G / FIBER 2G / SODIUM 418MG / POTASSIUM 538MG.

TIP: Commonly used in Indian cuisine, Kashmiri chili powder lends a touch of heat and beautiful red color to sauces and curries. Any regular- to medium-heat chili powder can be used in its place. To bump up the heat, add a pinch of cayenne pepper too.



CORIANDER

GINGER

CARDAMOM
PODS

Savory Summer Squash Muffins (Dhoodhi Handvo)

ACTIVE: 30 min TOTAL: 1¼ hrs

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze airtight for up to 3 months; reheat in a toaster oven.

EQUIPMENT: Muffin tin with 12 (½-cup) cups

Handvo is a beautifully browned lunch or brunch quick bread traditionally made with lauki (also called calabash), a large, mild squash found in India. This version uses easier-to-find zucchini and are made cupcake-size so each gets delightful crispy edges. (Photo: page 3.)

- 2 cups fine semolina flour
- 2½ tablespoons canola oil or grapeseed oil plus 1½ tablespoons, divided
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 3 cloves garlic, finely grated or minced
- 1 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated or minced
- 3½ cups packed shredded zucchini (about 1 pound)
- 1 cup low-fat plain yogurt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- ¾ cup water
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat 12 (½-cup) muffin cups with cooking spray.
2. Mix flour, 2½ tablespoons oil, salt, baking soda and turmeric in a medium bowl.
3. Combine garlic and ginger in a large bowl; press with a spoon to make a paste. Add zucchini, yogurt and sugar; stir until well combined. Add the dry ingredients and stir to combine. Add water and stir to combine again.
4. Spoon the batter into the prepared muffin tin, filling each cup until almost flush with the top. Level the batter.
5. Heat the remaining 1½ tablespoons oil in a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add cumin seeds and mustard seeds; cook, stirring, until very fragrant, about 45 seconds, being careful not to burn them. Remove from heat. Spoon a scant ½ teaspoon of the seasoned oil on top of each muffin, then sprinkle with sesame seeds.
6. Bake for 20 minutes. Leaving the pan in the center of the oven, switch the oven to broil, and broil the muffins until the tops are browned, 7 to 10 minutes more.
7. Let cool in the pan for 20 minutes before removing. Serve warm or room temperature.

SERVES 12: 1 muffin each

CAL 172 / **FAT** 6G (SAT 1G) / **CHOL** 1MG / **CARBS** 25G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G (ADDED 1G) / **PROTEIN** 5G / **FIBER** 2G / **SODIUM** 115MG / **POTASSIUM** 208MG.

WHOLE
CLOVESBLACK
MUSTARD
SEEDSSERRANO
CHILES
(GREEN)

GARLIC

CHANA
DALSEMOLINA
FLOURTURMERIC
(GROUND)

WHAT YOU NEED TO COOK INDIAN FOOD TONIGHT

PROBABLY ALREADY HAVE The ingredient lists for these recipes may look scary, but take a deep breath and consider this: if you have onions, garlic, ginger, fresh chiles and cilantro on hand, you already have what you need to build the flavor base for a wide range of easy-to-make Indian dishes.

RAID THE SPICE CABINET or head to a well-stocked supermarket to gather the common spices used in curries, dals and seasoned rices: coriander, cardamom pods, cumin seeds, garam masala (a blend of several spices used in Indian cooking), turmeric, black or brown mustard seeds and whole cloves.

GO TO AN INDIAN MARKET OR SHOP ONLINE Look for the harder-to-find but worth-seeking-out ingredients like fenugreek leaves, kashmiri and reshampatti chili powders, urad & chana dal (lentils) and fresh curry leaves at an Indian market or online from kalustyans.com or amazon.com.

DRIED
FENUGREEK
LEAVES

KASHMIRI
CHILI POWDER

BROWN
BASMATI
RICE

Chickpea Curry (Chhole)

ACTIVE: 15 min TOTAL: 15 min

Made with convenient canned beans, this is an authentic curry that you can make in minutes. Serve with brown basmati rice or warm naan. If you want an additional vegetable, try some roasted cauliflower florets. (Photo: page 110.)

- 1 medium serrano pepper, cut into thirds
- 4 large cloves garlic
- 1 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped (1-inch)
- 6 tablespoons canola oil or grapeseed oil
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 2 ¼ cups no-salt-added canned diced tomatoes with their juice (from a 28-ounce can)
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 15-ounce cans chickpeas, rinsed
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- Fresh cilantro for garnish

1. Pulse serrano, garlic and ginger in a food processor until minced. Scrape down the sides and pulse again. Add onion; pulse until finely chopped, but not watery.

2. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add coriander, cumin and turmeric and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes.

3. Pulse tomatoes in the food processor until finely chopped. Add to the pan along with salt. Reduce heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes. Add chickpeas and garam masala, reduce heat to a gentle simmer, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes more. Serve topped with cilantro, if desired.

SERVES 6: about 1 cup each

CAL 278 / FAT 15G (SAT 1G) / CHOL 0MG / CARBS 30G / TOTAL SUGARS 3G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 6G / FIBER 6G / SODIUM 354MG / POTASSIUM 356MG.

FRESH
CURRY
LEAVES

GARAM
MASALA

CUMIN
SEEDS

ONIONS

PLAIN
YOGURT

Lemon Rice (Chitrannam)

ACTIVE: 15 min TOTAL: 15 min

This is a great way to use leftover rice. Cooked rice refrigerated overnight will firm up and dry out a little, making it better suited to absorb all the flavors in this dish without getting sticky or mushy. In a pinch, use frozen or shelf-stable precooked basmati rice, available in many stores. Urad dal and roasted chana dal add texture and authenticity to the rice—look for both types of dal in Indian markets or online. (Photo: page 110.)

- ¼ cup lemon or lime juice
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil or canola oil
- ½ teaspoon black mustard seeds
- ⅓ cup cashews and/or peanuts
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 small serrano or green Thai chile, halved lengthwise
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
- 12 fresh curry leaves (optional)
- 2 tablespoons roasted chana dal (optional)
- 1 tablespoon urad dal (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 3 cups cooked brown basmati rice, cold or room-temperature

1. Combine lemon (or lime) juice and salt in a small bowl, stirring until dissolved.

2. Heat oil in a wide large pot over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking. Sprinkle in a few mustard seeds to test the oil—it's hot enough when the seeds sizzle and pop. Once hot, reduce heat to medium. Quickly add the remaining mustard seeds, nuts, garlic, chile pepper, cumin seeds and curry leaves, chana dal and urad dal (if using), covering the pan as needed to contain any splattering. Cook, stirring, until the nuts are lightly brown, 2 to 4 minutes.

3. Remove from heat and stir in turmeric, rice and the juice mixture.

SERVES 5: about ¾ cup each

CAL 220 / FAT 11G (SAT 1G) / CHOL 0MG / CARBS 29G / TOTAL SUGARS 2G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 4G / FIBER 2G / SODIUM 170MG / POTASSIUM 79MG.

URAD
DAL

CILANTRO



CHICKPEA
FLOUR

RESHAMPATTI
CHILI POWDER