

Shahi Paneer

Advanced · Vegetarian · ± 4 people · 60 min

The onions must not brown in this dish. They stay pale pink, which keeps the sauce light in colour and mild in flavour.

The spices go through the yoghurt first. In the fat the yoghurt releases they can cook gently without burning.

A little sugar caramelised in oil before the sauce goes in gives the deep red colour.

Spiciness. This is the amount of chilli as it is used in India. For a milder dish, use half the Kashmiri chili powder. There are no green chillies in it. The rest of the recipe stays the same.

Tip. Let the mixture cool before you blend it. That saves spattering and keeps the colour good. Sieving is optional, but it does make the sauce a good deal smoother.

Ingredients

For the base

- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- 1 tbsp ghee (clarified butter)
- 2 medium red onions, quartered
- 2 green cardamom pods
- 1 black cardamom pod
- 2 cloves
- 4 to 6 cm cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 Indian bay leaf (tej patta)
- 1 tbsp ginger garlic paste

The yoghurt spice mix

- 245 g yoghurt (about 1 cup)
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tbsp Kashmiri chili powder
- ½ tsp garam masala

For the sauce

- 10 to 12 cashew nuts, soaked
- 4 medium tomatoes, quartered
- ½ tsp salt
- 125 ml hot water
- 1 tbsp butter

To finish

- 1 tbsp mustard oil
- ½ tsp sugar
- 1 tsp Kashmiri chili powder
- 250 g paneer, diced
- 60 ml cream
- pinch of cardamom powder
- 1 tsp kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves), crushed

Method

1. Heat 2 tbsp mustard oil with 1 tbsp ghee in a pan.
2. Add the quartered onions with the green and black cardamom, the cloves, the cinnamon stick, 1 tsp cumin seeds and the bay leaf. Stir over medium heat.
3. Let it soften for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring throughout. Then lower the heat and add 1 tbsp ginger garlic paste. Cook another 2 to 4 minutes over low heat until the raw smell is gone. Note: the onions must not brown, they should stay pale pink.
4. Meanwhile mix 245 g yoghurt in a bowl with ¼ tsp turmeric, 1 tsp ground coriander, 1 tbsp Kashmiri chili powder and ½ tsp garam masala. Only add it once step 3 is done. Turn the heat to medium and stir well. The spices go through the yoghurt because that lets them cook gently in the fat the yoghurt releases.
5. After 4 to 5 minutes of stirring, add 10 to 12 soaked cashews along with the 4 quartered tomatoes, ½ tsp salt and 125 ml hot water. Mix and cook over medium-high heat until the tomatoes are soft.
6. Add 1 tbsp butter and let the whole thing cool. Then blend it smooth. Cooling before blending keeps the colour good.
7. Pour the purée through a fine sieve and push it through with a spoon. Set this sauce aside.
8. In a deep pan heat 1 tbsp mustard oil. Add ½ tsp sugar, lower the heat and let the sugar caramelise. Then over low heat add 1 tsp Kashmiri chili powder, stir, and pour in the strained sauce immediately. Mix well and turn the heat to medium.
9. Cook the sauce 10 to 15 minutes, stirring throughout. Then add 250 g diced paneer. Keep stirring, because the cashews make the sauce thick and it catches quickly. If it gets too thick, add a splash of hot water.
10. Taste after 10 to 15 minutes and adjust the salt. Finish with 60 ml cream, a pinch of cardamom powder and 1 tsp crushed kasuri methi. Turn off the heat and serve hot.