

LUCKNOW'S TREASURES

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TIL KA ALOO

A new book reveals the secrets behind the city's greatest attractions — the lip-smacking treats prepared in the kitchens of its storied chefs.

Sure, it has stunning monuments and a rich culture of traditional arts, but some of Lucknow's most loved attractions are prepared in its traditional kitchens. "Lucknow has always been a city of refinement and its cuisine reflects these sensibilities," write Sunita Kohli in the book she's co-authored with Chand Sur. "Most importantly, Lucknow was and still is known for its composite culture, its Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb. Its cuisine was influenced by the cuisines that travelled down the Silk Road from Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and then down to Quetta and Lahore."

Kohli and Sur share some of the recipes "distilled from this rich culinary heritage," that have made it into their new book.

TIL KA ALOO

Serves 8

Preparation time: 1 Hour

Ingredients

- Aloo (potatoes) 1 kg, small, even-sized
- Adhrak-lahsun (ginger-garlic) paste 1 tbsp
- Safed til (white sesame seeds) 100 gms
- Besan (gram flour) 1 tbsp
- Haldi (turmeric) powder 1/2 tsp
- Laal mirch (red chilli) powder 1 tsp
- Dhania (coriander) powder 1 tsp
- Amchoor (dried raw mango) powder 1 tsp
- Anaardana (pomegranate seeds) 1 tbsp, finely ground
- Egg 2 egg whites
- Sunflower oil 4 tbsp, for frying
- Kaala namak (rock salt) powder 1 tsp
- Salt 1 tsp

Preparation

- Wash the potatoes thoroughly. Soak in water with 1 tsp salt for half an hour, then parboil the unpeeled potatoes and let them cool.

Method

- 1 Blend the besan, egg whites and all the masalas together into a paste. Put the washed and unpeeled whole potatoes in the ready masala, making sure that the potatoes are properly covered with the masala. Then generously sprinkle the sesame seeds on the potatoes.
- 2 In a large frying pan, heat the oil and fry the potatoes until they turn golden brown. Sprinkle rock salt and mix. Til ka aloo is ready to be served.

PALAK GOSHT

Serves 8

Preparation time: 1½ Hours

Ingredients

- Palak (spinach) 1 kg, washed and chopped
- Mutton (gol boti)..... 750 gms from the leg, cut into 2-inch pieces, with the bone
- Onions 2 medium, peeled and finely chopped
- Tomatoes 2 large, grated with the peels removed
- Dahi (yoghurt) 50 gms
- Lahsun (garlic) 8 cloves, peeled
- Adhrak (ginger) paste 1 tsp

- Lahsun (garlic) paste 1 tbsp
- Garam masala (ground spices) 4 tsp
- Meat masala 1 tbsp
- Haldi (turmeric) powder 1 tsp
- Laal mirch (red chilli) ½ tsp, ground
- Tejpatta (bay leaf) 2 leaves
- Badi elaichi (black cardamom)3 pods
- Dalchini (cinnamon)2-inch piece
- Desi ghee 4 tbsp
- Salt1 tsp or to taste

Method

1 Heat the desi ghee, add the bay leaf, black cardamom and cinnamon. Then add the finely chopped onions, brown them and add the ginger and garlic paste along with the grated tomatoes. Add all the masalas together and let the mixture cook for five minutes. Then add the yoghurt and cook for a further five minutes. Add the meat and brown it well for 40 minutes, until it is well cooked.

2 In a heavy-bottomed pan of boiling water, boil the spinach for one minute, to retain the colour and remove the dirt. Remove from the flame, put it in a colander under cold water and squeeze out all the water and coarsely chop the spinach. Add the spinach to the meat curry and cook for five minutes until the spinach coats the meat well. Serve hot.

KAKORI KEBAB

Serves 8

Preparation time: 1 Hour

Ingredients

- Mutton1 kg, minced from lean gol boti
- Onion ¾ cup, chopped
- Onion paste ¼ cup, browned
- Kaccha papita (raw papaya) ¼ cup
- Kaju (cashew nuts)3 tbsp, ground to a paste
- Garam masala* (ground spices)1 tsp
- Khus-khus (poppy seeds) .¼ cup, well washed
- Kaali mirch (black peppercorn) powder1 tsp
- Laal mirch (red chilli) powder1 tsp
- Hari elaichi (green cardamom) powder1 tsp
- Laung (cloves) .. ½ tsp, powdered
- Laal mirch (red chilli) powder1 tsp
- Kesar (saffron)1 tsp, soaked in 1 tsp of warm milk
- Kewra (screw pine) essence 2 drops
- Besan (gram flour) roasted 7 tbsp
- Butter 50 gms, melted for basting
- Desi ghee 4 tsp

*A typical Indian version of garam masala powder consists of black and white peppercorns, cloves, cinnamon or cassia bark, mace (part of nutmeg), black and green cardamom pods, bay leaf and cumin seeds. As an alternative, use ready-made garam masala powder.

Method

1 Grind the mutton twice and then the third time, grind it with the desi ghee.

2 In a large flat metal platter, mix the mutton with all the ingredients, except the butter, and knead it well. Set it aside for half an hour. Then, knead again.

3 Divide the mixture into 16 equal portions. With oiled palms, shape the meat portions evenly around the skewers, about 4–5 inches each. Place the skewers with the raw kebabs on a charcoal grill or over a low charcoal fire for about five minutes. Baste with butter and cook again for four minutes, rotating the skewers slowly so that the kebabs cook and brown evenly. Serve kebabs hot with small onion rings and mint chutney (these are the subtle differences of garnishes between Delhi and Lucknow).

NARGISI KOFTA

Serves 4

Preparation time: 1 Hour

Ingredients

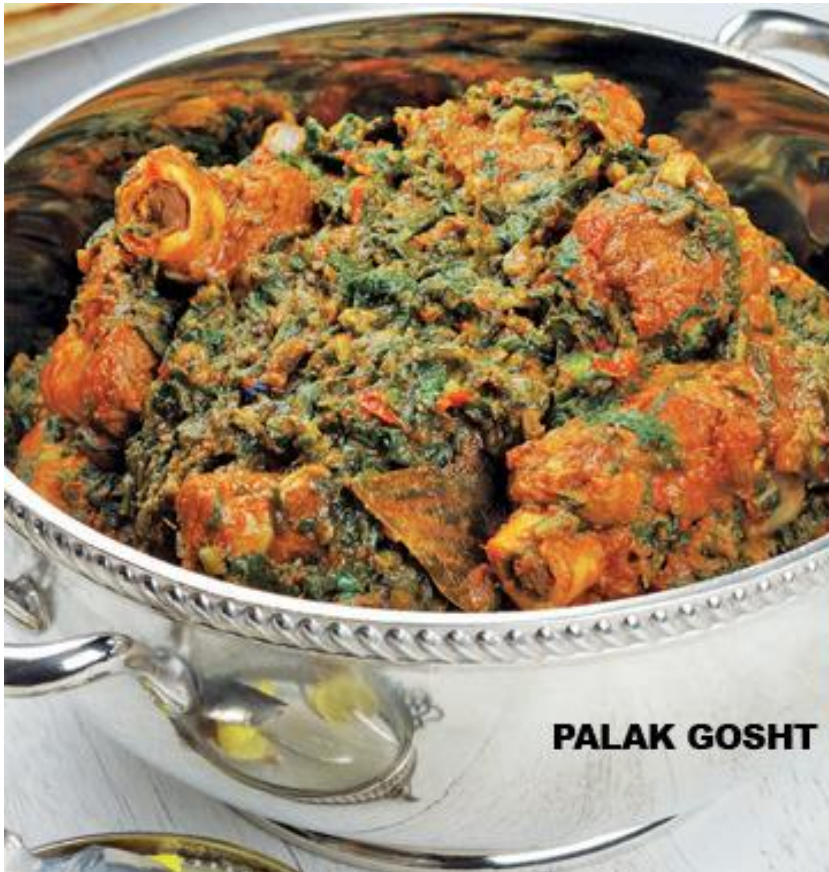
- Mutton250 gms, minced
- Eggs4 hard-boiled and shelled
- Onion1 small, finely chopped

- Onion 1 thinly sliced
- Onion paste 1 tbsp
- Lahsun (garlic paste) 2 tsp
- Adhrak (ginger paste) 2 tsp
- Dahi (yoghurt) 1¼ cup
- Chana ka atta (Bengal gram flour) 2 tbsp
- Khus-khus (poppy) seeds 1 tsp, well washed, ground to a paste
- Badi elaichi (black cardamom) 4 pods
- Laung (cloves) 3 cloves
- Kaali mirch (black peppercorns) 5 peppercorns
- Jeera (cumin) seeds ½ tsp
- Laal mirch (red chilli) powder 1 tsp
- Salt to taste
- Oil ½ cup

Method

- 1** Over a medium flame, heat the oil in a pan and fry the chopped onions to a golden brown colour. Remove from the oil and keep aside to let the onions cool. Grind the onions to a paste with the yoghurt and keep aside.
- 2** Mix half of the onion paste and half of the ginger and garlic pastes with salt. Then add the onion mixture and gram flour to the minced mutton and mix it well. Divide this mixture into four equal portions, and form each portion into a patty, then place a hardboiled egg in the centre of each patty and gently wrap the meat around all four eggs. On a high flame, in a kadhai, deep-fry each egg and set it aside.
- 3** For the curry, heat the oil in a pan and add the remaining fried onion paste with the sliced onions, ginger and garlic paste, red chilli powder, poppy seed paste and salt. Also add all the whole spices and fry them well, until the oil rises to the surface. Then add the yoghurt mixture and mix it in well. Remove from the flame.
- 4** Halve the fried boiled eggs lengthwise and place them in the curry on a flat platter. Serve hot.

Note: When the egg koftas are cut across, they are called Nargisi Koftas; when cut lengthwise they are called Qudums.



Extracted with permission from The Lucknow Cookbook, by Chand Sur and Sunita Kohli, published by Aleph Book Company

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