

## CURRY POWDER

Curry powder is composed of different basic spices ground into powder.

I received advice and tips of the how-to from two elderly ladies while waiting for my batch of spices to be ground at an Indian spice mill in Little India.

Also, my appreciation goes to a retired Indian school teacher who taught me & whom I learnt from that Indians do not even use the term curry powder. The most important is the blend of mixed spices called *garam masala*. Her good advice is to keep the spices whole. Toast and grind as required for flavour and aroma. Also, to retain freshness.

The most basic and simple curry powder will compose of coriander, cumin & fennel. The tumeric is for colour and the chilli for heat from mild to hot. The basic curry powder is enhanced for flavour and aroma with a combination of spices to create the different *masalas* for the different types of meat, seafood and vegetarian dishes. The flavours can be mild, fragrant or strongly spiced. The most basic of *garam masala* is made of a mixture of black pepper, cloves, green cardamons, & cinnamon. They are toasted and ground together in small quantity kept in an air-tight jar for instant use when required in a recipe.

The flavour of a particular curry will depend on the specific mix of spices. It can be mild, fragrant or strongly spiced. Be adventurous and experiment. Spices have health and medicinal properties. Properly combined, the food will enhance the well being of the body and keep it in balance.

Onions and garlic give an extra 'oomph' & taste to the dish. They are two ingredients ground & sauteed fragrantly before the curry paste is tempered with it. Ground matured ginger acts as a tenderiser is normally for meat. It also neutralizes the odour from meat to give a pleasant taste after cooking. The process of cooking a curry dish is easy.

Curry powder like all ground spices rapidly loses aroma and flavour when exposed to the air so should ideally be stored in air tight bottles. Because of humid weather, fungi may grow. I keep excess curry powder in the freezer.

For a small quantity of whole seeds, toast them in a frying pan until they begin to crackle. Immediately pound together with a pestle and mortar. It is easier to pound while the toasted spices is still hot.

I am appending below, the recipe for the bulk spices of more than 2 kg that I grind at the Indian spice mill. Because of the quantity of spices about 2 kgs, I spent about an hour a day for about 4 days, panning & picking the grit of the

spices, wiping the dried chillies with a piece of damp cloth & drying them in the blazing sun. The recipe is good for meat.

1 kg	coriander seeds
400 gm	dried chilli
250 gm	fennel
250 gm	cumin
125 gm	tumeric
25 gm	cinnamon
50 gm	black pepper
3 gm	cloves
15 gm	cardamons
1 pc	nutmeg
½ pc	mace

1. Pick any grit from the coriander, fennel, cumin, black pepper, cloves.
2. Ensure the day is hot the whole day. Gentle rinse the spices and lay them on a tray to be sun-dry completely.
3. Separate damaged dried chilli from the good ones. Wipe them with a piece of damp cloth. Sun-dry.
4. For the tumeric, my advice is not to grind them if you are doing it from home. The home machine will not withstand the hardness of the tumeric. Purchase ready ground tumeric powder.
5. The cinnamon & cardamons can be roasted together in the oven. (For the cardamons, roast about 30 gms)
6. Cinnamon is hard. Crush them with a rolling pin immediately out of the oven.
7. Remove the black seeds from the cardamon pods. Discard the pods.
8. Except for the dried chilli, tumeric, nutmeg & mace all the above are to be roasted at 150°C till aromatic but not brown.
9. Roast the dried chill after all other spices are done at 50°C about 5 minutes only.

My advice is, don't attempt grinding the 2 kg of spices using the home spice mill. The motor may get damaged because of length of time taken to finish grinding. But at the commercial spice mill, the 2 kg spices were ground in just about 5 minutes.

To cook Chicken Curry using the above powder. You need:

1 whole chicken about 1½ kg weight,	cut into bite sizes
3 nos	medium size potatoes, wash, peel & cut into 3-pc chunks
4 tbsp	curry powder, make into paste with 8 tablespoon water
50 gms	shallots
4 pips	garlic
2-cm pc	matured ginger

3 pcs        bay leaves  
4 cups      thin coconut milk  
½ cup       thick coconut milk

1. Ground shallots, garlic & ginger together.
2. Saute No. 1 till fragrant.
3. Add the curry paste & bay leaves to saute for a further 5 minutes. Do not allow paste to burn otherwise it will taste bitter. To prevent burning, simply sprinkle with water.
4. Add the pieces of chicken. Stir to completely coat chicken pieces with the aromatic paste. Stir in the 3 cups of milk.& place the chunks of potatoes over the chicken pieces.
5. Once boil, give a stir & simmer till chicken & potatoes until soft & cooked.
6. Add salt to taste.
7. Finally add the thick coconut milk. Stir & allow to simmer till oil surfaces.
8. Chicken curry goes well with hot rice or french loaf.

The following is a simpler and convenient version.

Have ready the ***Garam Masala***. You need:

1 tsp        cumin seeds  
1 tsp        fennel seeds  
1 tsp        black pepper seeds  
8 nos       cardamons  
8 nos       cloves  
4-cm pc    cinnamon stick

1. Toast the above till aromatic.
2. Once removed from pan, crush the cinnamon stick & remove the black seeds from the pods of the cardamons.
3. Use the coffee grinder to mill. Completely cool before storing in an air-tight jar. The *garam masala* is ready whenever needed in a recipe.  
(The above quantity may be too little for the coffee grinder. It may not cover the blade. Check the size of your coffee grinder & double or triple the quantity)

For cooking Chicken Curry, you need:

1 whole chicken of 1½ kg weight, cut into bite pieces  
3 medium size    potatoes, wash, peel & cut into 3-pc chunks  
50 gm            shallots  
4 pips            garlic  
2-cm pc        matured ginger  
2 tbsp          coriander powder  
1 tsp            fennel powder  
1 tsp            cumin powder  
1 tsp            chilli powder  
½ tsp            tumeric powder  
1 tsp            *garam masala*  
3 pcs            bay leaves

4 cups      thick coconut milk  
½ cup      thick coconut milk

1. Ground together shallots, garlic & matured ginger.
2. Make into paste the coriander, fennel, cumin, chilli, tumeric & ***garam masala*** powder.
3. Saute till fragrant the shallots, garlic & ginger.
4. Add the curry paste to saute for about 5 minutes.
5. Add chicken pieces & coat completely with the curry paste.
6. Stir in the thin coconut milk & place potato chunks on chicken.
7. Bring to boil. Stir the chicken & potato pieces. Simmer till chicken & potatoes are soft & cooked.
8. Adjust taste.
9. Finally add the thick coconut milk. Stir & further simmer till oil surfaces.
10. Serve with hot rice or french loaf.

Making your own curry powder is not that hard. Today, the situation is different. You can't find many people wanting to go through the process of making curry powder. It requires patience & love doing it. For convenience, curry powder of many brands are available off the shelves of supermarkets and general grocery stores. But it cannot be compared to tediously & patiently picking the grit & cleaning them. It's the aroma. It's 100% pure.

Enjoy!