



# RECIPES FROM THE NUTMEG TRAIL



## INDONESIAN SEAFOOD GULAI

Gulai ikan ~~~~~ Indonesia

Serves 4

A seafood curry that is both sunny in color and bright in taste, the rich mellowness of coconut milk offset by hot red chillies, sour tamarind and fragrant lemongrass. Like rendang, gulai comes from Indonesia's most westerly island, Sumatra, where food is often heavily spiced in a legacy of Indian influence. This recipe is lighter as it uses only fresh spices pounded together in a paste called bumbu. Traditionally this is done using an ulek, a bowl-shaped mortar of volcanic rock partnered with a curved pestle, but many Indonesians favor a food processor, as do I, making this a quick dish. Vary the fish or seafood as you like, poaching it at the last minute in the sauce.

- 400ml (1½ cups) coconut milk
- 8 raw king prawns
- 2 small squid
- 400g (14oz) firm white fish fillets, such as monkfish or cod cheeks
- Juice of ½–1 lime
- 2 lemongrass sticks, bruised
- 3 lime leaves, scrunched
- 1 tablespoon tamarind paste
- 1 teaspoon palm sugar or brown sugar
- ½ teaspoons fine sea salt

### FOR THE SPICE PASTE

- 5 small shallots, roughly chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 5cm (2 inches) ginger, peeled and roughly chopped (1½ tablespoons)
- 2cm (¾ inch) fresh turmeric, peeled, or 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 3 bird's eye chillies, chillies seeds removed
- ½ teaspoon shrimp paste (optional)

Grind the ingredients for the spice paste in a blender or food processor, adding a good splash of the coconut milk to help the blades turn.

Prepare the seafood. Peel and devein the prawns, leaving the tail on if you like. Clean the squid by pulling out the tentacles, ink sac, entrails and the clear piece of cartilage. Cut across the head, which is next to the ink sac and has two eyes, and discard. Scrape away the mottled membrane from outside the body, then cut open the bodies along the natural line and wash along with the tentacles to remove all traces of ink and slime. Spread out the squid bodies on a board, outside-down, then use a sharp knife to lightly score a diamond pattern on the inside surfaces before cutting into quarters. Cut the fish into bite-sized pieces and rub with the juice of half a lime. Set aside while you make the sauce.

Scrape the spice paste into a dry pan or wok along with the lemongrass and lime leaves (the added coconut milk provides the fat in which it will fry). Cook over a medium heat, stirring, for a few minutes to lose the harsh raw flavors. Add the remaining coconut milk, turn the heat up to bring to a bubble, then reduce to a simmer for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

Stir in the tamarind paste, palm sugar and salt. Add the fish and prawns, simmer for 1 minute, then add the squid. Cook for 2 minutes or until the fish is just starting to flake but not falling apart, the prawns have turned pink and the squid has curled into opaque pieces. Taste for seasoning, adjusting the salt, sugar, tamarind or lime juice as needed.

### EAT WITH

Jasmine rice, red chili sambal, prawn crackers



# GREEN COCONUT HOT SAUCE

Basbas qumbe ~~~~~ Somalia

Makes a jarful

Somalia, the easternmost point of the Horn of Africa, was an important hub of the early spice trade. The Romans called it “Cape Aromatica” for its aromatic resins, frankincense and myrrh. Centuries of traders ploughing its shores has left a cuisine influenced by Arabia, India, Turkey and Italy.

Spices are key to the food, especially African cardamom but also nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, fenugreek and cumin. Somalis also like their food hot, using chili sauces served on the side so the diner can dial up the fire to their liking. Do look out for a source of Somali-made basas (chili) sauces as the flavor combinations, such as date, tamarind and green chili, are superb. Here is a coconutty green one that lends itself to being made fresh. It is reminiscent of South Indian chutneys, but here chili is the star.

100g (3½oz) green chilies  
20g (¾oz) coriander (cilantro) leaves and stems  
1 small onion  
1 garlic clove  
3 tablespoons neutral oil  
Juice of a lemon  
1 tablespoon white vinegar  
1 teaspoon fine sea salt  
½ teaspoon sugar  
40g (½ cup) grated coconut or rehydrated desiccated coconut

If you like fire, leave the chili seeds in, otherwise you can remove some of the seeds and the surrounding membrane. Roughly chop the chilies, coriander, onion and garlic. Transfer to a blender with the oil, lemon juice, vinegar, salt and sugar. Blend to a green-flecked paste.

Stir through the coconut and taste for seasoning.

This will keep in a jar in the fridge for up to 5 days and the heat will mute a little with time.

## EAT WITH

Grilled fish, chicken or vegetables, dry-rubbed with xawaash spice mix





## MINCED CHICKEN KEBABS WITH SWEET SPICES

Kafta ~~~~~ Lebanon

Serves 4

There is just enough spice to enchant, not overwhelm, in these delightful minced chicken kebabs. This is an easy and popular recipe, especially good when the meat picks up a little char from the grill and perfect for a summer barbecue. You will find versions across Lebanon and the Arabian Peninsula, most usually made with lamb but I like the delicacy of chicken.

Baharat simply means “spices” and blends vary regionally in the Middle East, sometimes mild and smoky, sometimes sweet and fragrant. You can buy ready mixes or if you want to make your own baharat blend just for this recipe, combine ½ teaspoon each of ground paprika, cumin and coriander, ¼ teaspoon each of ground pepper, cinnamon, green cardamom, nutmeg and allspice, and ⅓ teaspoon each of ground cloves and chili,

500g (1lb 2oz) skinless, boneless chicken thighs  
 3 teaspoons baharat spice mix (see introduction)  
 1 teaspoon fine sea salt  
 2 medium firm tomatoes, coarsely grated and squeezed dry  
 1 small onion, coarsely grated and squeezed dry  
 2 garlic cloves, minced  
 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley  
 Neutral oil, for brushing

Cut the chicken into large chunks, keeping on some fat to ensure succulent kebabs. Put into a food processor with all the other ingredients. Pulse chop to mince the meat and bring everything together—go gently as you want the chicken well minced but not textureless.

With oiled hands, divide the mixture into 12 and roll and compress into flattened sausage shapes, about 2cm (¾ inch) thick. They will be soft, but chill in the fridge for half an hour or more to help them firm up and hold their shape.

Heat a griddle pan over medium–high heat and brush with oil. Grill the kebabs for 12–15 minutes, turning once, or until the outsides are lightly charred and the chicken is cooked through but still tender. If you are checking with a meat thermometer, it should reach 74°C (165°F).

### EAT WITH

Pita or flatbread, minted yogurt, grilled onions and tomatoes

Minted yogurt. Mix a small minced garlic clove and a good pinch of salt into a bowl of yogurt. Stir through finely chopped mint leaves and a squeeze of lemon juice.

