

Vegetable Biryani

Ingredients:

- 2 cups basmati rice
- 2 medium onions
- 1½ cup oil
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups mixed fresh vegetables (carrots, peas, beans, peppers and potatoes)
- 1 cup yogurt
- 2-3 medium tomatoes, diced
- 6 cardamoms
- 6 cloves
- 1 large cinnamon sticks
- 1½ tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. garam masala
- 1/2 tsp. red chili powder
- 1 tsp. garlic paste
- 1 tsp. coriander powder
- 3 green chilies, ground
- 1 tsp. ginger paste
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 star anise
- 3 tbsp. freshly chopped coriander leaves
- 2 tbsp. mint leaves, chopped
- 3-4 green chilies

Instructions:

1. Place rice in a colander and wash thoroughly under running cold tap. Soak in plenty of water for about 30 minutes. Thinly slice onions and keep aside.
2. Heat 1¼ cup oil in a large heavy based skillet, add one sliced onion and stir fry for 3-5 minutes, until soft but not brown.
3. Add rice, carefully stir to coat rice with oil. Add water, increase heat to high and bring water to boil, stir occasionally. Lower heat to medium -low, cover and cook until rice are ¾ cooked, stirring occasionally.
4. Cut vegetables into small and equal sized pieces and place them in cold water. Place yogurt in a small bowl, add all the spices, ginger paste and garlic paste, mix well and keep aside for 30 minutes.
5. Heat 1¼ cup oil in medium skillet, over medium heat. Add bay leaves and star anise fry for few seconds, then add remaining sliced onion and sauté until soft, about 5 minutes.
6. Add vegetables and stir fry for 3-5 minutes. Add yogurt mixture and cook over high heat, until vegetables are tender but still crisp. Season with salt.
7. Pre-heat oven to 400. In a large aluminum baking pan, place 2 inch layer of rice at the bottom, then a layer of vegetable mixture and green chilies, repeating this until vegetables mixture and rice have been used up. Sprinkle with coriander leaves and mint leaves.
8. Cover tightly with aluminum foil and bake for 30 minutes.

Note: Water for cooking basmati is twice the measure of rice. Removing rice off heat after it is three-quarters done should leave some fluid content that will get absorbed in the baking process. Baking allows the flavors to seep in evenly as well as make the rice fluffy.

Serve with a raita and fresh salad.