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OUR FAVORITE COOKBOOKS

Book comprehensive about curries, Indian cooking

LARRY COX

Published: 05.07.2008

Curry is the sassy first cousin to jalapeños. It's also an important ingredient in Indian cooking.

More than just an ingredient, it is, in fact, the gateway to Indian cooking and often leads to a joyous food-lover's extravaganza.



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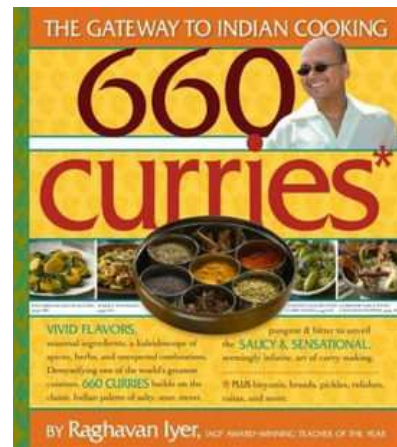
In his new cookbook, "660 Curries," Raghavan Iyer begins with the basics, explaining the building blocks of Indian flavors: salty, sour, sweet, pungent and bitter. From this basic palette, he shows how these basic tastes can be expanded to include a spicy, saucy, sensational cuisine that can, and often does, explode in the mouth.

This is one of the most comprehensive books ever written about both curries and Indian cooking. In its 800-plus pages, there are spice blends and pastes, appetizers, poultry, game and eggs, beef, lamb and pork, fish and seafood, paneer, legume, vegetable, contemporary and biryani curries. He also offers metric conversion charts, a glossary of ingredients, mail-order sources for spices and legumes and a user-friendly index.

The secret of curry is in layering the various spices and ingredients. Iyer serves up dozens of one-dish dinners that "dance on the palate." This is a collection that is geared for the home kitchen and most of the featured recipes are accessible to cooks whether they be seasoned or novices.

I tested two recipes from "660 Curries." I found fresh corn on the cob at

PHOTOS & IMAGES



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Breast of Chicken with Tomato and Coconut Milk
I found the more obscure ingredients for this recipe at 17th Street Market, 840 E. 17th St.

LARRY COX

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
 - 1 small red onion, cut in half lengthwise and thinly sliced
 - 4 medium-size cloves of garlic, finely chopped
 - 2 lengthwise slices of fresh ginger
 - 1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into 1-inch pieces
 - 2 tablespoons curry powder
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons sea salt
 - 1/4 cup unsweetened coconut milk
 - 1 large tomato, cored and finely chopped
 - 2 tablespoon finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems
- Preheat a wok or a well-seasoned cast-iron saucepan over medium-high heat. Drizzle the oil down its sides. Add the onion, garlic and ginger and stir-fry until the vegetables are light brown, about 3-5 minutes.
- Add the chicken pieces and the curry powder, and cook until the meat is seared all over, about 5 minutes.

Sunflower Market and tested Cob Corn in a Coconut-Chile Sauce. It was hot, hot, hot but good, good, good. My second dish was Breast of Chicken with Tomato and Coconut Milk. Both recipes I tested were crowd pleasers and fairly easy to prepare.

Tucsonan Larry Cox's "Shelf Life" reviews of fiction and nonfiction books runs Thursdays in Calendar Plus, tucsoncitizen.com/calendar. His "Treasures and Trends" antiques column runs Fridays in Weekend Plus, tucsoncitizen.com/weekend.

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Sprinkle the salt over the chicken and pour in the coconut milk, which will immediately come to a boil. Cover and lower the heat to medium. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is fork tender and no longer pink inside, 5-7 minutes. Remove the chicken pieces from the thin yellow sauce and place them in a serving bowl.

Raise the heat to medium-high and boil the sauce, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until it thickens, 3-5 minutes. Stir in the tomato and toss to bathe it in the curry. Serve immediately.

Serves 6.

Source: "660 Curries" by Raghavan Iyer (Workman, \$22.95)