

FOOD & DINING

Flavorful vegetarian fare for spice-loving foodies

When the urge to indulge in international cuisine strikes, many foodies take to their nearest restaurant districts to satisfy their cravings. But those willing to try their own hands at international cuisine can do so right in their kitchens.

For the foodie anxious to try his or her hand at Northern Indian cuisine, consider the following recipe for “Vegetable Dum Biryani (Rice Cooked With Garden Vegetables, Spices and Nuts)” courtesy of Monisha Bharadwaj’s “India’s Vegetarian Cooking” (Kyle Books).

VEGETABLE DUM BIRYANI

(Rice Cooked With Garden Vegetables, Spices and Nuts)
Serves 4

Bouquet garni of 10 green cardamom pods, 12 black peppercorns, small stick of cinnamon, 10 cloves, a few shavings of nutmeg, 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, 3 bay leaves

- 1/4 cup milk
- Large pinch of saffron
- 1/4 cup rose water
- 3 tablespoons ghee
- 3 medium onions, sliced
- 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste (see below)
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon garam masala
- Salt, to taste
- 10 ounces mixed vegetables — carrots, peas, potatoes (about 2 1/4 to 2 3/4 cups), peeled, cubed and boiled
- 1 1/2 cups basmati rice
- Handful of mint leaves, chopped
- Handful of cilantro leaves, chopped
- 3 tablespoons slivered almonds

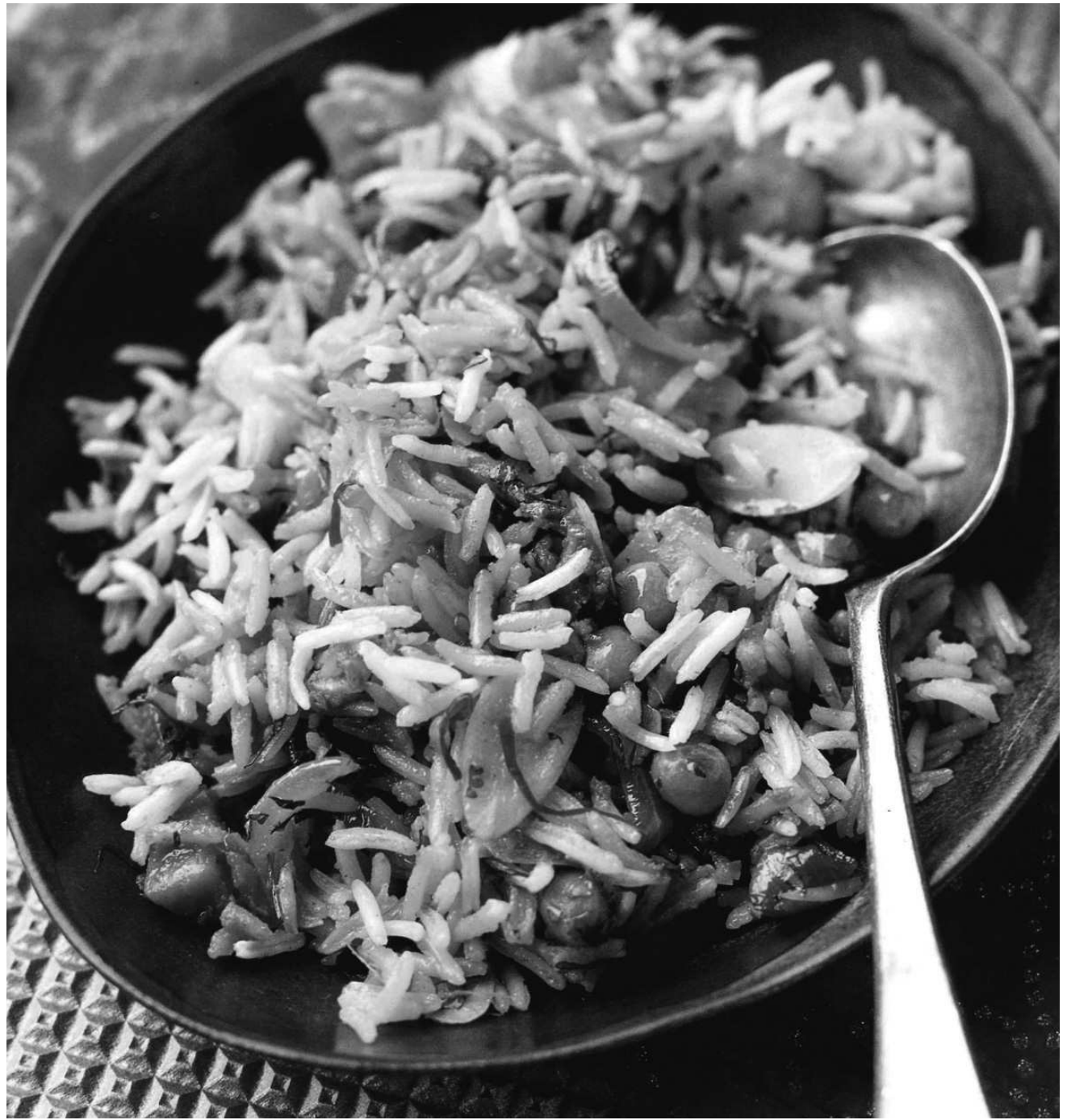
1. Preheat the oven to 425 F.
2. Put the spices (except 5 of the green cardamom pods) for the bouquet garni into a pan along with 3 cups of hot water and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat, cover the pan, and let it infuse into a savory aromatic liquid.
3. Crush the reserved green cardamoms finely in a mortar and mix with the milk, saffron and rose water. Set aside. This is the sweet aromatic liquid.
4. Heat 1 tablespoon of the ghee in a pan and fry the onions over a medium heat until brown. Remove half of them and reserve for the garnish. Add the ginger-garlic paste to the rest of the onions and stir for a couple of minutes. Whizz the mixture in a blender until smooth.
5. Heat another tablespoon of the ghee in a heavy pan and fry the onion mixture over high heat. Add the tomato paste and ground spices. Season with salt.
6. Drain the vegetables and add to the pan. Mix well and simmer for a few minutes until the ghee begins to separate. Remove from the heat and set aside.
7. Heat the remaining tablespoon of ghee in a separate pan and fry the rice over high heat. (Don’t wash the rice beforehand.) In a few minutes, when it is shiny, strain half the savory liquid into the pan. Bring to a boil,

reduce the heat, cover, and cook for about 6 minutes until the liquid has evaporated.

8. It’s time to assemble the dish. The bottom and top layers are always rice. Put a layer of rice at the bottom of an ovenproof dish. Sprinkle some the remaining savory liquid over it and some of the sweet liquid. Top with a layer of the vegetable curry. Sprinkle some of the fried onions, mint leaves and cilantro leaves over it. Repeat with another layer of rice. Dot the almonds on top. Keep going until everything is used up and the top layer is rice. Seal the dish with aluminum foil.

9. Cook the biryani for 40 minutes in the oven, reducing the heat to 375 F after 20 minutes. Open the dish just before serving to release a burst of fragrance.

To make the garlic-ginger paste: Take equal quantities of garlic and ginger and whiz in a blender until smooth.



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