

FOOD & DINING

Spice up your spinach



Many people love to add a little kick to their meals. Various spices can add flavor, but Indian spices tend to pack a more powerful punch than ingredients that are not quite as bold.

Indian dishes vary with regard to how much kick they deliver, and many people find dishes like the following recipe for "Saag Paneer" from Jill Lightner's "Edible Seattle: The Cookbook" (Sterling Epicure) is spicy but not overly so. Those who want a little more kick than this recipe provides can substitute mustard greens for a portion of the spinach.

SAAG PANEER

Serves 4

- 1 pound fresh spinach
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 teaspoon garam masala
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 cup ghee
- 1 medium onion, minced
- 2 tablespoons peeled and minced fresh ginger
- 1/4 cup heavy cream or evaporated milk
- 3/4 pound paneer, cut into 2-inch cubes

1. In a food processor, alternate adding handfuls of spinach and tablespoons of water, up to 3/4 cup water, blending between additions. When you have a wet, smooth puree, whirl in the salt.
2. In a small dish, combine the garam masala, coriander, turmeric, and cumin.
3. Set a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat and add the ghee. Once it is thoroughly hot, add the onion and ginger. Stir constantly, frying until the onion is soft and medium brown. Pour in the spice mixture all at once and stir until the spices are slightly fried and completely coating

the onion. Slowly pour in the spinach puree, stirring to blend with the spiced onion. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, until most of the water has evaporated, about 15 minutes.

4. Stir in the cream, add the paneer and cover. Cook for about 5 minutes, until the paneer is warmed through. Adjust the seasonings to taste and serve hot. Serve the dish with basmati rice and grilled naan or pita. Edible tip: The best spices are recently purchased and freshly ground; the older your spices, the more likely the final dish will taste muddy.

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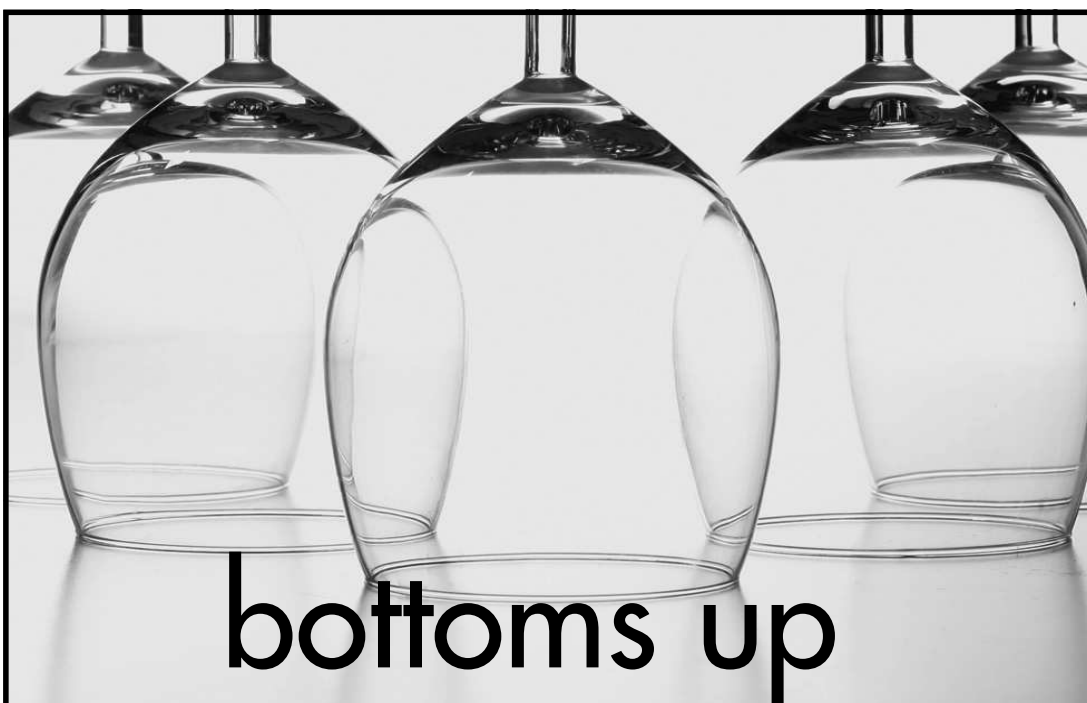
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