

Try Some Coconut Recipes from India

Coconut is used widely as a food item in India. Tender nut water is a refreshing drink by itself. Kernel of the mature nut is grated and used for garnishing dishes. Raw or roasted gratings are ground with spices to thicken gravies or to make chutneys. Fresh gratings are squeezed for extracting coconut milk, which is used for making a number of sweet and savoury dishes. Desiccated coconut is widely used in confectionery. Coconut oil is a favourite frying medium in the preparation of banana chips and many other snacks. It is used extensively for cooking in Kerala. Palm jaggery is used in the preparation of sweetmeats and also in medicines. Even the coconut inflorescence (young, unopened) and 'cabbage' are used for making restorative preparations.

Each region in India has its special delicacies where coconut is freely used. Here are two recipes which are popular in peninsular India.

Recipe 1

Modakam/Kozhukkattai (Stuffed Rice Balls)

This popular South Indian dish of festival days is prepared from coconut, rice and jaggery. This has a sweet, brown coconut centre enclosed in a white rice-flour shell.

By Rohini Iyer



Rohini Iyer is a senior Scientist at Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, India and coeditor & compiler of "Coconut Recipes Around the World"

Ingredients:

Raw rice flour 3 cups
Grated coconut 3 cups (fresh gratings from one medium sized nut)
Grated jaggery 250 grams (unrefined cane sugar)
Cardamon 4-5 pods
Water 4 1/2 cups
Salt 1/2 teaspoon
Ghee (Clarified butter) 1 table-spoon

Method of Preparation:

The shell: Roast the rice flour in a thick-bottomed deep drying pan till it thoroughly dry. It should freely slip between fingers. Do not allow it to become brown. Transfer the flour to a plate and spread. Boil 4 1/2 cups water in the pan with the salt and ghee. Stir in the flour and reduce the heat. When all the water has been absorbed, transfer the dough to a clean wet cloth spread on a big plate. Cover with the wet cloth. Knead the dough over the cloth thoroughly to get a smooth dough, free from lumps



The Filling

Heat the grated jaggery with one spoon of water in a thick bottomed pan. Keep stirring till it becomes a thick syrup of two-string consistency. Mix the grated coconut and stir till all the water evaporated. Turn off the fire. Finely powder the cardamom seeds. Mix into the filling. Make small balls of 1" dia of the filling.

Roll a small portion of the rice dough between oil greased palms to get a smooth dough. Make a ball of 1" dia. Make a depression in the centre with the thumb and gently fashion a cup. Fill the centre of the cup with the coconut filling. Cover on all the sides. Arrange the rice balls thus prepared in a steaming tray and steam cook for 5-10 minutes or till the 'Modakams' get cooked. Serve hot.

Recipe 2.

'Aviyal' (Mixed Vegetable Curry)

This is a typical vegetable preparation of Kerala. A variety of vegetables are boiled together and gravy is thickened by a delicately flavoured paste made of coconut and spices. The aroma gets accentuated by topping the preparation with pure fresh coconut oil. This curry is invariably prepared during feasts. It is a very good dish that goes well with rice, chapathies or hoppers.

Ingredients:

A number of vegetables can be used depending on the availability, like what is listed below.

Cucumber	250 grams
Ash gourd	250 grams
Raw bananas	2 or 3
Beans	100 grams
Carrots	250 grams
Drumsticks	2 or 3
Pumpkin	250 grams
Amorphaphalus (Elephant foot yam)	250 grams
String beans	100 grams
Snake gourd	250 grams

Cumin seeds	1/2 teaspoon
Green chillies	5 or 6 (depending on pungency)
Curry leaves (Murraya koenigii)	2 sprigs
Grated coconut	2 cups
Garlic	2-3 cloves (optional)
Fresh coconut oil	2 tablespoon
Turmeric powder	1/2 teaspoon
Raw mango (if available)	1 or sour curd 1 cup
Salt	to taste

Method of preparation

Peel and core cucumber, pumpkin and ash-gourd. Core the snake-gourd, peel carrots and bananas. Top and tail beans and drumsticks. Skin the yam. Wash all the vegetables and cut them into 5-6 cm long and 1/2 cm thick pieces. Boil all the vegetables with salt and turmeric, till they are tender. Do not add too much water. Grind together green chillies, cumin seeds, garlic and coconut into a coarse paste. Mix with curd (in case raw mango pieces have not been added in the vegetable mixture) or water to form

a thick slurry. Add to the vegetables in the pot and stir gently so that the vegetable pieces are not mashed. Turn off the fire when it comes to boil. Add curry leaves and pour two tablespoon of fresh coconut oil and stir gently. Serve hot along with rice or chappathy. □

