

Durban Lamb Biryani / Breyani

A South African Indian Delicacy



A staple in many Durban families, especially at Christmas and during festive gatherings. This is a recipe I have shared, adapted and shaped over the years.

PREPARATION

Allow time to marinate (6-24 Hours)

COOKING

Cook until meat is tender

METHOD

Layered and oven-finished

1. Marinating the Mutton

Ingredients

- 2 kg lamb or mutton with bone in
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp dhania and jeera powder (coriander and cumin)
- 1 tsp crushed chillies
- 2 tbsp chilli powder
- ½ tsp each of elachi (cardamom), black pepper powder and soomph (fennel) powder
- 1 tbsp crushed ginger and garlic
- 1 cup maas (plain, unflavoured full-fat or low-fat yoghurt)
- 5 ml Fresh lemon juice, to taste
- Oil, for frying
- 1 large onion, sliced and fried

Method

1. Combine the lamb or mutton with the spices, ginger and garlic, yoghurt and a tablespoon of fresh lemon juice.
2. Fry the sliced onion in oil until golden brown.
3. Add the fried onion and a little of its oil to the marinade. Mix thoroughly.

4. For the best flavour, cover or bag the meat pieces and marinate overnight in the refrigerator, or for a few hours if time is limited.

2. Preparing the Rice

Ingredients

- 3 cups (approximately 600 g) basmati rice
- Salt, to taste
- 2 or 3 green chillies
- A handful of freshly chopped dhania (coriander), mint and curry leaves
- A few sprigs of thyme
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 star anise
- 2 bay leaves

Method

5. Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil.
6. Add the rice, green chillies, fresh herbs, cinnamon sticks, star anise and bay leaves.
7. Cook until the rice is partially cooked but still firm. It will finish cooking in the oven.
8. Drain well and set aside.

3. Braising the Mutton

Ingredients

- The marinated lamb or mutton
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- Jeera powder 2 tbsps. (black cumin / shah jeera)
- 1 tsp Mustard seeds
- 1 tsp Whole soomph (fennel seeds)
- 10 whole black peppercorns
- 10 whole cloves
- 4 large Bay leaves
- 30 ml - A little extra oil
- Finely chopped fresh mint 5 or 6 small sprigs, dhania (coriander – a small bunch), 2 – 3 sprigs thyme and freshly bruised curry leaves 10-15 leaves.
- 4 roasting / soft cooking Potatoes, skinned and cut into pieces

Method

9. Heat a little extra oil in a large, heavy-based ovenproof pot.
10. Fry the finely chopped onion until golden brown.
11. Add the shah jeera, mustard seeds, fennel seeds, peppercorns, cloves and bay leaves. Let the spices release their aroma.
12. Add the marinated meat and cook, stirring occasionally.

13. Continue cooking until the meat is very tender. Add a little boiling water as needed to prevent it from drying out.
14. When the gravy has reduced and most of the excess water has evaporated, add the chopped mint, dhania, thyme, curry leaves and potatoes.
15. Transfer the pot to the oven and continue cooking until the potatoes are tender and the oil begins to surface.

Important: The meat should be tender and the gravy well reduced before you layer the rice.

4. Preparing the Lentils

16. Boil the lentils separately until cooked but still holding their shape.
17. Drain off any excess water.
18. Spread the cooked lentils evenly over the prepared mutton.

5. Layering and Finishing the Breyani

19. After adding the lentils over the mutton, spread the partially cooked rice evenly over the top.
20. Mix an egg yolk / egg yolk colouring/ or a generous pinch of Saffron with a little water and drizzle it over the rice.
21. Dot the rice with a little butter for extra flavour and richness.
22. Cover the pot and return it to the oven for approximately 20 minutes, or until the rice is fully cooked, excess moisture has evaporated and the flavours have melded together.

6. The Final Touch: Serving

- Once the breyani has been layered, do not stir or mix it with a spoon.
- Gently shake the pot from time to time to help prevent the bottom from sticking or burning.
- To serve, spoon from the side and lift through the layers so each portion includes rice, lentils, potatoes and tender mutton.

THE SECRET TO A GOOD BREYANI

Patience, well-marinated meat, fragrant spices and allowing the layers to cook together without disturbing them.

Disclaimer: The Recipe is a commonly used one with slight variations in each household. Durban Indians use their own spices and ingredients so taste may differ slightly according to spices used in different regions.

Prepared and Presented by Gabriel Benjiman. If one fails to follow through, I am available to travel and cook this meal for a family of six to 10 (:-D)