

Help with cooking up healthier mealtimes



MOONG SAK

Cooking time: 1hr 20mins Serves: Four to six
150g (5oz) moong beans, soaked overnight
2 tbsp oil
1 inch cinnamon stick
3 cloves
1 large onion, sliced
1 tsp black mustard seeds
3 tsp crushed garlic
1 tsp grated ginger
2 tsp tomato puree
200g (7oz) peeled chopped tomatoes
1 tsp sugar
2 tsp coriander powder
1/4 tsp turmeric powder
1/2 tsp chilli powder or to taste
salt to taste and garnish with freshly chopped coriander

1. Boil the soaked moongbeans for 50 minutes, until mushy and drain.
 2. Heat the oil and add the cinnamon, cloves and onions.
 3. Fry the onions, until lightly brown.
 4. Add the mustard seeds, as they begin to pop add the garlic and ginger.
 5. Add the tomato puree, tomatoes and the rest of the ingredients.
 6. Stir in the moong beans and allow to boil, then simmer on slow heat for 30 minutes.
 7. Garnish with the coriander and serve.
- NB: Make sure the heat is on low, when adding mustard seeds, as they are likely to pop.
- Serving suggestion: Serve with chapattis and rice.

CHUGU KASORI

Cooking time: 1 hr Serves: Four to six
2 tbsp oil

1 tsp black mustard seeds
3 tsp crushed garlic
1 tsp grated ginger
2 tsp tomato puree
150g (5oz) peeled chopped tomatoes
600g (1lb 3oz) of corn/corn on cob
300g (11oz) fresh peanuts, coarsely ground in a liquidiser with
1/4 pt (125mls) water
1 tsp chilli powder or less
1/4 tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp coriander powder
2 whole green chillies optional salt to taste
1/4 pt (125mls) water
Fresh coriander leaves, chopped for garnish

1. Liquidize the peanuts into a coarse mixture with 1/4 pint water.
2. Heat the oil in a saucepan and add mustard seeds.
3. When the seeds start popping add the garlic and ginger and stir.
4. Add tomato puree and chopped tomatoes and allow to cook for two minutes.
5. Add the rest of the ingredients and stir.
6. Add 1/4 pint (125mls) water, and more during cooking if required.
7. Bring to the boil, lower heat, cover and simmer for at least 40 minutes.
8. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves.

IT'S not just fry-ups that get the thumbs down from the health professionals. Indian, Italian and Chinese food all have their culinary sins. Victoria Temple finds out about a new initiative to spread the healthy eating message to all communities in the city...

THE message is clear - dump the fat, cut down on the calories and switch to healthy alternatives. But with so many different eating habits - we're as likely to be eating Asian, Chinese and Italian creations as meat-and-two-veg - it's not always easy to know what's healthy and what's not.

Health Promotion Gloucestershire is encouraging people to look at the ways in which they cook with a series of classes in different areas of the city. Funding has been secured from the Gloucester Primary Care Group and other bodies to run cookery classes. Too many of us, it seems are getting stuck in a rut with our eating habits and it's time to buck the trend. One of those classes has just been running at Roshni Women's Centre, in Barton Street, as a way of spreading the health promotion message to Gloucester's Asian community.

The course raises awareness about healthy eating as well as discussing shopping and budgeting. Many of the participants are

already aware of what they should be eating and the courses provide an opportunity to swap ideas.

"The aim is to encourage people who are trying to look at what they are eating," said Sheline Jetha, course tutor and cookery writer (Pictured front right with Becky Hurst, back, of Health Promotion Gloucestershire).

Sheline has published two recipe collections, *Authentic Indian Cookery* (no longer in print, after a spell of eight years) and *The Curry Book* (still in print).

"We cooked a variety of things and talked about what we would like to try out, including Chinese, English, Indian and even Italian pasta dishes.

"We did quite a few Western meals and the course became a way of bringing cultures together."

Recent publicity about the high fat content of dishes in Indian restaurants has given Asian food a reputation it does not deserve, said Sheline.

Asian food is usually very healthy.

"It all depends on how you use the ingredients," she said.

"Many Asian dishes are very low fat. It's very rare that ghee (a form of clarified butter) is used.

"Now it's all vegetable oils. And you can decide how little or how much oil you use in the cooking."

Most home-made Asian food, cooked from scratch with fresh ingredients, is much healthier than the takeaway version which has been adapted for the Western palate, says Sheline.

Healthy eating, she says, is also about making the most of ingredients that are readily available.

"There are times when we all buy convenience food, I do as well, but I also buy food from local markets.

"If you buy food locally, you can taste the difference," she said.

The course ran over six weeks and on Friday the participants all celebrated the end of the course with a feast of their own culinary creations.

"The women prepared dishes they had learnt over the last six weeks," said Becky Hurst of Gloucestershire Health Promotion. "Sheline and I presented them with certificates of attendance and healthy Asian recipe booklets.

"We then all tucked in to sample their cooking! It was lovely! They had prepared a variety of dishes, including western dishes such as quiche. Having a food party was a great way to end the sessions as it showed what the women had learnt and how much more aware of healthy eating they had become. When speaking to the women, I discovered that they use a lot of salt in their cookery," said Becky. Salt can cause hypertension, or high blood pressure, leading to heart disease or strokes."

Low in fat and salt but high in flavour, Sheline Jetha's recipes are full of flavour. The two recipes on this page (above left) were among those included in her cookery course...

More healthy options for food around the globe. . .

■ **WHEN** opting for an Indian, the best options are tandoori or tikka dishes which are normally served dry with salad and come with yoghurt on the side, allowing you to decide how much to have.

■ **FOR** Chinese, select meals in black bean or oyster sauces while noodle dishes are also often a good option.

These dishes are often stir fried, which is much healthier than other cooking techniques such as deep fry frying.

■ **ITALIAN** treat, pasta served with tomato-based sauces are among the best to choose. Pizzas are one of the worst choices, but if diners go for thin-crust rather than deep-pan then they are on the right track. Don't go for the five-cheese option and go for leaner ham rather than salami.

Watch out for stuffed crust pizzas too.

■ **WATCH** out for alcohol as well. It does count and the more you drink the less careful you are about what you're eating.

It also makes you more hungry."

Alcohol acts as an appetite enhancer - which is why fast-food outlets normally enjoy booming trade after pubs and clubs close.

■ **THAI** food is a good option as long as it isn't drenched in coconut milk and coconut cream.

■ **FOR** Mexican food, avoid the garnishes such as sour cream, tortilla chips and plump for grilled fish, chilli's, plain rice or a soft tortilla wrap.

Don't miss our smashing pumpkin recipes, pages 28 and 29