

Garam Masala

The word "garam" means hot and a "masala" is a blend of spices. The *hot* in this case does not mean hot like chillies but, rather, warming to the body.

Do make the effort to make your own garam masala. It will taste 10 times better than anything you can buy and will keep in an airtight jar for 6 months or so. Shop bought masala uses too many of the cheaper spices at the expense of the aromatic ones and, in most brands, the spices are not dry roasted. Dry roasting activates the aromatic oils in the spices and enhances the flavour no end.

All the recipes in this book which call for garam masala use this home made version. If you do decide to use shop bought garam masala there will inevitably be some variation in taste from my original recipe.

But why use garam masala at all? The answer is that garam masala allows you to add a small amount of aromatic spices to your curries. You should not be able to detect garam masala itself when you taste the finished curry but you should be able to enjoy the all round spiciness it imparts. That is why the recipes call for just 1 or 2 pinches of garam masala rather than a teaspoon full and why it is better to make your own. If you were to add large amounts of shop-bought garam masala to every curry they would all end up tasting the same.

ingredients

- 1 × 15ml spoon cumin seeds
 - 1 × 15ml spoon coriander seeds
 - 1 × 15ml spoon black peppercorns
 - 1 × 5ml spoon small broken cassia pieces (use the bits at the bottom of the jar)
 - 1 × 5ml spoon cloves
 - 3 black cardamon pods
 - 2 bay leaves
 - 1 × 5ml spoon crushed blades of mace (use the broken bits at the bottom of the jar)
- or**
- ½ of a whole nutmeg (use a rolling pin to break up the nutmeg)

special equipment

a electric spice or coffee grinder

method

1. Heat a cast iron frying pan over a medium/low heat.
2. Sprinkle all the spices **except** the bay leaves and mace into the hot pan and dry roast them, stirring regularly, for about 4 minutes or until the spices are giving off a pleasant aromatic smell.
3. Take care not to burn the spices – if you do, you will have to throw them away and start again. You will know if you have burnt them because they will taste bitter.
4. Pour the spices out of the pan onto a cold plate and leave to cool thoroughly.
5. When the spices are cool put them in an electric grinder along with the bay leaves and mace. Grind first of all in short bursts to break up the larger pieces. Then gradually extend the time of the bursts until you have a coarse grind. Now leave the grinder on for about 10 seconds or until you end up with a fine powder with no gritty bits at all. Try not to over-grind the masala or else the spices will heat up and lose some of their aromatic oils.
6. Finally, pass the garam masala through a fine sieve to catch any husk or tough bits that remain.
7. Store your garam masala in a dry, airtight jar in a dark place. It will keep in good condition for 6 months or so.



Please respect the work that has gone into creating and writing The Curry House. The content on curryhouse.co.uk is for private use only. Do not post this recipe to public forums or publish it on another website, in print or through broadcast media.

© David W Smith
2004 –2012
all rights reserved
Garam Masala
[Index](#)