

Kerala Style Poori & Potato Bhaji

BY MILAN MATHEW | @MILAN.MATHEW

Poori with potato masala is one of those meals that will always feel like home to me. Growing up, it was the kind of meal that made an ordinary morning feel a little more special. Even now, the memory of watching a poori puff up like a little balloon instantly takes me back to my mom's kitchen.

And I will say this with absolutely no bias: my mom makes the best poori. I've had it at restaurants and in different places over the years, but I'm always secretly comparing it to hers and nothing ever quite measures up. My favorite part is standing in the kitchen while she makes them, waiting for each one to come out perfectly golden and puffed. Half the time, they don't even make it to the table because I've already grabbed one while it's still hot.

As I've gotten older, I've realized how much love can live in something as simple as a recipe. I grew up surrounded by American holiday traditions, while my mom made sure the flavors and traditions she grew up with were passed down to us too. Now, those are some of the traditions I hold closest. To me, being Asian American means having a holiday table that can hold both worlds and knowing that sometimes the taste of home is simply a hot poori made by your mom.

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INGREDIENTS

Potato Bhaji

4 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
2 green chilies, sliced lengthwise
1-inch piece ginger, finely chopped or grated
1 tsp mustard seeds
½ tsp cumin seeds
8–10 curry leaves
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp black pepper
½ tsp salt, plus more to taste
1½ tbsp oil
½–1 cup water, depending on desired consistency
2 tbsp chopped cilantro

Poori

2 cups whole wheat flour (atta)
½ tsp salt
1 tsp oil
~¾ cup warm water, added gradually
Neutral oil, for deep frying

INSTRUCTIONS

01 Potato Bhaij

1. Peel and cube the potatoes. Boil in salted water for 12–15 minutes, or until fork-tender. Drain and set aside.
2. Heat oil in a large pan over medium heat. Add mustard seeds; once they begin to pop, add cumin seeds and curry leaves.
3. Add sliced onion, green chilies, and ginger. Sauté for 5–7 minutes, until the onions are soft and translucent.
4. Add turmeric, black pepper, and salt. Stir for about 30 seconds until fragrant.
5. Add the cooked potatoes and toss until evenly coated. Gently mash some of the potatoes while leaving some pieces whole.
6. Add ½ cup water and simmer for 5–8 minutes, adding more water if needed for your desired consistency.
7. Stir in chopped cilantro, adjust seasoning to taste, and keep warm.

02 Poori

1. Combine whole wheat flour and salt in a bowl. Add 1 teaspoon oil, then gradually mix in warm water until a firm dough forms.
2. Knead for 5–7 minutes until smooth. Cover and rest for 15–20 minutes.
3. Heat several inches of neutral oil in a deep pan over medium-high heat.
4. Divide the dough into small balls and roll each into a 4–5-inch circle of even thickness.
5. Carefully slide one poori at a time into the hot oil. Gently press with a slotted spoon to help it puff.
6. Once puffed and lightly golden, flip and fry the other side for 15–30 seconds.
7. Remove and drain on a paper towel. Repeat with the remaining dough.
8. Serve the pooris hot with the warm potato masala.