



Goat Curry

Bhutan/Nepal

Cook - DEVI

To find Devi's apartment among the labyrinth of buildings off Coolidge Avenue in East Oakland, it's best to just close your eyes and follow your nose, as smells of caramelized onions mixing with meat and turmeric beckon from the second floor. Inside, a Bollywood movie sings from the television, and Devi chops garlic to make goat curry—one of her family's treasured dishes and a favorite of her volunteer tutor, Lupe.

"Once," recalls Lupe of a visit to Devi's home, "I came in to find all the men around the table, wearing aprons and chopping up a whole goat!"

"Men cut the meat, women cook the meat," says Devi.

For religious and cultural reasons, Devi and family don't eat beef or pork, but they do eat goat, which, in the Bay Area, isn't easy to come by. "It's hard to get the goat here," Devi explains when preparing the recipe with Lupe's help. "We get the goat from a Muslim farm in Vacaville. We have to buy the whole goat, chop up the meat, put it in plastic bags, and store it in the freezer. The goat lasts us almost one month and tastes similar to what we had in Nepal." The spices, however, aren't so hard to find—like other Bhutanese/Nepali families in Oakland, Devi buys them in bulk from Indian groceries along the University corridor in Berkeley.

When Lupe enters the kitchen, the women embrace, and Devi puts her tutor to work on mashing the grated ginger and garlic into a paste. The kitchen's tall bookshelf is filled with repurposed bins, bottles, and jars of bright foods and spices—orange lentils, marigold turmeric, rust-hued chili powder, bright red pepper flakes, ivory coconut shavings. A jar propped upon the kitchen windowsill is packed with homemade pickles. "Radish pickles," Devi says proudly, showing off her jar. She returns to the stove and drops dashes of cinnamon, cardamom, and cumin into the pan.

"Like this?" Lupe asks, showing Devi the pounded garlic/ginger mixture she's been working on. Devi shakes her head. "Keep going," she says.

Lupe and Devi are both recent U.S. immigrants who were raised in rural areas—Lupe in the mountains of Guatemala and Devi in southern Bhutan and then, once her ethnic minority group was expelled from her native country, in a Nepali refugee camp. "It's so amazing how we share experiences and memories from our home countries, even though they are on opposite sides of the world," Lupe says. "Sometimes one of us will remember something about where we grew up, and the other one of us will be, like, 'Yeah! That's the same for me, too!'"

In a year, Devi will be eligible to apply for citizenship, and she's already begun studying for the test. Lupe, too, will take the test soon. Citizenship preparation is a key component of Refugee Transitions' adult literacy program, but it's not often that both volunteer and student are simultaneously preparing to take the test. "We're not just memorizing; we're trying to learn, too. So we go through the topics and study about American history. That lets us practice our conversation skills and learn the questions," says Lupe.

"We help each other," she adds.

As the meat simmers, Devi gives us a tour of her enchanting spice shelf, offering us smells and pinches to try. "This one Lupe brought for me," she says, sniffing a jar of self-ground cardamom, rich and nutty. Each time Lupe goes home to Guatemala, she brings back spices for Devi's tea. Devi warms milk on the stove and begins to mash cardamom—no one enters Devi's house without receiving a cup of fresh, spiced tea, least of all her tutor, Lupe.



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Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp. baara masala
(available in Indian markets)
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 4 lbs. goat meat
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 4 whole bay leaves
- 1 Tbsp. paprika
- 5 cloves garlic, grated
- 1 Tbsp. grated fresh ginger
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground cardamom
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin
- ½ cup water
- 1 1 tomato, chopped
- 3 fresh cayenne peppers, cut in
half lengthwise and deseeded
(optional)
- salt (to taste)
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro,
(for garnish)

Directions

Serves 8

- 1 Using a mortar and pestle, mash grated ginger and garlic together into paste. Set aside.
- 2 Heat oil in a large frying pan.
When oil is hot, add baara masala.
(Masala should pop and sizzle, do not let it burn.)
- 3 Add chopped onion and stir until it is coated with oil and masala. Cook for 2-4 minutes or until onion is soft and translucent.
- 4 Add goat meat, turning every couple of minutes to brown on each side. Mix in turmeric, bay leaves, and paprika.
- 5 In a medium bowl, mix water with garlic/ginger paste and then add cumin, cinnamon, and cardamom. Add mixture to frying pan along with tomato, salt, and cayenne peppers if desired.
- 6 Cover pan and let it simmer over low heat for 40 minutes or until meat is very tender. If curry begins to dry out, add water.
(Curry should reduce, but remain saucy.)

Garnish with cilantro.

Serve over rice.