

Bengali Style Potatoes with Winter Greens and Tart Red Lentils

This recipe is adapted from two recipes in [Bharti Kirchner's The Flavors of India](#) – one of my favorite Indian cookbooks written for Americans. You can also make this dish with spinach, but I prefer heartier greens.

2 tablespoons mustard oil plus one more tablespoon
½ lb. potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 inch cubes
1 bay leaf
2 dried red chilies
½ teaspoon [panch phoron](#)¹
½ teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
3 teaspoons ground cumin
1 tablespoon minced ginger
2 green chilies, chopped
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup tart lentils, (recipe on the next page) mixed with ½ cup water
4 cups firmly packed, slivered kale, collard and mustard greens

Heat the mustard oil over medium heat and fry the potatoes until they are light brown – stir them now and again, but try to leave them alone as much as possible. Remove the potatoes from the pan and drain them.

Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil over a medium flame. Fry the bay leaf and whole red chilies, just until the chilies start to brown. Add the panch phoron, turmeric, black pepper, cumin, ginger, green chilies and salt. Stir and fry until the panch phoron starts to pop and all the spices are very fragrant. Add the lentil and water mixture and the potatoes to the pot and let everything come to a boil. Turn the heat down, and simmer, covered for about 20 minutes – you want the potatoes to be tender.

Gently stir in the greens, and cover the pan. Simmer on low for about 10 minutes. When the dish is thick enough, turn off the heat, and let sit covered for another 10 minutes before serving. Serves six as a main dish with rice, or eight to ten as a side dish.

¹ Panch Phoron is a traditional Bengali five spice mixture. I make my version using roughly equal parts fenugreek, nigella, cumin, ajwain, and fennel. You can also buy the spices pre-mixed in some Indian grocery stores.

Tart Red Lentils

3 cups water
1 cup red lentils
1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
2 chopped green chilies
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon tamarind concentrate
1 teaspoon mustard oil
1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
1 teaspoon panch phoron¹, toasted and ground

Bring the water to a boil, and add the lentils. Reduce the heat and simmer till the lentils are tender, about 15 minutes. They should feel soft to the touch.

Using the food processor, purée the lentils with the ginger, green chilies, salt, and tamarind.

Heat the mustard oil in a sauté pan, and cook the mustard seeds in the oil until they start to pop. Remove the seeds from the heat, and mix them into the lentil purée. Add the panch phoron, stir, and let stand covered for at least 10 minutes so that the flavors have a chance to mingle.

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