

Most people think that you can't possibly eat Indian food

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**Most people think that you can't possibly eat Indian food**

**By Liz Canham**

Most people think that you can't possibly eat Indian food, if you're on a slimming diet.

That's a fair statement if you always eat Indian food in restaurants, because many traditional Indian recipes involve either deep frying or the use of ghee (clarified butter). However, if you cook Indian food at home, it can easily form part of a weight loss regime, just the same as any other food. You just need to follow a few simple general rules.

- Avoid altogether recipes which involve deep frying.
- If you need to seal meat before braising it for a curry, use a good non-stick pan and a spray bottle with sunflower or vegetable oil in it. Lightly spray the surface of your pan with oil and that should be enough to prevent the meat from sticking while you brown it.
- If a recipe includes cream or coconut cream, substitute plain yoghurt and another flavouring to replace the coconut.

Tandoori recipes are great as part of a low calorie or low carbohydrate diet. Just marinade some fish (cubed or whole), chicken (cubed or in pieces) or prawns (shrimp) in a mixture of low fat plain yogurt, ground turmeric, ground coriander, ground cumin, crushed garlic, grated root ginger and a little chilli powder (or to taste) for at least an hour. If you're using cubed meat, thread onto skewers. Grill or barbeque with a medium heat until done. Serve with mixed salad and wedges of lemon to squeeze over. If your diet isn't too severe, you can also have a pitta bread, a baked potato or some boiled rice with this.

Curry dishes are fine too (preferably fish or chicken). If you use a recipe which has just a spice and water base or a tomato base, it certainly won't do your calorie intake any harm but be sure to keep the oil you use for frying onions, spices or whatever, to an absolute minimum.

For vegetarians or those trying to cut down on meat because of its relatively high calorie content, Indian cooking is ideal. There are so many recipes for vegetables and pulses which are really tasty that you won't even know you're on a diet!

Don't forget paneer (Indian cottage cheese), which can be cooked as per the tandoori idea above,

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or in a spicy sauce. If you can't get paneer, try substituting tofu.

Here's to a slim new year!

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Liz Canham is the webmistress of

Asian Food and Cookery

and

Travellers' Tales

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## **Indian Cookery with a British Twist**

**By Liz Canham**

In a traditional Indian home, the wife and mother does not go out to work. She stays at home and spends her days making sure that there is wholesome and tasty food ready for her family to eat whenever they may want it. If there are other older women in the household such as aunts or a grandmother, they will help too.

An Indian girl will start learning to cook at a very early age and will be expected to help her mother with the household catering and cleaning too. At her mother's side a daughter will learn how to grind spices, how to mix them to make various masalas and exactly when and how to add them to individual dishes. She will learn how to make various types of bread – chapattis, rotis, parathas and more. She will learn to make several dishes at the same time, no Indian meal consisting of only one dish, and she will learn the art of producing the crispest deep-fried onion bhajis and pakora. The girl's skill in the kitchen can make the difference between her finding a husband or not.

There's no getting away from it, delightful though Indian cuisine is, producing a meal is a complex and time-consuming business, even for the most experienced Indian housewife.

That's the traditional way. However, in modern-day India and in Britain, where many Indian families have made their homes, life is quite different.

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These days, Indian women often do not have the luxury of staying at home all day. They want or need to go out to work. Indian girls brought up in Britain see other girls of their age going shopping, to parties, to visit friends, to school, to college and ultimately to work and they don't want to stay at home with their mothers, slaving over a hot stove. On top of that, they don't want to lose the culture and flavours of Indian cuisine.

What to do then, when Indian cookery does not provide a quick answer to providing a meal? Vicky Bhogal has found the answer. In her book, *Cooking Like Mummyji*, she explores the culinary problems of a modern Indian girl living in Britain and provides an interesting answer.

I suppose we would call this fusion cooking as it is a mixture of the flavours of India and the simplicity of British family food and the results are great tastes produced in the minimum of time. I particularly recommend Fishcakes with Bite and for Sunday lunch with a difference, Green Masala Roast Chicken – absolutely delicious.

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