

A tasty treat with a hint of spice

From her home in Marlborough, Usha Gupta creates delicious, wholesome Indian vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free recipes from Punjab, inspired by family recipes and the need for a healthy diet.



Pakorras

Makes 24



Ingredients

- 1 bunch of spring onions, chopped or two medium-sized shallots, sliced thinly, about 50g
- 100g new potatoes, peeled and diced finely
- 100g courgette, peeled and diced finely
- 100g carrots, grated
- 100g fresh spinach, washed and chopped
- 2 chillies (green finger), chopped finely
- 1¼ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon haldi (turmeric)
- ½ teaspoon of garam masala
- Juice of a half lemon or a couple of dessert spoons of natural thick-set yoghurt (dairy or soya)
- 2 cloves of garlic, crushed
- 220g chickpea (gram) flour, sifted
- ¼ teaspoon of baking powder
- 40ml water
- Oil (rapeseed/vegetable) for deep fat frying

IN 2014, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. With a view to preventing its progression and hoping to go into remission, I looked closely at my lifestyle and diet. I eliminated gluten, refined sugars, dairy milk and processed foods from my already vegetarian diet and immediately felt more energetic and lean. This spurred me to further refine my recipes and research new ones. Here is my recipe for delicious pakoras.

This popular North Indian snack, is a scrumptious guilty pleasure. Whenever I am feeling under the weather, my body craves these treats and, once I have a nibble, often with a piping-hot cup of chai, I feel instantly better. The batter is deep-fried, but the pakoras are packed with nutritious vegetables, spices and protein-rich chickpea flour. I like to use a balance of colours in my vegetables, often throwing in spinach, carrots, spring onions, courgettes and potatoes for a vibrant



Above: The pakoras can also be used in a delicious Dahi (yoghurt) Pakora Curry

finish. But the beauty of pakoras is that you can toss in any vegetables you have laying around! Aubergines, broccoli, cauliflower and sweet potatoes work well.

But, be warned: pakoras go very quickly! Colleagues, relatives and friends will devour them. So, I suggest you make a double batch. Pakoras are vegetarian, and can be made vegan by using soya yoghurt, or even omitting yoghurt altogether by opting for lemon juice. The recipe is totally gluten-free, as the flour comes from chickpeas.

Pakoras can be served as a starter or a snack. The extra batch of pakoras can be frozen and used in my delicious, tangy dahi pakora curry (see website for recipe). Traditionally made with thick-set dairy yoghurt, it works just as well with soya yoghurt as a vegan alternative.

Preparation time: 30-40 minutes

Frying time: about 20 minutes

Total time: 50-60 minutes

Making the mixture:

1. Place all the prepared vegetables, chillies, garlic, salt, turmeric, garam masala and the yoghurt or lemon juice in a large bowl and mix together.
2. Add the sifted chickpea flour and stir to coat the vegetables with the flour. Add enough water (about 40 ml) to make a thickish batter. Mix

with a spoon or your hand to combine everything together until the batter is of a 'dropping' consistency.

3. Heat the oil in a wok on medium to high heat. To test whether it is hot enough, drop a very small amount of the batter into the hot oil. If the droplet rises within a second or two, it is ready.
4. Just before frying the pakoras, add baking powder and incorporate into the mixture.

Frying:

1. Gently drop a heaped dessert spoonful of the vegetable batter into the hot oil, one at a time. Drop enough 'pakoras' into the oil as your wok will accommodate allowing sufficient room for you to be able to turn the pakoras over during the frying process.
2. Continue frying on medium to high heat. When the pakoras rise in the oil, turn them over. Continue turning them over every so often until they are golden-brown on both sides.
3. Remove the ready pakoras, draining them against the edge of the wok before placing them on absorbent kitchen paper.
4. Repeat this process until all the pakora batter has been used.

Cook's Tip:

Be very careful with the hot oil. Do not fill the wok more than a third. I also usually use one of the back burners to avoid splashes of hot oil just in case.

- To discover more recipes: www.ushasveryown.com where a video showing the pakora making process can also be found.