

SOUTH ASIAN BEEF AND POTATO BIRYANI RECIPE

2 ½ cups Spanish red onion (1 jumbo), diced

1/3 cup oil

1 ½ cups tomato, diced

5 cloves garlic, minced

2-inch piece ginger, grated

Spices (see notes)

1 cup Greek-style yoghurt

1-to-1 ½ lbs bone-in cubed beef, trimmed

1 lb potatoes (2 large), large cubes

1 ½ cups water

4 cups aged long-grain Basmati rice, washed, soaked, drained

Salt

Crushed saffron threads dissolved in a little hot water

Assorted roasted nuts, sultanas (white seedless raisins) and crispy fried onion rings

Spices:

Bay leaf, 1 or 2

Large black cardamom, about 3 or 4

Green cardamom, about 3

Cinnamon bark

Cloves, about 3

Chili pepper, about 1-to-2 tsp

Salt, as needed

Black pepper, about ¼ tsp

Peppercorns, about 8

Nigella, dill, black cumin, fenugreek and fennel seeds; about 1/2 tsp each

Turmeric, about ½-to-1 tsp

Cumin, about ½-to-1 tsp

Dried plums (prunes), about 5

Dried sour apricots, about 7

* Spices listed are approximate; I added them randomly without measuring. If possible, slightly toast before use or prior to grinding.

Sauté onions in oil until nicely golden; about 25 minutes. Add tomatoes, sauté 20 minutes longer until tomatoes cook down and oil starts separating to the sides.

Add cubed beef and stir-fry a couple of minutes until no longer pink.

Stir in garlic ginger spices yoghurt potatoes; stir-fry gently 10-15 minutes. Add water, bring to a boil, cover, and simmer on low heat until meat and potatoes are tender. Once cooked, return heat to high and stir-cook until oil starts separating to the sides once more. Remove from heat.

Meanwhile, add rice in a pot and top off with 5"of water (about 10-15 cups). Add salt. Bring to a boil and cook until rice is almost done; rice kernels should mash but have a firm whitish core (do not overcook). Drain.

Grease bottom and sides of a casserole. Layer rice and meat sauce, alternating between the two, beginning and ending with rice (you should have two layers of sauce). Drizzle saffron water on top. Cover; cook on the stove top or in the oven. Remove from heat, rest 10 min, fluff and mix gently through layers before serving.

* If cooking on the stovetop, heat on high 2 min, place an iron tawa (a thin mesh or flat griddle-like) under the pot and allow it to heat, then cook on low 20-25 min.

* If cooking in the oven, bake @350F for 22-28 min; remove cover only before serving.