WILL MEYRICK

SINGAPORE / SINGAPORE STREET FOOD

PRAWN BIRYANI WITH ACAR

Singapore prawn biryani hides a dry, spicy prawn masala under fragrant basmati rice. It comes with acar, a quick sweet and sour pickle of cucumber, carrot and chilli that cuts through the spice.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	40 min	45 min	1 h 25 min	Medium	Hot

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE PRAWNS

500 g large raw prawns, peeled
1 tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp salt
4 tbsp ghee or neutral oil
2 onions, finely sliced
5 garlic cloves, crushed
30 g ginger, grated
2 tbsp chilli paste (or 6 dried chillies, soaked and ground)
2 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp garam masala
2 tomatoes, chopped

FOR THE RICE

400 g basmati rice, soaked for 30 minutes
1 cinnamon stick
4 green cardamom pods
4 cloves
2 bay leaves
A pinch of saffron in 3 tbsp warm milk
Chopped coriander and Chinese celery
Fried shallots

FOR THE ACAR

1 cucumber, seeded and cut into batons
1 carrot, cut into batons
1 long red chilli, sliced
1 small onion, sliced
100 ml rice vinegar
3 tbsp sugar
1 tsp salt

METHOD

MAKE THE ACAR

1. Warm the vinegar, sugar and salt until dissolved, then cool. Toss with the cucumber, carrot, chilli and onion and leave for at least 30 minutes.

COOK THE PRAWNS

2. Toss the prawns with the turmeric and salt. Heat half the ghee in a pan over high heat, sear the prawns for 1 minute and lift them out.
3. Add the rest of the ghee and the onions. Cook over medium heat for 10 minutes, until deep golden. Set a third aside for the rice.
4. Add the garlic, ginger and chilli paste and fry for 3 minutes. Add the ground spices and tomatoes and cook for 8 minutes, until thick and the oil separates.
5. Return the prawns and turn for 2 minutes, until the masala is almost dry and coats them.

COOK THE RICE

6. Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil with the cinnamon, cardamom, cloves and bay. Add the drained rice, boil for 5 minutes, until three-quarters cooked, and drain.

LAYER AND STEAM

7. Spread the prawns in the base of a heavy pot. Cover with the rice, the reserved onions and the saffron milk.
8. Cover tightly and cook over the lowest heat for 12 to 15 minutes. Rest for 5 minutes off the heat.
9. Serve with the prawns dug up from under the rice, coriander, Chinese celery, fried shallots and the acar.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

Use the biggest prawns you can find and cook them short: they steam again under the rice.

A few drops of yellow or red food colouring on the rice is how the stalls do it; saffron or turmeric is enough at home.

The acar keeps for a week in the fridge and goes with any curry.

Zam Zam has faced the Sultan Mosque since 1908. It is known for its murtabak, but Will also orders the biryani, with the prawn hidden under the rice.He digs it out: prawn cooked with masala until almost dry, like a chilli fry, with a little acar on the side, sweet and pickled. For Will it shows the Malay and Indonesian...