

Multi-ethnic London and food: Jerk & masala

Before you start: What do jerk and masala have in common? Surf the Net to find out about each one.

Variety is the spice of life ...

... as the saying goes. So what does that make London, which is one of the most multi-ethnic cities in the world? Judging by the great variety of restaurants in the city's West End alone which offer delicious food from countries across the globe, you could say 'the spice of life' is literally here to be had. But the hot! hot! hot! or tangy sweet-and-sour are not limited to the West End – for can you honestly imagine any high street in London without its Indian curry house or Thai takeaway?

Now, beyond the West End and all the high streets, there is a *third* alternative if you're looking for an authentic, more affordable and yet equally tasty meal: You can visit one of the many lively parts of London where local

communities were 'multi-ethnic' ages before words like 'diverse', 'multi-cultural' or 'multi-ethnic' became popular – places such as Brixton with its high British Afro-Caribbean population, or Tooting, Southall and Green Street – those London 'Little India' or 'Little Punjab' neighbourhoods, to name just a few.

But how about a more creative and fun approach to multi-ethnic London? Why not download a recipe or recipes for a meal created by one of the many prestigious chefs of London, then take a trip down to the shops or, better still, to a local market for the ingredients? Or you may just prefer try out some of the recipes offered here below. Whichever approach you choose, good luck and bon appetit!

Afro-Caribbean recipes

Jerk chicken dish (Marinated chicken)

(for 8 chicken breasts or 8 chicken thighs & drumsticks)

- 1 tablespoon each: pimento (allspice) & dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder (or 2 large cloves freshly ground)
- 1 ½ teaspoons each: ground sage, cayenne & black pepper
- ¾ teaspoons each: nutmeg & cinnamon (both ground)
- ¾ tablespoon molasses & ¼ tablespoon brown sugar
- 3 spring onions & an onion, finely chopped
- 1 Scotch bonnet pepper (habanero), seeded & ground to a paste*
- 50 ml olive oil
- 100 ml white vinegar
- 50 ml soy sauce
- 125 ml freshly squeezed orange juice & the juice of one lime
- a bunch of coriander, finely chopped
- salt to taste

*These peppers are fiery hot, so wear thick rubber gloves when handling!

» Blend all the ingredients in a blender. Marinate the chicken well with the mixture and cover with cling foil. Refrigerate for at least 12 hours, turning the chicken a few times. Before grilling bring to room temperature. When the coals on the grill are greyish white, sear the chicken till brown all around (about 6–8 minutes on each side). Baste with the marinade from time to time. The remaining marinade can be boiled up and served as a hot-and-spicy chicken dip. Serve with rice and peas (aka Jamaican 'coat of arms'; see p.2), fried plantain and salad.



Jamaican 'coat of arms' (Rice and peas)

1 tin red kidney beans (400g), rinsed & drained
 1 tin (400g) unsweetened coconut milk
 450g rice
 1 stock cube
 3 spring onions, finely chopped
 1 large clove garlic, well crushed or chopped
 1 tablespoon butter (or oil)
 ¼ teaspoon dried thyme
 (or 1 ½ teaspoons fresh thyme, finely chopped)
 1 Scotch bonnet pepper (whole, do not chop up)
 enough water to make up a litre with the coconut & beans

Put the beans, coconut milk, stock cube, spring onions, garlic, thyme, butter and water into a saucepan and bring to the boil. Add rice and salt and stir for a minute till the mixture comes to the boil again. Reduce heat to low and place the Scotch bonnet pepper on top of liquid. Cover with a tight-fitting lid and allow to simmer for 30 minutes or until rice is cooked. Remove the pepper before serving.

Fried plantain

4-6 ripe plantains
 vegetable oil (e.g. peanut, canola or sunflower)
 cayenne pepper & salt to taste
 some fresh grated ginger to garnish (optional)

Cut off ends of the plantains and then peel them by slitting them lengthways and slice them diagonally. Heat a little oil in a frying pan. Add the plantain slices and fry until they are crisp and golden, turning as necessary. Allow to drain on a rack and season with salt and pepper. The plantain is best kept warm in a preheated oven. Before serving garnish with a little ginger if desired.



Caribbean sweet potato pudding

3 medium sweet potatoes, finely grated
 1 cup coconut, freshly grated
 2 tablespoons butter
 1 teaspoon grated ginger
 ½ cup dark brown sugar & 1 tablespoon molasses
 ½ cup flour
 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
 ½ cup raisins (optional)
 ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 ¼ teaspoon nutmeg, grated
 1 cup coconut milk
 whipping cream (optional)
 caramel or rum-flavoured syrup (optional)



☺ Mix the coconut with the sweet potato. Add the butter, ginger, sugar, flour, raisins, salt and spices. Add the molasses, vanilla essence and coconut milk. Mix thoroughly and pour into a well greased baking pan. Bake in a preheated oven (175°C) for an hour or till the pudding is a deep golden brown. Serve with whipped cream topped with syrup.

Indian recipes

Chicken masala (Murg man pasand or 'heart-pleasing' chicken)

1 kg cleaned chicken, in pieces
 6 medium-sized onions, finely chopped
 5–6 cloves of garlic, crushed or very finely chopped
 3 cm piece of fresh ginger, very finely grated
 3–4 tomatoes, chopped
 ghee (or oil) for frying
 4 cm cinnamon stick
 5 whole green cardamoms
 4 cloves
 salt to taste
 50 g almonds, finely ground

Ground spices:

¼ – ½ teaspoon red chilli powder
 1 rounded teaspoon ground cumin
 ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
 1 flat teaspoon ground coriander seeds (or powder)

To garnish:

2 tablespoons almond slivers
 ½ a handful fresh coriander



☺ Heat the ghee/oil and fry the onions, stirring constantly till they are deep brown but not burnt! Add the ginger and garlic and cook for a few minutes. Add all the whole spices and then the chicken and stir fry for about 5 minutes. Mix in the ground spices and the salt and fry gently, lowering the heat if necessary. Add the tomatoes together with the ground almonds and ¼ l hot water and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for about half an hour, stirring from time to time. Garnish and serve with plain rice (or pilau) and raita.

Cucumber-yoghurt sauce (Kheera ka raita)

a medium-sized cucumber, peeled & coarsely grated
 300 g full-fat yoghurt
 ½ onion, finely chopped
 a teaspoon ground cumin
 freshly ground black pepper & salt to taste
 1 ½ tablespoons freshly chopped mint

Put the yoghurt into a bowl and mix in the cucumber, onion, cumin, salt and pepper and a tablespoon of the mint. Garnish with the remaining mint. Allow to cool well before serving.

Indian carrot pudding (Gajar halwa)

500 g carrots, finely grated
 5 tablespoons ghee
 2 tablespoons almond slivers
 2 tablespoons semolina
 350 ml milk
 a pinch of saffron
 4 tablespoons sugar
 3 tablespoons raisins
 seeds of 2 cardamoms, ground

To garnish:

almond & pistachio slivers; cashews

Heat 3 tablespoons of the ghee in a pot and add the carrots. Turn low and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring from time to time, till the carrots are tender. In a small pan melt the remaining ghee and stir fry the almonds and semolina for 5 minutes. In a big pot heat up the milk with the sugar, saffron and raisins.

Add the carrot mixture and stir fry for 15 minutes on low heat till the mass thickens and leaves the side of the pot. Add the cardamom. Garnish. Put the halwa in a shallow dish and leave to refrigerate for at least an hour.

