KitchenBooQ

Achari Paneer Tikka (Pickle-Spiced Paneer)

Serves: 4 | Cooking Time 40 minutes | Level: Capable



INGREDIENTS

1 lb (450 g) paneer, cut into 1-inch cubes
3/4 cup (180 ml) plain full-fat yogurt
2 tbsp (30 ml) mustard oil
1 tbsp (15 ml) lemon juice
1 tsp (5 g) salt
1/2 tsp (2.5 g) turmeric powder
1 tsp (5 g) Kashmiri chili powder or paprika
1/2 tsp (2.5 g) garam masala
1 tbsp (8 g) achar masala or pickle spice blend
1 tsp (4 g) nigella seeds
1 tsp (3 g) fennel seeds, lightly crushed
1/2 tsp (0.5 g) fenugreek leaves, crumbled
1/4 tsp (0.75 g) asafoetida powder
1 small onion, cut into 1-inch chunks
1 large bell pepper, cut into 1-inch chunks

Notes
Marination is essential; the acidic yogurt and mustard oil break down the paneer slightly for better flavor absorption without making it rubbery. If raw mustard oil is unavailable, substitute with neutral vegetable oil but note you will lose the authentic pungent depth. This dish contains dairy and must be cooled within 2 hours of cooking, then stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days or frozen for 1 month. Never store at room temperature. Reheat gently in a skillet over medium-low heat with a splash of water to restore moisture before serving.

PREPARATION

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the yogurt, mustard oil, lemon juice, salt, turmeric, chili powder, garam masala, achar masala, nigella seeds, crushed fennel seeds, crumbled fenugreek leaves, and asafoetida until smooth and uniform.

2. Add the paneer cubes to the marinade and gently toss to coat evenly. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or up to overnight, turning the paneer once halfway through marination.

3. Thread the marinated paneer and vegetables onto metal skewers or wooden skewers that have been soaked in water for 30 minutes, alternating pieces for even cooking. Pour any remaining marinade into a small heatproof bowl and set aside.

4. Preheat your oven to 425F (220C) and switch it to broil mode, or prepare a grill over medium-high heat. Lightly oil a baking sheet or grill grate.

5. Place the skewers on the prepared surface and cook for 8-10 minutes, turning every 2-3 minutes with tongs until the edges are charred and the paneer is heated through. Brush generously with the reserved marinade during the first few minutes of cooking to keep the cubes moist.

6. Transfer the skewers to a serving platter. Garnish with fresh cilantro leaves and a light squeeze of lemon juice. Serve immediately alongside mint-cilantro chutney or cool yogurt raita.