

Yield: Makes 8 servings

ingredients

- 2 1/2 lb boneless lamb leg, cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes
- Salt as needed
- Ground white pepper as needed
- 1 1/2 cups plain yogurt
- 2 tbsp minced ginger root
- 1 tbsp minced garlic
- 2 tsp ground cardamom
- 12 oz cashew nuts
- 1/4 cup ghee (see tips, below) or canola oil
- 3 cups small-dice yellow onion
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- 1 tsp ground fennel
- 2 tbsp ground coriander
- 6 Thai bird chiles, chopped, or to taste
- 1/3 cup chopped cilantro stems
- 1 cup heavy cream
- Salt to taste
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro leaves
- 1 cup pan-roasted cashews (see, tips below)

preparation

1. Trim the lamb and cut it into large pieces. Season with salt and pepper and put in a bowl. Add the yogurt, 1 tbsp ginger, the garlic, and cardamom. Stir or toss until the ingredients are evenly distributed and the lamb is coated. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and up to 3 hours.

2. Put the cashews in a small bowl and add enough hot water to cover them. Let the cashews soak for 30 minutes and then drain. Grind the drained cashews to a coarse paste in a food processor. Set aside.

3. Heat the ghee or oil in a casserole or Dutch oven over medium heat until it shimmers. Add the onion and sauté until transparent, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the cumin, cardamom, fennel, the remaining ginger, and the coriander. Cook, stirring often until aromatic, about 2 minutes. Add the chiles, cilantro stems, and cashew paste and stir well to be sure that nothing is sticking. Sauté, stirring frequently and adding water a tablespoon at a time if necessary, until the mixture is very aromatic, about 2 minutes.

4. Add the lamb and the yogurt marinade, increase the heat, and stir until the pieces are evenly coated. Once the meat's juices begin to flow, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer very slowly, stirring occasionally, until the meat is nearly tender, about 1 1/2 hours.

5. Add the cream and continue to simmer until the curry is flavorful and thickened and the lamb is tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Season to taste with additional salt, pepper, or chopped bird chile. Serve garnished with the cilantro leaves and cashews.

Source Information

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Chef's tips: Ghee

Ghee, a type of cooking butter used in Indian cooking, can be purchased in jars at Asian or Indian markets, but it is easy to make yourself.

Cube 1 pound of cold unsalted butter, place in a sauce pan, and set over low heat. Once the butter has melted, increase the heat slightly. The pure butterfat will become very clear. Some foam will rise to the top; skim it away.

Increase the heat slightly and continue to cook the butter until the milk solids that have fallen to the bottom of the pan turn a deep golden color.

Immediately remove the pan from the heat. Ladle the clear butter-fat, or ghee, into a clean container; discard the liquid at the bottom of the pan. You can keep ghee in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Pan Roasting Nuts

You can buy roasted peanuts and cashews to garnish some of our South-east Asian stews like this curry. For the best flavor and texture, however, consider toasting your own. You can use the same technique to pan-roast spices and seeds for a depth of flavor you simply can't find in store-bought spice blends.

Let a heavy-bottomed skillet or sauté pan get very hot over high heat. Add the nuts, spices, or seeds to the pan in an even layer. Swirl the pan gently to keep the ingredients in motion constantly. The aromas will open up and deepen dramatically.

Once the nuts, spices, or seeds begin to give off a noticeable aroma, keep a close eye on them. They can go from perfect to overdone in a few seconds. Pour them out of the pan into a bowl just before they are the shade of brown you want.

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