Kootu Vegetable stew (Serves 6)

Ingredients

For toor dal:
1/2 cup toor dal
2 cups water

Spice mix for roasting and grinding:
2 Tbsp vegetable oil
2 Tbsp Channa dal (split peas)
1 tsp urad dal
3 Tbsp coriander seeds
2 tsp cumin seeds
1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds
1/8 tsp asafoetida powder
2 red chilies
6 peppercorns

For Vegetables:
1 lb. of combined chopped vegetables such as:
   carrots (peeled, 1” pieces)
   celery (remove top and bottom, and slice into 1/4 inch pieces)
   butternut squash (peeled, seeded, 1” cubes)
   eggplant (1” cubes), (about 1/2 cup each)
1/2 tsp turmeric
1/4 tsp asafoetida
salt: 1 tsp or to taste

To end:
1/2 tsp mustard seeds
curry leaves 1 sprig

Procedure

1. Cook toor dal in 2 cups of water for about 40 minutes. Turn off heat and set aside. In the meantime, chop your veggies and gather your spices.

2. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil, pop a few mustard seeds (to see if the oil is hot). When they pop add all the spices for roasting. Cook on medium-high heat until the red chilies turn a dark shade of red (not black), the peppercorns pop, and the fenugreek seeds turn dark brown (but not black). Turn off heat. Set aside to cool. Then grind into a thick paste with some water.

3. Steam chopped vegetables in 1 cup water with the turmeric, asafoetida and salt.
a. First add celery, cook for 5 minutes
b. Add carrots, cook for another 3-5 minutes
c. Add butternut squash and cook for 10 minutes,
d. Finally, add eggplant and cook for the remaining 10 minutes, until all the vegetables are soft.

4. Finally, in a separate (large) pan, heat the rest of the oil with the mustard seeds until they pop. Quickly add the curry leaves, add the cooked vegetables, and ground spice mixture. Simmer together for five minutes. Then add the cooked dal and salt, adjust water for consistency.

5. You don’t want the stew runny on the plate, but it should also not be a solid mass. Vegetables in thick gravy is the idea. Serve hot.
Green beans with shredded coconut (Serves 6 comfortably)

Ingredients
1.5 lbs fresh green beans, trimmed, chopped into 1/4 “ pieces and washed.
1/2 cup fresh frozen, unsweetened, shredded coconut
2 red chilies each broken in two (remove after cooking, before serving, or warn guests to set them aside)
1 tsp cumin seeds
1Tbsp oil
1.5 tsp salt or to taste

Procedure
1. Heat oil in a wok or large pan, add the red chilies, and when they turn a shade darker, add cumin seeds and fry for 15 seconds.
2. Then add the chopped green beans, sprinkle a little water, lower heat, and cover tightly with lid and steam for 5 minutes.
3. Add salt, and coconut, turn up the heat and mix for a couple of minutes. Serve hot.
3. **Lemon Rice. (Serves 6, easily)**

**Ingredients**
1 cup of uncooked small grain white rice  
3 cups water  
Juice of one lemon  
1 tsp turmeric powder  
1/4 bunch cilantro leaves, chopped  
1 tsp urad dal  
1 Tbsp channa dal (split peas)  
1 tsp mustard seeds  
1 hot green chile, finely chopped (two if everyone is adventurous)  
1/3 cup filtered sesame oil (i.e. not toasted or dark sesame oil)  
1.5 tsp salt  
2 carrots, grated

**Procedure**
1. Soak the urad and channa dals in half a cup of water for at least 20 minutes—can be longer.  
2. Cook rice to consistency that is neither too sticky nor as distinct isolated grains. (I wash the rice thoroughly, bring the three cups of water to boil in a pot, then add the washed rice, gently scrape the bottom with a fork to prevent sticking, and when the water starts to boil again, cover with a tight lid, lower heat to simmer, and cook for 20 minutes. But methods vary a lot).  
3. A few minutes before the rice is done, drain the water completely from the dals that are soaking. Heat one tablespoon of oil, add the mustard until they pop. Then add the soaked dals and stir for a few minutes until they turn a golden color. Add the chopped green chilies—cook for another minute and turn off heat.  
4. Spread the cooked rice, still warm, in a large platter or bowl, add the lemon juice, salt, turmeric powder, cilantro, and fluff with forks so as not to mash the rice grains. Add the fried mix, the rest of the oil, and carrots, and fluff again. The result should be a bright yellow, slightly glistening rice, with streaks of green from cilantro, orange from carrots, and specks of golden brown from the dals.
Cucumber Pachadi ("Raita," in North India) (Serves 8 to 10)

Ingredients
1 English cucumber
1 lb plain Greek yogurt
1 green chili (2 if among friends)
1/4 cup fresh frozen shredded coconut
1/2 bunch cilantro, roots and lower stem removed, washed, and coarsely chopped
1 tsp salt
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
12 red and/or yellow cherry tomatoes

Procedure
1. Wash, peel, and grate the cucumber, place in a bowl with a little salt to draw out the water while you are preparing other ingredients.
2. Wash and halve the tomatoes. Set aside.
3. In a blender add the yogurt, coconut, cilantro, and chilies. Blend to a uniform consistency. If necessary, use a little of the water that is released from the cucumber to loosen the consistency.
4. Drain the cucumber, and stir into the yogurt—do not blend!
5. Heat the olive oil with the mustard seeds in a pan, and when the seeds pop, toss it (well, be careful; toss is too strong a verb; averting body and eyes, gently, gingerly, add the hot oil and mustard seeds to the bowl is more like it). Add oil and mustard seed to yogurt mixture.
6. Put yogurt in a serving bowl or platter. Arrange the tomato halves in some pleasing pattern with their skin ends up for presentation.
Saag Paneer (serves 4-6)

Ingredients
Frozen spinach 1 lb.
2-4 Tbsp of vegetable oil or ghee
Paneer 10 oz., cut into 1/2 inch cubes
1 Medium yellow onion, thin sliced
3 cloves of garlic, minced
2 tsp of minced fresh ginger
(Or garlic ginger paste from a bottle - 2 Tbsp, instead of the last two items)
2 medium ripe tomatoes, diced
1 cup whole milk or coconut milk
1/2 tsp turmeric powder
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
2 tsp cumin seeds
2.5 Tbsp of garam masala spice blend
(Or if you want to make your own, grind together: use a one-inch cinnamon stick, 3
cloves, 3 cardamom pods, 1/4 tsp black peppercorns, 2 Tbsp coriander seeds, 1/2
tsp of fennel seeds). Dry roast garam masala spices in a pan until fragrant, and grind
into fine powder.
Salt 1.5 tsp or to taste

1. Thaw the spinach well. Chop finely. No need to grind it up fine. Just enough
so that the individual leaves and stems are made into a homogenous consistency.

2. Heat 1-2 Tbsp of ghee, and fry the cubed paneer, stirring frequently until at least
several of the sides of each cube are a golden brown. Set aside.

3. In the same pan, heat another Tbsp of ghee, add the cumin seeds, and after 30
seconds, add sliced onions and stir. After about 7 minutes, add the garlic and ginger.
Fry for another two minutes. Then add the diced tomatoes, turmeric, cayenne
pepper, and garam masala. Stir until the tomatoes are soft. Add the pureed spinach,
paneer, and whole milk or coconut milk, bring to a quick boil, lower heat and
simmer for 10 minutes.

4. Turn off heat, serve hot.