

E. FISH PREPARATIONS

In Kashmir many varieties of small and big fresh water Fish (K-'Gādā') are available. Some years back Silver Carp was bred in lakes and rivers, and it has multiplied so much, that now it forms the major part of the supply. It has very little small bones (thorns) and its growth is also quick. Trout, Both Rainbow and Brown spotted, were reared much earlier. State Government Fisheries Department has maintained many protected Trout Breeding Centres, which supply parent stock to feed most of the abounding cold fresh water streams, where licenced Fishing is allowed. Trout, at the rates fixed by the Government, is sold by Government Fisheries.

Rivers, Streams and Lakes of Kashmir, abound in small and big Fish varieties, mostly with fine bones, but these are considered more delicious than Silver Carp. 'Māhsīr', a large delicious fresh water Fish, is also found in rivers.

Small, about 6 to 10 inch long. Fishes are sometimes roasted in a fire of dry lake and marsh reeds, by fishermen, and are sold in some markets of Srinagar, and also in some rural towns near lakes and streams. These are nutritious and easily digested. They taste very good, especially when sprinkled with Salt and Chili Powder.

Most of river, tidal water and sea Fishes, sold in Indian markets, may also be cooked according to the methods described hereafter.

Kashmiris eat lot of Fish. Due to lakes, streams, brooks and rivers spread all over the valley, Fishes are available almost everywhere. Its free availability and lower price, in comparison to Mutton, Goat's Meat and Fowl etc., makes Fish a good source of Protein, in the food of common people of Kashmir. Here, Pandits too are mostly non-vegetarian. Fish preparations are a must on their certain festivals e.g. 'Shivarātrī', and New Year's Day. Even in 'Pitṛā Krīyā' Fried Fish and 'Chapāṭīs' are distributed, to

neighbours and relatives, on 'Tīlā Shṛāḍh' day, in the year following the death of a member of the family. Cooked Fish and Plain Cooked Rice, called 'Gādā Baṭā', is offered to the 'House hold Deity', during winter, on some day in the month of 'Pōsh', and is partaken by all the family members too. 'Tāv Gādā tā Lavāsā', Sauteed Spiced Fish and big 'Chapāṭīs' baked in an oven, similar to a 'Rumālī Rōṭī', used to be sent to the in-laws of newly-wed daughters, by Kashmiri Pandits, on 'Shivarātrī' Festival. Some RECIPES of Kashmiri Fish Preparations follow.

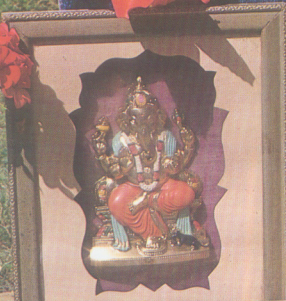
RECIPE NO. 70.

1. 'Raniḥ Gādā'. (E-Fish Curry Kashmiri style) (H-'Kashmiri ṭarīqa sē pakāyī Machhlī').

This is a special preparation of Kashmiri Pandits and is savoured both by Hindūs and Muslims alike. Fish of bigger size, each weighing about a kg. or more, are used usually in making the Curry.

Ingredients :-

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| 1. Fish, - | 2 kg. |
| 2. Mustard oil, - | 2 cups. |
| 3. Red Chili Powder, - | 1 tbsp. |
| 4. Turmeric, - | 2 tsps. |
| 5. Ginger Powder, - | 2 tsps. |
| 6. Aniseed Powder, - | 1 tsp. |
| 7. Cloves, - | 3 nos. |
| 8. Asafotida, - | a pinch. |
| 9. 'Garam Masālā' or crushed 'Varī Masālā', - | 1 tsp or 15 gm. |



TOP - RCP NO. 44
MID - RCP NOS. 41 & 42.
BOT - RCP NOS. 43 & 44.



10. Cumin Seeds, - 1 tsp.
11. Caraway Seeds, - 1/2 tsp.
12. Salt, - 2 tsps.

Preparation :-

1. With a knife cut off fins, gills and opercula of the fishes, and take out their Innards, after making slits lengthwise in the middle of their bellies. Scrape the scales and inside of every fish, and then wash these with several waters, thoroughly both inside and outside.
2. With a sharp knife, first cut the heads and about 3" tail pieces. Then again chop the remaining fish horizontally into 2" to 3" pieces. If these are too big, cut further through the spine each piece into two. In case of fish of smaller size, slice horizontally each into 3 pieces of equal length, consisting of head, tail and middle piece.
3. Wipe all the pieces with a cloth, and keep in a plate.

Method of Cooking :-

1. Deep fry in oil the dressed fish pieces including the heads, in a 'Kadāhī', till these are brown and stiff. Only 5 to 6 pieces should be fried at a time, to facilitate turning with a perforated ladle, and for uniform frying on all sides. Take out the fully fried pieces from the 'Kadāhī', with the perforated ladle, after draining all oil. Keep aside in a plate.
2. Now in an earthenware cooking pot ('Leij'), or a steel or tinned brass or copper 'Pañīlā', of about 3 litres capacity or more, pour a litre of water, and add the Spices. Ingredients no. 3 to 8, and also the oil left over, after frying of fish pieces.

Sometimes more oil is used in deep frying to save time. In that case, the extra oil is kept for future use but only for frying of fish and cooking its curry, as the used oil picks the odour of the fish.

Stir the 'Masālā', oil and water, by a ladle and bring the cooking pot to a boil. Add the fried fish pieces to the boiling gravy.

3. Let cook, on medium heat, for half an hour or more, till the gravy thickens and oil begins to show.
4. Add 'Garam Masālā' or 'Varī Masālā', and cook for a few minutes more. The Curry is served cold usually with Plain Cooked Rice.

It can keep for a couple of days even in hot weather, but for a longer time during winter. The Fish Curry is therefore usually cooked at one time, to be served for several days. Cold Fish Curry is relished more, than when it is hot, because of its thick congealed gelatinous gravy.

Tamarind, Tomatoes, tart Apples, Prunes, fresh Plums, or fresh or dry Apricots, are also added sometimes, in addition to 'Masālā', to impart a pleasant tart taste to the Curry. For the above Recipe we would require about 50 gm. of Tamarind or 100 gm. of Tomatoes, or a couple of tart Apples, or a dozen of Plums or Prunes or fresh or dry Apricots. The Tamarind is kept soaking in a cup of boiling water, before hand, cooled and mashed and the strained pulp is added, after the fish pieces have boiled for a few minutes. If Tomatoes are used, these are dipped in boiling water for a minute, and then plunged in cold water. Thereby their skins are peeled off easily. After mashing and straining, the sauce is added, while the curry is boiling. Pared tart Apple quarters, after coring, or Prunes, or fresh whole tart Plums or fresh or dry Apricots, are also added, while the fish pieces are boiling. Sour dried Apricot halves, with stones removed, are available in the market and are called 'Chērā Naem'. A dried variety of plums called Prunes (K-'Ōlūv Buḡhār'), are also sold in the market.

RECIPE NO. 71.

2. 'Masālāḡār Ṭaliḡh Gādā'. (E-Fried Fish prepared with Spices) (H-'Masālāḡār ṭaliḡh huḡī Machhī').

Fish varieties, with no small bones, and each weighing about a kg., are preferred for this Dish.

Ingredients :-

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| 1. Fish, - | 1 to 2 kgs. |
| 2. Mustard Oil, - | 2 cups. |
| 3. Curd, - | 1 cup. |
| 4. Red Chili Powder, - | 2 tsps. |
| 5. Salt, - | 2 tsps. |
| 6. 'Ajvāin' Seeds, - | 1/2 tsp. |
| 7. Ginger Powder, - | 1 tsp. |
| 8. Turmeric, - | 1 tsp. |
| 9. Asafoetida, - | a pinch. |
| 10. 'Garam Masālā', - | 1 tsp. |

Preparation :-

1. Slit open, with a knife the bellies of the Fish, length wise through the middle. Remove Innards. Cut off fins, gills and opercula. Scrape with a knife the scales, and also the inner side of the bellies. Wash the fish thoroughly, several times with water.
2. With a sharp chopping knife, first sever the heads, and also the tail pieces of about 3" length. Cut the remaining Fish length-wise, through the spine into two parts. Slice each part into two or three pieces of about 3". Wash the head, tail piece and all the other pieces again and wipe with a cloth.
3. In a steel bowl, make a well blended batter of the Curd and all the Spices and Salt (Ingredients 4 to 10).
4. After dipping each piece of Fish in the batter, lay on a steel platter, side by side in one or two layers. Each piece should get evenly covered by the batter. If desired the head may be kept separate to be cooked along with a Fish Curry. Leave the platter aside for an hour or two to let the Spices soak in.

Method of Cooking :-

In a heavy iron 'Kadāhī', heat the oil on moderate flame, till the froth disappears and it just begins to smoke. Deep fry, 2 or 3 pieces of battered fish at a time, turning these, with a perforated ladle

(H-'Jhamā'), in the oil once or twice, till these are evenly brown and become quite stiff for being served hot.

It is better to half fry the pieces in the first instance, an hour or two before the final frying and serving. Take out every piece from the 'Kadāhī', with the perforated ladle, draining all oil after both the initial, and final frying. Left over oil is used next time for frying, or else used in the preparation of a Fish Curry. It is not used in the preparations other than that of Fish, as the oil takes the odour of the Fish.

RECIPE NO. 72.

3. 'Gādā Ṭā Muji, Yā Goagji, Yā Naḍeir, Yā Moaṅji, Yā Baṅḍ Gūpī' (E-Fish cooked with Radishes, or Lotus Roots, or Turnips, or Knol Khol, or Cabbage) (H-'Machhī aur Mūlī, yā Shalgam, yā Kamal kī jadh yā Gāṅth Gōbhī, yā Baṅḍ Gōbhī').

Fish Curry made in combination with Radishes of big white round variety, or Lotus Roots, is a cherished Dish of Kashmirīs. Almost equally delicious is Fish cooked with Knol Khol, Turnips or Cabbage. The Fish imparts a very appetizing flavour and a wonderful taste, to these Vegetables too. On the other hand, addition of Vegetables increases the bulk of the Dish, and so comparatively a lesser quantity, of presently expensive Fish, is required, to cater for a family, and hence this is economical too.

The process of cooking is similar in all these five preparations, except in respect of dressing and preparation of the raw Vegetables that are added.

In Kashmir, whole Fish are sold soon after the catch. In other places in India dressed Fish, cut in desired sized pieces, is sold in the Fish Markets.

Ingredients :-

1. Non-dressed Fish, each weighing about half a kg., - 1 1/2 kg. or
dressed Fish pieces, - 1 kg.

2. a. Radishes, White Round without leaves, -
1 kg. or
- b. Lotus Roots of 1" diameter or more, -
1/2 kg. or
- c. Knol Khol, -
2 kg. or
- d. Turnips without leaves, -
1 1/2 kg. or
- d. Cabbage, one about, -
1 kg.
3. Mustard oil, -
1 1/2 cup.
4. Asafoetida, -
a pinch.
5. Cumin Seeds, -
1 tsp.
6. Cloves, -
3 nos.
7. Red Chili Powder, -
2 tsps.
8. Turmeric, -
2 tsps.
9. Ginger Powder, -
2 tsps.
10. Aniseed Powder, -
2 tsps.
11. Salt, -
about 2 tsps.
12. 'Garam Masāla', -
1 tsp. or
'Varī Masāla', -
15 gm.

Note :- If Radishes or Turnips are not available without leaves, then buy more accordingly. The leaves may be cooked separately. See Recipes for Vegetarian Dishes.

Preparation :-

1. Scrape Fishes with a knife to remove scales etc. Cut off their fins, gills, opercula (gill covers), and the teeth. Silt the bellies of the Fishes in the middle, lengthwise, and remove their Innards and cut each into desired size pieces. Scrape insides of every piece and wash thoroughly all pieces. Wipe these with a cloth and keep aside in a plate.
2. (a). If Radishes are to be added, cut off their green tops and thin roots along with any other hairy roots around. Slice horizontally into 1/2" thick round pieces. Cut bigger slices, of over 1 1/2" diameter, further into two half rounds. Wash all pieces with water.

- (b). Scrape Lotus Roots with a knife, to remove the brown skin. After cutting off their root heads and withered ends, slice horizontally into about 2" long pieces. Then split, vertically, each slice into two. Wash thoroughly and remove mud etc., from the holes.

- (c). In case of Knol Khol to be added to the Fish, tender skinned fresh ones, of medium size should be purchased. Remove leaves along with stems from the sides of each Knol Khol, leaving only the tender ones at the top. Cut horizontally with a knife, the soft tops of the Knol Khol along with the tender leaves, and split each top into two. Now pare off the fibrous skin of every Knol Khol. Cut, the pared Knol Khol, horizontally, into 1/2" thick round slices. Cut slices, bigger than 2" or more in diameter, further into half rounds. Discard fibrous cores, if any. Wash thoroughly with water, the dressed pieces and tops.

- (d). For cooking with Fish, good fresh Turnips of medium size, preferably the Purple top, Snow ball or Golden ball varieties, should be purchased.

Cut off greenish top portions and leaves of each Turnip. Then cut, vertically, each one into 2 to 4 equal sections through the middle of each Turnip, according to its size so that each piece is about the size of an egg. Shave off sharp edges and corners of the pieces with a knife. Wash well with water. The shavings and green tops are cooked separately, as a Vegetable Dish.

- (e). If Cabbage leaves are to be added to the Fish, discard withered and coarse outer leaves. Separate every bigger and whole leaf. Split central portion of the Cabbage into 4 pieces vertically, after cutting the hard stem. Wash leaves etc, and leave aside, in a colander, to drain water.

Note :- Good and tender leaves of Radishes, Knol Khol and Turnips should not be thrown away. These are nutritious and are used as vegetables. (See in Vegetarian Dishes).

Method of Cooking :-

The Method of Cooking and Spices etc. used, are same as in the case of 'Fish Curry' already described in RECIPE NO. 70, except in the addition of prepared Radish, Lotus Root, Knol Khol or Tumip pieces, or Cabbage Leaves etc. These dressed Vegetables, in every case, are added, after frying, in the oil, left over from the oil in which the Fish was fried, when the edges of the pieces or leaves turn a little brown. The Vegetable chosen, along with fried Fish pieces, is cooked together in an earthenware pot ('Leij') or a steel 'Pañla' or a tinned brass vessel, in a litre of water, after adding the Spices (Ingredients 4 to 11) and the left over oil, as in the case of Fish Curry. When the Vegetable selected, is done, the gravy thickens, and oil begins to separate, add 'Garam Masāla', or crushed 'Varī Masāla', and serve preferably cold. Once ready the dish is served usually for 2 or 3 days as a side Dish in Domestic Meals.

RECIPE NO. 73.

4. 'Hogādā Ṭā Hāk Yā Bum', (E-Dried Fish with 'Karam Sāg' or dried Water-lily Stems) (H-'Sūkhī Machhī aur Karām Sāg yā Bum').

Dried Fish is available freely in Kashmir. Smaller Fish are dried whole in sun and are called 'Razā Hogādā'. Bigger ones, after slitting open their bellies and discarding their Innards, are pressed flat and dried in sun. These are called 'Pachā Hogādā'. In Fish Markets, mostly in cities and towns near sea shores in India, dried whole fishes, and also fishes cut into pieces, are available freely. Those, who get used to eat it, like its appetizing odour. They greatly relish it, when cooked alone or in combination with 'Hāk' or 'Bum', in Kashmir. Dried Lotus and Water-lily Stems, got from lakes etc., in Kashmir, are called 'Bum', and in Hindī 'Kamal kē Nāl'

Ingredients :-

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|------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Dried Fish ('Hogādā'), - | 250 gm. |
| 2. 'Hāk' ('Karam Sāg') or 'Bum', - | 125 gm. |
| 3. Mustard Oil, - | 1/2 cup. |
| 4. Red Chili Powder, - | 1 tsp. |
| 5. Salt, - | about 1/2 tsp. |
| 6. Turmeric, - | 1/2 tsp. |
| 7. Asafoetida, - | a pinch. |
| 8. 'Varī Masāla', - | 10 gm. or |
| 'Garam Masāla', - | 1/2 tsp. |

Preparation :-

1. The fins of Dried Fish are cut and skins scraped clean. Any dry Innards found in 'Razā Hogādā' are also scrapped off. These are then roasted on a smokeless flame, or on live charcoals, washed and cleaned in hot water twice or thrice, and cut into desired pieces.
2. 'Hāk' leaves are sorted, after discarding coarse stems, withered, stained or insect-eaten portions, and then washed.
3. If 'Bum' is to be cooked with Dried Fish, it is cut into 3" or 4" lengths, and soaked in hot water before cooking for 1/2 an hour. Thus after reconstituting the dry 'Bum', extra water is squeezed out by hand.

Method of Cooking :-

In a 'Kadhī' or a 'Pañla', heat oil on medium flame, and when foam disappears, add half a litre of water, the Salt, Turmeric, Chili Powder and Asafoetida. Bring to boil and add prepared Dried Fish pieces and sorted 'Hāk' leaves or the prepared 'Bum'. Turn and stir with a ladle and cook for half an hour, to soften the Fish and the 'Hāk' or 'Bum'. Then add crushed 'Varī Masāla' or 'Garam Masāla'. Serve with Plain Cooked Rice.

5. 'Kānz Tā Gādā Yā Guran'. (E-Fish or Small Fish or very Small Dried Fish, cooked with Fermented Rice-Water) (H-'Badī, yā Chhōfī Machhliyan, yā Sūkhī Bahūf Chhōfī Machhliyan, 'Kānz' kē sāth pakā ke').

'Arā Guran' are Very Small Fish 1½" to 3" in length, collected from streams, and then dried in sun. These are sold in market along with 'Hogadā'. In Kashmir 'Guran' means very small Fish, and 'Arā' is a stream. 'Kānz' is a sour fermented liquid made from Rice-Water, Sōyā Beans, 'Ajwāin' and Salt etc., and apart from other uses, is also added, while cooking, to Big or Small Fish or 'Arāguran'. As for the cooking of bigger fish, or of small fresh fish of about 5" to 8" in length, which also are called 'Guran', and in which 'Kānz' is added, the method is almost the same as described in RECIPE NO. 73. Here in this case a couple of cups of 'Kānz' are added while boiling. The smaller Fish, after cleaning is fried and cooked whole or after cutting it into two pieces. Following is a Recipe for cooking 'Arā Guran'.

Ingredients :-

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|------------------------|----------|
| 1. Dried 'Arāguran', - | 250 gm. |
| 2. Mustard Oil, - | 2 tbsp. |
| 3. Red Chili Powder, - | 1 tsp. |
| 4. Turmeric, - | 1/2 tsp. |
| 5. 'Kānz', - | a cup. |
| 6. 'Varī Masālā', - | 10 gm. |
| 7. Salt, - | 1 tsp. |

Preparation :-

1. Soak the 'Guran' in hot water for half an hour then wash once or twice to remove adhering sand etc., if any.

Method of Cooking :-

1. In a steel 'Kadhānī' fry a little, on medium heat, the prepared 'Guran', in Mustard oil. Add a cup of water, Red Chili Powder, Turmeric and the Salt. Let cook for 15 minutes.
2. Add a cup of 'Kānz'. Sometimes Tamarind pulp is used instead of 'Kānz'. Add crushed 'Varī Masālā'. Serve with Plain Cooked Rice.

'KĀNZ', (or 'Sadṛā Kānz').

The surplus rice water (K. 'ANIMĀ') obtained from decantation of rice cooked daily as a staple in Kashmirī homes, some years ago, was usually used for preparing 'Kānz'. In a 'Dēg', a big baked clay pot, this starchy liquid, was collected, and a handful of Soya beans along with some 'Ajwāin' and Salt, were added now and then. Even left over cooked and raw vegetables were added occasionally. It got fermented, as the pot covered with a lid was kept near the fire place (K. 'Dān'), and the upper clear, fermented and pleasantly sour liquid, which contained Vitamins, Enzymes and Minerals, after boiling and spicing was mixed with Cooked Rice, before eating, or was used in cooking certain dishes. No doubt, it is a tonic, a carminative and also a healthy food. Even now, in some homes it is prepared, just as 'Kānjī' is made outside Kashmir.