

Lamb Rakka

Cafe Rakka, Hendersonville, TN

4 ounces coconut oil or peanut oil
4 to 5 Syrian black cardamom seeds
½ Tablespoon ground cardamom
½ Tablespoon ground cumin
½ Tablespoon coriander
4 cloves garlic, smashed
1 stick cinnamon
2 bay leaves
1 Tablespoon turmeric
¼ Tablespoon celery seeds
¼ Tablespoon ajowan
2 pounds boneless leg of lamb, cubed
2 Tablespoons lemon juice
Kosher salt
½ Tablespoon saffron (Syrian, if possible)
16 ounces tomato puree

1 cup milk
1 cup yogurt
2 ounces sour cream
4 dried figs, quartered
1 ounce dried sweet cherries
Fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish
Cooked basmati rice, for serving



Lamb: In saucepan add 2 ounces of coconut oil, 2 black cardamom seeds, ¼ tablespoon cardamom, ¼ tablespoon cumin, ¼ tablespoon coriander, 2 cloves of garlic, and ½ stick of cinnamon, 1 bay leaf and ½ tablespoon turmeric. Cook over medium heat to toast for about 2 to 3 minutes, then add the lamb, 1 tablespoon lemon juice and salt, to taste. Let it simmer for 20 to 25 minutes stirring occasionally. When meat is cooked, add the saffron and turn off the heat.

Korma: In medium saucepan add the remaining 2 ounces of coconut oil, and the remaining black cardamom seeds, cardamom, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, bay leaf and turmeric. Add the celery seeds and ajowan and toast for 2 to 3 minutes over medium heat. Stir in the remaining 2 cloves of garlic and the tomato puree, and mix well. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of lemon juice and cook for 10 to 15 minutes over low heat. Stir in the milk, yogurt, sour cream and salt, to taste. Cover the pan and simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour, stirring every 5 minutes, until the color turns bright orange. Add the figs and the cherries and cook for 1 minute. Stir in the lamb, cook for 2 minutes, then turn off the heat.

Add a few cilantro leaves to the bottom of each serving bowl and ladle in the lamb korma. Garnish with more cilantro and enjoy it with basmati rice.