

Japanese Curry

The History of Japanese Curry

- Japanese Curry started with the Japanese Navy adapted curry from the British Navy, adapted late 19th/early 20th century.
- The thicker, sweeter sauce became popular in Japan.
- There are now a huge amount of regional, culinary, and personal variants.

There Are Two Basic Methods Of Making Japanese Curry.

The most common method is the Roux Method:

- Flour, a fat (like butter), and curry powder are combined together (the Roux), and cooked in a pan or pot until browned.
- The roux is mixed with broth.

The lesser common method is to use a thickener like cornstarch and arrowroot:

- A small amount of broth is set aside and mixed with a thickener.
- The curry powder and broth are brought to a boil.
- When appropriate, the thickener and broth is added.

To keep in mind:

- The roux method seems to be the original method of making the curry – it's probably derived from common European methods.
- The use of thickener is a faster method as cooking the roux method easily takes twice as long as throwing things together.
- Roux methods usually result in richer tastes as the flavors blend together and various components cook and roast.

Almost no self-respecting cook of Japanese curry will do anything this simple. There's often a huge amount of other ingredients added to the curry!

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“Real” Japanese Curry Often Involves Many Ingredients And Variants

Popular Additions To The Roux Include:

- Soy Sauce or Worcestershire Sauce
- Tomato Paste Or Catsup
- Garlic
- Red pepper and/or black pepper
- Fruits, jellies, and similar components.
- Sometimes the roux is made from carmelized onions.

Popular Additions To The Broth Include:

- Fruits, jellies, or juices
- Wine (especially red wine)
- Spices
- Cream
- Coconut milk
- Sometimes other broths, like daishi, are used.

There Are Also Some Seemingly Strange Additions:

- Coffee
- Cheese
- Other causes like chutney.
- Powerful alcohols like rum or sake.

Ways To Make Your Own:

- Read books, recipes online and get personal recipes. These give you ideas.
- Take one curry recipe and slowly add/subtract to it so it evolves.
- Trying a completely different one now and then might help give you ideas.
- Never add or and subtract more than one ingredient per batch. In other words you may both add and subtract something, but don't, say, add two different ingredients unless you're experience.
- Don't tweak the amounts of two many ingredients at once – I'd say never more than two.
- Add ingredients to old batches to see how they affect taste.
- Write things down and keep a record!

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Making Basic Japanese Curry - Classic “Roux Method”

Ingredients

- 4 tbsp butter, margarine, or oil (or 2 tbsp organic peanut butter)
- ¼ cup flour
- 2 tbsp curry powder (preferably S&B)
- 3 cups of your preferred broth

Method

- Melt butter in a non-stick or iron pot on low heat.
- Mix in flour and curry powder.
- Cook on low heat, scraping and stirring, while it browns.
- When it gets a bit crumbly (but not dry) add the broth.
- Stir with a whisk and turn up heat until a simmer.
- Cook until it thickens and bubbles don't easily break the surface

Making Basic Japanese Curry – Easy “Thickener Method”

Ingredients

- 4 Tbsp arrowroot powder
- 2 tbsp curry powder (preferably S&B)
- 3 cups of your preferred broth

Method

- Set aside ¼ cup of broth. Add arrowroot.
- Add curry powder and broth to a pot. Bring to a simmer.
- Remove from heat.
- Stir the arrowroot/broth mixture and add to pot when it stops boiling.
- Sauce will thicken. Pour into containers or serve.

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Steve's Personal Healthy Curry:

The Roux consists of:

- 2 Tbsp organic, natural peanut butter
- ¼ cup oat flour
- 2 Tbsp curry powder
- 1/8 tsp red pepper powder
- 1/8 tsp black pepper powder
- 1 tbsp maple syrup
- 3 Tbsp tomato paste (about 3 oz)
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce (only one if you use store-bought broth)
- 2 Tbsp crushed garlic (6 cloves)
- 2 ¼ tsp cocoa powder

For The Broth:

- 2 2/3 cup vegetable broth (low-sodium)
- 1/3 cup red wine

To Cook:

- Mix all of the above ingredients into a mass in an iron pot or a reliable no-stick one. Warning – it will be sticky, but that decreases with time.
- Cook on low heat, constantly scraping the sides. Flatten the roux, let it brown, scrape, repeat.

- You want it to gradually turn a darker brown and gets a bit crumbly.

This is sometimes called “The fox.”

- Add the 2 2/3 cups vegetable broth.
- Add 1/3 cup red wine along with the broth.
- Turn up heat to a mild boil, stir constantly with a whisk, occasionally scraping the sides.
- When the bubbles take a bit of effort to burst out, you're done! Freeze it or serve!

For A Faster Version:

- Set aside ½ cup of broth. Mix in 4 Tbsp arrowroot.
- Put everything else but flour into a pot (you won't need flour) and bring to a boil.
- Remove from heat and when it stops bubbling, stir in the arrowroot mixture (you'll probably need to re-stir it before adding)
- It will thicken, then you can serve or freeze.

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Steve's "Fast And Full" Variant

A thick protein-packed curry thickened with beans and vegetables. Make 6-8 servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp onion powder or one dry-sautéed diced onion.
- 1 small butternut squash (about 2 pounds unpeeled), peeled, seeded, cut into cubes.
- 2 tomatoes, diced.
- 3 cups cooked garbanzo beans (2 14.5 oz cans)
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 2/3 cup red wine (shiraz and zinfandel are good)
- 4 tablespoons curry powder.
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp maple syrup
- 4 tablespoons soy sauce (If you use store-bought not-quite sodium free vegetable broth, use 2 Tbsp)
- 4 Tbsp crushed garlic
- 4 1/2 tsp cocoa powder
- 4 Tbsp peanut butter

To cook:

1. Place everything into a pot, bring to a boil, then simmer.
2. When the squash is soft, mash with potato masher to break it and the beans and tomatoes up.
3. Either puree with immersion blender or let cool and puree in regular blender.

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