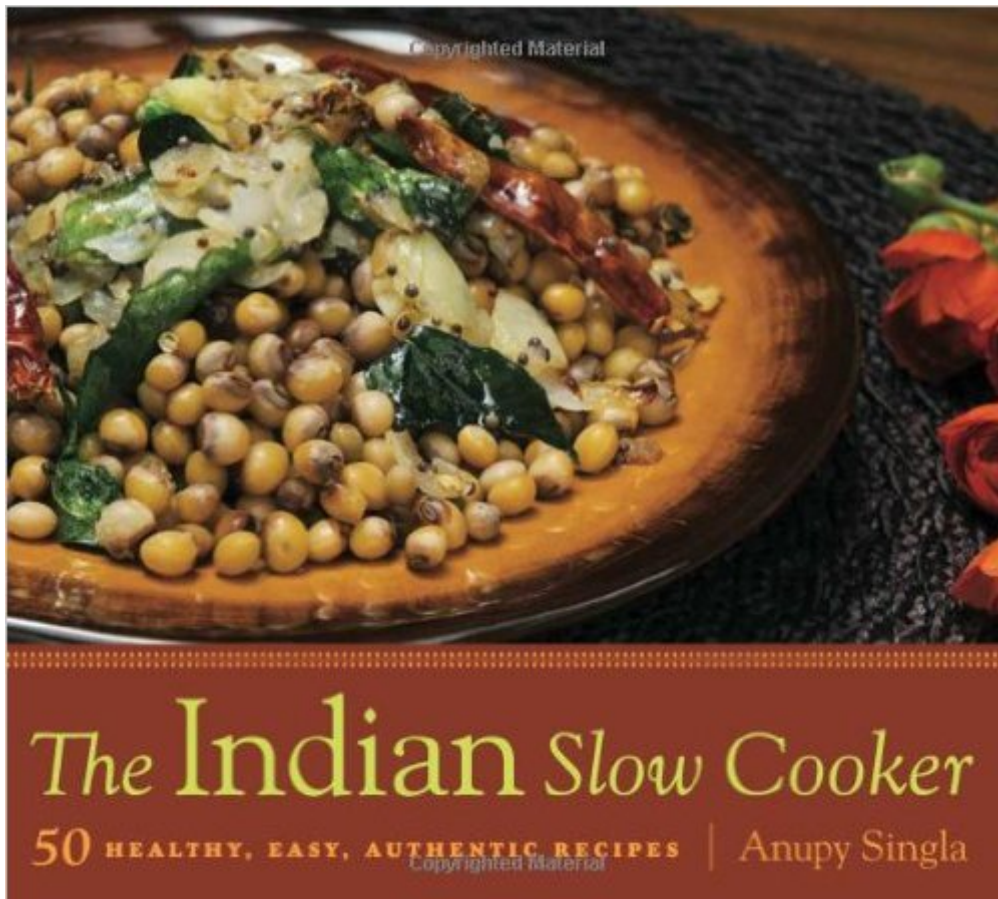


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The Indian Slow Cooker: 50 Healthy, Easy, Authentic Recipes



Synopsis

This unique guide to preparing Indian food using classic slow-cooker techniques features more than 50 recipes, beautifully illustrated with full-color photography throughout. These great recipes take advantage of the slow cooker's ability to keep food moist through its long cooking cycle, letting readers create dishes with far less oil and saturated fat than in traditional recipes. Anupy Singla shows the busy, harried family that cooking healthy is simple and that cooking Indian is just a matter of understanding a few key spices. Her "Indian Spices 101" chapter introduces readers to the mainstay spices of an Indian kitchen, as well as how to store, prepare, and combine them in different ways. Among her 50 recipes are all the classics — specialties like dal, palak paneer, and gobi aloo — and also dishes like butter chicken, keema, and much more. The result is a terrific introduction to making healthful, flavorful Indian food using the simplicity and convenience of the slow cooker.

Book Information

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: Agate Surrey (September 7, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1572841117

ISBN-13: 978-1572841116

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 9.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (395 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #50,892 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Asian Cooking > Indian #99 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking Methods > Slow Cooking #253 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking Methods > Quick & Easy

Customer Reviews

I'm an avid slow cooker, and I have cooked my own Indian food for a long time, even making paneer from milk. I've made many restaurant basics on the stove, both from my own recipes and from recipes in books. I've even improvised Indian food in my slow cooker, especially moong dal with spinach (adapted from Suvir Saran's Indian Home Cooking), Goan fish (which I loved at a restaurant and reverse engineered; coconut milk + homemade curry paste + frozen salmon fillets, and after the fish was cooked I reduced the sauce on the stove), and a coconut dal recipe (adapted from Mark Bittman's Best Recipes in the World) that entranced even my most carnivorous

friends. I've used this book to cook about 8 recipes and here's what I've found. Implicitly I am comparing it with my favorite slow cooker books, the "Not your mother's slow cooker" and "Not your mother's slow cooker for two", which I like because they have a balanced set of recipes and have clearly tried making them different ways: they specify when things need to be browned before adding to slow cooker, and say whether high or low is better for a given recipe. The 8 recipes I made are mustard greens and spinach, chana dal, green lentil and rice, dry dal, cauliflower, pigeon peas with garlic and lemon, and my boyfriend made the chicken vindaloo and chicken masala, and then made lamb vindaloo based on the chicken recipe.

Strengths:

1. Prioritizes spices: she says if you're going to buy 7 spices, which are the 8 you should buy. That wasn't a typo: she lists 7 of the crucial spices, and then adds an 8th, and then pictures of her crucial 7 spices include spice #8 while omitting another.
2. Some of the food is really good. I like the flavors of 5 of the 8 recipes we've made (disappointing ones discussed below). Other food others have liked, even though I haven't, like the cauliflower.
3. I like how conversational the book is, and that she mentions how the recipes fit into her life.
4. I love that she has vegetable recipes --- most slow cooker cookbooks don't cook veggies outside of root vegetables.
5. I also like that my boyfriend got really excited to see the book --- he wanted to borrow it the day it came and was really excited to make the vindaloo.
6. As with any Indian cookbook, most recipes are suitable for people with the most common food restrictions: few or no recipes use peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, shellfish, wheat, soy, corn, and most are vegetarian. Many are dairy-free and vegan. They use little sugar and starch, so are fairly low glycemic index.

Weaknesses:

1. Avoids some obvious short-cuts: Someone who is using their slow cooker will want other short cuts that don't compromise flavor, such as pre-ground spices, frozen spinach, and canned tomatoes. Is someone who is using a slow cooker also going to grind their own coriander or dip a single tomato in boiling water to peel off the skin before cutting it? I only grind my own spices when I'm making a huge batch of curry paste that will last me a year.
2. Logistics are off. She tells you to buy 8 spices, but so far I haven't found a single recipe that uses 2 of the spices with no other special ingredients. 1 lb of mustard greens filled my entire 6 qt crockpot leaving little room for the 1 lb of spinach and spices, onion, garlic, ginger that I was supposed to add afterwards. Thankfully I was using frozen spinach, but 1 lb of fresh spinach would not have fit.
3. She buys into the fat-free fallacy that it's better to make enormous quantities of fat-free food than moderate quantities of normal-fat food, so most of the dal/bean recipes are fat-free. On a flavor basis, that's a huge negative: flavor is less full, texture is more gummy, and the hot spices are harsher than if made traditionally in oil. (The only times I've ever seen people get chemical burns in their mouth from hot peppers were when they were in fat-free dishes, so I think there's a real change in the quality of

peppers when cooked in oil versus not.) On a health basis, it's also a huge negative. Fat-free food has a higher glycemic index than traditional food, so many people overeat when they eat fat-free food, and certainly they do not save calories.⁴ The recipes make enormous quantities. The keema recipe calls for 4 pounds of ground meat (vs. ones I found online use 1 lb at a time). Dal recipes use 3-4 cups of lentils. Why contribute to American epidemic of huge portions? She gives directions for halving the recipes, but it's distracting to do that for each of the dozen ingredients in a recipe.⁵ It's mostly legumes, with only 7 meat recipes, ~12 vegetable recipes, and no fish. Of the 7 meat recipes, she says a few aren't traditional, and three include dairy in a central role (e.g., butter chicken) so a given person might not even be able to use all 7 recipes without tinkering if they have food restrictions. (A little known fact: people with food allergies often rely extensively on Asian cookbooks because they avoid most common allergens. Normal people buy Asian cookbooks because they want to try cooking something new. People with food allergies buy Asian cookbooks because they can't eat half the recipes in western cookbooks.)⁶ She gives a single time for how long a dish takes to cook, but she doesn't explain how your choice of crockpot size affects that time. She gives 2 choices of crockpots (4 and 5 qt) for making the cauliflower, but gives only one cooking time (3 hours). I used a 4 qt crockpot and it was still crunchy after 3 hours; presumably the 3 hours was for a 5 qt crockpot. As I learned from "Not your mother's slow cooker", cooking time varies with how full a crockpot is, with fuller crockpots taking longer to cook. Similar experience with the dry dal.⁷ The first two recipes that I made were disappointing. Besides taking different amounts of time to cook than expected, the Aloo gobi (cauliflower with potatoes) was gritty with spices. You actually feel the vast quantity of spices as you eat it because there are tablespoons and tablespoons full of different spices. It's not a smooth feeling that you have from aloo gobi that you make on the stove. My guess is that the spices don't get a chance to dissolve into the oil. I served the aloo gobi to guests, and some of them loved it, and others weren't so excited, so it's personal taste. My boyfriend made lamb vindaloo, and there was the same thick grittiness from undissolved spices. My suggestion for the future will be to make spice pastes ahead of putting them in the slow cooker. The dry dal I made with urad dal, and it tasted raw after even twice as long as it was supposed to cook, and I didn't like the taste. And so I added water and cooked it overnight, and it still did not taste good. So I ended up with cups and cups of this dal that is barely palatable --- I ate a couple of servings, but threw 3/4 of it out, which I virtually never do. Maybe I just don't like urad dal, though, or maybe mine was old. Btw, one reviewer mentioned how expensive it was to buy the ingredients. If you can find an Indian grocery, they shouldn't be. I went to my local Indian grocery (Patel Brothers, which is a national chain), and bought the full set of suggested spices for my boyfriend, some extra

spices for myself, 4 lbs black chickpeas, and some other groceries, and my total was 25 dollars. And this is 7 and 14 oz bags of spices, not the small bottles from supermarkets. I'm glad that I have this book, but since I already have to tinker with the recipes such as by adding fat and halving the recipes, I think that I would have been better off with a good Indian cookbook and using the slow cooker whenever there's a long simmer time, as I've done in the past.

I have been waiting forever for someone to write a wonderful collection of Indian recipes for the slow cooker and my prayers have been answered! Anupy Singla has put together some lovely easy Indian recipes - where all you do is throw a bunch of easy-to-find ingredients in the slow cooker, set it and forget it for several hours! The recipes mainly focus on vegetarian ingredients but there are some lovely meat curries (with notes on how to make many of them vegetarian with soy crumbles or seitan). The fact that she has figured out how to make kheema (a ground beef and peas comfort-food dish) in the slow cooker (genius!) is worth the price of this book! I can't wait to make every recipe and will probably be making a batch of the "Wet Curry" every week to freeze and use for quick weeknight meals. Overall, I am thrilled with this book - it will let our family eat delicious and healthy Indian meals more often than we were able to before. Yippee!

I'll start my review by stating I've read all of the 1- and 2-star reviews here on .com before I prepared most of the recipes and I'll try and address many of the concerns noted there. I am a graduate student who loves to cook but who is often busy (or, at least, should be busy) studying and a slow cooker was a Christmas gift for me to allow me more time to study yet still prepare delicious, home cooked meals. In my search for "healthy" slow cooker cookbooks, I ran across this book and ordered it instantly as I love Asian cuisine. I'll admit, I lean more towards sushi, Thai, and Chinese than I do Indian (so, I'm no expert) but I've liked every Indian dish I've had previously in restaurants. Before writing a review, I decided to try a swatch of recipes from the book. Here they are (for what it's worth, in order that I made them): Traditional Chicken Curry, page 108 Rice Pudding, page 127 Punjabi Curried Kidney Beans, page 74 Spiced Cauliflower and Potatoes, page 91 Black Lentils, page 51 Many of the negative reviews stated the dishes were:- "too spicy" -- I didn't find this to be the case, at all. I went with the low end on the chilies (i.e. many recipes state 4-6 serrano peppers, I'd go with 4), often seeding/stemming at least one of them to cut down on the heat. If you don't like foods too spicy, but still want the flavor, I'd recommend using fewer peppers, or seeding/stemming them before adding them to the dish.- "too salty" -- the author *clearly* states upfront that she uses kosher/sea salt in all recipes. If you use table salt, she recommends cutting

the amount by half. As someone who never uses much salt in the preparation of his food, I've yet to find any dish "too salty"- "undercooked meat/veggies" -- I own a 6-quart crock pot, which is larger than the 5-quart crock pot the author uses in all recipes. As such, my cooking times had to be longer (though, not by much. maybe 30 minutes), as it takes longer for the heating unit and stoneware to get up to temperature. Nevertheless, I have *never* had an undercooked dish by simply following directions and adding a smidge more time. Again, the author clearly states in her introduction (as do *all* slow cooker cookbooks I've run across) that different units heat differently, and cooking times need to be adjusted accordingly.- "not authentic" -- this is one issue I cannot address, as I am not Indian nor did I grow up eating "authentic" Indian cuisine. However, each dish I have tried is tasty (as I'll elaborate on below).- "too many beans/lentils/non-meat recipes" -- while I bought this book on a whim, if you are purchasing books through .com, many of them allow you to view the Table of Contents before purchasing the book. I recommend doing that, should you be worried too many recipes won't suit your fancy.- "all the spices are the same in each recipe" -- I'll admit, this had me highly skeptical, as well. With almost every recipe using the same spices (turmeric, red chile powder, garam masala, cinnamon, ginger, serranos, cumin, coriander), I really thought the dishes would taste waaay too similar and I'd get sick of each recipe. Boy was I ever wrong! Each dish, while similar, has it's own unique, distinct flavor that is just wonderful! On top of that, as a graduate student, it's budget friendly, as I only need a few spices in the pantry to make a wide variety of dishes!Now, on to my food reviews:Traditional Chicken Curry: as this was the first dish I tried, I had high hopes (especially considering my apartment smelled fantastic for hours!). It came out very delicious and was easy to make. And much to my surprise, it tasted even better the next day!Rice Pudding: my least favorite of the five dishes I've tried so far. I made it twice, as I messed it up the first time, and I did like it better the second time. Honestly, I think I'm just not a huge cardamom fan and it was "too much" the first time. The second time, I used ground cardamom, instead of seeds, hoping to tone down that particular flavor. It worked, and I enjoy it much more now.Punjabi Curried Kidney Beans: let me state upfront I am not a vegetarian and almost every meal I typically make contains meat. Boy was I surprised how much I loved this...even more than the chicken curry! While I'm not a vegetarian, this cookbook may yet turn me into one! I was amazed how the spices and flavors created a wonderful dish that didn't even make me miss meat!Spiced Cauliflower and Potatoes: again, upfront, I hate cauliflower. Seriously! But, I was so pleased with the curried kidney beans, I decided to give this a whirl. Again, wonderful!Black Lentils: I am eating this as I write, and having never had lentils before, it is again delicious and I don't even miss meat. Truly a compliment!I've already gone to the grocery store to stock up ingredients for the next few dishes I

want to try...I've been eating nothing but Indian food since this book arrived and I can't say I'm sick of it! I also love that she gives the history of each dish, along with personal anecdotes about each. For me, it really helped bring the book/food alive. While everyone has a different palate, and different tastes, I can honestly say I have enjoyed every dish I have made. If you love flavorful, simple foods to make, I suggest you try this book.

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