



Let's Learn About Fenugreek Crackers!

Teachers, please review this insightful background info on Fenugreek (pronounced “feh-nyuh-greek”) Crackers/Methi Mathri (pronounced “may-thee mu-tree”) and share with your students in an age-appropriate way before eating the snack. Use the guiding questions to inspire discussion while your students enjoy the snack.

Note: High-school aged students will be receiving ingredients to make chai tea with a chai masala blend, jaggery sugar, and milk. Elementary students are going to receive a sensory exploration kit to smell, touch, and see the whole spices that go into the tea.

What is Hindu Heritage Month? Canada's first ever Hindu Heritage Month was celebrated in 2022 to recognize the positive contributions and rich culture of Canadians of Hindu Heritage. The Hindu festival of lights, known as Diwali, fluctuates in between October and November every year and is celebrated on Sunday, November 12th this year. Methi Mathri is a savory recipe often enjoyed on Diwali!



Food Memories: This recipe has been shared with us by Ankita Vaidya, owner of catering business *Simmer & Spice* (@simmer.spice). Ankita grew up watching her mother and grandmother cook for special occasions, which is a part of the reason she decided to move to Canada in 2013 and attend culinary school at Fanshawe College. Food has always been close to her heart and she has many fond memories of the smell of Methi Matri filling up the house around Diwali, where her mother would take almost five days to prepare snacks for the festivities! Ankita also reminisced about taking three weeks off of school to

celebrate Diwali, where she and other children would play with toys, eat snacks, watch fireworks, and admire the beautiful decorations. Now that she owns her own business, she shares these special memories with people through catering for events, teaching cooking classes, and on her podcast *Beyond Butter Chicken*, where she speaks about Indian cuisine, history, facts, and easy recipes!

Although the crackers we've made for you are baked not fried, Guest Chef Ankita Vaidya shared with us that fried food is typically eaten around Diwali because processed oils and refined flour were historically very labour intensive to make and considered a luxury to be savoured during times of celebration. Families would typically prepare for Diwali festivities many days in advance, with fried snacks being advantageous to serve to guests because they could be made ahead and stored out of the fridge. This holiday takes place leading up to the winter when it was a good time to consume extra fats.

Fenugreek Crackers/Methi Mathri: Fenugreek crackers are a staple in many Indian households and traditionally enjoyed with masala chai (tea), which will also be explored today. We used whole-wheat flour and baked these crackers in the oven, whereas traditionally this recipe would be deep-fried and made using refined flour. Ankita associates these crackers with festive times, as they would first be offered to the gods during Diwali as a thank you, and then offered to children. Fenugreek is a plant that has been incorporated into Indian cuisine for thousands of years, with its leaves having a slightly bitter taste, that when used in moderation is balanced out by the other flavours and ingredients in a recipe. Fenugreek leaves are commonly known as Methi leaves, giving these crackers the name Methi Mathri.

Ankita says that food is very fragrant in India and often uses locally-sourced ingredients and spices. Chef Ankita says that anytime she smells cardamom, it takes her back to memories of festive times. These flavourful crackers blend many common Indian spices such as turmeric, chili powder, coriander, and chaat masala. It also uses ghee (pronounced "gee") to combine all of the dry ingredients together. Ghee is a type of clarified butter that has been simmered for a long time, allowing all of the water to evaporate and the milk solids to separate. This process gives the ghee a slight caramel taste! In our recipe, we used vegetable ghee which is a vegan alternative.

Many of these ingredients can be found in the spice section of your local grocery store, as well as specialty Indian stores, and even through Chef Ankita's business, *Simmer & Spice!* McCormick Spices generously donated the spices we used in these crackers.



Guiding Questions

Grades 9-12:

1. Have you tasted fenugreek crackers or chai masala (tea) before? How were they different/similar? (if no one has, skip this question)
2. Have you tasted any foods that originate from Indian cultures? Discuss the flavours and the ingredients.

Examples: butter chicken, tikka masala, biryani, samosa

3. Does your family or household make any foods that have been in the family a long time? Are there any foods they make that you want to learn how to make yourself?
4. Do you have any special meals or foods that bring back good food memories when you smell or eat them? Share your food memories!

Grades 4-8:

1. Refer to guiding questions 1-4 for Grades 9-12 above, and refer to question 4 for FDK-Grade 3 below for the masala chai sensory exploration kit.

FDK-Grade 3:

Sensory exploration encourages the use of descriptive language instead of just saying “yum” or “yuck”.

1. What are our five senses?
2. Pass out crackers and before students take a bite, ask them one question at a time: How does it smell? How does it look? How does it feel? Encourage descriptive adjectives.
3. Have everyone take a bite at the same time, including teachers, ask students: How did it sound when you took a bite? How does it taste? Encourage descriptive adjectives.

4. Use your sensory kit to explore the whole spices used in chai masala (tea) using four out of the five senses. The kit contains green cardamom pods, fennel seeds, whole cloves, a piece of dehydrated ginger, cinnamon sticks, and black peppercorns. **Once teachers are familiar with which spice is which, remove the labels so that students can't see.** Pass around the tea bags of each spice and have students smell, look and touch them, while trying to identify which spice is which. After all the spices are identified, you can even have some students close their eyes and smell multiple spices one at a time to see if they can guess them right using only one sense. Discuss why or why not they could or couldn't identify the spices.
5. Do you have any special meals or foods that bring back good food memories when you smell them? Share your food memories!

Baked Methi Mathri (Fenugreek Crackers)

This recipe is put together by Chef Ankita Vaidya of Simmer & Spice. Traditionally these crackers are served with chai masala, and are a welcome addition to the Diwali table!

Yield: 24 - 30 crackers

Difficulty: Intermediate

Ingredients

2 cups whole wheat flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 ½ teaspoons ajwain (carrom seeds)
1 tablespoon white sesame seeds
¼ teaspoon hing (asafoetida)
2 tablespoons dry fenugreek leaves (kasuri methi)
1 teaspoon Kashmiri red chili powder
1 teaspoon cumin, ground
1 teaspoon coriander, ground
½ teaspoon turmeric
½ teaspoon chaat masala
5 tablespoons ghee, or vegetable ghee
½ - 1 cup water (use as needed)

Equipment

Cutting board
Baking sheet
Parchment paper
Rolling pin
Plastic wrap
Pizza cutter
Measuring cups
Wooden spoon
Fork
Bowls of various sizes
Dish towel

Directions

Get Organized!

Gather your mise en place; get together all of the equipment needed for the recipe and gather your ingredients.

Get Prepped!

Measure all of the dried ingredients into a bowl and mix together well.

Measure the ghee, and water separately.

Start to incorporate the ghee into the flour by rubbing it in between your fingers with the dried ingredients, until it is well combined. The ghee should be in small pieces within the flour, so that the flour seems crumbly.

Slowly add the water, starting with half a cup and bring the ingredients together either by hand or with a wooden spoon. Add water a couple tablespoons at a time until you can bring all of the flour mixture together to form a dough ball.

Transfer the dough to the counter and knead it well for five minutes. Cover the dough with a clean cloth or with saran wrap and let it rest at room temperature for at least 15 minutes.

Divide the dough into two halves, and roll the dough out, with additional flour if needed. Roll the dough as evenly as possible, to a thickness of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.

Transfer the dough onto the baking sheet lined with parchment. Using a fork, dock the dough all over by repeatedly piercing the dough with the fork to prevent the crackers from having large bubbles and allowing steam to release when cooking. Using a pizza cutter, cut the crackers into rectangles about 1 inch x 3 inches. If there are any scraps on the sides that are not quite rectangles, do not worry! Crackers come in all shapes and sizes.

Get Cooking!

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Bake the crackers for 12 - 15 minutes, until crackers are just starting to become golden. Be careful not to underbake them as they will not be crispy, and be careful not to overbake them or they will be bitter. These crackers will keep well in a sealed container at room temperature for up to 3 weeks.

Chai Masala

This spice blend makes the perfect cup of creamy chai masala. Make up a large batch ahead of time, and when it is time for tea you only need to add ½ teaspoon of this spice blend mixed together with tea leaves, sugar or jaggery, water, and milk.

Yield: Approximately 20 portions tea

Difficulty: Beginner

Ingredients

Spice blend:

¼ cup green cardamom, in pods

2 teaspoons green cardamom, ground

2 tablespoons fennel seeds, whole

½ teaspoon cloves, ground

2 tsp ginger, ground

½ teaspoon cinnamon, ground

½ teaspoon black peppercorns, whole

Equipment

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Bowls of various sizes

Medium pot

Fine strainer

Dish towel

For making tea (one serving only):

½ teaspoon spice blend above

1 teaspoon black tea leaves (we used caffeine-free)

2 teaspoons jaggery or sugar

¼-⅓ cup milk

Directions

Get Organized!

Gather your mise en place; get together all of the equipment needed for the recipe and gather your ingredients.

Get Prepped!

Measure all of the spices and place together in a sealed container like a mason jar.

Get Cooking!

To make 1 serving of chai, bring 1 cup water to a boil. Add tea leaves and masala spice blend; boil for 1 minute.

Add jaggery or sugar, and milk. Boil gently for another minute.

Strain the spices out through a fine mesh strainer, and serve warm.