

Aromatic Chilli Beef



Ingredients (serves 3-4)

- 2 dried pasilla chillies
- 1 dried mulato chilli
- 2 dried guajillo chillies
- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 black cardamom pods
- 4 cloves
- 2 whole star anise
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 medium red onions, sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- 3cm piece of fresh ginger, grated
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 2 tsp white wine vinegar
- 500g braising beef steak, trimmed of fat, cut into 3cm cubes
- 400g tin tomatoes
- 1 tsp brown sugar
- salt to taste
- fresh ground black pepper to taste
- ½ tsp garam masala

Method

First prepare the dried chillies. Slit the chillies open, shake out the seeds and cut off the stalks. Tear the chillies into strips. Heat a frying pan over a medium heat and drop in the chillies and allow them to roast for a couple of minutes or until they release their aroma. Stir them occasionally being careful not to let them burn.

Remove the chillies from the heat and tip into a bowl and pour over enough just-boiled water to cover and leave to stand for 20 minutes.

Put the chillies and some of the water into a blender or small food processor and blend into a smooth paste.

Put the oil into a large heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat. Drop in the black cardamom pods, cloves and cumin seeds. Fry gently for about 30 seconds then add in the onions and continue frying gently, stirring occasionally, until the onions are soft and translucent and slightly browned.

Add the garlic and ginger and continue frying for a minute or so until the raw garlic smell disappears. Stir in the ground cinnamon and turmeric, add the vinegar and cook for a further minute or so until the vinegar fumes mellow.

Stir in the blended chillies and stir to mix.

Add the beef and stir until it is well coated with the spice mix. Tip in the tinned tomatoes, breaking up the tomatoes with your stirring spoon. Stir in the sugar, add a little water, if needed the liquid should just cover the meat) bring to a simmer and reduce the heat to very low. Cover with a lid and leave to cook gently 2 hours until the meat is soft and tender. Check now and then to make sure it is not sticking to the bottom of the pan and give a little stir.

After cooking time is up, stir in the garam masala and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with plain steamed rice.