



NIHARI

Traditionally a Muslim breakfast dish consisting of beef bone marrow and trimmings cooked with spices overnight and served the next morning to labourers before they would head out for the day's work. Even today, the best version is to be found at Delhi's Jama Masjid where countless people queue up early in the morning to get a taste of this rich and hearty curry. Originally served with *double ki roti* (leavened bread), it is now served with sheermal, an enriched flatbread spiced with saffron & sesame akin to a naan but with the richness of a brioche. My slightly unorthodox version uses goat instead of diced beef but you can use either.

SERVES 6-8

INGREDIENTS

NIHARI

Beef bone marrow – 2 kg, cut into 1 inch pieces/rounds

Diced goat (preferably ex-dairy) – 1kg (or diced beef)

Minced garlic – 1 tbsp

Minced ginger – 1 tbsp

Onion, diced – 2 medium

Water – enough to cover the meat & bones

Masala

Fennel seed – 5 tbsp ground

Deggi chilli powder – 1.5 tbsp *

Kashmiri chilli powder – 2 tbsp

Salt – 2 tbsp

Ground ginger 1 tbsp

Grind these together

Black Pepper – 1 tbsp

Star Anise – 2 each

Ground nutmeg – ½ tsp

Mace blades – 3

Green Cardamom – 5 each

Cassia bark – 4 inch piece *

Bay leaf – 2

Caraway seeds – 1 tsp

Cumin seeds – 1 tsp

Cloves – 10

Long pepper – 4 each

Black cardamom – 3 each



SHEERMAL

Plain flour – 650g
Salt – ¾ tsp
Caster sugar – 1 tbsp
Cream cheese – 60g
Instant yeast – 2.5 tsp
Kewda water – 1 tsp *
Ghee – 3tbsp
Double cream - 3 tbsp
Egg – 1, medium
Milk powder – 4 tbsp
Saffron strands – 1 pinch
Warm water – 100ml

To finish

Sesame seeds
Melted butter

*NB: Deggi chilli powder – a mix of chilli powder & paprika, available on Amazon, redrickshaw.com or your local Indian spice shop.

*Cassia: Indian cinnamon – not as sweet as Ceylon/regular cinnamon. You can substitute regular cinnamon but if you can get cassia, nothing like it. Available from the above resources. Also known as *dalchini*.

*Fried onions – most supermarkets will have them in the world food section.

*Kewda water: available online or at your local Indian store. If you can't find it, feel free to leave it out.

TO GARNISH

Chopped coriander – 2 tbsp
Lemon – 1, cut into wedges
Fried onions – 2 tbsp *
Ginger, cut into thin strips/julienne – 2 tbsp
Red onion, sliced with a little lemon & salt – ½ onion

METHOD

Nihari is best started in the morning to have for dinner

First make the sheermal dough. Soak the saffron in the warm water for 5 minutes. Put all the ingredients apart from the sesame & melted butter in a bowl and mix to form a soft dough. Gently knead for a couple of minutes to bring it all together in a smooth ball. The dough will feel very soft and wet – this is completely normal and will firm up in the fridge.

Wrap the bowl and leave it in the fridge for 8 hours.

Grab a large heavy bottom pot and heat it up. Add a splash of oil and then the onions. Fry the onions on medium heat for about 10 minutes and then add the garlic & ginger and cook for another 5 minutes. Lower the heat and put a lid on.

Heat up a frying pan until it's smoking hot. Dry fry the bone marrow pieces – some of the fat will render out so you don't need to add any extra oil. Brown the bones on all sides and add them to the pot with the onions (keep the rendered fat in the frying pan).

Pat the diced goat dry with some kitchen cloth. In the same frying pan, sear the diced goat until browned all over. Remove to a plate/tray and keep aside. Tip any remaining fat into the pot with the marrow bones.

Add the ground fennel, ginger, chilli powders and salt to the pot. Stir and put a lid on the pot and cook on medium heat for 15 minutes – stir every 5 minutes or so. Pour enough water to cover the bones and bring to a boil. Let the pot boil for a couple of minutes before turning the heat down to medium and put a lid on.

Let this cook for an hour. After the hour is up, add the ground masalas and stir. Bring the mix back up to a boil and then turn back to medium and let it cook for another hour. Once the hour is up, add the diced goat and top up with water if necessary (the entire mix should be submerged). Put the lid on and turn the heat to low.

Cook for 3-4 hours until the goat is literally disintegrating and there is no more marrow left inside the bones. Remove and discard all the bones – if there's any marrow inside any of them, just shake it out. The curry should have a layer of rendered fat floating on the top – do not remove this. If the curry hasn't thickened, turn the heat to medium and cook a little more until thickened.

Adjust the salt if needed.

To make the sheermal, preheat the oven to 230c and place an oven tray in. Take the dough out of the fridge and knock down and knead for a minute. Divide the mix into 8 balls and gently roll out to 1cm thickness. Prick the surface of the dough with a fork and brush with a little milk and sprinkle some sesame on top. Carefully lift off the counter and place in the oven on the tray. Cook for 10-12 minutes until golden all over. Remove from the oven and brush with melted butter. Repeat until you've cooked all the dough.

To serve, portion the nihari in bowls and serve with the accompaniments on the side for everyone to add to their individual portions.