

Crab Chettinad Recipe

Ingredients: Serves 4-6

1.5kg soft-shelled or blue swimmer crabs
1/3cup coriander seeds
1 cup (250ml) vegetable oil and melted unsalted butter combined
1-inch cinnamon stick
3 green cardamom pods
3 whole cloves
1kg yellow (brown) onions, about 6 medium, chopped
1 teaspoon salt, plus extra salt to taste
2½ tablespoons grated fresh ginger
2½ tablespoons crushed garlic
4 teaspoons chili powder
4 teaspoons ground turmeric
1kg tomatoes, about 7 medium, unpeeled, finely chopped
1 cup (45g) chopped fresh cilantro (fresh coriander)
18 fresh curry leaves, torn into pieces
4 teaspoons crushed black peppercorns
steamed basmati rice, for serving

Method:

Remove large top shell from each crab. Remove fibrous matter from inside crab and discard. Rinse crabs well. Use a sharp knife to cut each crab in quarters. Set aside. In a spice grinder, grind coriander seeds to a powder. Set aside. In a large frying pan, heat oil and butter mixture over low heat. Add cinnamon, cardamom and cloves. Cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add onions and 1 teaspoon salt and cook, uncovered, stirring often, until onions are dark golden brown, 15-20 minutes. Add ginger and garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add ground coriander, chili powder and turmeric, and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add tomatoes and cook, uncovered, stirring often, until tomatoes are cooked and soft, about 10 minutes. Add crab and cook, covered, turning pieces occasionally, until crab shells turn red and meat is just cooked, 15-20 minutes. Use tongs to remove crab pieces to a plate. Add cilantro, curry leaves and peppercorns to sauce in pan, mixing well. Taste and add salt if desired. Return crab pieces to pan and turn to coat with sauce, then serve hot with steamed rice.