

Aloo Chat (Potato)

Serves 3 as a starter

Chats are traditionally served as cold snacks or salads but chat literally means "lick". Many chats are savoury but there are also fruit chats which are made by sprinkling chunky pieces of fruit with chat masala.

What all chats have in common is that they use chat masala. You can buy ready made chat masala at specialist Asian grocers (MDH is a reliable brand) or you can make your own from the recipe in this book. I tend to use my own chat masala these days as I can guarantee the quality and consistency of the spice blend.

Indian restaurants often have 2 chats on their menu – aloo (potato) and murgh (chicken). Some restaurants serve their chats hot, others serve them cold. How you serve yours is up to you but I prefer mine on the warm side. Serve with salad leaves for a light starter or on puri bread for something more substantial.

Remember to choose good **boiling** potatoes that don't break up on cooking. Using floury potatoes that are good for chips or roasting will result in a mushy mess!

ingredients

350g (trimmed weight) potatoes – use Desirée, Estima or another good boiling variety
2 medium sized tomatoes
1½ × 15ml spoons groundnut oil
1 × 2.5ml spoon crushed garlic
1 × 2.5ml spoon ground cumin
1 × 2.5ml spoon turmeric
1½ × 5ml spoons [chat masala](#) + (optional) a few pinches as a garnish
2 spring onions – thinly sliced
2 × 5ml spoons finely chopped fresh coriander leaves and thin stalks

special equipment

large karahi or wok

method

1. Peel the potatoes and trim by “squaring off” the round edges so you get something approaching a 6-sided block. Discard the trimmings and weigh to check you now have 350g of prepared potato. Slice the potato into 15mm cubes (the exact size and shape will vary but that’s what to aim for).
2. Bring a pan full of water to the boil and add the potato cubes. Return the water to the boil and simmer gently for exactly 7 minutes. Drain off the boiling water and plunge the potato cubes into plenty of cold water to cool thoroughly and firm up. Set aside, covered in cold water.
3. Put the tomatoes into a bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave for 3 minutes and then remove the tomatoes with a spoon and plunge them into plenty of cold water. When the tomatoes are comfortable to touch remove them from the cold water and pat dry with kitchen paper. Cut the tomatoes into quarters by cutting down through the stalk end. Take each quarter and gently peel off the skin and remove the pith and seeds. Now all you have left is 8 pieces of tomato flesh. Chop the flesh coarsely.
4. Heat the oil in a large karahi or wok over a medium heat.
5. Slide the crushed garlic into the oil, give it a quick stir and then after about 10 seconds add the chopped tomatoes.
6. Cook until the tomatoes have lost most of their moisture and are beginning to fry in the oil. Now add the ground cumin and turmeric and stir fry for 30 seconds.
7. Drain the potatoes of water and add to the wok. Sprinkle the chat masala over the potatoes and, **with a metal spoon**, stir the mixture very gently so as not to break up the potato cubes. Stir carefully until the potatoes are well coated with oil and spices.
8. Heat, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are warmed through. Omit this stage if you are serving the chat cold.
9. Serve warm or cold with salad leaves. Garnish each portion with sliced spring onions and chopped coriander. If you like, you can sprinkle a pinch or 2 of chat masala over the cooked potatoes to add extra spiciness.