

Aloo Tikki

(spicy potato cakes)

makes 6 potato cakes

I first had Aloo Tikki in Tamarind which is a *very* upmarket Indian restaurant in London's Mayfair. The Curry House had been invited to Tamarind to cover the launch of a new book by the best selling Indian cookery writer Sanjeev Kapoor.

After learning all about Sanjeev's new book the assembled press and book-trade people were treated to a selection of Tamarind's Michelin-starred food. Aloo Tikki were amongst the delights I sampled that day and I've been making my own version ever since because I enjoyed them so much.

There are many variations on the theme of Aloo Tikki. Sanjeev Kapoor's book, *Khana Khazana*, contains a recipe for Lehsuni Tikki which are rich in garlic and cashew nuts but my version more closely resembles those cooked by Alfred Prasad, the executive chef at Tamarind.

Aloo Tikki are ideal as a starter but they work just as successfully as part of a spicy buffet.

ingredients

250g (peeled weight) potatoes – use Desirée, Estima or another good boiling variety
2 × 15ml spoons sieved gram flour (this is the ground chana dhal used to make onion bhajis)
1 × 5ml spoon ground cumin seed
2 finely-chopped spring onions
3 thin green chillies – seeds and pith removed then finely chopped
a few good grinds of black peppercorns
salt (to bring out the taste you will need plenty)
1 × 15ml spoon finely chopped fresh coriander leaves and fine stalks

to fry the tikki

butter or vegetable oil (butter gives the best results by far)

special equipment

A large (28cm) non-stick frying pan
a broad-bladed palette knife

method

1. Peel the potatoes and cut them into even sized pieces. Don't make the pieces too small or they will break up when cooking – about the size of ½ an apple is fine.
2. Place the potato pieces in a large pan of boiling water. Bring the water back to the boil, cover the pan and *simmer gently* for 20–22 minutes or until the potatoes are just soft.
3. Drain the water off the potatoes and return the pan to the heat for a few moments to draw off any excess moisture. Remove the pan from the heat and mash the potatoes thoroughly with a potato masher. Try to get rid of all the lumps so you end up with a smooth dough (do **NOT** add butter, milk or anything else you normally put in your mashed potato – you want only plain mashed potato for this recipe).
4. Transfer the mashed potato to a large mixing bowl and set aside to allow it to cool.
5. When the mashed potato has cooled to room temperature add all the other ingredients to the bowl. Mix thoroughly with a fork until all the ingredients are incorporated into the mashed potato. Finally, use a spatula to scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl and incorporate any stray mixture into the bulk.
6. Now it's hands-on time. Knead the mixture by taking a handful at a time and squishing it through your fingers (you can't get more hands-on than that!). When the mixture is thoroughly kneaded divide it into 6 equal portions whilst still in the mixing bowl.
7. Take one of the portions of potato mixture and, on a flat work surface, shape it into a round, flat cake. Mould the sides of the cake so they are vertical and not sloping. Gently slide a palette knife under the cake and transfer it to a large plate.
8. Repeat the procedure for the other 5 portions of mixture so you get 6 Aloo Tikki in all.
9. Cover the plate with cling film and place it in the fridge for **at least an hour** for the mixture to cool down and firm up.
10. Take the non-stick frying pan and place it over a medium heat. Add enough butter or vegetable oil to generously cover the whole surface of the pan. Remove the plate of Aloo Tikki from the fridge.
11. When the butter/oil has heated up to pan temperature slide the palette knife under the tikki, one at a time, and gently transfer them to the hot frying pan.. Fry the tikki for about 7 minutes occasionally agitating the pan to make sure they are not sticking.
12. Gently turn over the tikki with the palette knife and fry the second side for another 5–7 minutes.
13. The tikki should now be golden brown and crispy on both sides. If either side needs a little more cooking just raise the heat a little to finish off.
14. Serve hot as a starter or as part of a buffet.