

Jhinga Kebabs

sweet and sour king prawn (large shrimp) kebabs

serves 2

medium-hot (or milder if you prefer)

I got the inspiration for this recipe from Sanjeev Kapoor's book Khana Khazana. Sanjeev is India's top TV chef and his books are always invaluable for new ideas because his recipes are authentically Indian rather than the westernised curry house adaptations that we're used to.

Sanjeev's recipe was for Jhinga Varuval which is crispy pan-fried prawns. I've altered the recipe to give it a taste reminiscent of the restaurant Patia and to make it suitable for grilling on a barbecue. The end result is hot, sweet and sour – a classic combination and my absolute favourite.

You can use either raw prawns which will be grey or ready-cooked prawns which will be pink. If the prawns are frozen allow them to defrost slowly until completely thawed. Raw prawns will need thorough cooking while ready-cooked ones will only need enough time to heat the prawns and cook the marinade. Don't overheat ready-cooked prawns or they will turn unbearably tough and chewy.

ingredients

225g jumbo king prawns (extra large shrimps)

1 fat clove garlic

25mm piece fresh ginger

1 × 15ml spoon ground rice

2 × 15ml spoons groundnut oil or other vegetable oil

2 × 5ml spoons lime juice

1 × 2.5ml spoon tamarind concentrate (double this for tamarind purée)

1 × 5ml spoon sugar

2 × 5ml spoons paprika

1 × 2.5ml spoon ground cumin seed

about $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a 2.5ml spoon of hot chilli powder for a medium-hot taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ × 2.5ml spoon turmeric powder

1 whole star anise

salt to taste (add only at the last minute)

special equipment

a hot barbecue grill where the charcoal has turned grey
kebab skewers (preferably double-pronged)
kebab rack (optional)

method

1. Take the prawns (fully thawed if previously frozen) and dry them thoroughly on kitchen paper.
2. Make the garlic paste by grating the garlic on the finest mesh of a grater. Discard any solid pieces you have left over. Otherwise use a garlic press and then mash the pieces with the back of a fork
3. Make the ginger paste by peeling off the skin and grating the ginger using the finest mesh on a grater
4. Add the garlic and ginger paste to a small bowl.
5. Add all the other ingredients, except the prawns, star anise and salt, to the bowl and whisk until thoroughly mixed and smooth.
6. Now transfer the prawns and all the whisked marinade into a bowl which will just fit both. Using a metal spoon gently stir the marinade so that it completely covers the prawns.
7. Poke the whole star anise deep down into the middle of the prawns so the marinade takes up all its flavour.
8. Refrigerate the prawns and marinade for at least 2 hours and preferably 4 hours or more.
9. When the marination is complete add the salt and stir to mix until the salt has dissolved.

10. Thread the prawns onto skewers leaving a clear gap between each one.
11. For raw prawns, grill at a medium height over the hot charcoal. Rotate the skewers regularly so the prawns cook evenly. Ensure that the prawns are thoroughly cooked before serving.
12. For ready-cooked prawns, grill at a medium/low height. Rotate the skewers regularly. Remember that all you need to do is warm through the prawns and quickly cook the marinade clinging onto the prawns until it becomes a thick coating with a few attractive charred patches.



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