



Dinner Party Recipe Pack

by MasterChef finalist Saira Hamilton

Here are all the recipes you'll need to create your 'Host at Home' dinner party for [#CurryForChange](#). Made together, these recipes will create the perfect menu for a **Bengali-inspired party for 8 people**. The recipes scale up easily for more guests, and most of the dishes freeze well if there are any leftovers. Your guests will be amazed at the big flavours and variety of dishes on display, and only you will know how easy it all was!

Read alongside the [step-by-step guide](#) to make the whole event run smoothly.

Welcome Cocktail

[Pommybellini](#) - Prosecco with pomegranate and cinnamon syrup

Amuse Bouche

['Saag paneer' tartlet](#) - lightly spiced spinach and cheese in a puff-pastry tart

Starter

[Seehk kebabs](#) - melt-in-the-mouth spiced lamb kebabs flavoured with fresh herbs, served with rocket salad and home-made yoghurt raitha

Main Course

[Chicken Jalfrezi](#) – a deliciously spicy curry enriched with roasted tomatoes, sweet peppers, courgettes and red onions and flavoured with fragrant coriander and green chilli

Side dishes

[Aubergine bhaji](#) – Chunks of spicy fried aubergine with cherry tomatoes sautéed with garlic and chilli

[Tarka dhal](#) - the classic Bengali lentil dish tempered with onion, cumin and lots of garlic

[Pilau rice](#) – steamed basmati rice flavoured with ginger, butter and onions

[Bengali salad](#) - cubes of fresh salad vegetables in a zingy citrus dressing

Dessert

[Baked Ginger Cheesecake](#) – a rich and creamy make-ahead dessert studded with crystallised stem ginger for an extra flavour hit



Get more recipes and inspiration at sairahamilton.com. You can watch her cooking on [YouTube](#) and follow her on [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#) @SairaHamilton and on [Facebook](#) as SairaHamiltonChef.

Saira's book Kitchen favourites with Saira: Chilli, Ginger and Garlic now available to buy on [Amazon](#).



Welcome Drink: Pommybellini

Ingredients

150g white caster sugar
150ml water
1 cinnamon stick
1 fresh pomegranate, seeds removed
80ml shop-bought pomegranate cordial
2 bottles Prosecco, well-chilled

Method

First make the pomegranate syrup. Place the sugar and water in a small saucepan and place over a medium heat. Heat gently until the sugar melts and then reduce the heat.

Add the cinnamon stick and around half of the pomegranate seeds (a good handful) Allow the syrup to simmer for around 10 minutes then take off the heat and allow it to cool down completely.

Strain the syrup through a sieve and keep aside in a jar or bottle until needed.

To serve the pommybellinis, add around a tablespoon of the cinnamon pomegranate syrup in the bottom of a champagne flute or coupe. Then add a little dash (around ½ tbsp) of the pomegranate cordial and finally add a few of the reserved pomegranate seeds. Top up with well chilled Prosecco and serve.



Amuse bouche: Spinach and cheese tarts with garlic crisps

Ingredients

1 pack ready-rolled puff-pastry
½ tbsp cold-pressed rapeseed oil
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
½ tbsp red chilli, finely chopped
¼ tsp turmeric

½ tsp whole cumin seeds
150g fresh spinach, chopped
50g feta cheese
75g mozzarella cheese
salt and pepper to taste
1 egg yolk, beaten

Method

First make the filling for the tarts, which needs to be cold before you begin to construct. Set a frying pan over a medium heat, and when the pan is warm, add in the rapeseed oil and gently fry the chopped garlic and red chilli for 2-3 minutes. Add in the turmeric and cumin seeds and fry for another minute. Then add in the chopped spinach and turn over in the spiced oil for around 3 minutes until wilted. Set aside in a sieve to cool to ensure any excess moisture drains away.

Crumble or chop the feta and cut the mozzarella into small (1 cm) cubes.

Pre-heat the oven to 200°C (190°C fan oven). Use an 4cm round cutter cut out 8 circles of pastry. Tip: If you don't have cutters, you can make square tarts by cutting 4cm squares.

Lightly score an area 1.5 cm inside the pastry shape, try not to cut all the way through. If you have used the cutters, use a slightly smaller cutter to do this job. Then use a fork to prick the inside area 3-4 times. Place the pastry shapes onto a lightly oiled baking tray.

Place little piles of the cooked, cooled and drained spinach into the centre of the tarts, then place the cubes of cheese on top. You'll probably need 2-3 pieces of each cheese. Use a pastry brush to apply the beaten egg yolk to the edges of the tarts before placing into the hot oven for 9-10 minutes.

The tarts should be golden brown on the edges and the pastry must be cooked and lightly golden on the bottom. If it isn't completely cooked, return the tarts to the oven for another couple of minutes.

Serve the tarts either warm or cold displayed on some lambs lettuce or rocket leaves.



Starter: Seehk Kebabs with Coriander Raitha

Ingredients

600g minced beef or lamb (or mixed)
2 tsp garam masala
½ tsp turmeric
1½ tsp cumin
1½ tsp coriander
1 tsp chilli powder
1 tsp salt
1 red onion finely diced
5 cloves garlic, crushed
1 tbsp fresh ginger, finely chopped or grated
2 green chillies, finely chopped
big handful of chopped coriander (or mint and parsley)
1 egg, beaten
40-50g breadcrumbs
zest and juice of half a lemon

Method

Place the minced meat in a large mixing bowl, and add in all the other ingredients. Mix together really well, with hands is always best!

If you can leave the mixture to develop the flavours for an hour or two, the resulting kebabs will be better. If the mix feels too wet, add more breadcrumbs. If it is too dry you may need to add more egg.

Divide the mixture into 16 equal portions, by dividing the mixture in half and then had again until you end up with 16 balls of kebab mix. Take each portion and roll firmly between your palms into a long sausage shape; wet your hands between each ball for a smooth finish. Press the mixture together well whilst shaping the kebabs to ensure you have a good texture to the finished product.

Recipe continues on next page...

Seehk Kebabs continued...

Once formed, cover with cling film and allow the kebabs to rest in the fridge until you are ready to cook them (at least 30 minutes).

When you are ready to cook, or so. In the meantime, pre-heat your oven to 180°C (170°C fan). Heat a frying pan until it is hot. Add in a tiny amount of oil, then carefully place the kebabs and fry each surface until they have a good caramelised colour on each side. It should only take 3-4 minutes at most. Don't overcrowd the pan, you may need to cook these kebabs in 2 or 3 batches.

Transfer the kebabs to an oven tray and finish the cooking in the oven for 6-8 minutes. Always test to check the meat is cooked all the way through before eating. If they need longer put them back in the oven until they are done. Serve with fresh coriander raitha.

Coriander Raitha

Ingredients

1 big bunch fresh coriander (around 100g)
1 tsp sea salt
2 tsp caster sugar
1 garlic clove
1 birds-eye green chilli, with seeds
300g natural yoghurt

Method

Chop all the fresh ingredients roughly, and then place all the ingredients except the yoghurt in a blender. Always use the stalks and leaves of the coriander as the stalks contain most of the flavour. Blend the mixture well, scraping down the sides of the blender as necessary.

Once you have a rough, bright green paste add in the yoghurt.

Blend again for short time (10-15 seconds) until you have a bright green sauce of pouring consistency. Taste the mixture and adjust the salt or sugar to your personal taste.



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Main Course: Chicken Jalfrezi

Ingredients

6 tbsp vegetable oil
2 onions, finely chopped
6 cloves garlic, crushed
1½ inches ginger, finely chopped / grated
1 tbsp tomato purée
1 tsp sugar
200ml water
1 kg boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 3-4 cm pieces
3 bell peppers green, red and yellow – cut into thick slices
2 courgettes – halved, then sliced thickly
2 red onions – halved and cut into thick slices
2-3 large mild red chillies cut into slices
100g baby plum or cherry tomatoes
1 tbsp rapeseed / sunflower oil
big pinch of sea salt
Big handful of fresh coriander, chopped

Spices

Whole spices – 4 cardamom pods, 1 cinnamon stick (or cassia), 2 bay leaves
Ground spices – ½ tsp turmeric, 1½ tsp chilli powder, 1½ tsp sweet paprika, 1½ tsp coriander, 1½ tsp cumin, ½ tsp garam masala, 1 tsp salt

Recipe continues on next page...

Chicken Jalfrezi Method

Prepare all your spices in advance; ginger and garlic in one bowl, whole spices in another, ground spices in a third. It will stop things going wrong later! Heat the oil in a large saucepan, on a medium to high heat. When the oil is hot, add in the chopped onions. Cook the onions for at least 10-15 minutes until they are a bronzed brown. Tip: Be patient or the final result will be pale and pasty looking!

Then add in the whole spices (tear the bay leaf) and fry for a further minute, until you can smell their fragrance. Add in the ground spices and fry for at least 30-40 seconds, stirring all the time to prevent burning.

Now add in the garlic and ginger pastes, tomato puree and sugar and fry for at least another 90 seconds or so. Then add in approximately a cupful of water (200ml). At this point the spice-mix will bubble furiously. Keep cooking, stirring continuously, until most of the water has evaporated, and you are left with a shiny looking curry paste in the pan.

Now, with the heat still high, add in the chicken pieces. Turn it over occasionally but keep the heat up for at least 5-6 minutes until the pieces are sealed all over. Wait until the pan is bubbling nicely before reducing the heat. Reduce the heat to a healthy simmer and cover. Cook for about 30-35 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Whilst the chicken is cooking, prepare the vegetables. Preheat an oven to 220°C (200°C for a fan oven). Place them all in a shallow baking tray, drizzle with the rapeseed oil and season with sea salt. Toss the vegetables until they are all covered with oil and place in the oven for 25-30 minutes until the vegetables are cooked through and with browned edges.

Add the roasted vegetables to the chicken along with the chopped coriander and stir until well combined.



Main Course: Aubergine Bhaji

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, sliced finely
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced finely
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 large aubergines (or 10 small aubergines)
- 150g cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1-2 green chillies, cut in half lengthways
- handful of finely chopped fresh coriander

N.B. You will need a good size frying pan with a lid that fits.

Method

In the frying pan, fry the onions for a couple of minutes then add the garlic. Cook until the onion is fully translucent and is starting to just brown at the edges.

Wash the aubergines and cut into thick slices and then cubes of about 2 cm.

Sprinkle in the spice mix and allow to cook gently for at least a minute. Then add in the aubergine cubes and stir well to coat every piece. When the pan is back up to heat, add a splash of water (around 3 tbsp / 50 ml) and put the lid on. Cook for 5 minutes with the lid on.

Remove the lid, add in the cherry tomatoes and the green chilli. Stir well to mix. Cover again and cook for another 8-10 minutes until the aubergine is soft and cooked through.

Then uncover the pan and cook on a medium-high heat until the bhaji is quite dry, and any excess liquid has evaporated. Garnish with the chopped coriander and serve.



Main Course: Tarka Dhal

Ingredients

400g red split lentils
600ml water
½ tsp turmeric
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp salt

1 green chilli
1 small onion, sliced finely
4/5 cloves garlic, sliced finely
3 tbsp vegetable oil
Small bunch of coriander, chopped

Method

Wash the lentils well in a large bowl covered in plenty of water. Give it a really good swish around with your hands (anyone who has done one of my cookery masterclasses will know exactly what I mean!) and then tip out the excess water which will have turned cloudy. Be careful not to lose all your lentils with the water - use a sieve if you have butterfingers. Repeat this process at least 3 times. Add 600ml plain cold water to the washed lentils in a large saucepan. Don't add anything else! Put on to a high heat, uncovered, and bring to the boil.

You have to hang around and wait for the water to boil. As it does a nasty looking whitish scum will rise to the surface. Once the scum has risen (doesn't that sound lovely?) take the pan off the heat and remove the scum with a slotted spoon. Put the lentils back onto a medium-low heat until it is simmering gently. Then just wait, be patient it will take about 20 mins, until the lentils are cooked through and very soft and squidgy.

Once cooked stir the lentils briskly, you can use a hand whisk to get a smoother texture, or just a wooden spoon will do just as well. Now you can add the spices, the bay leaf and the green chilli. Let the dhal continue to simmer gently, if the dhal is too thick and starts to catch on the bottom on the pan, add more water from a recently boiled kettle. You are looking for the consistency of a thick soup.

Meanwhile in a separate pan, a small frying pan is best, add the oil and onions and garlic and fry on a high heat. This is called 'tempering'. When the onion and garlic are nicely browned, pour the whole lot including oil in to the dhal and stir to mix. Throw in the coriander and the dhal is done. Enjoy with plain rice or a freshly made roti.



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Main Course: Pilau Rice

Ingredients

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| 1 small onion, sliced finely | 1 tsp salt |
| 1 tbsp cold-pressed rapeseed oil | 1 tbsp ginger paste |
| 2 tbsp ghee or clarified butter | 450g basmati rice, washed and dried |
| 2-3 pieces of cassia bark or 1 cinnamon stick | 900ml boiling water |
| 4-5 cardamom pods | Optional - crispy fried onions to garnish |
| 2 bay leaves | |

Method

Wash the rice in plenty of cold water and repeat at least 3 times. Dry the rice well in a sieve or spread over a large tray. Tip - it's important not to leave the rice grains wet for too long as they can break and turn mushy when finally cooked.

In a large saucepan, melt the ghee and oil together. Fry the finely sliced onions over a medium heat until really brown and crispy.

Add in the whole spices and stir in the oil for a few seconds until you can smell the aromas coming from the spices. Add in the rice grains, the ginger, salt and fry gently for at least 3-4 mins, stirring carefully and constantly, ensuring all the grains are well coated with the spiced butter.

Add in the water and stir well to combine and release any grains or spices stuck to the bottom of the pan. Bring the pan back to the boil then reduce the heat to the barest simmer, cover and cook for 15 mins with the lid on.

Turn off the heat and allow the rice to rest, still covered with the lid for 10 minutes. After the resting time, fork through the rice gently, and garnish liberally with the crispy fried onions before serving.



Main Course: Bengali Salad

Ingredients

- ½ iceberg lettuce or 1 Romaine or Cos heart
- ½ cucumber, finely sliced
- 3 salad tomatoes, halved then sliced
- 1 carrot, peeled and finely sliced
- 1 small red onion, finely sliced
- 2 tbsp finely chopped coriander
- 2 green chillies, finely sliced (optional)
- Juice of half a lemon
- ½ tsp salt
- 3 tbsp cold-pressed rapeseed oil (or any salad oil)

Method

Place all the chopped salad vegetables in a serving bowl and toss together to combine well.

Whisk together the lemon juice, salt and oil thoroughly and drizzle all over the salad just before serving. Make sure the salad is mixed really well with the dressing to ensure the best flavour.

Meanwhile in a separate pan, a small frying pan is best, add the oil and onions and garlic and fry on a high heat. This is called 'tempering'. When the onion and garlic are nicely browned, pour the whole lot including oil in to the dhal and stir to mix. Throw in the coriander and the dhal is done. Enjoy with plain rice or a freshly made roti.



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Dessert: Baked Ginger Cheesecake

Ingredients

200g ginger biscuits
½ tsp powdered ginger
75g melted butter
400g full-fat cream cheese
250g ricotta
2 tbsp plain flour
175g caster sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract, or seeds from one vanilla pod
2 large eggs, plus 1 yolk
30g crystallised ginger, chopped finely
optional garnish - icing sugar and berries to decorate

Method

Preheat the oven to 170°C, fan oven at 160°C.

Melt the butter in a small pan or the microwave. Crush the biscuits to a fine crumb either in a food processor using the pulse button or in a plastic bag with a rolling pin. Then mix with the powdered ginger for an extra kick. Pour in the butter and stir well to combine.

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Baked Ginger Cheesecake continued...

Press the crumb into the base of a greased and lined loose-bottomed cake tin (20cm diameter). Bake the base in the oven for 5 minutes, remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.

Mix all the remaining ingredients except the crystallised ginger, ideally with an electric whisk or food mixer until very well combined and creamy. Pour carefully over the buttery biscuit base as the mixture is quite liquid and you don't want to disturb the crumbs.

Chop up the crystallised ginger finely, then scatter over the cheesecake mix so that it is evenly distributed.

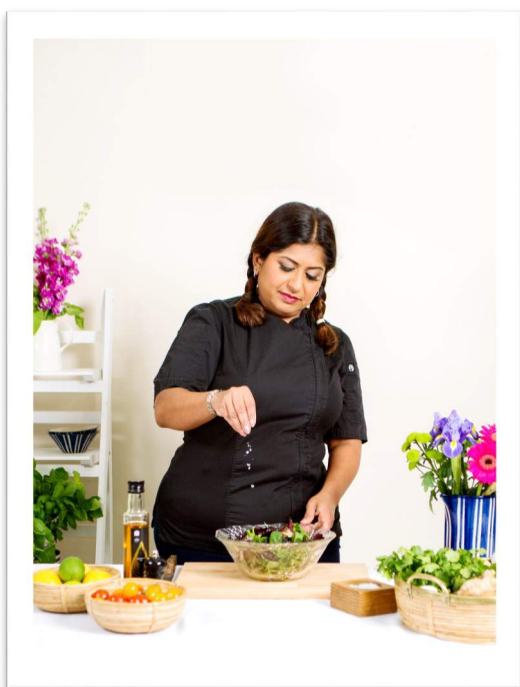
Bake the cheesecake for 35-40 minutes; check the bake after 35 minutes. It should be lightly golden on the top and be set around the edges but with a slight wobble in the centre. If it needs a little longer bake for a further 5 minutes. Allow to cool completely before serving.

The cheesecake can be served just as it is, or to dress it up a little, sift some icing sugar over the top and decorate with berries such as strawberries, raspberries, blackberries or redcurrants.

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About the chef...



Saira is a chef and food writer best remembered as a finalist in MasterChef 2013. She won high praise from judges John and Gregg for her Bengali-inspired food. Saira was inspired by MasterChef to leave behind a 20 year career in law enforcement and embark on her dream of a new vocation in food, launching her catering company 'small aubergine'. Saira cooks for private clients all over the country, hosts supper-clubs and chef residencies and runs cookery masterclasses at several venues.

Saira's first cookbooks '[Kitchen Favourites with Saira: Chilli, Ginger and Garlic](#)' were published in February 2016. Saira is currently working on a new book of authentic Bangladeshi cuisine (Anness Publishing) due to be released in March 2018.



Get more recipes and inspiration at sairahamilton.com. You can watch her cooking on [YouTube](#) and follow her on [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#) @SairaHamilton and on [Facebook](#) as SairaHamiltonChef.

Saira's book Kitchen favourites with Saira: Chilli, Ginger and Garlic now available to buy on [Amazon](#).