

Durga Devi's Favourite Foods

Jai Mata Di ... All glories to our awesome and merciful Divine Mothers...

Many have requested us at Dipika to compile an article on Devi's favourite food offerings. For example - what does Devi like to eat and drink? The information provided below is procured from the Devi Bhagavatam. As Vaishnava's (devotees of Lord Vishnu) main shastra is the Srimad Bhagavatam (18 000 verses), the Shaivite's (devotees of Lord Shiva) main shastra is the Shiva Purana (24 000 verses) thus the Shaktavite's (devotees of the Mother) main shastra is the Devi Bhagavatam. The information given below is from the 18th and 24th chapters of the Devi Bhagavatam.

Firstly we at www.dipika.org.za are extremely humbled that our Devi's have allowed us to compile an article of this nature and gather information which has never been researched at this depth before. We thus humbly dedicate this article to the sacred lotus feet of all our Divine Mothers esp. to Srimati Durga Devi and Srimati Sarasvati Devi. JAI MATA DI.

Do note: We have provided the appropriate verses but the main topics viz. {1}, {2} etc are explained from page 2 onwards in great detail... This a lengthy article of 24 pages. The reason for a picture to accompany each number is to make sure you understand what I'm trying to relay to you. For example #14 is about the Barley (Apupa) Cake, I have provided the recipe but the end product of the cake should look like the picture of the recipe provided.

Srimad Devi Bhagavatam 8th book chapter 24 "On the worship of the Devi"

Lord Narayana (a.k.a Lord Vishnu) said:- O Devarsi Narada the worshipper is to offer cake flour {1} to Devi. The worshipper is to offer plantains to Devi. The Lord said it is a rule to give an offering of {2} Payasam (Sweet Rice, known as Devi Payasa). Lord Narayana said the Mother becomes very pleased when one offers to Her the following items:- {3} Gur (a form of sugar); {4} honey, ghee, milk, curd, gur (Panchamrit), {5} Takra (butter-milk), {6} apupa (barley cake), {7} fresh butter, {8} Karkati (cucumber), {9} Kushmanda {10} Modaka (is a sweet dumpling), {11} Panasa (jack-fruit), {12} Plantains {13} Jambu Fruit {14} Mango, {15} Sesamum (Sesame) seeds, {16} Oranges, {17} Anar (pomegranate), {18} Badari {19} Dhatri fruit (Amla/Amalaki), {20} Payasa {21} Prithuka (Poha), {22} gram (pulses), {23} coconut, {24} Jambira (lemon/lime citrus fruits), {25} Kaseru (a.k.a Singhada, water chestnut), and {26} Surana (Yam).

Srimad Devi Bhagavatam The 11th Book chapter 18 called "The greatness of Devi Puja".

Narada spoke:- O Bhagavan! I'm now very eager to hear the special Puja of Shree Devi." Lord Narayana said:- O Devarsi! I shall now specially speak to you how Mother Bhagavati (another name for Mother Durga) is worshipped. Offer Devi Dhoopa (incense/agarbatti) made of {27} Black Aguru (aloe wood/eagle wood), {28} Camphor, {29} Sandalpaste, {30} Red sandalpaste, {31} Sihlaka (Lobhaan/samarani/oriental sweet gum) and {32} Guggula (Gugul), saturated with ghee in such a way as the whole room of Shree Bhagavati scents with pure fragrant smell. The Devi Bhagavati becomes pleased. The devotee, who offers daily the light of camphor to the Devi, goes to the Surya Loka (The Sun Realm). The devotee should offer heaps of {33 – VIEW BELOW THE SETTING ON THESE ITEMS} food consisting of six Raasas (Tastes viz pungent, bitter, spicy, sweet, **salty**, and astringent), the plates and dishes for chewing, sucking, licking and drinking, that is, all kinds of food solid, and liquid, mountain-like high. Always give food on golden (if possible) flat plates and cups and various delicious sweet juicy nice heavenly fruits {34} (like pomegranate or apple, grape, orange, coconut juices to name a few), nicely arranged on trays, cups and saucers. When Shree Mahadevi Bhuvaneshvari gets pleased, the whole universe gets pleased. Offer Devi a jar

(lota/chumbhu) of drinking Ganga (Ganges) water, cool and nice, scented with camphor to Devi; then offer betels (leaf and nut) with camphor, cardamom (elachie), cloves, and various delicious scents. These all are to be offered with great devotion so that Devi will be pleased. Next have {35} music with lovely flutes and (percussion instruments like) mridangas, murajas, dhahkas and dundubhis to please Devi. The Vedic mantras are to be recited, the Puranas are to be read and the hymns to be chanted. Devi is pleased with anybody who remembers Her even once! What wonder then that She will be pleased with all these offerings! The Mother is naturally merciful to her child. When She is loved with devotion, then She becomes very merciful. There is nothing strange here!

DO NOTE:- When preparing any offerings to Devi or to any Deity for that matter, I always strongly suggest that 1) one must (of course) have a bath and wear clean clothes, 2) talking is not allowed (one may cover his/her mouth with a cloth) as the saliva from one's mouth can easily enter into the offerings thus rendering the offerings soiled and unfit for Devi to consume), 3) no shoes should be worn (unless it's only used in the kitchen area), 4) when preparing offerings to Devi one should mentally chant (one should avoid chanting out loud – the only reasoning being that saliva could enter the preparations, and make them unclean to offer to Devi) Her mantras for example “Om doom durgaayai namah”, etc. as the vibrations one expends in the offering, Devi will be accepting.

{1} **Puri:- Ingredients:-** 1 cup wheat flour, about 1/2 cup water {some use cold while others hot} (or as needed to make a pliable dough, this may vary depending on the quality of flour), sugar and ******* salt (view below). **Method:-** Stir the flour in a bowl. Add salt and water - little by little - to the dough until it comes together into a pliable dough. Add little by little while kneading. You can also add 1 tbsp or so of the hot oil (that you are heating for deep frying) to the dough. The final consistency should not be too tight (dry) or too soft (wet). Knead it well until smooth. The dough should not be totally sticky (only lightly sticky) or feel dry in your hands. Make small round balls out of it. These will depend on how big a frying pan you have.

Tip 1: Do not let the dough sit. Usually for roti(s), the dough sits for some time which makes the dough very soft. But for Puris this rule does not apply. Letting it sit for too long makes it prone to soaking up lots of oil while frying. Hence use the dough immediately to make the Puris. Roll it out into small circles with thin-medium thickness. Don't make it too thin or else it will come out crispy. Repeat for all dough. Alternatively heat oil for deep frying. Do the “oil-temperature” test to see if it's ready. The oil should be hot but not too hot that it smokes.

Tip 2: Drop a small piece of dough into the oil. The dough should fry up immediately and come to the surface. You know the oil is not hot enough when the puri does not puff up and is flat and instead also it soaks up the oil. Now drop the puri into the oil. While the puri is slowly coming to the surface, make sure to keep ladling in the hot oil on the surface. This helps the puri to puff up. Turn it so that it gets evenly reddish brown or golden yellow (however you prefer). Place it on paper towel to drain off any excess oil. If fried correctly, it will retail very little oil. Serve it with side dish of your choice.

******* The issue which many will raise is the addition of salt, as most Hindu's know that salt is not added to the Puri mixture and Channa Dal. So why have I mentioned the addition of **SALT** in the Puri mixture and Channa Dal? Let me explain... When one performs a Durga/Devi Puja, one observes a saltless fast, many aspirants don't even drink water. So when one offers a Puri to the Mother, do remember Mata is not saltless fasting - rather we are saltless fasting for her. After the puja is completed and when one partakes in the Halwa Puri (which is given to the lady of the house first), thereafter she consumes that prashad, she breaks her salt-fast with the blessed salted Puri. So why are you hearing this for the

first time? Hmm I have no idea... Common sense and practicality should always prevail which many seem to be lacking these days. The Betel leaf is heart shaped hence it seems Devi is giving us a clue about something (of course this is speculation on my part but I am a Hindu that likes to do things differently and love thinking outside the box), so why not make the Puri the shape of a heart like the betel leaf. I do this to show my love to Devi. I'm sure she will be smiling because I'm preparing something that's really not done by most... I presume. The Chana Dal should be soaked overnight, and the next morning boiled until it's soft and then sprinkle some salt and add to the preparations. Most Hindus just soak the Dal and it's still very hard to eat, so if it's hard to digest for most then why are we giving Devi to consume this.

Do note:- In the recipes provided below GARLIC and ONIONS are named in the ingredients. Now many will not use Garlic or Onions as many will argue that it's not SATTWIC (mode of pure-ness) which it isn't. Garlic is a food (in the mode of Ignorance) and Onion is a food (in the mode of passion) according to Ayurvedic texts. So the onus is wholly upon yourself to use them or not. If you feel it's not kosher then by all means omit that in the ingredients. Do remember that we do have a choice.

{2} **Payasam** (Sweet Rice/Kheer – a preparation consisting of rice, milk, and gur {sugar}) known as Devi Payasa. How to make Payasam. **Ingredients:** 1 litre Milk (Full cream), 1/4 cup short grain Basmati rice (soaked for a few hours), 1/4 cup sugar + 1/8 cup more if needed, 1/4 tsp cardamom powder (Elachie), a few strands of saffron, 2 tbsp raisins, 2 tbsp almonds (Soaked for 4-5 hours) and pistachio to garnish in the end. **Method:-** Use a thick bottomed pan and add a little water (2 tbs). Adding water to the pan before boiling milk reduces the chance of the milk from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Add milk to the pan and boil it. After it comes to a boil add the rice. Short grain rice is preferable for use in kheer as they get mixed uniformly resulting in a thicker kheer. Soak the saffron strands in 2 tbs milk in a separate bowl. After giving rice and milk mixture a boil reduce the gas flame to low and let it simmer for 1/2 hour. Rice kheer should always be cooked on low gas flame. It tastes much better this way and there is less chance of it sticking to the bottom of the pan. Keep on stirring in between and after 30 minutes the kheer will be thick and rice grains would be very soft. Add sugar (gur), cardamom powder, saffron and washed raisins to the mixture and give it another boil. After 5 minutes switch off the flame. Let the kheer cool. Remove the skin of soaked almonds. Garnish the Kheer with pistachio and almond slivers. You can use almonds without soaking as well. (Do note pistachios and almonds are optional as these items are a luxury and expensive).



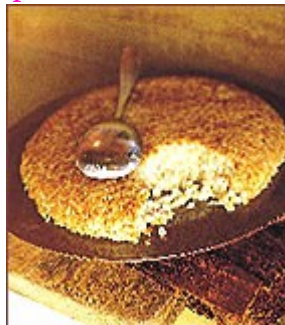
{3} **Gur** (a form of sugar), Jaggery is a traditional uncentrifuged sugar consumed in Asia and Africa. It's a concentrated product of date, cane juice, or palm sap without separation of the molasses and crystals, and can vary from golden brown to dark brown in color. Source <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaggery>



{4} **(Panchamrit)** Honey, Ghee, Milk, Curd (yogurt) and Gur. In a standard size cup add 3/4 cup milk, 2 Tsps of yoghurt (maas), 1 Tsp of Grated gur or Sugar, 1 tsp honey, a drop of ghee. Mix this well and that's your Panchamrit/Charanamrita. You can add some coconut water and cut fruits like banana, apple, pear etc. This is however optional.

{5} **Takra (butter-milk)**, Buttermilk refers to a number of dairy drinks. Originally, buttermilk was the liquid left behind after churning butter out of cream. This type of buttermilk is known as traditional buttermilk. Source <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buttermilk>

{6} **Apupa (Barley Cake)**, Parmesan Barley Cake (this savory barley side dish is a round cake with a layer of tangy Parmesan cheese in the center. To serve the barley cake, cut it into wedges or, for a more rustic approach, scoop out portions with a serving spoon).
Ingredients:- 8 cups water, 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, 1 medium onion, finely chopped, about 1 and 3/4 cups pearl barley flour, rinsed, 1 and a half cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese, salt and freshly ground pepper, 1/4 cup vegetable oil. Method:- Bring the water to a boil in a medium saucepan; cover and keep warm over low heat. Melt the butter in a large saucepan, add the onion and cook over low heat, stirring, until translucent, for about 8 minutes. Add the barley to the onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until thoroughly coated with butter, for about 2 minutes. Add 2 cups of the hot water and simmer, stirring often, until the water has evaporated, for about 10 minutes. Repeat the process with the remaining water, adding 2 cups at a time. Remove the barley from the heat. Stir in 1 cup of the Parmesan and season with salt and pepper. Spread the barley on a baking sheet, cover with plastic and let cool. Line a 10-inch cake pan with plastic wrap, allowing a 6-inch overhang. Using a rubber spatula, spread half of the barley evenly in the cake pan. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/2 cup of Parmesan and cover with the remaining barley; smooth the surface. Cover the barley cake with the overhanging plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, at least 4 hours or overnight. Heat the oil in a 10-inch nonstick skillet. Working quickly, unwrap the barley cake and gently lift it from the pan using the plastic wrap. Invert the cake onto an unrimmed baking sheet, discard the plastic wrap and slide the cake into the skillet. Cook over moderate heat until the cake is heated through and very brown and crisp on the bottom, about 15 minutes. Set a large serving plate over the skillet, invert the cake onto it and serve cut into wedges. Bake the cake prior to the start of the pooja as the cake can stand at room temperature for up to 4 hours. Rewarm in a 180°C oven.



{7} **Fresh butter**... This is self explanatory.

{8} **Karkati (cucumber)** ... Cucumber is part of the Gourd family. Read below (#9) for more information.

{9} **Kushmanda** is an Ayurvedic medical gourd where every part is used and is one of the most valuable plant/fruit in existence. Botanical name:- Benincasa hispida. English:- Ash gourd, White pumpkin, White gourd melon. Hindi:- Pedha, Kumherha, Bhalua. Sanskrit:- Kushmanda, Sreshtaphala. Other names:- Winter melon, white gourd, winter gourd, tallow gourd. A gourd is a plant of the family Cucurbitaceae.



Gourd is occasionally used to describe crops like pumpkins, cucumbers, squash, luffa, and melons. Gourds have had numerous uses throughout history, including use as tools, musical instruments, objects of art, film and food. The seeds of this fruit are flat and white in colour. The fruits of this plant are widely used for cooking in India. Many delectable dishes like peta, (a sweet dish), soups and curries are prepared using this fruit. According to texts of Ayurveda this fruit is very light to digest and sweet to taste. It cools the body and acts as a brain tonic. The Winter melon, also called white gourd, winter gourd, tallow gourd, Chinese preserving melon, or ash gourd, is a vine grown for its very large fruit, eaten as a vegetable when mature. The fruit is fuzzy when young. The immature melon has thick white flesh that is sweet when eaten. By maturity, the fruit loses its hairs and develops a waxy coating, giving rise to the name wax gourd, and providing a long shelf life. The melons are used in stir fry, soup or stew. In North India and Pakistan, the vegetable is also used to prepare a candy called Petha. In South Indian cuisine, it's used to prepare curries. In Ayurvedic remedies it's used to increase one's appetite and its fresh juice is used to cure kidney stones. The seeds are cooked in milk and taken to increase "sperm count" and to improve sperm locomotion. In India, Ash gourd is used to make a liquefied dish with curds or buttermilk.

Kushmanda stewed:- Just as the name implies, Stewed Winter Melon is mainly made of winter melon, a very healthy vegetable. It contains multiple vitamins and trace elements necessary for the human body. Being cold in nature, it is very helpful for supplementing the body fluid and clearing the stomach fire. It also can encourage the starch and sugar in human body to change into heat energy instead of fat. **Ingredients:** fresh winter melon, 250g. **Preparation:** Clean the winter melon after being peeled. Cut into thick pieces (if too thin, it will be burnt to a frazzle easily) and put into a plate. **Seasonings:** chopped ginger, chopped green onion, garlic slices, salt, wet cornstarch, soy sauce. Note: the amount of the seasonings listed above can be appropriately used according to one's personal taste. **Methods:** **Step 1:** Put the wok on high heat and add in 3/4 wok of water. Add in winter melon pieces when the water is boiling. Boil it for 1 minute until it turns soft. Remove it from the wok and put into a basin. **Step 2:** Use a small basin or dish, adding in some salt, soy sauce, chopped green onion and ginger, garlic slices as well as the wet cornstarch. Stir it well with the teaspoon for later use. **Step 3:** Pour away the water in the wok, and place the wok over high heat until hot. Add some cooking oil, swirling to coat sides. Add in the prepared seasoning juice from

the above step and stir-fry for 20 seconds until fragrant. Pour in the boiled winter melon pieces and stir-fry for 1 minute until the flavor is absorbed. Turn off the heat. Ladle the delicious Stewed Winter Melon out of the wok and serve it into a fine porcelain plate.

Kushmanda soup:- **Ingredients:-** 8 cups water, 750g winter melon, cut into small pieces, skin removed, white pepper, 1 honey date, salt to taste, dhania, a green chilli, fresh young curry leaves. **Method:-** Bring the water to boil in a deep pot. Add the winter melon and honey date. Continue to boil on medium heat for 15-20 minutes before lowering the heat to low. Discard the "foam" at the top of the soup. Keep boiling the soup on low heat for about 45 minutes or so or until the soup is full of the sweet flavor of all the ingredients. Add white pepper and salt to taste. Garnish with dhania, green chilli, fresh young curry leaves. If you like, you might add some more water and bring the soup to boil before serving.

Kushmanda curry:- **Ingredients:-** 3 cups Winter melon (skin removed and cut into small about 1/2 inch pieces, 4 small green chillies, cut length-wise, 3/4 cup water, 1 3/4 cup coconut milk, 1/2 tsp salt or per taste, 2 tsp oil, 1 tsp mustard seeds, 2 dry red chillies, each split into two, 4-5 fresh curry leaves. **Method:-** Remove the skin of the Winter melon and chop into pieces. Take a medium size cooking pot and add the Winter melon pieces in it along with the green chillies, salt and water. Cover with a lid and cook on medium to low flame for about 5-6 minutes until the Winter melon pieces are cooked and there is little water left. (You may want to check frequently to see if the Winter melon pieces have turned soft since we do not want to over cook them as they will turn pulpy). Turn the heat off and set aside. Extract the coconut milk. Take about 1 and 3/4 cup of the milk and add to the pot with the cooked Winter melon. Again start the heat back on and cook on low heat for about 2 minutes or until you see a couple bubbles in the coconut milk mixture. Immediately turn heat off and set aside. For the final tadka (oil tempering or garnish), take a small pan or skillet and heat the coconut oil in it. When hot, add the mustard seeds and once they start spluttering , turn heat to low and add the dry red chilli pieces and the curry leaves. Saute on low for about 1 minute more and turn heat off. Add this oil garnish over the cooked pumpkin and coconut milk mixture. Make sure you do not overcook the Winter melon pieces and make sure there is not much water in the pot before you add the coconut milk so that you get the desired thick consistency of the curry.



Kushmanda seeds:- They are edible but usually inadvisable to be eaten directly, instead they should be used in the form of decoction for better medical benefits. The seed is anthelmintic and anti-inflammatory. The seeds are boiled in milk and taken to increase "sperm count" and to improve sperm locomotion. Long term consumption of the seeds herb is inadvisable.

Kushmanda leaves and flower:- Young leaves and flower buds steamed and consumed in soups or curry. The flower added to batter should be fried in oil and served as fritters. Actually every part of the Kushmanda is edible, hence it's quoted in the Devi Bhagavatam as one of Devi's favourite dishes to be served to Her.

{10} **Modaka** is a sweet dumpling stuffed with a filling of coconut and jaggery. **Ingredients:-** 1 cup rice flour (chawal ka atta), 1 cup water, 1 tsp oil, oil for greasing, a pinch of salt. **For the filling:-** 1 cup grated jaggery (gur), 1 cup grated fresh coconut, 1/2 tsp cardamom, (elaichi) powder, 1 1/2 tbsp ghee. **Method:-** For the filling, in a non-stick pan, add grated coconut and jaggery and cook over a slow flame till the jaggery melts and the mixture comes together. Add the cardamom powder and mix well. In another non-stick pan boil the water. Add 1 teaspoon oil and a little salt in the boiling water and stir. Reduce the flame, add the rice flour while stirring continuously. Whisk well so that no lumps remain. Cover with a lid and keep aside for about 5 minutes. Grease your palms with a little oil and knead the dough while it is still warm; if the dough cools it will get lumpy, if it's not kneaded. You could even use a hand blender to knead the dough. Make even size small balls of the dough (2 inch in diameter) using oil. Then roll each of them into a round shape, 3½" in diameter. Make 8 to 10 folds in rolled dough with 1 cm distance in between. To make a fold pinch the outer line of rolled dough a little bit ahead making 1-2 mm thick fold. Add a spoonful of the filling into the dough. Bring all the ends together and press to seal. Prepare a steamer by adding water, a teaspoon of oil and heat it till the water comes to a boil. While the water is simmering, place the modaks on a greased steamer plate and steam for 6-7 minutes. Once the modaks are cooked they will turn translucent. Serve hot drizzled with pure ghee.



{11} **Panasa (Jack-fruit)** a.k.a. jack tree, jakfruit, or sometimes simply jack or jak is the largest tree-borne fruit in the world and a species of tree in the Artocarpus genus of the mulberry family (Moraceae). The jackfruit curry is one of the most popular curries served after a puja has been performed for Devi. Many are not aware that this vegetable is one of Devi's favourites. Ripe jackfruit is consumed as a a sweet delicacy. Ripe jackfruit arils (the skin that covers the seed) are sometimes seeded, fried or freeze-dried and sold as jackfruit chips. Jackfruit seeds are rich in protein. The fruit is also rich in potassium, calcium, and iron. Boiled Jackfruit seed is also edible. Seasoned with nothing more than salt, the seed is also fried and consumed. The seed starch is useful in relieving biliousness, while the roasted seeds are regarded as an aphrodisiac. The vegetable is boiled and then added to batter which is fried in oil and served as fritters. The wood of the Jackfruit tree is used for the production of musical instruments which we cover in later in this article. Jackfruit wood is widely used in the manufacture of furniture, doors and windows, and in roof construction and Buddhist statuaries in temples. Jackfruit is the national fruit of Bangladesh. The leaves of jackfruit tree are useful for curing fever, boils, skin diseases and in Shradha puja. When heated, they prove useful in curing wounds. What has been given above is just the tip of an iceberg in the greatness of the Panasa (Jack-fruit). Due to space we shall stop here. Two simple Jackfruit recipes for the beginners who desire to learn more.

Jackfruit Curry:- **Preparation Time:** 25 mins, **Cooking Time:** 10 mins, **Total Time:** 35 mins. **Ingredients:-** 400g Jackfruit, 50g (25-30) cashew nuts, 300g (4-5) tomatoes, 2-3 green chillies, 1 inch piece ginger, 2-3 tbsp ghee or oil, 1-2 pinches hing, ½ tsp cumin seeds, ¼ tsp turmeric powder, 2 springs curry leaves, 1 tsp dhania powder, ½ tsp red chilli powder, salt (as per taste), ¼ tsp garam masala, fresh dhania. **Method:-** Rub cooking oil on your hands and on the knife. Cut off the skin of the jackfruit. Wash the jackfruit and cut into 1 or 2 inch pieces (I would advise also using the seeds as well). Boil the jackfruit in a tall pan adding

water and salt. Once the jackfruit is soft, empty the ingredients into a large colander and keep aside. Soak the cashew nuts in lukewarm water for ½ hour and then make a fine paste – keep aside. In a large flat pan add ghee or oil. Bring the flame to medium heat. Add the chillies, ginger, curry leaves, hing, cumin seeds, turmeric powder, red chillie powder, dhania powder and cashew nuts paste in the ghee or oil. Sauté for 2-3 minutes or until oil starts separating from the masala. Add boiled jackfruit in pot and sauté for a further 2 more minutes. Add water as per your desire. Then add salt and mix it well. After it boils once, cover the pan and cook for a few more minutes as per your desire on low flame so that all spices gets absorbed in jackfruit. Turn off the stove and add garam masala and dhania in curry. Empty the curry in a serving bowl and garnish with more dhania leaves. The jackfruit curry is now ready for Devi to eat. (I personally like to add more oil or ghee as Jackfruit curry tastes better with excess oil – just for this curry).



Jackfruit Pakora (fritters):- Ingredients:- 150g Chickpea flour, 15g Cake flour, Medium-sized jackfruit pieces (that has already been boiled), 1 medium-sized onion grated, 1 tsp coarsely ground dhania seeds, half a tsp coarsely ground cumin, 3 green chillies (finely pounded), a pinch of hing, a teaspoon kalonji (a.k.a Nigella Sativa) seeds, fine salt, half a tsp paprika, half a tsp baking powder, a handful fresh dhania leaves (chopped), 25g diced spring onions, oil for frying and water. Method:- Sift all the dry ingredients into a large mixing bowl. Add the remaining ingredients to the above. Mix in enough water to make a batter similar to the consistency of thick flapjack batter. Heat some oil in a large frying pan. Dip a piece of jackfruit in the batter and place in the hot oil. Turn over when the fritters are golden brown. Once the other side is golden brown, remove and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot. Have with hot Rooibos tea – South African style.

{12} **Plantain...** Many confuse plantains with bananas.



Plantains are a member of the banana family. Although they look a lot like green bananas and are a close relative, plantains are very different. Plantains are used as a vegetable in many recipes, especially in Latin America and Africa. Plantains are sold in the fresh produce section of the supermarket. So F.Y.I... Plantains are starchy, used as a vegetable, and are longer than bananas, it has a thicker skin, it resemble green bananas, but may also be green, yellow or black WHILE Bananas are sweet in taste, eaten as a fruit, shorter than plantains, thinner skin, its color is green when not fully ripe and yellow when ripe.

Plantains are highly nutritious, a good source of potassium and Vitamins A & C, high in dietary fiber, an energy booster and high in carbohydrates.

Plantain Curry {Arati Kaya Kura} – (India):- **Ingredients:-** 2 raw plantains, peeled, sliced into small cubes, a fistful of chana dal (soaked in water for a few hours), half cup of fresh coconut pieces, hing, 5-8 green chillies, pinch of turmeric, mustard seeds, cumin and curry leaves, dhania and salt to taste. **Method:-** First soak chana dal in water for a few hours. Meanwhile make a paste of fresh coconut and green chillies by adding a pinch of salt. Place a pot of water on a stovetop on medium heat, waiting for it to boil. Meanwhile prepare the plantains (wash, peel and cut). When water starts to boil, add these cut plantain cubes to water. Cook them for about 5 minutes on high heat, then pour them into a colander and discard the water. Now in a big saute pan, add one tablespoon of oil, add mustard seeds, cumin and curry leaves, a pinch of hing then add the soaked chana dal. Fry them in oil for few minutes. Now add the plantain cubes, turmeric, salt, coconut-green chilli paste. Mix them thoroughly and cook them covered for about 10 to 15 minutes. You can garnish with a little garam masala and dhania.

Aranitas {shredded green plantain fritters} – (Puerto Rico):- **Ingredients:-** 3 green plantains, 2 teaspoons crushed garlic or powder, a pinch of hing, salt and pepper to taste, oil for frying. **Method:-** Shred the peeled plantains. Combine the shredded plantain, garlic, salt, hing and pepper. Drop by tablespoons into hot oil. Fry until crispy turning over once. Drain on paper towels. A great snack with hot tea.

Green plantain fritters - Spicy (South Africa):- **Ingredients:-** 150g Chickpea flour, 15g Cake flour, 2 Medium-sized plantians sliced long (or you can grate it), 1 medium-sized onion grated, 1 tsp coarsely ground dhania seeds, half a tsp coarsely ground cumin, 3 green chillies (finely pounded), a pinch of hing, a teaspoon kalonji (a.k.a Nigella Sativa) seeds, fine salt, half a tsp paprika, half a tsp baking powder, a handful fresh dhania leaves (chopped), 25g diced spring onions, oil for frying and water. **Method:-** Sift all the dry ingredients into a large mixing bowl. Add the remaining ingredients to the above. Mix in enough water to make a batter similar to the consistency of thick flapjack batter. Heat some oil in a large frying pan. Dip a slice of plantain in the batter and place in the hot oil or add spoonfuls of this mix (if you grated it) to the oil. Turn over when the fritters are golden brown. Once the other side is golden brown, remove and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot. Have with hot Rooibos tea – South African style.

{13} **Jambu Fruit** (Rose-apple). *Syzygium jambos* has several common names viz. champakka, "water apple", "rose apple", etc. The edible fruit of *Syzygium jambos* is shaped like some kinds of guava, to which the plant is fairly closely related. In fact the fruit is so like the guava in appearance that people unfamiliar with it may mistake it for a guava on first sight. The ripe fruit has a strong, pleasant floral bouquet, hence such common names as "Rose apple" and "pomarrosa". In South Africa for example, there is no noticeable bitter after taste, but the bouquet is decidedly assertive, whether one regards it as rose-like or not. *Syzygium jambos* grows on every continent except Antarctica. The fruit is eaten like a guava and is cut and served. The Rose apple fruit is frequently served with spiced sugar.



How to make Rose apple juice with spiced sugar? Liquidize the rose apple fruit. Leave aside. In another container, add a pinch of cinnamon, brown sugar, a pinch of nutmeg and pure vanilla extract. Add the liquidized juice in the mixing container and serve to Devi iced.

{14} **Mango.** Need I say more? I would suggest preparing ripe mango juice which is then kept in a small cup and placed near Devi when the puja is about to commence. Also one can cut green mango in pieces and then add chilli powder or salt and then served. Also one can prepare green or ripe mango chutney.

Homemade Mango Chutney Recipe:- Ingredients:- Half cup sugar, 250ml distilled white vinegar, 1 and half cups ripe mangoes cut in 3/4-inch pieces, 1/4 cup chopped onion, 2 Tsp raisins, 1 tsp ginger, finely chopped, 1/4 garlic minced, 1/4 tsp mustard seeds, whole, 1 tsp red chilli pepper flakes (hot). Method:- Combine sugar and vinegar in a pot; bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Add remaining ingredients and simmer, uncovered, until it is of a syrup-like consistency and slightly thickened, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Stir occasionally during cooking. Let it cool down and then serve when it's room temperature.

{15} **Sesamum** (Til seeds). Sesame seeds could be the oldest condiment known to humans. It is highly valued for its oil which is exceptionally resistant to rancidity. Sesame seeds add a nutty taste and a delicate, almost invisible, crunch to many Asian dishes. Not only are sesame seeds a very good source of manganese and copper, but they are also a good source of calcium, magnesium, iron, phosphorus, vitamin B1, zinc and dietary fiber. In addition to these important nutrients, sesame seeds contain two unique substances: sesamin and sesamol. Both of these substances belong to a group of special beneficial fibers called lignans, and have been shown to have a cholesterol-lowering effect in humans, and to prevent high blood pressure and increase vitamin E supplies in animals. Sesamin has also been found to protect the liver from oxidative damage. Sesame seeds has many more health benefits but due to space we shall stop here. Black or brown sesame seeds are added in the Havan samaghr̥ee which are offered into the fire when chanting Devi's names.

{16} **Oranges:-** Need I say more? I would suggest preparing orange juice which is then kept in a small cup and placed near Devi when the puja is about to commence. The orange (also grapefruit, lime, lemon, basically citrus fruits) is a gift from Mother Shakambhari Devi (another name for Mother Durga) to us humans and especially for those suffering from many ailments viz. women who suffer from breast cancer. The similarity between round citrus fruits and breasts is definitely more than coincidental. The orange and grapefruit contains substances called limonoids, which have been shown to inhibit the development of cancer in human breast cells. So tell me how amazing is our awesome Mother is to give us foods that's shaped like a human body part. WOW.

{17} **Anar** (pomegranate)... anardana (from Hindi: anar + dana, pomegranate + seed) is Devi's favourite fruit. Yes She does have expensive tastes. The pomegranate symbolizes prosperity and fertility. Pomegranates are used in cooking, baking, juices and smoothies. Both the skin and seeds are used. The seeds are separated from the flesh, dried for 10–15 days and used as an acidic agent for chutney and curry preparation. Dried seeds are used in several culinary preparations, such as trail mix, granola bars, or as a topping for salad, yogurt, or ice cream. In the Ayurveda system of medicine, the pomegranate has been extensively used as a source of traditional remedies. The rind of the fruit and the bark of the pomegranate tree is used as a traditional remedy against diarrhea, dysentery and intestinal parasites. Pomegranate has been used as a contraceptive and abortifacient by means of consuming the seeds, or rind, as well as by using the rind as a vaginal suppository. So pregnant ladies beware. Pomegranates are a rich source of antioxidants. Therefore, it helps to protect your body's cells from free radicals, which cause premature aging. In simple words, pomegranate juice pumps the level of oxygen in your blood. The antioxidants fight free radicals and prevents blood clots. This eventually helps the blood to flow freely in your

body in turn improving the oxygen levels in your blood. Pomegranates are especially high in polyphenols, a form of antioxidant purported to help reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease. In fact, pomegranate juice, which contains health-boosting tannins, anthocyanins, and ellagic acid, has a very high antioxidant activity. Pomegranate health benefits run bone deep; it can reduce the damage on the cartilage for those hit with arthritis. This fruit has the ability to lessen the inflammation and fights the enzymes that destroy the cartilage. I would suggest making pomegranate juice which is then kept in a small cup and placed near Devi when the puja is about to commence.



{18} **Badari** (a variety of dates). a.k.a Ziziphus jujuba red date, Chinese date, or Indian date, etc. The fruits and seeds are used in eastern traditional medicine, which when used alleviate stress, and used traditionally for antifungal, antibacterial, antiulcer, anti-inflammatory, sedative, antispastic, antifertility/contraception, hypotensive and antinephritic, cardiotoxic, antioxidant, immunostimulant, and wound healing properties. In Devi puja dry dates are cut into small pieces and mixed with cut coconut strips and then offered to Devi.



{19} **Dhatri fruit** (Amla/Amalaki) a.k.a Indian Gooseberry. The fruits of the Amla tree are used in various Ayurvedic preparations. The Amla fruit is praised as DHATRI (Deity of health) in Ayurveda. The Ayurvedic medicinal properties of Amla are way too many to



mention here but in a gist it has a good effect on one's hair, skin and eye also on the nervous, digestive, circulatory, respiratory, reproductive and urinary systems just to name a few. When performing Devi's puja in summer it's advisable to offer Amla juice mixed with water in a small cup and kept in front of Devi's murti/picture or where She is being worshipped. The reason for this is that it helps to lower the body temperature of Devi during summers and we want Devi to be as comfortable as possible as She is our guest for those few hours of the puja. Preparation of Amla water: Amla water can be used when fresh Amla fruit juice is not available. Follow these steps to make amla water. Take 3 tea spoons of dry amla fruits.

Thoroughly wash them and soak over night in clean water. Mash and squeeze the soaked Amla fruits next day morning and filter the juice.

{20} **Payasa** (kheer - sweet rice). Please do revert to #2 as it's the same information.

{21} **Prithuka** ({Poha - Hindi, Atukulu - Telugu, Aval - Tamil} – Flattened/beaten/pressed rice/flaked rice preparation). Flattened rice is a dehusked rice which is flattened into flat light dry flakes. These flakes of rice swell when added to liquid, whether hot or cold, as they



absorb water, milk or any other liquids. This easily digestible form of raw rice is very popular across Asia and is normally used to prepare snacks or light and easy fast food in a variety of Indian cuisine styles. Flattened rice is in a way, a convenience food and very similar to bread in usage. There are many recipes that use Poha but we shall provide just 3.

Aval Nanachathu Recipe:- **Ingredients:-** 1 cup of Aval/Poha, 1 Tsp sugar or grated gur, 1/4 cup grated coconut, 1 banana sliced into pieces, a pinch of elachi, a pinch of salt, 1/4 cup sliced cashews, 2 string of saffron, half cup water. **Method:-** Mix well all the ingredients together in a mixing bowl & cover with a lid and keep it for an hour and then serve to Devi.

Beaten rice with paneer Recipe:- Beaten rice is soaked in water for a few minutes and then sieved. In a mixing bowl add the rice, scrambled paneer and a pinch of salt. Mix and serve with mango or lemon pickle.

Batata Powa or Kanda Poha Recipe:- Serves: 4. **Ingredients:-** 2 cups Poha (thick variety), salt, 1 Tbsp lime/lemon juice, sugar (optional), 2 Tbsp oil, ½ tsp mustard seeds, 1 whole dry red chilli, 1/8 tsp hing, 1/2 tsp turmeric powder, 1 spring curry leaves, 2 Tbsp peanuts, approx 150g diced onion, 1 green chilli finely chopped, 1 large (approx 200g) – diced potato, dhania – finely chopped for garnishing. **Method:-** Gently rinse Poha with water about 2-3 times. Drain out the water and sprinkle salt and lemon juice (and optional sugar). Gently mix with a fork and leave aside. Heat oil in a medium non-stick pan on medium heat. Add mustard seeds and let them pop. Add dry red chilli, hing, turmeric powder, curry leaves and peanuts. Cook peanuts for 30-40 seconds and add onions and green chillies. Cook onions for 1-2 minutes until translucent and add potatoes and salt. Mix well, cover and cook potatoes until tender but not mushy. Fluff up Poha with a fork and add it to the pan. Mix well. Sprinkle with a little water if Poha have dried out too much. Garnish with chopped dhania and serve hot.



{22} **Gram** (different types of pulses esp. Chana {chickpea} Dal). There are 100's of different varieties of Gram grown around the world. In Devi pujas the chickpea dal is generally used. **How to prepare the Chana Dal for Devi:-** The Chana Dal should be soaked overnight and the next morning washed thoroughly and then boiled until it's soft. Pour the Dal in a colander and then in a mixing bowl add the chana dal and then add some salt. Boiling the Dal and adding salt is consider taboo in North India and personally it doesn't make sense because we are preparing this offering for Mother Durga and Devi is not fasting saltless so why are we offering her saltless foods as we are fasting for her? After the puja is completed the devotee then eats the salted puri and dal to break her/his saltless fast. I pray that this misunderstanding is finally addressed.

Chana Dal Recipe:- Prep Time:- Soaking Time - 10 Mins, Cooking Time - 35 Mins. Serves: 4-5. **Ingredients:-** 1 cup chana dal, 1 large onion, 1 large tomato, 2-3 green chilli, 1 tbsp cooking oil, a pinch of hing, 1 bay leaf, 1 tsp cumin seeds/jeera, 1 dry red chilli, 1 tsp fresh minced garlic, 1 tsp red chilli powder, 1 tsp dhania powder, 3-4 tsp turmeric powder, 1/2 tsp garam masala powder, water - as needed, salt - to taste, chopped dhania, 1 tbsp ghee (optional). **Method:-** Soak channa dal for 30 minutes and then boil in a pot adding water and 1/4 tsp of turmeric powder. The dal must boil until it's very soft. Keep the boiled dal aside. In the meantime finely chop the onion, tomato, green chilli, dhania leaves. In a deep pan heat oil then then add hing, cumin seeds and allow it to splutter. Add bay leaf, dry red chilli, garlic and saute until garlic becomes golden brown. Add onion, green chilli and further saute. Once onion becomes soft add red chilli powder, coriander powder and remaining 1/2 tsp turmeric powder mix well. Add tomato, mix cover and cook until tomato gets mashed. Add the mashed dal and mix well, add salt, 1-2 or more cups of water (depending on the consistency you prefer) and bring it to a good boil. Chana dal is normally thick in consistency. Add garam masala and stir well. On a slow flame let it simmer for about 5 minutes, then garnish with dhania and then turn off the flame. If you are using ghee it should be added now and mix or add while serving. Serve hot with steamed rice and a salad on the side, or with pickles and fresh yogurt (maas). In chana dal we should see the dal pieces but it should be soft while we eat. This is a delicious yet simple meal for Devi.



{23} **Coconut**. In Sanskrit, the coconut is called kalpa vriksha ("the tree which provides all the necessities of life"). A coconut (Sanskrit: narikela) is an essential element of rituals in the Hindu tradition. Often it's decorated with bright metal foils and other symbols of auspiciousness. It's offered during worship to a Hindu Deity and hindus often initiate the beginning of any new activity by breaking a coconut to ensure the blessings of the Deities

and a successful completion of one's activities. The Hindu Deity of well-being and wealth, Lakshmi-devi, is often depicted holding a coconut. In Hindu wedding ceremonies, a coconut is placed over the opening of a pot, representing a womb. Coconut flowers are auspicious symbols and are fixtures at Hindu weddings and other important occasions. In Kerala, coconut flowers must be present during a marriage ceremony. The flowers are inserted into a barrel of unhusked rice (paddy) and placed within sight of the wedding ceremony. The coconut palm is grown throughout for decorations, as well as for its many culinary and nonculinary uses; virtually every part of the coconut palm can be used by humans in some manner or the other and has significant economic value. Coconuts' versatility is sometimes noted in its naming. The seed provides oil for frying, cooking, and making margarine. The white, fleshy part of the seed, the coconut meat, is used fresh or dried in cooking, especially in confections and desserts and its lauric acid helps the level of HDL cholesterol (the good cholesterol) more than any other fatty acid, either saturated or unsaturated (*i*). So eating coconuts actually decreases the risk of getting heart disease. The Coconut has anti-microbial, anti-viral and anti-bacterial properties. Coconut-based diets are amongst the healthiest in the world. Desiccated coconut or coconut milk made from it and is frequently added to curries and other savoury Indian dishes. Coconut flour has also been developed for use in baking, to combat malnutrition. Coconut chips is a popular quick snack. Coconut butter is often used to describe the solidified coconut oil, but has also been adopted as a name by certain specialty products made of coconut milk solids or puréed coconut meat and oil. Dried coconut is also used as the filling for many chocolate bars. When performing Devi's puja, you can offer Devi fried coconut strips and fresh coconut juice in a small cup which is placed in front of Her with the other different types of juices.

Coconut chutney (Uruttu chammanthi) is a South Indian spicy chutney-side-dish and condiment. Ingredients:- 1 cup fresh coconut, peeled and cut into small pieces, 2 Tsp chana dal, 1 cup plain yoghurt, 1½ Tsp salt (adjust to taste), 2 green chillies, cut in small pieces, 1 cm piece ginger, ½ cup water (approximately), 1 tsp lemon juice (if required). For seasoning:- 1 tsp oil, pinch of Hing, ¼ tsp black mustard seed, 2 red chillies, broken in pieces, 6 - 8 curry leaves (1 sprig). Method:- Peel coconut and cut into small pieces so they are easier to blend. Roast chana dal on medium heat until it is light brown in colour and has a roasted aroma. Coarsely grind chana dal in a blender. Add yoghurt, green chillies and salt and continue blending into the paste. Add coconut to the paste, a few pieces at a time and keep blending. Add water, as needed, to help with the grinding. Adding the coconut in small amounts also helps this process. Use lemon juice to adjust the sourness as per your liking. Blend well. Deposit the mixture into a serving bowl. For seasoning:- Heat oil in small pan, when hot, add black mustard seeds and wait till they crack. Add hing, red chillies and curry leaves. Pour the seasoning mixture over the chutney which is in a serving bowl.



Coconut Burfi:- Ingredients:- 1 cup grated coconut, 1 cup sugar, 1/4 cup water (To soak the sugar), 1/2 tsp cardamom powder, 1 tsp ghee. Method:- Keep heavy bottomed pan on stove. Add sugar and pour the water. Dissolve the sugar making it into a sugar syrup. Add the grated coconut and cardamom powder and mix well. Keep mixing till the coconut sticks on the sides. Spread ghee on a tray and pour the coconut. Make the slices immediately and cool it.



{24} **Jambira** (lemon/lime citrus fruits). Common name English (Lime tree, Lemon), Hindi (Jamir nimbu, Nimbu), Sanskrit (Nimbuka, Jambira, Jambaka), Latin name (Citrus limonum/acida or medica–Fructus). The medical benefits of the humble lemon/lime is mind blowing to say the least. But from a religious point of view, the lemon/lime is very dear to Devi, so much so that Lord Narayana states this so. In prayers to Devi devotees should always prepare a garland made out of lemon/lime and when Devi is invoked, Devi is garlanded to seek Her blessings. Also devotees instead of using a clay lamp use a lamp made out of a lemon/lime. How to make a Nimbu lamp. Roll one lime on a hard surface as to make the insides of the lime very soft. Then cut the lime in half and the remove the fleshy parts. Once that's done add ghee in the lime and a long wick. You can then, on a saucer, place white uncooked rice and then, on top of the rice, place the lime lamp. (A note from myself, I add a small piece of foil where the wick is so that the wick don't burn the skin of the lime). Lighting a lime lamp has many various benefits as well. Nimbu pani:- Nimbu pani (lime juice) is one of India's most loved summer refreshments and it's so easy to make it begs belief. Squeeze two fresh limes, add to a tall cup, add sugar or gur (jaggery) to taste and cut 1 spring of mint and add to the mixture. Simple and very healthy. This should be prepared for Devi when performing her puja. (Optional – the zest/peel of a lime or lemon has more benefits than the insides, so I advise finely grating abt 1/4 tsp of the peel and adding to the mixture).

Devi's Lemon/Lime Bars



Ingredients:- Crust:- 1 cup flour, 1/3 cup confectioners' sugar, 1/2 tsp ground ginger, 1/4 tsp salt. Filling:- 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar, 2 Tsp flour, 1/2 tsp baking powder, 1/2 cup fresh lime juice, 3/4 cup yogurt (instead of eggs. Do note 1/4 cup yogurt = 1 egg), lightly beaten, 2 tsp lemon extract, 4 drops green food color. Method:- Preheat oven to 180°C. For the Crust, mix flour, confectioners' sugar, ginger and salt in a large bowl. Cut in butter with pastry blender or 2 knives until mixture resemble coarse crumbs. Pat mixture into greased foil-

lined 9-inch square baking pan. Bake 15 to 18 minutes or until crust is lightly browned. Remove from the oven. For the Filling, mix granulated sugar, flour and baking powder in large bowl. Add lime juice, yogurt, lemon extract and food color; whisk until blended. Pour filling over warm baked crust. Bake 20 to 25 minutes longer or until filling is set. Cool in pan on wire rack. Cut into bars.

{25} **Kaseru** (a.k.a Singhada, shingada or singoda is used as a vegetable, fruit, nut and flour), English - water chestnut, Hindi and Sanskrit - Kaseru, Telugu - Etikoti. Kaseru makes the heart strong and cures insanity and other related diseases. It quenches thirst and helps in alleviating inflammation and poison and helps in enhancing in sperm count and breastmilk. Singhara flour is used to make sweets and puris; the flour is permissible during 'vrats' and fasting. A perfect fruit to eat for those who desire a healthy life.



Singhara Fruit



Singhara Flour

Water chestnut are almost fatless and is therefore a healthy food option; an excellent source of potassium, a very important mineral for humans and an ideal fruit for diabetics. The small, rounded corms have a crisp white flesh and can be eaten raw, slightly boiled, or grilled. The corms are rich in carbohydrates, especially starch, and are also a good source of dietary fiber, riboflavin, vitamin B6, potassium, copper, and manganese. In China, they are most often eaten raw, sometimes sweetened. They can also be ground into a flour form used for making water chestnut cake. Water chestnuts are often combined with bamboo shoots, coriander, ginger, sesame oil, and snow peas. They are often used in pasta or rice dishes.

[Singhada Sheera \(Water chestnut Halwa {pudding}\)](#)



Preparation Time: 10 mins, Cooking Time: 20 mins, Makes 4 servings. Ingredients:- 4 Tbsp ghee, 1 cup waterchestnut (shingoda) flour, 3/4 cup sugar or grated gur (jaggery), 1/2 tsp cardamom (elaichi) powder, 1 Tbsp almond slivers, 1 Tbsp pistachio slivers. Method:- Heat the ghee in a broad non-stick pan, add the waterchestnut flour and cook on a slow flame for 3 to 5 minutes or till it becomes golden brown in colour, while stirring continuously. Add 2 cups of warm water, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 8 to 10 minutes or till all the

water is absorbed, while stirring continuously. Add the sugar/gur, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 5 to 7 minutes or till the ghee separates. Add the cardamom powder and mix well. Serve hot garnished with almonds and pistachios.

Water-chestnut (Singhada) Puri:- Preparation Time: 10mins. Cooking Time: 5 mins. Makes 4 servings. Ingredients:- 1/2 cup waterchestnut (singhada) flour, 2 boiled colocassia (arbi, madumbi), salt to taste, ghee or oil for deep frying. Method:- Peel and mash the Madumbis, add the flour and salt, mix well and knead into a soft dough, using little water. Divide the dough into equal portions and shape each portion into small round puris of 1/4" thickness. Heat the ghee in a kadhai (wok) and deep fry each puri till golden brown from all the sides. Drain on an absorbent paper and serve hot to Devi.



Water-chestnut potatoe pakoras (fritters):- Preparation Time: 20 mins. Cooking Time: 20mins. Makes 6 to 8 servings. Ingredients:- 2 potatoes, thinly sliced, 1 cup water chestnut flour, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp chilli powder, oil for deep-frying. Method:- Combine the flour, salt, chilli powder and mix well. Add water to make a smooth batter of pouring consistency. Heat the oil in a kadhai (wok) and dip the potato slices in batter, and deep fry till they turn golden brown and crisp. Drain on an absorbent paper. Serve hot.

Water chestnut, Paneer and green peas curry



Ingredients:- 2 Tbsp oil, 1/2 cup onions (grated), 1 tsp ginger, garlic paste, 1 tsp chilli powder, 1/2 tsp turmeric powder, 1/4 tsp cardamom powder, 1/4 tsp hing, 1 tsp garam masala, 1/2 cup plain yogurt, 2 Tbsp tomato puree (paste), 2 Tbsp cashew nut paste, salt, 250g water chestnuts, 200g paneer, 1/4 cup green peas, 4 Tbsp fresh cream, dhania, a few pinches of garam masala. Method:- Heat oil add onions and sauté the grated onion until all the liquid is evaporated and the oil starts to separate. Add ginger garlic paste and sauté

until fragrant and then add the spices and sauté on low flame for a few minutes. Add plain yogurt, tomato puree, salt and one cup of water. Simmer slowly for ten minutes. Add the cashew nut paste, water chestnut pieces, paneer pieces and green peas. Cook for a few minutes, adding enough water to make a thick gravy and then add a few pinches of garam masala. Add fresh cream and add on the top of this some freshly chopped dhania and adjust the seasoning before serving to Ma Durga.

{26} **Surana** (a.k.a Yam, *Amorphophallus campanulatus* Bl., Elephant-foot yam, Carrion flower, Devils tongue). Yam and sweet potatoes are **NOT** the same. Although yams and sweet potatoes are both angiosperms (flowering plants), they are not related botanically. Yams are a monocot (a plant having one embryonic seed leaf) and from the Dioscoreaceae or Yam family. Yams are closely related to lilies and grasses and is native to Africa and Asia and many varieties of sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) are members of the morning glory family, Convolvulaceae. The skin color of sweet potatoes can range from white to yellow, red, purple or brown. The true Yam is a versatile vegetable. It can be barbecued, roasted, fried, grilled, boiled, baked, smoked and when grated it is processed into a dessert recipe. The Yam tuber is stomachic, tonic, constipating; increases both appetite and taste; useful in piles, enlarged spleen, tumours, asthma, bronchitis, vomiting, abdominal pain and elephantiasis; much used in acute rheumatism. The yam is high in fibre and in omega 3 fatty acids, low glycemic index – hence good for those suffering from diabetes, and cools the body. The root is emmenagogue (which stimulate blood flow in the pelvic area and uterus); used in boils and ophthalmia. Infusion of the leaf stalks is useful in bites of poisonous insects. The yam is a gift from Mother Shakambhari Devi (another name for Mother Durga) to us humans for those suffering from the above ailments esp. w.r.t the pancreas as the oblong Yam bears a strong resemblance to the pancreas, and it's an antioxidant that protects all tissues of the body, including the pancreas, from damage associated with cancer or aging. So tell me how amazing is our awesome Mother to give us foods that's shaped like a human body part. WOW.

Surana or Elephant foot yam chips:- **Ingredients:-** 250 gms yam, peeled, washed and sliced. 1 tsp red chilli powder, ½ tsp turmeric powder, 1-2 tbsp lemon juice, salt as required, ghee or oil for frying, a few coriander leaves and lemon wedges for garnish. **Method:-** Please use gloves when cutting and washing the Yam. In a mixing bowl add the turmeric powder, red chilli powder, lemon juice and salt. Mix the ingredients uniformly, then add the yam pieces and uniformly coat the yam slices with the marination and set aside for for 20-30 minutes. Next add the oil in a flat pan and when the oil is reasonably hot add the yams pieces and shallow fry until it's nice and golden brown on either side. Next drain the yam pieces on kitchen tissues and serve the surana chips hot garnished with coriander leaves and lemon wedges to Devi. For a twist to the chips recipes above the marinated yam slices can also be baked, barbecued, roasted, grilled and smoked instead of frying.



Elephant Foot Yam Curry (South-Indian Style):- **Ingredients:-** 500 grams peeled and chopped elephant foot yam, 2 tsps salt, 500ml water, 2 Tbsps yogurt (maas), 3 dried red chillies, 1 tsp mustard seeds, 1/2 tsp cumin seeds, 1 tsp white lentils, 2 sprigs of curry

leaves, 1 Tbsp sugar, 1 tsp turmeric powder, 1/4 tsp garam masala, dhania. Method:- Please use gloves when cutting and washing the Yam. Wash chopped pieces of elephant foot yam under running water. Add fresh water to the pieces of yam. Boil the pieces of elephant foot yam and once half boiled, add salt (to your liking). Then add the yogurt after 10 minutes. This helps us to avoid an itching sensation in the diner's throat which is sometimes caused by elephant foot yam. Mix the ingredients together. Boil for a further 5 more minutes. Then drain the water from the yam pieces. In another flat pan pot add oil or ghee and then add red chillies, mustard seeds, cumin seeds and white lentils, next add curry leaves. Then add the boiled elephant foot yam pieces. Mix the spices well with the yam, then add turmeric powder and sugar. Mix well. Cover the pan with a lid. Slow cook the ingredients until they acquire a golden brown color and have a slight crispiness. Garnish with 1/4 tsp garam masala and dhania. Serve the dry curry with rice with little ghee added to it to our awesome Devi.



{27} **Black Aguru** (aloe wood/eagle wood/agar wood). Dhoopa (incense/agarbatti) made of Black aguru. One of the main reasons for the relative rarity and high cost of agarwood is the depletion of its wild resource. First-grade agarwood is one of the most expensive natural raw materials in the world. It's difficult to procure this item and extremely expensive to say the least so it's generally best to omit this item due to circumstances.



{28} **Camphor**. (Hindi - kapoor, Sanskrit - karpooa) When camphor is lit, it burns itself until it evaporates completely without leaving any residue. Just like the camphor burns itself while giving light to others, it's a gesture of promise that us amazing Hindus make to a Deity, in this case, Durga Devi. And that the person lighting the camphor would burn his/her ego completely without leaving any residue while spreading light (knowledge) to people around him/her. The fragrant aroma that the camphor emanates signifies the goodness that is spread around the person once the ego is burnt. Camphor is used in various ways in Hinduism. When offering Devi water Lord Narayana advises to offer Her camphor water and I quote "Offer Devi a jar of Ganga water, cool and nice, scented with camphor". It's basically water with a pinch of crushed camphor and left in front of Her picture or murti when performing Her puja. Camphor is used as a flavoring, mostly in sweets, in Asia. It's widely used in cooking, mainly for dessert dishes, in India.

{29} **Sandalpaste** and {30} **Red sandalpaste**. Sandalwood is the name of a class of fragrant woods from trees in the genus Santalum and they retain their fragrance for decades. Sandalwood paste is integral to Hindu rituals and ceremonies, to mark religious utensils, and to decorate the icons of the deities. It's also distributed to devotees, who apply it to their foreheads or their necks and chests. Preparation of the paste is a duty fit only for the pure. The paste is prepared by grinding wood by hand upon granite slabs shaped for the purpose. With the slow addition of water, a thick paste results (called Gandha in Sanskrit), which is mixed with saffron or other such pigments to make chandan. Chandan powder is very popular in North India. In Ayurveda, sandalwood is said to bring one closer to the divine and has a very cooling effect. Thus, it's one of the most used holy elements in Vedic societies. When performing Devi puja a chandan dot is applied to Devi's forehead and/or on the coconut.

{31} **Sihlaka** (a.k.a lobhaan, frankincense, oriental sweet gum, liquid amber, asiatic storax). Sihlaka has plenty of uses. Fundamentally, it promotes calmness, serenity and relaxation. These indications will always be present, no matter how Sihlaka is used. Its fragrance gives concentration during worship and removes adverse and negative magical affects of the body, mind and at home. In modern times, the use of chemical insecticides and pesticides is causing damage to the environment and the human life. Sihlaka is a good natural insecticide and an excellent repellent of insects and mosquitoes. It has numerous benefits even as a medicine. Its fumigation, incense and fragrance relieve constipation and stomach pain. In the morning after cleansing the house and before the puja proper commences, I always advise to smoke the house with Sihlaka because once the puja commences and when Devi makes Her appearance for the puja all the negative and stagnant energies will be removed.

{32} **Guggula** (a.k.a Commiphora wightii, Guggal, Guggul or Mukul myrrh tree). Guggul is sought for its gummy resin. Guggul can be purchased in a loosely packed form called dhoop, an incense from India, or from any good puja shops in South Africa and this resin is burned over hot coals. Guggula produces a fragrant and dense smoke. The burning coals which let out the smoke are then carried around to different rooms and held in all corners for a few seconds. This drives away evil spirits and negative energies as well as remove the evil eye from the home and its family members. I advise to use this resin with lobhaan and hing and mix these three ingredients and then add to Raaz lobhaan and smoke one's home twice or thrice a week with amazing effects.



One should procure Guggul, Lobhaan and Hing, pound the 3 into powder and store in a container. Before commencing with a puja one should first sprinkle the room and house with the following ingredients. In a 5L bucket add 4.5L water, 1 cup rose water and a little cow pee and cow-dung {optional} and a pinch of turmeric. Mix the ingredients and then sprinkle in the around the house. Then one should smoke the house esp. where the puja is going to take place. In a small burning receptacle add a raaz lobhaan cone. Light the cone with a match and the add a 1/4 tsp of the mixture (Guggul, Lobhaan and Hing). Thereafter smoke in and around the house. The reason for this is to remove any malefic vibrations and

negative spirit beings from the puja area.

{33} The devotee should offer heaps of food consisting of the ***6 Rasas (Tastes viz. pungent, bitter, spicy, sweet, **SALTY**, and astringent), mountain-like high {VIEW THE PICTURE BELOW ON THE SETTING ON THESE ITEMS}. Lord Narayana states that one should offer Devi “Betels (leaf and nut) with camphor, cardamom (elachie), cloves, and various delicious scents”. So how do we go about doing this? On a rectangular tray place a large banana leaf, then on top of the banana leaf place 9 sets of hot puri's (one puri on top of another), on top of the puri's place a betel leaf (the point of the betel leaf must face you), add 1/4 tsp Halwa, 1/4 tsp Sweet rice, 3 kinds of fruits (I suggest purple/red grapes, apple and pear), 3 kinds of Mithai (sweets), 3 channa dal, 1 elachie, 1 clove, 1 flat betel nut, a dot of red sindhoor, 1 tikli, 2 red bangles (preferably glass and not plastic bangles but according to ones' financial situation). Set the above in the order I have stated. ***The 6 Rasas mentioned above are elaborated even more now. 1) **LAVANA (Salty)** – Betel nut, Puri, 2) **MADHURA (Sweet)** – Halwa, sweet rice, betel nut, cardamom, mithai, puri, fruits, 3) **AMLA (Sour)** – Fruits, betel but, 4) **KATU (Bitter)** – Betel nut, 5) **TIKTA (Pungent)** – Betel leaf, betel nut, cloves, elachie, 6) **KASHYA (Astringent)** – Channa dal, betel nut, cloves, puri, fruits.



{34} Lord Narayana always states that one should give cups of various delicious, sweet, juicy, nice, and heavenly fruits. So what the Lord means here is to offer Devi Her different types of freshly made fruit juices for Her pleasure to drink while the puja is being performed by the pundit and family. From the above mentioned fruits etc, I would advise preparing Milk mixed with gur (refer to #3 above), Panchamrita (refer to #4 above), Butter-milk (refer to #5 above), Jambu-fruit juice (refer to #13 above), Mango juice (refer to #14 above), Anar juice (refer to #16 above), Orange juice (refer to #17 above), Coconut juice (refer to #23 above), Lime/lemon juice (refer to #24 above), Water with a pinch of camphor (refer to #28 above). Please procure those small glasses and only use them specifically for this puja.

{35} Music with lovely flutes and mridangas, murajas, dhahkas and dundubhis to please Devi. On #34 I will be compiling a seperate and very comprehensive article on this topic as it has a lot of information to cover. This article will follow the present article.

Betel Leaves Rice Recipe:- A betel leaf is one of the most important items in the socio-religious life of Hindus. There will not be any auspicious occasion without betel leaves in India. Also, betel leaves are regarded as a symbol of freshness and prosperity. According to Ayurveda, it's used to cure diseases that are spread by air, bile and phlegm. Also, it's a safe alternative medicine for cold and cough. Chewing the betel leaves and areca nuts (the black flat betel nut) alleviates the symptoms of those who are affected by cold. Coming to the

recipe, betel leaves rice is a meal with lots of health benefits and is very easy to prepare. It has a distinct flavour i.e. unique tastes due to the betel leaf, garlic, cumin and pepper.

Health benefits of betel leaves:- Good for digestion, a natural palate cleanser and a mouth freshener, strengthen teeth and gums, it has diuretic properties.

Preparation time: 10 mins. Cooking time: 15 mins. Ingredients for Betel Leaves Rice. To grind:- 4 betel leaves, 1/2 tsp of cumin, 1/2 tsp of black pepper. Other ingredients:- 1 cup of cooked rice, 1 large onion, 3 garlic cloves, 1/4 tsp of turmeric powder, salt to taste. To temper:- 1 tsp of gingelly (til/sesame) oil, 1 tsp of ghee, 1 tsp of mustard seeds, 1 tsp of urad dal, 7 curry leaves, pinch of hing (asafoetida). Method for betel leaves rice:- Wash the betel leaves. Grind betel leaves, pepper and cumin. Keep it aside. Heat a pan with oil and ghee, temper it with the ingredients listed under "To Temper". After it sizzles, add onions, garlic cloves and turmeric powder, fry it until it turns a golden brown colour. Add ground paste and little water, saute this for 3 mins. Turn off the flame/heat. Add cooked rice and salt, toss well. Serve hot with appalam/papadum/papad or potato chips. Tips: - You can also use red chillies while grinding or during tempering for a more spicy taste. Don't chose mature betel leaves, rather use tender ones.



Betel Leaf Chew:- This preparation is usually served; at the end of an Indian meal, ceremonies such as weddings, receptions or after a heavy ghee/oiled based Indian meal. The preparation that is consumed helps in digestion and also act as a mouth freshener. Paan can be prepared in the following way. The betel leaf is washed carefully and then dried with a clean cloth. Procure spices such as cardamom, anise (not star anise) and katha with choona (lime paste), soomph, grated coconut, supari (the black flat betel nuts) and small pieces of various candies. Grind the spices lightly and add to the lime paste on the betel leaf. Fold the leaf into a triangular shape and secure it by piercing a piece of clove into it. Keep the paan fresh on ice with rose petals until ready to be served. Chewing betel evokes a mild euphoria, and a general feeling of 'well-being'. The areca-nut and the betel leaf complement each other and are, therefore, in harmony. Since the areca-nut is 'hot' and the betel leaf 'cool', they act together to keep the human body in balance (Yin-Yang). The betel leaf also relieves 'hot' illnesses such as headaches and fever. Many of our ancestors used to sew betel leaves into a large net and then place it on a child's chest or head. The betel leaves were believed to absorb the heat of the body - reducing the fever and speedily healing the affected child.



Question:- Why is a banana leaf used as a base for the Halwa Puri to be placed on?

Answer:- Our Awesome ancestors commonly used banana leaves to eat food instead of plates. There are lots of benefits for this. Placing the Halwa Puri and its “mountain-like high foods” on the banana leaf awakens the digestive acids to digest the offerings that Mother Durga is going to consume. Also the hot Puri when placed on the banana leaf, the leaf gets sweltered thus absorbing the chlorophyll in that leaf. Not only that, a flavour is produced at that time, that awakens the six tastes of that person. Amazing, isn't it? :) One should sit thankfully in front of the food. When thanking, one should remember about that plant and how it was cultivated. Secondly, when thanking the chef and how the food was prepared should come to one's mind. Thirdly, when thanking the one who serves, we can see the food in front. Next we thank God, and then the environment, the condition and the situation comes to mind. “Thus, we thought about the food for four times before eating it. Now our body is completely fit to digest the food that we are going to eat because, by this time, all the acids were produced to digest the food. That is why it's advised to refrain from talking whilst eating. Don't eat food while talking or when watching television. The body will react according to the taxing or feisty scene that we see. This will affect the body harmfully. Mind and food was the base for everything for our former generation. They lived according to that. But today it's not like that. Some of the readers of this article may disagree with these comments, but how can one disagree and say that this is not correct. Eating on a banana leaf helps in the prevention of diseases like Diabetes, Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, Cancer, Ulcer, Heart diseases, Piles. If anyone in your family is suffering from any of these diseases mentioned above, please read this and share with others.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:- In South Africa we use a coconut to represent Devi and the coconut is draped in a red sari with yellow hues and placed in a large dish. On her sari a handful of rice signifying her form as Annapoorna-Devi is placed on the sari on top of that on a banana leaf, halwa puri etc is placed. This is called the “koicha” which basically means Her offerings are placed on Her lap ready for Her to partake in that offering. In front of the dish all the offerings of juices etc are placed in a semi circle, for Devi to drink while the puja is being performed for Her.

We also compiled an indept article called “THE BATHING AND SMOKING RITUALS AND PROCEDURES AFTER THE BIRTH OF A CHILD” and in this article we covered the topic of what leaves to use in the 3rd, 6th and 12th days following the birth of a child. In the article we mention the following leaves viz. Lime/Lemon and Mango. These and other leaves are boiled and mother and baby are then given a bath with these healing and curative leaves. Within a very short period the mothers' wounds etc are healed and once again we must thank Devi for taking care of us humans.

HAVAN:- From the information given above mango is one of Devi's fav's so the wood of the Mango tree is used for Her havan. Also Sesamum seeds (til), a few camphor tablets, cloves, elachie, dried coconut stripes, ghee, gur (sugar), sweet rice, puri, dried mango fruit pieces, dates, dried flat rice (Poha), Lobhaan, hing, guggal, white rice, navadhan, barley, sandalwood powder, dried anar seeds, chickpea, rose petals, a few black flat betel nuts, a few betel leaves (cut finely), a few dried jackfruit seeds, a few dried banana stripes are used in the samaghee for Devi. Use what is available or easily attainable in your area..

If you liked this article then I'm sure the following articles below will interest you as well which we have released on DIPIKA.

“SALT and its importance in Hinduism”

“The Importance of Fasting Saltless and Saltless Recipes”

“Shakambhari – The Mother that provides us with Nourishments”

“THE BATHING AND SMOKING RITUALS AND PROCEDURES AFTER THE BIRTH OF A CHILD”

“The Importance of Dhaar and Halwa Puri in Devi Puja”

“Why is Nagara/Pachra music performed after a Devi Durga puja.”

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Thank you so much for taking the time to read this article. We pray that this article will assist you in some way and we also pray that it helps you to appreciate the beauty and remarkable foresight of our ancient Hindu culture. We wish to educate all readers and demystify the path of Hinduism (Sanatan Dharma). Please feel free to share these articles with friends and family who do not have direct access to our website or articles. If you use the articles in any form including blogs and/or as part of other articles kindly credit our website as a source. We hope that the articles serve as a reference to you and your family when you need clarification of certain topics. Jai Hind...Jai Mata Di. All glories to our Divine and Amazing Mothers.

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