

Ethnic Food for Kids

By Michelle Stern of [What's Cooking](#)

On our family's recent trip to Panama and Costa Rica, my children loved tasting tropical fruits that they hadn't seen before. It got me thinking about how eager kids can be to taste foods that are sweet and those that are similar to foods they already like. Fruits there come in fantastic shapes, sizes, and colors, and were a joy to try...even if the outcome was a surprising burst of sour flavor, or if the texture was reminiscent of raw oysters!

Okay, so it was easy to get my kids to taste fruit. But how could I get them to try the local fare? At home, it is pretty easy to get them to taste Italian, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese foods. Maybe that is because they are prevalent in our community and we frequently dine in those types of restaurants. Or maybe it is because of the familiar ingredients that they contain, such as cheese and noodles.

What if I wanted to get them to try Indian food? It is one of my favorites, and is usually saved for the rare occasion where we splurge on a babysitter. Why have we been keeping this delicious food to ourselves and not sharing it with our kids? Was it because we didn't want to listen to the inevitable moaning and groaning of how they didn't like their meal? Wait a minute – they have familiar foods in Indian restaurants, too. What about naan, a delicious flat bread that is wonderful with plain yogurt or the flavorful sauces that coat many of the other menu items? And who can resist Tikka Masala?

I decided that I would make an Indian (ish) dish at home, to see how my kids would respond. I really wanted to make Tikka Masala, but the recipe is quite involved and would have taken a lot of active cooking time. My house is currently for sale and lots of potential buyers have been visiting (some with only 5 or 10 minutes notice!) so I opted for a simpler version in my crock pot. Although I wanted to make a more traditional dish, I felt that it might be wise to go easy on the spices for the first time around. Kids often respond to new flavors with trepidation, so I wanted to ease them into it. I figure with some repeated exposure and seeing their mother drool with anticipation at the menu in an Indian restaurant, they would eventually want to see and taste what they have been missing!

Even though I could have predicted the outcome, I try not to have preconceived notions of how my kids will respond to food. I gave them equal portions and waited to see what would happen. My daughter immediately scrunched up her face and said, "Mom, you know I don't like saucy foods...especially with tomatoes." To that, my son jumped in and said, "But I am a saucy guy, Mom. I love it!" Never one to shy away from a challenge, I topped their chicken with some plain yogurt, reserved from the recipe. My daughter liked that better, but said that she would prefer a dish where the all of the chicken was simply buried in yogurt. I made a mental note of that one and will try to get her help in creating something like that in the future...In the meantime, see how your family responds to this dish. Enjoy!

Slow Cooker Indian Braised Chicken

By using a slow cooker to prepare this dish, you will be able enjoy a dinner that is ready when you return home from a day away!

1.5 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
1 can diced tomatoes, drained (14 ounces)
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon ginger, grated
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon garam masala (an Indian spice mix)
1/2 cup plain lowfat yogurt
1/4 cup cilantro or parsley, chopped

1. In a slow cooker, add chicken, tomatoes, onion, tomato paste, ginger, garlic, coriander, and cayenne.
2. Season with salt and pepper, and stir to combine.
3. Cook on low for 6 hours, or high for 3.5 hours.
4. Stir in yogurt and cilantro or parsley, and garam masala.
5. Serve with long grain brown rice.

Servings: 4 (with some left for lunch!)

CALL THE KIDS:

- Drain the canned tomatoes. Add to slow cooker.
- Peel garlic and press with garlic press.
- Measure spices and yogurt.
- Use scissors to cut up parsley or cilantro.

Nutrition (per serving): 201.9 calories; 21% calories from fat; 5.0g total fat; 87.8mg cholesterol; 309.4mg sodium; 770.5mg potassium; 15.8g carbohydrates; 3.0g fiber; 2.7g sugar; 12.8g net carbs; 24.5g protein.

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