

Créole Smothered Okra Masala

Serves 4

- **Trinity:** 1 large onion, roughly chopped; 1 green bell pepper, chopped; 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 lb fresh okra, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic (or 1 tablespoon chopped jarred garlic)
- 2-4 tablespoons pecan or olive oil or ghee (clarified butter)
- 3 dried bay leaves
- ¼ teaspoon ground or whole cardamom
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds (or ground cumin)
- 2 teaspoons Love Seasoning + season to taste (or ½ tsp. cayenne pepper powder & 1/2 teaspoon paprika powder)
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon black pepper + salt and pepper to taste
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- ½ can (14 oz.) tomato sauce
- 1 can (14 oz.) fire roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons coconut milk (I recommend culinary coconut milk)
- 1 tablespoon plain yogurt, whisked (or 1 tablespoon kefir)
- 1 lb raw or frozen Gulf shrimp – deveined, shelled and thawed (optional)

Method:

- In a large pot or sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of ghee or oil.
- When well heated, put in all the dry powdered spices and bay leaves.
- Mix well, allowing the spices to cook well. Allow them to fry for 30 seconds or so.
- Add two tablespoons of ghee and sauté the roughly chopped onions, bell pepper and celery on medium heat. Make sure not to brown the seasoning. Add salt and pepper to seasoning.
- When the peppers and celery are soft and the onions are translucent, add the garlic paste. Mix well and allow to fry for about 30 seconds.
- Remove Trinity and put half the okra in the pan, drizzled well with oil and seasoned with salt and pepper, and let cook until edges are brown and seeds begin to burst on both sides. Repeat with other half of okra. Add Trinity back to pan.
- Add the chopped tomatoes with the tomato paste and sauce with cinnamon, turmeric and Italian seasoning, and mix well.
- After a minute of stirring, add the coconut milk and whisked yogurt and mix everything well together.
- Add salt or Love Seasoning to taste, and allow the gravy to simmer on low heat for 10-15 minutes. Add some more tomato if it seems too crunchy.
- Just before serving, add the shrimp and allow it to cook in the curry until pink.
- Season with lemon juice and serve with steamed rice.

Bon manjé!