

Several years ago I woke up to the fact that I was jobless and my marriage had ended. I had come to another fork in my life. At first, I started another business. It didn't take long for me to realize that my work was unfulfilling. That's when I decided to travel around the world—alone on my motorcycle.

Over three years I traveled 62,000 miles through 35 countries on five continents. At first, I traveled too fast. I quickly learned that the goal of travel is not to check destinations off lists, but rather to experience culture and connect with people—most often over good food and drink.

After returning from this adventure, I'd come to yet another fork in the road. What do I do next? I decided to write a book—another journey that took me nearly as long as my around the world journey.

At first I planned to write a traditional travelog or memoir, but I realized the best way to share this adventure was beyond words. To recreate that experience I wanted to give readers more and let them see it with photos, to feel it through stories of culture and connection and to taste it with flavors of local food.

Agents and publishers asked me to simplify the idea, take out the food and photos. Rather than compromise, I decided to turn to the crowdfunding site, Kickstarter. After three years of work, my book is ready to print. FORKS, A Quest for Culture, Cuisine and Connection, is a 270 page hardcover book with 500 color photos and 40 recipes I collected from all over the world.

Of the many countries I had hoped to visit, but ran out of time before I could is Myanmar, or Burma. Though I'm not sure when, I will get to Burma and learn more about it's tumultuous history, culture and food.

So I've already begun my Burma discovery with this recipe shared with someone who recently had the chance to wander it's markets, countryside and ancient ruins. So join me as we travel to new lands where we can try new things and connect with others.

Burmese Lentil Chicken Curry

Now known as Myanmar and home to Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, the country once called Burma is nestled between India and China, Myanmar which means its food and culture influences and is influenced by both of its neighbors. With yellow lentils (chana dal) and spices (cumin, garam masala, etc.) are fond friends to Indian food. This comfort curry, not unlike other stews, is thicker and sometimes served over Chinese egg noodles or with Indian chapati bread. I prefer steamed basmati rice, but accompany this rich flavor sensation

with your preference. Serve with a cold frosty beer or a simple German Kabinett riesling.

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups dried yellow lentils
- 1 1/2 lbs boneless chicken thighs, cut into chunks
- 1/8 cup fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground turmeric
- 3/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon garam masala
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 tablespoon grapeseed oil
- 1 white onion, roughly chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 tomatoes, roughly chopped
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 3 bay leaves

Preparation

1. Rinse and then place lentils in a large saucepan; cover with enough water to sit 2 inches above lentils. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; cover, reduce heat, and simmer about 25 minutes or until tender. Drain and set aside.
2. Place chicken in a medium-sized bowl and pour over fish sauce and mix and marinate all chicken pieces for five minutes. While chicken is marinating, combine cumin and next seven ingredients (through ground cloves) in a large zip-loc plastic bag. Add chicken, seal and shake to coat all pieces.
3. Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion; sauté 2 minutes or until tender, add garlic and sauté for one minute more. Add chicken and spice mixture and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the chicken broth and cayenne pepper while scraping the pan to loosen chicken bits. Add tomatoes, lemon juice, lentils and bay leaves. cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Uncover, stir curry, and let simmer for 10 more minutes. Discard the bay leaves, and serve over steamed rice or with chapati bread.