This silky Butter Paneer is a decadent vegetarian dish, derived from its carnivorous cousin Butter Chicken, born in Delhi but enjoyed around the world. It’s a rich, luxuriously appointed recipe and what’s more the gravy can be made in advance, chilled or frozen then brought to temperature when you’re ready to add the paneer.
Butter Paneer (Delhi)

SERVES 6

4 tablespoons butter
80ml vegetable oil
3 kashmiri red chillies
2 tsp ginger paste
2 tsp garlic paste
1 bay leaf
1 inch cinnamon stick

3 cloves
2 cardamoms
½ tsp peppercorns
3 tablespoons cashew nuts (chopped)
1 onion (roughly chopped)
6 tomatoes (roughly chopped)
1 tsp chilli powder
1 tsp garam masala
½ tsp turmeric
3 tablespoons tomato ketchup
140ml water
400g paneer cubes
3 tablespoons double cream
Salt

Using a large pan, heat a tablespoon of butter and a tablespoon of oil over a medium heat. Now add the red chillies, ginger and garlic paste and all the whole spices (bay leaves, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom and peppercorns). Cook for a couple of minutes until they yield their musk and then add the cashew nuts and onions.

Sauté the onions until they turn blonde then add the tomatoes and mix well. Cover and cook until the tomatoes start breaking down, the mix starts to get jammy and the oil starts to gather at the edges. Take off the heat and allow to cool.

Once the pan has cooled down, remove as many of the visible whole spices as possible, transfer everything to a blender and pulse until smooth.

Using the same pan, add the remaining butter and the pulped gravy, then add the garam masala, chilli powder, turmeric, tomato ketchup, salt and 140ml water and bring the pan to the boil. Turn down to a medium heat and simmer for 30 minutes until the oil surfaces to the top. Turn down to a very low heat.

Meanwhile in a non stick frying pan, add the remaining oil and heat over a medium high temperature for 3-4 minutes. Then turn down to a medium heat and fry the paneer cubes on all sides until crispy with brown patches. Drain on kitchen paper towel and pop into the bubbling gravy. Stir in the double cream, reserve some to dress the dish and serve.

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