

My mother's Handvo

Snack, spicy, Gujarati



Purnima Patel

Purnima Patel has lived in many continents but now resides in Bethesda, Maryland. She is the mother of two grown daughters. She works as a cytotechnologist in the Pathology Lab at Virginia Hospital Center. In her spare time, she loves to cook, read and travel.

My mom married my dad – both Gujaratis- in 1945 at a very young age in India and went with him to start their life in Uganda, where my siblings and I were born and raised. My mom, and many others like her, rooted their lives by establishing all their Indian customs and foods in the completely foreign environment.



Purnima with her mother in Entebbe. There is a kerosene stove under the tree.

A favorite ritual in my life in Kampala was Sundays. My dad would pack the family into our car and drive off to the beach at Entebbe to spend the day. My parents would have planned the food with our family friends and relatives ahead of time. All the children and dads would play on the beach, while the moms would turn on kerosene stoves to start cooking the lunch.

One of the items my mom would make was *Handvo*, which is a baked Gujarat staple that one can eat at any time, hot or cold. Although Handvo is normally cooked in an oven, on the beach she would cook it on the stove with a few hot coals on the lid to imitate an oven. She would always serve her homemade *chundo*, a sweet/sour mango pickle, with it.

Many years later when I got married and moved to America, I craved to recreate my Sunday memories. I got my mom's recipe, which I learnt through her letters across oceans. Freshly made Handvo is now my family's favorite Sunday ritual.

Serves 4-6

Preparation Time: 5 hrs. Soaking, 8 hrs. Fermenting, 45 minutes cooking

Ingredients:

- ½ cup toovar dal
- ½ cup chana dal
- 1cup rice
- ½ to 1 cup sour yogurt
- 1 cup grated bottle gourd (doodhi) substitute green zucchini

- 1 small onion grated (optional)
- 1 tbs brown sugar or 1tbs of jaggery (or to taste)
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp ginger chili paste (or to taste)
- salt to taste
- ½ tsp soda bicarb

For tempering:

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp sesame seeds (plus more to sprinkle on top)
- 1/2 tsp whole methi seeds
- 1/4 tsp asafoetida
- 1 piece cinnamon
- 4 whole cloves
- 1-2 whole red chillies (to taste)

Method

Clean, wash and soak the dals and rice together in enough water for at least 4 to 5 hours.

Drain, and blend in a mixer to a coarse mixture using the yogurt. Add salt and turmeric and mix well. Cover and keep aside to ferment overnight.

When ready to make, add the rest of the ingredients and mix well, adjust seasoning and set aside.

Heat the 2 tbsp. of oil in a non-stick kadhai and add the clove, cinnamon, ½ tsp. sesame, mustard, and methi seeds.

When the seeds crackle, add the asafoetida.

Mix the tempered oil into the batter, taste and adjust seasoning.

Have a well-greased sheet cake baking tray ready depending on how thin or thick you want the final Handvo.

Pour the batter into the greased baking tray and sprinkle a generous layer of sesame seeds over it.

Bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°C (400°F) for 30 to 35 minutes or till the crust is golden brown in color.

Cut into squares and serve hot or cold with pickle of your choice, and salty lassi.