

## Avocado Oil Masala Paste

I love spicy food, but sometimes when you eat food made with hot peppers, all you can taste is heat. You know what I'm talking about — that *nothing tastes good because your mouth is on fire* kind of heat.

After years of cooking and trying different kinds of dishes, I've found that there are two kinds of spicy. The warm, aromatic version you get from things like cinnamon, ginger, and cloves, and then the chili pepper kind that burns your mouth. I like both, don't get me wrong, but in cool weather, I prefer the former, with a bit of heat from peppers, but not too much.

This week's recipe is for something a little different. It's not for a meal that you can make for dinner, but this recipe for masala paste can help you turn a lot of different foods into amazing meals. It's so easy, and seriously good.

It starts with a base of tomato paste, and added to that is a potent blend of herbs and spices and, of course, avocado oil. I cook the tomato paste in the oil in a skillet over low heat to deepen the flavor, but you can definitely skip that step if you want to.

Once you've blended it together, you have endless possibilities for how to use it. It's perfect made into curries with coconut milk —

it's particularly good with chicken or shrimp. I've cooked it with red lentils and spinach, and even spread it over naan for a snack. One recipe is enough for several meals — you only need a couple tablespoons to get the flavor. You can use this in place of any jarred curry paste you may have used in the past, and trust me, this is way better. Just sauté some onion and a protein of your choice, add a dollop of masala paste with some stewed tomatoes and coconut milk. Serve over rice. Delicious.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin avocado oil
- 5 tablespoons tomato paste (about half a small can)
- 1 3-inch knob of ginger, peeled and grated (or about 2 teaspoons jarred)
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes (more or less depending on how much heat you like)
- 4 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 bunch cilantro leaves

#### Directions:

Put the cumin and coriander in a dry skillet and heat over medium heat. Toast for 2-3 minutes, until fragrant. Using either a mortar and pestle or spice grinder, grind the spices until fine.

In a large deep skillet, add the oil to the pan and heat over medium heat. Add the tomato paste, and cook for 5-6 minutes, turning with a rubber spatula every minute or so. Add the cumin and coriander, ginger, red pepper flakes, paprika, garam masala, and salt. Cook for 2 more minutes, stirring constantly. Turn off heat and let cool for a few minutes and transfer to a blender or food processor, making sure to get all the oil from the pan.

Pulse until smooth and transfer to a small jar or airtight container. Store in the fridge for up to a week, or in the freezer for up to 2 months.

Note: to skip cooking the tomato paste, simply toast the seeds and toss them in a food processor with the remaining ingredients. Blend and store.