

## **Thaal**

*Thaal* is a variety of dishes that are prepared for Maharaj so that we can feed Him food items of our choice. It is important that we offer food to Maharaj. One thing we need to remember is, when we feel hungry our Maharaj feels hungry, so before we start to eat we must offer Him thaal.

One way of offering thaal to Maharaj is by doing maansi pooja, this should be ideally performed five times a day:

1. In the morning
2. Around 11 o'clock
3. Around 4 o'clock
4. Around 6 o'clock
5. Before you go sleep

This web page will teach you many ways in which to prepare food so that we can offer thaal to Maharaj both physically and mentally.

### **What thoughts should be occurring while preparing thaal?**

While preparing thaal it is extremely important that our mind and thoughts are clean and pure. Our mind should be focused solely on Maharaj. We need to remember that we are preparing food for Him.

Thoughts that are in our mind whilst we're preparing the food, are passed into our meal, we then serve this food to other people. The people that are going to be eating our food will begin to think similar thoughts as when we made the food.

For example, if we had angry thoughts while preparing food, the person eating our food will begin to become hot tempered. If we were thinking pleasant thoughts and thinking of Maharaj. The person eating our food will be calm natured, these good thoughts are called *saatvik vichaar* (pure thoughts).

There are many ways in which we can carry out *saatvik vichaar* while preparing food. Singing Maharaj's kirtans, dhuns, or listening to katha while preparing food are some ways to have pleasant thoughts. Whilst preparing food, we should never think that we are making this for ourselves, friends or family, but always think that we are making this for Maharaj. When we eat food we should never think this is my food but this is *prasad* (sanctified/blessed food) that Maharaj has given me with His love.

### **The thaali**

The *thaali* (plate) which we serve Maharaj in should be different from the rest of our dishes. It should be made of gold, silver or brass. We should have taburis (small drinking vessel) for milk and water, small bowls for serving different types of food, and a spoon. All of these utensils should be different from the ones you eat with. You must **NEVER** eat from His plate or use His utensils, or serve food to anyone on this plate.

You must remember that Maharaj only eats from His devotees that have clean and pure thought, and those that feed Him with love.

All liquids including water, milk, ghee and oil must be filtered using a *garnu* (cotton cloth used for filtering, not a plastic sieve) prior to drinking or being used in the preparation of any food. Water remains filtered for up to six hours after that it must be refiltered. Butter must be melted and filtered using a *garnu*

### **Why it is important for us to do thaal?**

The reason why we prepare thaal for Maharaj is to show our *bhaav* (love) towards Him and do His *seva* (service). He is giving us the opportunity to feed Him. Once the thaal is prepared, decorate His plate with all the food neatly arranged. In a glass prepare warm milk with *kesar*(saffron), *badam*(almonds) and *pista*(pistachio) and a glass of cold water. Make sure you remember Maharaj's favourite, *ghor* (jaggery) and *antharaan*(pickle). Stand in front of the sinhasan facing Maharaj, and mentally feed with your own hands. Sing a thaal such as 'Jamo Thaal Jeevan' or 'Rudi Randhi Mein', alternatively you can chant the following mantra:

**“Dhrut Pakvam Havishyanam, Paaya-Sanch SaSharkraam  
Nana-Vidhan Cha NaiVedhyam, Shree Hare Prati Grah-Yatam”**

After feeding Maharaj, we should mix the food into the original dishes so that the prasad is shared amongst everyone.

### **Benefits of not eating outside food**

A lot of our Swainarayan satsangis do not eat outside food, i.e. restaurant food, bread, biscuits, etc as they do not filter the water, milk, oil, ghee with a cotton cloth, they do not observe the Rajasvala dharma (period of menses, where a female does not perform religious and domestic duties for 3 days), their thoughts may be impure, etc. Lord Shree Swaminarayan states in the Shikshapatri Shlok 19

“One shall never accept food or drink prepared by a person from whom one is prohibited by holy scriptures, even if it is the Prasad from the offerings to Lord Shree Krishna. However, it may be accepted if it is Prasad from the offering in Jagannathpuri.”

By preparing food with our own hands, we achieve the following:

- We are able to offer the food to Maharaj.
- Fulfil his *aagna* (wishes).
- The ingredients are fresh.
- No unknown additives, preservatives, e-numbers, egg, meat, fish extracts/derivatives.
- Control the amount of fat intake.
- Rajasvala dharma is observed.
- Good thoughts are going into the food.
- Better hygiene.
- Cheaper

## **Saaks**

Serves 5-6

### **Standard vaghaar**

1 tbsp sunflower oil  
1 small dried or fresh chilli chopped in half  
1 pinch methi seeds (fennel)  
4 laving (cloves)  
1 small piece taj (cinnamon)  
1 tsp rai (mustard seeds)  
1 ½ tsp jeeru (cumin seeds)  
5-6 washed limbro (curry leaves)

### **Method**

Put the sunflower oil in the saucepan, with the chilli, methi, laving and taj on a low heat with the lid covering the saucepan. Once the methi seeds have gone red, add the mustard seeds and cover the saucepan. Once the majority of mustard seeds have popped, add the jeeru and limbro.

### **Bateta-nu saak (potato curry)**

Vaghaar items

4-5 medium potatoes, diced (any type)  
½ cup hot water (optional)  
1 ½ tsp salt  
¼ tsp hardar (tumeric)  
3 fresh tomatoes  
1 tsp of aadoo marcha (ginger and chilli paste)  
1 ½ tsp lemon juice  
small piece of ghor (jaggery)  
1 ½ tsp ground dhana jeeru (coriander and cumin powder)  
fresh chopped coriander

### **Method**

Do a standard vaghaar, add the diced potatoes, and keep stirring on a medium flame so that the potatoes don't stick to the pan. If you want the saak to be of runny consistency, add the hot water at this point. When the potatoes have cooked, add the salt and hardar and stir. Then after a few minutes, add the tomatoes, aadoo marcha and lemon. Turn the gas on slow heat and let the saak cook. Keep checking on the saak, making sure it's not burning and is cooking nicely. Finally add the ghor, dhana jeeru and fresh coriander and serve with naan or rotli.

### **Variations**

Chana bateta (chickpeas and potatoes) – 3 handfuls of boiled chick peas.

Matar bateta (peas and potatoes) – 3 handfuls of boiled peas.

## **Rotli**

Flour

Ghee

Hot water

## **Method**

Sieve the flour into a gamelu (big bowl). Take some of that flour out into a small bowl. The amount of flour sieved should depend on how many people you are cooking for. Add 2 tbsp of ghee and mix in. Then add the water, which should be boiling hot. Knead till the flour and water combine into dough. Soften the dough by adding a bit more ghee.

Heat a tavi (flat round pan) on a medium flame. Take some dough the size of a table tennis ball and flatten. Coat both sides in the separate flour that was put to one side at the start. Put onto the patlo (rolling board) and roll into a thin round chapatti using a velan (rolling pin). Put the rotli onto the tavi, leave it for around 10 seconds and turn over. Press the rotli gently using a piece of kitchen towel and turn over. Put onto a plate and coat in ghee.

## **Variations**

Masala rotli – add jeeru, dhana jeeru powder, salt, haydar, fresh methi and fresh coriander.

**Bateta (potato) bhajiya**

4 medium sized potatoes  
1 tbsp ajmo (parsley seeds)  
1 handful of fresh methi  
1 handful of fresh coriander  
1 tbsp jeeru  
1 tbsp aadoo marcha  
1 tsp hardar  
1 tsp soda bicarbonate  
2 tsp salt  
2 cups chana flour (chickpea/besan flour)  
Lemon juice  
Sunflower oil for deep frying

Finely slice the potatoes to resemble potato crisps. Fill half of a deep saucepan with sunflower oil and heat on a medium flame. In a separate bowl, mix the ajmo, fresh methi, fresh coriander, jeeru, aadoo marcha, hardar, soda bicarbonate and salt. Add the chana flour and mix with the potato slices. Put in some lemon juice until the slices have a thin coat of the mixture on it. The coating should be thin and not runny at all. Then one by one place each of the coated potato slices into the preheated oil and turn the heat to full. Cook both sides until light brown and remove. Place on kitchen towel to remove excess oil.

**Variations**

Potatoes can be replaced with slices of red and green capsicums, gisori, fresh chillies, karela (bitter gourd) or aubergines

## **Drinks**

### **Banana Milk Shake**

Serves 1 -2

1 banana, sliced  
500ml milk  
1 tbsp honey or sugar

Liquidise all ingredients in a blender and serve chilled.

### **Fresh lemon sherbet**

Serves 4

2 large lemons  
Honey or sugar to taste  
1 litre boiling water

Peel lemon finely, cut in half and squeeze out the juice. Dissolve honey or sugar in water, add lemon peel and let stand for 30 minutes. Then add the lemon juice. Chill and strain before serving.

### **Mango milkshake**

Serves 4

1 litre milk  
3 large ripe kesar mangoes, peeled and chopped  
3 tsp sugar

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until soft and creamy. Serve chilled.

**Variations:** strawberry milkshake can be made using 250g of strawberries instead of mangoes and 3-4 teaspoons of sugar.

## **Desserts**

### **Chocolate sponge cake**

250 grams self raising flour  
300 grams milk  
125 grams butter, melted  
200 grams sugar  
2 level teaspoon baking powder  
1 level teaspoon bi-carbonate of soda  
2 table spoon cocoa powder  
2 teaspoon vanilla essence

Sieve the self raising flour and add the filtered milk along with the melted butter. Please note: filter the melted butter through a cotton cloth before adding to the mixture. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix it until there are no lumps in the mixture. Smear the cake tray with a thin layer oil and sift some self raising flour to cover the layer of oil. This is to ensure the cake does not stick to the cake tin. Ladle the mixture into the cake tin and place in the oven, preheated on gas mark 4 for 30 minutes. To test the whether the cake is cooked, poke a clean, dry knife into the centre. If the knife comes away clean then it is ready, otherwise cook for a further 5 minutes. Once cooked turn upside down on a wired tray to cool.

### **Fresh fruit salad**

Serves 6

1 litre whole milk  
½ tsp ground elachi (cardomon)  
1 pinch of ground taj (cinnanmon powder)  
1 pinch kesar (saffron)  
2 tbsp sugar  
125g seedless grapes  
1 banana  
1 pomegranate  
1 ripe pear  
¼ pineapple  
4-5 finely chopped almonds  
6-7 finely chopped pistachios

Boil the filtered milk and then reduce on a low heat for 15 minutes, continuously stirring it to avoid it from sticking to the bottom. Add the elachi, taj, kesar and sugar. Cool the milk in a sink full of cold water. Chop the fruit into small pieces. Sieve the milk to remove the froth and malai from the milk. Add the milk and fruits together and garnish with the almonds and pistachios. Serve chilled.