



Mark's

# Onion Bhaji



## Background

Onion Bhajis must surely be the Prince of fritters. Great slices of succulent softened onion in a 'crispy on the outer edges', 'soft on the inner' spicy dough. The basic recipe is simple – but there are endless variations according to taste as the bhaji can take all sorts of seasoning. Popular with kids it is a sure-fire success – and so easy to make.


I rediscovered it during lockdown when, deprived of bread flour in the shops, I started looking to see what the possibilities of others flours were. There was no run on gram flour – or baking powder – so it was soda bread and bhajis!

 **Prep time:** 30 mins

 **Cooking time:** 20 mins

 **Difficulty:** Easy

 **Serves:** 4-6

 **Course:** Starter

## You will need

A deep frying pan (or wok) in which to shallow fry

## Ingredients:

4	Large onions	Finely sliced
200 grams	Gram flour**	Gram flour, besan, or chickpea flour, is a flour made from chickpeas.
1 tsp	Baking powder	
1 tsp	Chilli powder	Or, 1-2 hot green chillies (to taste), finely chopped
1 tsp	1 tsp turmeric	
	Vegetable oil	For frying
2 tsp	Black onion seeds	AKA Nigella or Kalonji seeds)**
	Lemon Juice*	Half a lemon's worth
1 tsp	Cumin seeds*	Coarsely chopped
½ tsp	Fennel seeds*	
4 tsp	2 tsp root ginger*	Finely grated
2 cloves	2 cloves of garlic*	Finely chopped
1 bunch	Fresh coriander*	Small bunch, chopped

\* Optional

\*\* Available from Al Amin's store on Mill Road

## Method

1	Chop the onions into crescent slices. Some recipes suggest soaking the onions before putting them into the batter which you will shortly make – too much faff!
2	Mix the gram flour, baking powder and spices and salt in a mixing bowl. Some recipes suggest sifting the flour – too much faff!

3	Mix in about 200ml of cold water to make a thick batter – add more if the batter is too stiff.
4	Heat about 5cm of oil in your wok or pan. Heat it until it begins to smoke or when a tiny bit of batter you put into the oil rises browning and bubbling to the surface.
5	Lower heaped tbsps of the bhaji mixture into the pan, a few at a time, and cook for a few mins, turning once, until they are evenly browned and crisp, so about 3-4 mins. When you first put them in they may not look very promising – too random in their arrangement to make a cohesive bhaji – but that is the magic of the gram flour – have faith – they WILL bind together - you cannot go far wrong! Chances are, you will be cooking your bhajis in batches of 6-8. Keep the ready-cooked ones on a tray on a low heat in the oven till needed.
6	Drain the cooked bhajis on some paper kitchen towel (if you are sufficiently patient and don't eat them as soon as they come out the pan)
7	Serve – or cool and freeze – but nothing beats eating them as soon as they come out of the pan

### Serving suggestion

Sprinkle with some of the chopped fresh coriander before serving.  
Serve with some Mango (or other Indian) chutney

### Geeta's Chutneys and Pickles



Geeta's chutneys are fabulous accompaniment to the bhajis – slightly more expensive than many chutneys – but proportionately better. Available in Al Amin's store on Mill Road



### Nigella Seeds

Also known as black cumin, black seed, onion seeds, black caraway and fennel flower. Most commonly these seeds are known as nigella or *kalonji* (from Hindi).

Nigella is a member of the buttercup (Ranunculaceae) family. They were said to have been found in King Tut's tomb and have been used as a preservative, a spice, and as the Prophet Muhammad claimed, a seed with healing powers.