



Party Like It's Diwali

In that one of the fastest growing minority populations in the United States is the Indian population – and given that Indian cuisine, as a diversion from the weekday meal is the fastest growing ethnic cuisine, Americans may be surprised to learn that New Year's will come a bit earlier this year ... India's New Year, that is.

India's weeklong festival of lights and celebration of good over evil is widely celebrated as Diwali (pronounced Di-val-i), with the heart of the festivities celebrated worldwide on November 5. Interesting, colorful and celebratory, Diwali or the Festival of Lights celebrates each day of the week with unique traditions and festive customs:

Day 1: Happy Dhan Teras

One of the Indian Gods revered during Diwali is Lord Rama, who returned from exile on this day after defeating evil and restoring goodness. On Dhan Teras (day one), many prepare and shop for items symbolic of the week's festivities, including new clothes for the new year, candies for customary gifts and fireworks to scare away darkness, or evil.

Day 2: Happy Naraka Chaturdas

This day roughly translates into the end of the demon Narakasura and pays homage to Lord Vishnu and his triumph. Traditionalists will bathe before dawn or dusk, put on brand new clothing and light only a few candles or fireworks.

Day 3: Diwali!

This is India's New Year's Eve! The center of the week's celebrations and festivities, Diwali is also known as Lakshmi Puja (after the Goddess of Light and Prosperity). All who recognize Diwali will clean house, say prayers, adorn doorways and use every candle, lantern and firecracker available to light up their homes and streets to welcome in a new year of wealth and goodness ... thus its name, the Festival of Lights.

Day 4: Happy Annakut

Nearing the end of the celebrations, Annakut is a day for remembering Krishna's defeat of evil and protection of shepherds through lively, brightly colored decorations and feasts. This elaborate day not only gives thanks but also symbolizes the promise of eating well throughout the coming year.

Day 5: Happy Bhayiduj

Indian legend says that brother and sister gods, Yama and Yami, visited with each other to strengthen their familial bond, feast, exchange tokens of affection and make promises of care and protection. On this last day of Diwali, many siblings follow in their footsteps.

Tandoor Chef, a leading frozen Indian cuisine found widely in grocery aisles across the country, is one authentic Indian food manufacturer working to help consumers better understand this important holiday with meal ideas and more. Try this traditional Indian meal on Annakut in honor of the Diwali's Feast day. Or, share in the celebration with D.I.Y. (Diwali It Yourself) Diwali ideas, customizable e-cards and more found on TandoorChef.com, [Twitter.com/TandoorChef](https://twitter.com/TandoorChef) and [Facebook.com/TandoorChef](https://facebook.com/TandoorChef).

Diwali Meal Planner

Appetizer: Tandoor Chef Jumbo Samosa, a fluffy pastry stuffed with spicy potato and peas.

Main Course: Tandoor Chef Chicken Tikka Masala served with naan bread is a traditional Indian meal to help jump-start any Diwali celebration

Dessert: Almost Seera

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of coarse wheat flour
- 1-1/2 cup of blanched almonds
- 1 teaspoon of Cardamom Powder
- ¼ teaspoon of crushed Saffron strands
- 1 tablespoon of whole milk
- 8-10 blanched almonds finely chopped into slivers
- 1-1/4 cup of Ghee
- 3 cups of water
- 1 cup of sugar

Directions:

First, dissolve the crushed Saffron in the warm milk. Keep it aside for some time. Now dry and make a powder out of the blanched almonds. Save 10 almonds for the garnish. Melt the Ghee in a large and heavy pan. Sprinkle it with flour. Stir and fry the mixture for about 2-3 minutes. Next, add the almond powder to the mixture and again stir and fry the mixture until it becomes golden and smells sweet. The mixture should be stirred continuously. Add the water and again stir and cook it. Then, add the sugar to the mixture. When the Ghee starts to exude, add the Cardamom and saffron to the mixture. Now, stir and place the prepared dish into the serving dish. Garnish it with the chopped almonds.

For more information on Tandoor Chef, please contact:

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