



Thanjai

Idli: Fluffy, round, white as snow

In this day and age, it can feel impossible to maintain a healthy diet because of many reasons. From the lack of time to cook a healthy dish amidst all of our busy lives, to the financial ease of spending just \$5 at McDonald's for a filling meal, and then of course the general misconception that healthy food is not as tasty as junk.

But the fact of the matter is that healthy food, especially vegan food, can be just as flavorful if not more, than your favorite junky meal. One dish that provides a strong case for this argument is a classic South Indian snack - idli.

What is Idli? Why is Idli healthy?

Fluffy, round, white as snow, and pillow-like, idli is the perfect snack for just about anybody; and yet, it is made out of just two simple ingredients - rice and lentils.

The batter is specifically made from steaming fermented rice and black lentils together. Steaming is a wonderful, unique, and healthy alternative to most snacks which are often fried and oily, especially because steaming preserves all of the natural nutrients.

The fermentation process also increases the protein and vitamin content, while simultaneously breaking down the starch so it can be more easily digested in the body. Even celebrities like Madonna have discovered the health benefits, and tastiness, of idli and adopted it into their diet when trying to lose weight. Idli is great for weight reduction because it can satisfy your carb cravings whilst also remaining low in calories because there is little grease. One idli has just 39 calories, with no saturated fat or cholesterol.

Since idli is incredibly filling, some consider it enough for a whole meal. In fact, idli is a staple breakfast meal in India.

What to Eat With Idli:

The important thing to remember about idli is that it always is accompanied by a side dish to add the classic Indian spice and flavor to the savory rice cake. Some common side dishes include sambar, coconut chutney, and coriander chutney. For a list of more sides, check out this informative article by Padhu's Kitchen!

US Vice President elect, Kamala Harris, who is also half-South Indian, personally prefers idli paired with "really good sambar" as one of her favorite meals. Fun fact: Did you know that Kamala Harris' mother moved to the US from Tamil Nadu in South India, only to become a cancer biologist? Talk about the immigrant hustle!

Who Invented Idli?

Believe it or not, idli did not originate from India despite being a staple Indian food today. Food historian K.T. Achaya postulates that idli arrived in India anywhere between 800 to 1200 BCE all the way from Indonesia, because this area was ruled by Hindus dynasties at the time. Meaning, Indian cooks that worked for royals' presumably returned to India with this delicious new recipe up their sleeve, ready to share.

Another food historian, Lizzie Collingham, suggests that idli came from Arab traders that settled down in India who were particularly strict about their diet thereby sticking to eating mostly rice balls, which eventually turned to flattened rice cakes of sorts eaten with a coconut gravy, soon becoming the idli we all know and love today.

Where does your stance on idli's origins lie? Do you have your own unique theory? Let us know!

World Idli Day

It has been said that Idli has been around since at least 800 BCE. As such, Idli is absolutely beloved by Indians all across the subcontinent.

So much so, that one extremely passionate Idli lover decided to create World Idli Day, to be celebrated on March 30 every year. The creator of World Idli Day, Eniyavan, commemorated its beginning by cooking 1,328 different types of Idli in 2015. Yes, you read that right - over 1,300 kinds of Idli! His idli innovations are inspired by his daily life, like his pizza idli. People might think that because of its bland appearance that Idli is a "boring dish", but Eniyavan clearly proved otherwise.

Fortunately, a large variety of idlis can be found right here in Montreal as well. Check out this list of South Indian restaurants in the area for you to satisfy all of your idli curiosities.

