

Vegetable Pakora

Base batter (makes ~40 balls):

- Gram flour: 500g
- Onion: 8 small / 6 large
- Garlic: 10 cl
- Eggs: 2
- Bouillon: 2 tbsp
- Turmeric: 2 tbsp
- Cumin: 2 tbsp
- Coriander: 2 heaped tsp
- Ginger: 2 heaped tsp
- Chilli powder: 2 heaped tsp (or more to taste)
- Baking powder: 1 heaped tsp
- Salt: large shake
- Pepper: few twists
- Vegetable oil: enough for deep fat frying

Bonus bits to taste:

- Fresh coriander (handful) - parsley works too
- Small chunk of grated fresh ginger (1cm square)
- Fresh chillies

You can replace some or all of the onion with an equivalent volume of any combination of:

- Peas
- Chopped peppers
- Cauliflower (finely chopped, lightly steamed)
- Mushrooms
- Grated carrot

Chop the onions - not too finely. Mix up the flour, bouillon and spices in a large bowl. Mix in the eggs and water (400g ish) until it has a "soft dropping" consistency. Chop/crush the garlic and mix through. Break up the onions and mix them in along with any bonus bits (see above) and the salt and pepper. Mix in the baking powder last.

Heat up the vegetable oil in a large pot - needs to be 3cm deep or so. It is hot enough when a drop of batter floats and sizzles. Use two spoons to make small egg-sized balls of mixture and gently place them into the oil (be wary of splashes). The balls should sizzle and produce lots of fine bubbles. Keep the balls separate and move them around, making sure they're cooked evenly. They should take 2-3 minutes to cook and should be the colour of onion skin when cooked. Use a holey ladle to remove them from the pot and shake/drain off any excess oil before transferring to a cooling rack coated in kitchen towel. Use the first batch as tasters to check the spice mixture and adjust as necessary. Keep going - don't allow the oil to overheat between batches. If required, put them in the oven on a low heat to keep warm until you're ready to serve.

They are best warm and fresh, but can be eaten cold. To reheat: gas 5 / 180°C for 10-15m. If covered, they will keep in the fridge for a few days. Freezing is possible but they should be defrosted then reheated.

Adjustments for bhajis:

Bhajis should be crispier and less doughy than pakora, and should be like little nests rather than smooth balls. Use more onions for the same amount of batter, and chop them into larger strips (halve and slice them). Add a bit more water to the batter so it's slightly lighter - like very thick cream. Finally, when forming the balls, make them a bit flatter and wider (this also means you can get away with using less oil).