

Where it all started



Britain's involvement in curry dates back to the days of British India, in the 18th and 19th centuries, when some 20,000 British soldiers were stationed across the sub-continent.

The birth of curry is inextricably linked with the pioneering soldiers, indeed many of today's curry recipes were adapted from local recipes as the troops became accustomed to the spicy dishes made by the cooks of the East India Company.

Mulligatawny Soup for example is an Anglicised version of a more pungent forebear which was actually a type of pepper sauce. Similarly Kedgerree was originally a rice and lentil dish but was adapted to be a breakfast dish containing fish.

Indians referred to their different dishes by specific names and would have served the British with Madras, Rogan Josh and Dopiaza rather than 'curry'.

The origins of the word "curry" lie with the Portuguese who used a Tamil word 'Karil' to describe a mixture of spices, or spiced sauce which was used for seasoning as well as for sautéed vegetables and meat. British soldiers became so accustomed to 'curry' that it became part of their staple diet.

Now dishes like Madras, Lamb Rogan Josh and Chicken Korma are so popular in British they have replaced traditional dishes such as steak and kidney pie and roast dinners.

Dishes develop and change according to a host of new influences but it is the soldiers of the British Raj we have to thank for bringing the dish to these islands.