Maaaavadu

This image captures the timeless essence of a South Indian summer. An elderly grandmother, the family's culinary matriarch, is seen meticulously preparing Maavadu (tender baby mango pickle) in her rustic, sun-drenched kitchen.

By Uma | April 7, 2026



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Ingredients

- **Baby Mangoes (Vadu Mangai):** 1 kg (Look for the ones with stalks attached)
- **Castor Oil:** 1-2 tbsp (This keeps the mangoes shiny and prevents mold)
- **Rock Salt:** 1 cup (Adjust to taste; rock salt is better for preservation)
- **Red Chili Powder:** 1.5 cups (Use a mix of spicy and Kashmiri for color)
- **Mustard Seeds:** 4-5 tbsp
- **Turmeric Powder:** 2 tbsp
- **Asafoetida (Hing):** 1.5 tbsp (Preferably solid/compounded hing, roasted and powdered)

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Preparation

- Wash the baby mangoes thoroughly in cold water.
- **Crucial Step:** Pat them completely dry with a clean kitchen towel. Any moisture will cause the pickle to spoil.
- Trim the stalks slightly, but leave a tiny bit of the stem intact.

2. The First Coating

- Place the dried mangoes in a large, clean glass jar (Bharani) or a ceramic crock.
- Add the **castor oil** and toss well until every mango is coated.
- Add the **salt** and **turmeric powder**. Shake the jar well.
- Cover the jar and let it sit for **2-3 days**. Shake the jar twice a day. You will notice the mangoes shrinking slightly and releasing water (brine).

3. The Spice Mix

- Grind the **mustard seeds** into a fine powder.
- If using solid **hing**, roast it slightly and powder it.
- In a bowl, mix the chili powder, mustard powder, and hing.

4. The Final Cure

- Add the spice mix directly into the jar with the mangoes and their brine.
- Mix gently with a dry wooden spoon.
- Close the lid tightly. Tie a clean cloth over the lid to keep it airtight.
- **Wait:** Shake the jar once a day for the next **10-14 days**.

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Pro-Tips for Success

- **The "Water" Rule:** Never add external water. The mangoes will release enough liquid to create a thick, spicy gravy.
- **Storage:** Use a sterilized glass or ceramic jar. Avoid plastic or metal, as the salt and acid will react with them.
- **Hygiene:** Always use a **completely dry spoon** when taking the pickle out.
- **The Mustard Kick:** If you like a stronger pungent flavor, you can coarsely grind the mustard seeds with a teaspoon of water into a paste and add it, though the dry powder method lasts longer.

Best Served With

Maavadu is the ultimate companion for **Curd Rice (Thayir Sadam)**. The contrast between the cold, creamy rice and the spicy, tangy mango is a South Indian classic.

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