

International Women's Day is tomorrow. Although it has been around for more than a century, IWD is not particularly well known in the United States. I doubt you'll find a large stock of cards to choose from at the Colonial Pharmacy or even your favorite gift shop. However, after the historic Women's March in January, there might be a bit more interest and excitement this year.

So what's it all about? A National Women's Day was declared in the early days of the last century to honor the Garment Workers' Strike of 1908. It quickly went international. From Armenia and Azerbaijan to Chile, Herzegovina, Macedonia, Romania, Zambia and more, people around the world observe International Women's Day on March 8. It is a day to celebrate women's achievements and push for gender equality.



How can you, should you celebrate International Women's Day? Be bold, be bold for change. IWD is a call to action to help make a better working world, a gender equal world. Think of it as an opportunity to commit yourself to change. Overwhelmed? Don't be; it's okay to take one simple step. And please, don't be shy. Feel free to declare what you will do to help accelerate gender parity in your home, in your state or across the world.

The leaders of the Women's March have suggested that, if they can, women should take the day off from work. More than forty years ago, the women of Iceland went on one-day strike and it changed the course of history. They skipped the office as well as the never-ending pile of laundry, cooking and childcare. They took to the streets for a massive demonstration and brought the country to a standstill. Schools, shops and offices closed. The businesses that remained open were bedlam with harried fathers trying to get some work done and keep their children entertained.

Next, women can exercise their economic power and stay out of the stores. Women drive seventy to eighty percent of all buying decisions in the United States. Decide to buy nothing on March 8. If you feel you can't possibly stay out of the shops for even one day, stick to small, local women- or minority-owned businesses.

And finally, you can put your pink hat away. The color of International Women's Day is red. There may not be a march up Main Street in your town or mine. However, when you stroll into the local bookstore or visit a friend in the hospital, your red sweater will show your support.

Don't forget to celebrate. Read a book by your favorite woman author, visit the Soo Sunny Park exhibition at the Currier Museum or see the stars at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center. International Women's Day is a time to honor women and feel inspired by their long list of social, economic, cultural and political achievements.

Be bold, celebrate and bon appétit!

Shrimp Curry with Spinach

Perhaps you will end your day with a gathering of friends to celebrate your own accomplishments, friendship and solidarity. Enjoy!

Serves 6

About 1/4 cup your favorite curry paste*

Olive oil

1/2 onion, cut in thin wedges

1 carrot, cut in small dice

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

3 cloves garlic, minced

1-inch piece fresh ginger, minced

1 1/2 cups unsweetened coconut milk

1/2-1 cup shrimp or chicken stock

1 1/2 cups Basmati rice

1-2 tablespoons butter (optional)

1 1/2-2 pounds jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined

8-10 ounces fresh baby spinach

Zest and juice of 1 lime

Chopped cilantro

Heat the curry paste in a saucepan over medium high. If the paste is stiff, add a little olive oil. Add the onion and carrot, season with salt and pepper and stir to evenly coat the vegetables. Sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and ginger and sauté 2 minutes more.

Stir in the coconut milk and stock and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 20-30 minutes.

Can be made ahead to this point. Cool the sauce to room temperature, cover and refrigerate.

While the sauce simmers, cook the rice. Bring 6 cups of salted water to a boil. Add the rice and cook for 15 minutes. Drain the rice and return it to the pot. Stir in the butter, cover and let the rice sit for 10 minutes.

Transfer the sauce to a large skillet and raise the heat to high. When the sauce is bubbling, add the shrimp and toss to coat. Add the spinach in handfuls and toss to coat and wilt. Continue tossing until the shrimp are pink and all the spinach has wilted, about 5 minutes. Stir in the lime zest and juice.

To serve: spoon the rice into shallow bowls, top with shrimp and spinach and generously sprinkle with chopped cilantro.

** Curry paste combines many different and all wonderful spices. You can make your own or find a jar in specialty food stores and some large supermarkets. Look for curry paste NOT curry sauce. You don't want to overpower the shrimp so start with a mild paste and continue experimenting from there.*