

Chicken Tikka Masala

Not overly complicated, nor too time consuming to prepare and cook (under 2 hours total) this recipe delivers the goods. It's still being tweaked, but it's good just the way it is. Quality ingredients and fresh ginger and garlic are important.

Serves: 4-6

Ingredients

Chicken Tikka

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon table salt
2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts trimmed of fat
1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt (Brown Cow if available)
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
3 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed (about 2 teaspoons)
1 tablespoon peeled & grated fresh ginger (don't use a microplaner)

Masala Sauce

3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 medium onion diced fine (1 1/3 cups)
3 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed (about 2 teaspoons)
2 teaspoons peeled & grated fresh ginger (don't use a microplaner)
1 Serrano (milder) or Habanero (spicier) chili with ribs and seeds removed and flesh minced

1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 tablespoon garam masala (McCormick's if available) or if necessary substitute 2 tsp ground coriander, 1/4 tsp ground cardamom, 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon & 1/2 tsp ground black pepper)
1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes (Muir Glen if available)
2 teaspoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves

Rice

2 cups Basmati rice
3 cups water
2 tablespoons vegetable oil (try butter)
1/2 teaspoon salt

Preparing Chicken Tikka

1. Combine cumin, coriander, cayenne pepper and salt in a small bowl.
2. Sprinkle both sides of the chicken with spice mixture pressing gently so mixture adheres.
3. Place chicken on plate or cutting board, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30-60 minutes.
4. Whisk together yogurt, oil, garlic, and ginger; set aside.

Preparing and Cooking Sauce

1. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium high heat until shimmering, then reduce heat to medium.
2. Add onion and cook, stirring frequently, until light golden, 8-12 minutes.
3. Add garlic, ginger, chile, tomato paste, and garam masala
4. Cook, stirring frequently until fragrant, 2-3 minutes.
5. Add crushed tomatoes, sugar, and salt.
6. Bring to boil and then reduce heat to medium low.
7. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
8. Stir in cream and wait for it to simmer again.
9. Remove pan from heat and cover to keep warm

Preparing and Cooking Rice while Sauce Simmers

1. Rinse rice twice (put rice in medium bowl – cover rice with water – swirl water with finger – drain rice into sieve – repeat a second time)
2. Put rice in saucepan with water, oil and salt and cook on high heat, stirring occasionally.
3. Start work on preparing and broiling chicken (see below) while waiting for rice water to boil.
4. Allow rice water to boil until it is slightly below the level of the rice in the pan.
5. Set burner on low and place cover on saucepan.
6. Cook rice for 20 minutes.
7. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position (about 6 inches from the heating element) and set temperature to broil

Preparing and Cooking Chicken while Rice Cooks (and Sauce Simmers)

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position (about 6 inches from the heating element) and heat broiler.

2. Using tongs, dip chicken into yogurt mixture (chicken should be coated with thick layer of yogurt) and arrange on top of a broiler pan with top in place. Discard excess yogurt
3. Broil chicken until thickest parts register 150 degrees (this is below the accepted safe temperature for chicken – do you want good or safe?) on an instant-read thermometer and exterior is lightly charred in spots (10-15 minutes flipping over the chicken after 5 minutes).
4. Let chicken rest for 5 minutes and then cut into 1-inch chunks.

Final Assembly

1. Stir chicken into warm sauce
2. Stir cilantro into sauce.
3. Salt as needed (this really makes a difference!)
4. Serve on plates or in bowls over mounds of rice.

Based on “Chicken Tikka Masala at Home” by Rebecca Hays from *Cook's Illustrated September & October 2007*