



Chicken Korma (Tested)

Serves 4 to 6

Chicken Korma was once a noble dish that graced the banquet tables of the Mughal court, laden with cream, nuts, and expensive spices. Some recipes use just cream, some use yogurt, and some recipes include both. This is a mild curry, not spicy, and I think you'll find it appealing to all taste buds. Serve with basmati rice to sop up all the sauce!

Ingredients

One 2-inch piece of ginger, peeled and chopped (about 3 tbsp.)

1 large onion, cut in half (half chopped, half sliced)

5 garlic cloves, chopped

¼ cup cashews

1 ½ cups plain, whole milk yogurt (not Greek-style)

2 tsp. ground coriander

1 ½ tsp. garam masala

1 tsp. kosher salt, or ½ tsp. regular salt

½ tsp. cayenne pepper

3 tbsp. canola oil

2 lb. boneless skinless chicken thighs

One 2-inch stick cinnamon

8 whole cardamom pods

2 bay leaves

3 tbsp. heavy cream
Cilantro sprigs for garnish

Directions

Place the ginger, the chopped onion, garlic, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water into a blender container. Blend until smooth, then add the cashews and blend until smooth again. Set aside for use later.

Next, whisk the yogurt with the coriander, garam masala, salt and cayenne pepper in a small bowl. Set aside.

Pour the oil into a large, wide, sauté pan and heat. Make sure the pan is good and hot so the chicken won't stick to the pan. Add the chicken thighs, and turn the heat to medium. Turn the chicken after browning one side, and repeat flipping the chicken thighs until they are mostly done. You will finish cooking them in the sauce.

Remove the chicken and set aside, remove any excess fat in the pan as well, leaving about 2 tablespoons remaining. Still over medium heat, add the cinnamon stick, cardamom pods, and bay leaves. Toast for a minute, then add the remaining sliced onion. Sauté for a few minutes, until the onion turns translucent and is just starting to brown a bit. Add the reserved garlic/ginger paste to the pan, fry for a few minutes so that all the raw flavor has been cooked off.

Stir in the yogurt, the heavy cream, and then nestle the chicken thighs into the yogurt. Simmer on low for 5 to 10 more minutes, until the chicken is done and the sauce has reduced a bit.

Garnish with cilantro sprigs, Serve with basmati rice.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy

Adapted from <http://www.serioouseats.com/recipes/2011/02/chicken-korma-recipe.html>



Cauliflower with Ginger, Garlic and Green Chile (Tested)

Serves 4 to 6

This cauliflower stir-fry is a snap to prepare. Have all of your ingredients sliced and spices measured out ahead of time, so that it can be assembled quickly.

Ingredients

2 to 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 tsp. cumin seeds
1 tsp. yellow or brown mustard seeds
3 cloves garlic, sliced into julienne strips
One 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and sliced into julienne strips
1 jalapeno pepper, sliced into julienne strips (seeds removed for less heat)
1 lb. cauliflower florets, about 4 heaping cups
 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 tsp. kosher salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. garam masala
1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)
freshly ground black pepper to taste
Cilantro sprigs for garnish

Directions

Heat a large wide sauté with the vegetable oil. When hot, add the cumin and mustard seeds. Let them toast for a minute, but as soon as the seeds begin to pop you can add the garlic, ginger, and chiles. Stir for about 30 seconds, then add the cauliflower florets.

Stir fry for 5 to 7 minutes, until the florets turn brown in some spots.

(While the cauliflower is cooking, mix the salt, garam masala, black pepper, and the optional cayenne in a small dish so that it's ready to add to the pan.)

Add the seasonings, toss to blend, then add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water. Stir quickly and cover, turn the heat down a bit, let the cauliflower finish steaming for 3 more minutes. If not completely done yet, add another $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and continue to steam.

Garnish with chopped cilantro if using.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy

Adapted from "Quick and Easy Indian Cooking," by Madhur Jaffrey



Chai-Spiced Almond Cookies (Tested)

Makes 36 cookies

I'll venture a guess that you've probably made Russian Tea Cakes, or Mexican Wedding Cakes. Well, these cookies are that, but with Indian chai spice!

I've used whole, blanched, almonds that I ground in the Cuisinart. But I would imagine that for convenience sake you could use the equivalent amount of almond meal.

Inspired by a recipe for Chai-Spiced Almond Cookies from Epicurious, I came up with my recipe after researching several other recipes, and combined the best of them all. I've created my own chai spice blend as well. You'll have more spice blend than you need, but then, I think you'll be making this cookie again, perhaps soon!

Ingredients

1 cup softened butter (two sticks)
½ cup powdered sugar
1 ½ tbsp. **chai spice blend** (see below)
1 tsp. vanilla extract
½ tsp. almond extract
¼ tsp. salt
2 cups flour
1 cup (5 oz.) whole almonds, ground, or substitute 1 heaping cup almond meal
Powdered sugar for rolling

Directions

Place the softened butter and ½ cup powdered sugar into the mixing bowl. Cream until smooth, then add the spice blend, vanilla and almond extract, and salt. Mix until blended, then add flour and almonds. Dough should come together smoothly.

Roll into 1-inch balls and place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes, until just set. The bottom of the cookie should be very pale, not brown! If your cookies are smaller, or bigger, baking time will need to be adjusted.

Remove to cooling rack. When cookies have cooled a bit, but are still warm, roll in powdered sugar to coat. Let cool completely, then roll in powdered sugar one more time to make them look real pretty!

Pro tip: I like to roll them in the second coating of powdered sugar right before I serve them, so they look very fresh. If you're like me, and have a shaker full of powdered sugar, you can just shake sugar all over them to give them a fresh coat instead of rolling them again.

Chai spice blend

Makes about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. cinnamon
1 tbsp. ginger
1 tbsp. cardamom
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cloves
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. finely ground black pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. nutmeg

Blend all spices thoroughly and store in a small container.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy

Customs and Cuisine

The Siddharthnagar district of India, located in northern India bordering Nepal, celebrates festivals throughout the year, including Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, and Holi, the beautiful festival of colors held in the spring. The rich beauty of these celebrations is reflected in the region's food as well. The cuisine is characterized by strong aromas and bold tastes, with an important focus on spices. Spices determine the flavor, appearance and taste of every meal. American diners might recognize some Siddharthnagar favorites, including Aloo Tikki (made from boiled potatoes), Korma (meat and/or vegetables cooked in yogurt), and Matar Paneer (a spiced dish with peas and cheese).

Dining etiquette in India is quite different than Western countries. It is considered proper Indian etiquette to eat with your hands. It is tradition and part of the Indian culture. Indian etiquette and good manners do vary from region to region, as does the type of cuisine. For instance, in North India it is impolite to dirty more than the first two segments of your fingers. In the South, where rice and wet curries are more common, it is permitted to use your whole hand. If you are not sure what to do, just observe or ask.

Part of the traditional Indian etiquette and culture is to share food, whether on long train journeys or dining in a restaurant. While sharing is an important part of Indian etiquette, it is considered impolite to share a fork or spoon or drinking glass, to bite from someone else's food or to double dip.

The left hand is not used for eating, even if you are left-handed. To do so is considered unclean. Wait to be served before eating, since you will be eating with your right hand and would otherwise get food on the serving spoon. Never offer food from your thali, even if it has not been touched. The same basic rules of Western etiquette still apply, such as washing your hands before and after a meal.

Sources:

Asia Initiatives (provided)

[A to Z of Manners and Etiquette](#)