

Butter Chicken

Advanced · Non-vegetarian · ± 4 people · 60 min · Ahead: 1 hr pre-marinade plus 2 hrs to overnight marinating

Make first: Makhani Sauce

Butter chicken is the best known Indian dish outside India. The chicken is marinated twice and then roasted, not simmered in the sauce. The roasting gives the light smoky flavour.

Start in good time. The first marinade needs an hour, the second at least two hours and preferably overnight.

The sauce is in the separate makhani sauce recipe. Make that beforehand.

Spiciness. This is the amount of chilli as it is used in India. For a milder dish, change only these two things: leave out the green chillies and use half the Kashmiri chili powder. The rest of the recipe stays the same.

Tip. The barbecue gives the most flavour, the oven is the easiest and a grill pan works too. Roast the chicken to about 80 to 90 percent done: it finishes cooking in the sauce and stays juicy that way.

Ingredients

For the first marinade

- 500 g boneless chicken thigh
- 2 tbsp ginger garlic paste
- 1 tsp Kashmiri chili powder

For the second marinade

- 2 tbsp mustard oil (or olive oil)
- 1 tsp Kashmiri chili powder
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 1 tbsp ginger garlic paste
- 1 tsp salt, or to taste
- 3 tbsp Greek yoghurt

To finish

- butter, a few knobs
- fresh ginger, cut into fine strips
- 1 green chili, sliced lengthways (optional)
- makhani sauce (see its own recipe), about 400 ml
- hot water, to adjust the thickness
- 1 tsp honey
- 1 tbsp crème fraîche
- 1 tsp kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves)

- 1 tsp garam masala
- fresh coriander, finely chopped

Method

1. Put 500 g boneless chicken thigh in a bowl with 2 tbsp ginger garlic paste and 1 tsp Kashmiri chili powder. Mix it through properly and leave it 45 to 60 minutes.
2. Then pour off the liquid the chicken has released. Now you make the real marinade.
3. Heat 2 tbsp mustard oil until it just smokes and let it cool. That takes the sharp edge off. With olive oil this is not needed. Put the oil in a bowl.
4. Into that oil stir 1 tsp Kashmiri chili powder, ½ tsp turmeric, 1 tsp garam masala, 1 tbsp ginger garlic paste, 1 tsp salt and 3 tbsp Greek yoghurt until well combined.
5. Turn the chicken through it until every piece is coated. Marinate at least 2 hours, preferably overnight in the fridge.
6. Now the chicken meets the heat. That can be on the barbecue, in a grill pan or in the oven.
7. On the barbecue: lay the pieces on the grate and roast until about 80 to 90 percent done and properly roasted-looking.
8. In a grill pan: put the pan on medium heat, add some butter and grill the chicken on both sides until nearly done.
9. In the oven: preheat to 220 degrees, top and bottom heat without the fan. Put the chicken on a rack with a tray underneath and bake 15 to 20 minutes. Check regularly so it does not burn. With a fan oven, preheat to 200 degrees and roast 15 to 18 minutes. For colour on top, finish 3 to 4 minutes under the grill.
10. Melt a few knobs of butter in a pan. Add the ginger strips and the green chili if using, then add the roasted chicken.
11. Pour the makhani sauce over the chicken and let it cook over medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes until the chicken is cooked through. Add hot water if the sauce gets too thick.
12. Finish with 1 tsp honey, 1 tbsp crème fraîche, fresh coriander, 1 tsp kasuri methi crushed between your hands and 1 tsp garam masala. Stir through, taste and adjust the salt. Good with basmati rice, chapati or naan.