

COCONUT CHICKEN CURRY

If you make only one curry from this book, let it be this one. Simple, satisfying, and made with ingredients that are easy to find, Coconut Chicken Curry is a workhorse in the Burma Superstar kitchen. At the restaurant, it's the base for noodle dish Nan Gyi Thoke and the dip for Platha, a buttery flatbread. Alone, it's a satisfying meal with rice. For best results, cook the curry the day before serving to give the flavors time to soak into the chicken. This recipe makes about 7 cups, so you can freeze any leftovers to make Nan Gyi Thoke or serve with platha down the road.

SERVES 4; 6 AS PART OF A LARGER MEAL

2 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs

1 tablespoon paprika

1/2 teaspoon turmeric

2 teaspoons salt

1/3 cup canola oil

3 cups finely diced yellow onion

2 tablespoons minced garlic

1 (13 1/2-ounce) can unsweetened coconut milk

1 1/2 tablespoons fish sauce

1 1/2 cups water

1 teaspoon Madras curry powder

1/2 teaspoon cayenne

1 cup cilantro sprigs, for garnish

1 lime or lemon, cut into wedges, for garnish

Trim the chicken thighs of excess fat and cut into 1/2-to 1-inch pieces. Transfer to a bowl and use your hands to mix with the paprika, turmeric, and salt. Let the chicken marinate at room temperature while you prepare the other ingredients, or refrigerate it overnight.

In a 6-quart pot, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Stir in the onions, decrease the heat to medium-low and cook gently, stirring often to prevent scorching, for 10 minutes. Add the garlic and continue to cook until most of the water from the onions has been cooked out and a glossy layer of oil has risen to the surface, about 5 minutes more.

Add the chicken and stir to release the spices into the onions. Pour in the coconut milk, increase the heat, and bring to a near boil. Let the coconut milk simmer briskly for about 4 minutes to thicken a bit. Decrease the heat to medium-low and add the fish sauce. Stir in the water and bring the pot back to a near boil. The broth will thin out as the chicken starts to release its juices.

Lower to a gentle simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is tender, 50 to 55 minutes. Droplets of paprika-red oil will rise to the surface. Stir in the curry powder and cayenne, simmer briefly, and remove from the heat.

If time permits, let the curry sit for at least 20 minutes before serving. This allows the chicken to soak in more flavor as the curry cools. Bring to a simmer before serving and taste, adding more salt or fish sauce if desired. Serve with bowls of cilantro and lime wedges at the table.

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