

# Grilled Tahini Chicken

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Serves 4

**1 (3- to 4-pound) chicken,  
cut into 10 pieces**

**Kosher salt**

**6 cloves garlic, peeled**

**2 teaspoons whole cumin seeds,  
toasted (or 2½ teaspoons  
ground cumin)**

**2 teaspoons paprika**

**¼ cup tahini**

**¼ cup lemon juice**

**2 tablespoons olive oil**

Tahini is having a moment in the United States. Thanks in part to the popularity of Yotam Ottolenghi's cookbooks, the sesame paste has moved beyond its best-known application, as an ingredient in hummus, and now turns up in chocolate chip cookies (where it's awesome, actually), sauces, and, as in this recipe, marinades. It gives the grilled chicken an irresistible nutty richness.

One note: You must babysit this chicken on the grill, as it can char quickly. To avoid this, stand guard, tongs in hand, and once the skin has browned, turn the chicken frequently to prevent it from sticking and burning. I like to grill over hardwood charcoal, which burns hot and clean, and I maintain a two-zone fire, with a cooler area with fewer coals beneath the grate, a sort of safety zone for the chicken in case the exterior is darkening quicker than the interior can cook. If you prefer, you can also use this marinade on boneless, skin-on chicken thighs, which will cook much more quickly.

I am forever grateful to Will Gioia for teaching me this recipe. Will and his wife, Karen, cooked in many of the best Bay Area restaurants before opening their New York-style pizza spot, Gioia, in Berkeley, California, followed a few years later by a restaurant of the same name in San Francisco. They have a knack for wringing maximum flavor out of simple combinations of ingredients, as this recipe demonstrates. The chicken is terrific hot off the grill but does not suffer at all upon sitting, making it a nice do-ahead summer dish; it'd also be a great picnic dinner.

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> Season the chicken pieces on both sides with salt, transfer to a plate or small baking pan, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour (or up to overnight).

> In a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt. Add the cumin seeds and pound until

ground, then transfer to a bowl and add the paprika, tahini, lemon juice, and olive oil and season to taste with salt; it will have the consistency of peanut butter. (If you're using ground cumin, smash the garlic to a paste with the side of your knife, then transfer to a

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recipe continues \

## Grilled tahini chicken, continued

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bowl and add the cumin and remaining ingredients.)

> Remove the chicken from the refrigerator and slather the tahini marinade all over each piece. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let stand until the chicken is at room temperature (no more than an hour).

> Preheat a charcoal or gas grill for direct, medium-high-heat grilling. When the grill is hot, put the chicken pieces on the grill grate, skin-side down, and cook until the skin begins to brown and you can easily lift the pieces off the grate, then continue to cook, turning frequently and

moving the chicken pieces from hotter to cooler parts of the grill as needed, until cooked through, about 25 to 30 minutes. The chicken has a tendency to stick, so be vigilant about turning it frequently. If the chicken threatens to burn before it's cooked through, you can move the pieces to the cooler zone of the grill, cover the grill (leaving the cover vents open), and continue grilling until it's cooked through; use a meat thermometer or the tip of a sharp knife to check.

> Transfer to a platter and serve hot or at room temperature.

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