



Chicken Curry with Basmati Rice

SERVES 6

Indian curries claim many variations, but not all taste spicy hot. Many recipes call for the British invention, curry powder. But I prefer to toast and grind my spices for a more robust flavor and aroma. I learned how to prepare this chicken curry from Celia in Kerala who kept a wooden box filled with a rainbow of spices. She had a small kitchen in her garden where we shaved fresh coconuts with a sharp iron blade, saving the milky water to add to the curry (and sip through bamboo straws). Curry leaves offer a crisp and citrusy tang when fried or stirred into sauces. (They're rarely eaten raw.) You can usually find them at international supermarkets, but feel free to omit them from this curry if they're not available. You can substitute fish or shrimp for the chicken. Or, as my vegetarian friends can attest, cauliflower works as well.

INGREDIENTS

CHICKEN CURRY

3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (12 ounces), cut into 1-inch cubes

juice of 3 limes

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

¼ teaspoon red chile flakes

1 1/2 tablespoons ground cumin

8 cloves garlic, chopped

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, chopped

20 fresh curry leaves (optional)

1 teaspoon salt

1 cup fresh coconut (unsweetened frozen)

2 tablespoons coconut oil (or vegetable oil)

1 onion, chopped

2 tomatoes, chopped (or 1 can chopped tomatoes, drained)

1 jalapeno, minced

1 can coconut milk

Basmati Rice (recipe follows)

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro



PROCESS:

In a large bowl, combine the chicken, lime juice, 1 teaspoon of the salt, and the turmeric. Stir to coat the chicken and set aside.

In the bowl of a food processor, combine the coconut, garlic, ginger, cumin, chile flakes, 10 curry leaves, if using, and the remaining 1 teaspoon salt and process into a coarse paste. Transfer the curry paste to a small bowl and set aside.

In a large skillet, heat the coconut oil over medium-high heat.

Add the onion and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and jalapeño and cook for another 5 minutes. Add the chicken (with its marinade) and curry paste and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is no longer pink, about 10 minutes. Add the coconut milk and remaining 10 curry leaves, if using, and simmer for 20 minutes, until the liquid is slightly reduced. Serve over basmati rice, garnished with the cilantro.

Basmati Rice

makes 5 cups

2 cups basmati rice

6 cups water

2 teaspoons kosher salt

Rinse the rice in cold water and drain. In a 4-quart saucepan, combine the rice, water, and salt and bring to a boil over high heat. Immediately reduce the heat to low. Place a lid on the pan slightly ajar to allow steam to escape and simmer for 12 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and place lid on pan to cover completely. Let sit for 15 minutes, or until service time. Note: Do not stir the rice until after the final 15 minutes of steaming.