

CHICKEN APRICOT CURRY WITH TURMERIC RICE AND LENTILS



With the holidays just ahead, I find myself craving the warmth and depth of a good curry. The sultry spices and layered flavors bring balance to the richness of the traditional holiday meals. Reach into your spice drawer for turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, garam masala, and cayenne. The flavor is built up with sautéed onions, garlic, fresh ginger, sautéed tomatoes and coconut milk. It's delicious right from the pan, but I often double the recipe because it's just as good reheated, making it a lifesaver on those busy nights when you get home late.

- Leslie Mackie



INGREDIENTS:

CHICKEN APRICOT CURRY

3 Tbsp olive oil (neutral oil or clarified butter also work)

6 to 8 chicken thighs, skinless

¾ cup yellow onion, medium dice

1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved

2 Tbsp fresh ginger, finely diced

1 Tbsp garlic, finely diced

1 tsp ground turmeric

½ tsp ground cumin

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp cayenne pepper (or black pepper for a milder version)

1 tsp garam masala

¾ cup dried apricots, diced

¾ cup chicken stock

1 (13½ oz) can coconut milk

1 cup cilantro, coarsely chopped, divided

¼ cup fresh lime juice (about 1 lime)

TURMERIC RICE AND LENTILS

2 Tbsp olive oil

⅓ cup yellow onion, medium dice

1 tsp garlic, finely diced

¼ tsp ground cumin

¼ tsp ground turmeric

½ cup basmati rice

½ cup red lentils

1 tsp kosher salt

2½ cups water



DIRECTIONS:

CHICKEN APRICOT CURRY

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Season the chicken thighs with salt and pepper. In a cast-iron or oven-safe casserole pan over medium-high heat, add 2 Tbsp of the olive oil and sear the chicken thighs, alternating sides for 5 to 6 minutes until golden brown. Remove the thighs and set aside.

Reduce heat to medium and add the remaining 1 Tbsp of oil to the pan. Add the onion and sauté for 2 minutes, until translucent. Stir in the tomatoes and cook for another 2 minutes, letting them soften and release their juices.

Add the ginger, garlic, turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, cayenne, and garam masala. Stir and cook for 2 minutes, allowing the spices to bloom.

Stir in the apricots and return the chicken thighs to the pan. Pour in the chicken stock and bring to a simmer for 5 to 8 minutes. Mix in the coconut milk and half the cilantro. Transfer the pan to the oven and cook, uncovered, for 18 to 20 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce has thickened.

Remove from the oven and stir in the remaining cilantro and lime juice. Taste and adjust seasoning with kosher salt, if needed.

TURMERIC RICE AND LENTILS

While the chicken is cooking, start your rice.

In a medium saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, cumin, and turmeric. Sauté for about 2 minutes, until the onions are translucent.

Stir in the rice and lentils, coating it in the oil and spices. Add the water and salt, and bring to a simmer. Partially cover with a lid and cook for 16 to 17 minutes, until the rice is tender. Fluff with a fork, cover, and keep warm until ready to serve. The lentils will dissolve but add a nice richness to the rice.

Serve the chicken thighs with the turmeric rice and lentils, spooning plenty of sauce over the rice. I like to serve this with sautéed spinach or green beans. A dollop of raita is also a great addition to this dish.

Note: Macrina's Piadina Bread, grilled and brushed with olive oil, makes a nice accompaniment. Please note that our Piadina Bread is not carried regularly but can be special ordered from your local Macrina Café two days in advance.