Butter Chicken

Make-ahead · Serves a crowd · Serves 4–6

Ken's note: TBD

Don’t make it overly sweet — the tomatoes should carry the sauce. A teaspoon of honey only if it tastes sharp. Serve with basmati rice and naan.

Ingredients

Marinade

- 2 lb boneless chicken thighs, or a mix of thighs and breast, cut into bite-size pieces
- ¾ cup full-fat yogurt
- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp grated garlic
- 1 Tbsp grated ginger
- 2 tsp Kashmiri chili powder (or 1½ tsp paprika plus ½ tsp cayenne)
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp melted ghee

Sauce

- 3 Tbsp ghee
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 green chili, sliced (optional)
- 1 Tbsp grated garlic
- 1 Tbsp grated ginger
- 1 tsp Kashmiri chili powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- ½ tsp turmeric
- ⅓ cup raw cashews
- 1½–2 lb ripe tomatoes, chopped, or one 28-oz can whole tomatoes, crushed, plus 2 Tbsp tomato paste
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- 2–3 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tsp dried fenugreek leaves (kasuri methi), crushed
- A squeeze of lemon
- Chopped cilantro
- Salt
- Up to 1 tsp honey, only if needed

Method

1. Toss the chicken with the marinade and refrigerate at least 4 hours, ideally overnight.
2. Char the chicken under a hot broiler or on a grill (or in a ripping-hot pan) until well browned in spots, even a little blackened. It doesn’t need to be cooked through.
3. In a wide pan, heat the ghee and cook the onion and cumin seeds until the onion is soft and golden. Add the green chili, garlic, ginger, and ground spices and cook a minute. Add the cashews and toast briefly, then the tomatoes and tomato paste. Simmer, covered, until the tomatoes have collapsed, about 30–40 minutes.
4. Blend until smooth and strain back into the pan. Add the chicken and any juices and simmer gently until the chicken is just cooked through. Stir in the cream and butter — don’t flood it with cream. Finish with the fenugreek, a squeeze of lemon, and cilantro. Taste and salt at the end, and add the honey only if the tomatoes are very sharp.