Home-style Keralan Chicken Curry

Serves: 4-5 people

Ingredients

- 850gms boneless (with bone for more flavour)
- Skinless chicken thighs cut into small curry cut pieces

For Marination

- 1 whole lemon juice
- ½ tsp Black pepper Powder
- ½ tsp Turmeric powder
- 1 tsp salt

For Kerala spice mix
(approx. 100g)

- 50 gms Fennel seeds
- 20 gms Green cardamom
- 20 gms Cloves
- 20 gms Cinnamon
- 10 gms Black Pepper
- 1/2 Nutmeg
- 1 Star Anise (full flower)

For the paste

- 60ml vegetable oil
- 6 medium Red Onions (Sliced)
- 3 Vine Tomatoes (chopped)
- 8 Garlic Cloves (chopped)
- 1 Ginger thumb sized (chopped)
- 2 tsp turmeric powder
- 2 tsp Kashmiri chilli powder or normal red chilli powder
- 4 Tbsp Coriander Powder
- To taste salt

For the curry

- 40 ml Vegetable oil
- 1 tsp black mustard seeds
- 1 medium Red onion (Sliced)
- 8 fresh curry leaves washed and dried
- 2 dried whole red chillies
- ½ tsp black pepper powder
- ½ tsp Turmeric powder
- ½ tsp Kashmiri chilli powder or normal red chilli powder
- 1½ tbsp Kerala Spice mix

- 2 cups (480 ml) approx of the curry paste
- 1 cup (240 ml) approx coconut milk
- ¾ cup water
- 1 tbsp coconut oil to finish (optional)

To serve
- Coriander sprigs (chopped)
- Lemon wedges
- Steamed basmati rice or paratha breads

Step 1

For the marination

Method:

- Mix all the ingredients together in a large bowl and coat all over the chicken pieces. Leave in the fridge while you prepare the spice mix and curry base paste.

Step 2

For the Kerala spice mix

Method :

- Heat a non-stick pan. Dry roast the spices with a pinch of salt for 3-4 mins on the lowest flame, until you just start to smell the spices. Transfer to a plate and let it cool. Grind in Spice grinder / coffee grinder to an almost fine powder. Store it in an airtight container. You can store it for 1-2 months.

Step 3

For the paste

Method :

- Warm a heavy based saucepan / pot over a medium – high level heat and add the oil. Add the red onion and sauté, stirring frequently until dark brown for 15-20 mins. Then stir in the ginger garlic and continue to sauté for 2-3 mins slightly browned make sure not to burn.
- Add in tomatoes, stir in and mix then add in the dry spices turmeric, chilli powder, coriander powder and salt. Stir the mix for a minute then cover with a lid and let it cook for 4-5 mins or till the tomatoes are cooked off try to retain the moisture.
- Once the mix is cooked, let it cool down and make a paste in a blender. Add a little water if needed to make the paste. We will need 2 cups of this paste for the next step to make the curry and leftover paste can be frozen to make curries with other spice mixes and different tempering

Step 4

For the curry

Method :

- Warm a heavy based saucepan / pot over a medium level heat and add the oil . As soon as the oil is hot remove it from the fire and carefully add the mustard seeds. Please be careful of the popping mustards. Add the curry leaves and whole red chillies, put the pan / pot back on fire and then add the sliced onions. Once the Onions are nice and brown and caramelised, stir in the marinated chicken.

- Slightly brown and seal the chicken. Add in the dry spices turmeric powder, chilli powder, black pepper powder & 1 tbsp of the Kerala Spice Mix. We will use the remaining spice mix for the finishing. Then add in the coconut milk and cook the chicken for 10-15 mins. Top with a little water occasionally, if needed.
- Finally add the curry paste and stir with a lid and cook for another 10 mins. Check for salt and finish off with chopped coriander, ½ tsp of Kerala Spice Mix and 1 tbsp of coconut oil. Best enjoyed with Basmati rice.

Notes

- This curry can be made as vegan or vegetarian, substituting the chicken for 2 small can of chickpeas and ½ diced aubergines and skip the marination step.
- Sprinkle a pinch of salt when cooking onions helps in cooking faster.
- The water quantity for the curry depends on the consistency you prefer for the curry. If you like a semi dry consistency, add 3/4 cup water and if you prefer a gravy consistency, add 1 cup.
- Make sure you don't roast the spices more than the specified time otherwise it will give a charred taste.