

Chicken Tikka Masala

Ingredients:

2-3 lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs
salt & pepper
2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil

For the marinade:

1 cup plain yogurt
2 tablespoons smoked paprika
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1 tablespoon ground cumin
2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon lemon zest
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon ginger, peeled and grated

For the sauce:

2 tablespoons rendered chicken fat
1 onion, chopped
1 serrano pepper, de-seeded and chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon ginger, peeled and grated
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 tablespoon smoked paprika
2 teaspoons garam masala
1 teaspoon sugar
1 (14.5 oz) can diced fire-roasted tomatoes (with juices)
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
½ cup heavy cream
chopped cilantro for garnish

Directions:

Combine the marinade ingredients in a small bowl and mix well. Season the chicken on both sides with salt & pepper, then add the chicken and the marinade to a resealable bag, making sure the chicken is well-coated with the marinade. Refrigerate for an hour.

Remove the chicken from the bag to a plate and use paper towels to wipe off most of the excess marinade. Heat the oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat and brown the chicken on both sides -- about 6-8 minutes total. Remove the chicken to a plate. Spoon off all but about 2 tablespoons of the rendered chicken fat.

Add the onions and serrano with a dash of salt to the rendered fat in the pot and cook until they begin to soften -- about 5-6 minutes. Add the garlic and ginger and cook until fragrant -- about 30 seconds. Add the tomato paste, paprika, garam masala and sugar and cook until the spices are toasted -- about 2-3 minutes.

Add the tomatoes and red wine vinegar and use the liquid from the tomatoes to de-glaze the bottom of the pot. Add the chicken (w/ any accumulated juices), turn up the heat to a simmer, then cook the chicken and sauce over medium heat (low simmer) until the chicken is cooked through and tender -- about 25-30 minutes. Add the heavy cream and cook for another couple of minutes. Taste and add salt & pepper as needed.

Serve over cooked rice and garnish with cilantro.