

Thai Yellow Chicken Curry

Ingredients

Bone-in chicken thighs	3 lbs	Fish sauce	3 Tbsp.
Coconut cream	2 (13.5 oz.) cans	Brown or turbinado sugar	3 Tbsp.
Yellow curry paste	5 Tbsp.	Chicken stock	2 cups
Yukon gold potatoes	1½ lbs	Neutral oil	2 Tbsp. + ½ cup
Carrots, medium	3	Limes	2
Yellow onion, large	1	Fresh cilantro	for garnish
Shallots	3	Thai basil	for garnish
Garlic cloves	8	Salt	to taste
Fresh ginger	3 Tbsp.	Dried árbol chilies	15-20
Lemongrass stalks	2	Fresh serrano peppers	3-4
Canned pineapple slices	2 cups		

Directions

Cut 1½ lbs **potatoes** into 1½" uniform chunks — Peel and roll-cut 3 medium **carrots** into 1" pieces — Combine **potatoes** and **carrots** in *Medium Bowl #1* (vegetables) — Cut 1 large **onion** into 1" wedges — Slice 3 **shallots** — Mince 6 **garlic cloves** — Mince 3 Tbsp. **ginger** — Combine **shallots**, **ginger**, and **garlic** in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Bruise and cut 2 **lemongrass stalks** into 3" pieces — Drain and pat dry 2 cups **canned pineapple slices** and place in *Large Bowl #1* — Remove stems from 15-20 **árbol chilies** — Slice 3-4 **serrano peppers** thin (seeds in) — Slice 2 **garlic cloves** thin for oil — Zest and juice 2 **limes**

Chili Oil

1. In a small saucepan, combine ½ cup **neutral oil**, 15-20 **dried árbol chilies**, 3-4 sliced **serrano peppers**, and 2 sliced **garlic cloves**. Place over medium-low heat.
2. Heat gently, watching carefully. When **chilies** darken and become fragrant (about 2-3 *minutes*), immediately remove from heat.
3. Add pinch of **salt** to the hot oil off-heat. Let steep for at least 20-30 *minutes*. Strain or leave **chilies** in for presentation. Set aside.

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Curry

1. Render 3 lbs bone-in **chicken thighs** in dutch oven over medium-high heat for about *3-4 minutes* per side, until deeply golden-brown and skin releases easily from the pan. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2* and set aside.
2. Open 2 (13.5 oz.) cans of **coconut cream** without shaking. Scoop the thick cream from the top of one can into a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (should yield about $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup thick cream). Reserve the remaining coconut liquid and the second can in *Medium Bowl #2*.
3. Heat the thick **coconut cream** over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. It will begin to separate and the fat will "crack" (you'll see oil pooling). This takes *3-5 minutes*. When you see clear oil separating, you're ready.
4. Add 5 Tbsp. **yellow curry paste** to the coconut fat. Fry the **paste**, stirring constantly, until it darkens, becomes very fragrant, and the oil takes on the **paste's** color, about *3-4 minutes*. The mixture should smell toasted and complex, not raw.
5. Add 3 sliced **shallots**, 3 Tbsp. minced **ginger**, and 6 minced **garlic cloves** (*Small Bowl #1*) to the **paste** and cook, stirring, for *2 minutes* until **shallots** are softened. Continue cooking for *1 minute* more until fragrant.
6. Add seared **chicken thighs**, remaining **coconut cream** (*Medium Bowl #2*), 2 cups **chicken stock**, 2 bruised **lemongrass stalks**, **potatoes** and **carrots** (*Medium Bowl #1*), and 3 Tbsp. **fish sauce**. Stir to combine.
7. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cover partially and cook for *35-40 minutes*, stirring occasionally, until **chicken** is very tender and **potatoes** have softened and begun to break down slightly, thickening the sauce.
8. Add 1 large **onion** cut into 1" wedges and continue simmering for *10 minutes* until **onions** are tender but still hold their shape.
9. Remove **chicken thighs** to a cutting board. The bones should pull out easily at this point. Discard skin if desired. Shred or chop the meat into bite-sized pieces and return to the curry.
10. While curry continues to simmer, heat a skillet over high heat. Sear **pineapple slices** (*Large Bowl #1*) quickly, about *1-2 minutes* per side, until lightly caramelized. Roughly chop seared **pineapple** and add to curry.
11. Taste the curry broth. Add **brown or turbinado sugar** 1 Tbsp. at a time (up to 3 Tbsp. total), tasting as you go. The curry should be balanced: rich, slightly sweet, savory, with subtle sour notes from the **pineapple**.
12. Simmer for final *5 minutes* to meld flavors. Taste and adjust seasoning with **salt** if needed (**fish sauce** usually provides enough).
13. Remove **lemongrass stalks**. Turn off heat and stir in **juice** and **zest** from 2 **limes**.
14. Ladle curry over steamed jasmine rice. Garnish with fresh **cilantro** and **Thai basil**. Provide **lime wedges** and the **chili oil** on the side. For heat, drizzle *1-2 tsp.* of **chili oil** over individual portions.

Equipment Required

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (6-8 quart capacity)
- Small saucepan (for chili oil)
- Large skillet (for searing pineapple)
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Fine-mesh strainer (optional, for chili oil)
- Vegetable peeler
- Citrus zester or microplane
- Ladle
- Tongs (for removing chicken thighs)

Mise en Place

- Chill **coconut cream** cans overnight or for several hours to ensure proper fat separation
- Cut all vegetables before starting
- Cut **potatoes** into uniform 1½" chunks for consistent cooking
- Prepare **chili oil** while curry simmers or up to several days ahead
- Have all aromatics prepped and ready before beginning to cook
- Bruise **lemongrass** by smashing with the flat of a knife to release oils
- **Small Bowl #1** — aromatics: sliced **shallots**, minced **ginger**, and minced **garlic** (about ½ cup total)
- **Medium Bowl #1** — vegetables: **potatoes** cut into 1½" chunks and roll-cut **carrots** (about 3 cups total)
- **Medium Bowl #2** — reserved **coconut cream** liquid from both cans (about 2 cups)
- **Large Bowl #1** — drained and patted dry **canned pineapple slices** (2 cups)
- **Large Bowl #2** — seared **chicken thighs** (set aside after initial searing)

Ingredient Tips

- Bone-in **chicken thighs** provide superior flavor - the bones contribute gelatin and depth during cooking
- Russet **potatoes** are essential for their high starch content which naturally thickens the curry as they break down
- Cut **potatoes** into uniform 1½" chunks - consistent size ensures even cooking and proper breakdown
- Mae Ploy brand **curry paste** is recommended for consistent results
- **Fish sauce** brands vary in saltiness - Red Boat and Three Crabs are more concentrated than Squid or Tiparos brands
- Drain and thoroughly pat dry **canned pineapple** before searing to ensure proper caramelization
- If **lemongrass** is unavailable, substitute with lemon zest added at the finish
- **Palm sugar** can replace brown sugar for more authentic flavor

Preparation Tips

- The "cracking" of **coconut cream** is critical - don't rush this step. You must see clear oil separating before adding **curry paste**
- Properly blooming the **curry paste** in the fat until darkened and fragrant is what elevates this above takeout quality
- Sear **chicken thighs** for only 3-4 minutes - they will finish cooking during the simmer
- The curry should simmer gently, not boil hard, or the **chicken** will toughen
- After 35-40 minutes, the **chicken** bones will pull out easily - this is the ideal time to debone
- Keep 2-3 bones in the curry during final simmer for additional body and flavor
- Don't skip searing the **pineapple** - the caramelization adds complexity. Rough chopping after searing helps distribute the flavor throughout the curry
- Taste and adjust seasoning multiple times - the balance of sweet, salty, sour is crucial
- Add **lime juice** and zest at the very end to preserve bright citrus notes

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Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chili oil** can be made up to *2 weeks* ahead and stored at room temperature
- Curry can be made *1-2 days* ahead and often tastes better as flavors meld
- Store curry in refrigerator for up to *4 days*
- Curry thickens significantly when refrigerated - thin with **stock** or **coconut milk** when reheating
- Freezes well for up to *3 months* - thaw overnight in refrigerator
- Reheat gently over medium-low heat, stirring frequently
- Add fresh **lime juice** and herbs after reheating for brightness

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over steamed jasmine rice (traditional) or sticky rice
- Accompany with Thai cucumber salad for cooling contrast
- **Chili oil** can be drizzled on individual portions for customizable heat
- Garnish generously with fresh **cilantro**, **Thai basil**, and **lime wedges**
- Crispy fried shallots make an excellent textural garnish
- Leftover curry can be used as a filling for savory crepes or over noodles
- For a complete meal, serve with spring rolls or satay as appetizers