

Better Stovetop Butter Chicken Recipe

SHO SPAETH

Butter chicken is inherently delicious—even in its most streamlined and simplified form, it's tasty. But with just a little more effort, it becomes superlative. The goal of this recipe is to hit all the characteristic notes of butter chicken—mildly spiced tomato-based sauce; tender, charred chicken pieces; a mother's love's worth of butter and cream folded in at the end—while developing flavor at every turn. It may be a little more complicated than just placing all the ingredients in a pressure cooker and then blending them, like some other, very popular butter chicken recipes, but the extra effort is worth it.



Still, this recipe isn't difficult, despite the long ingredient list. The yogurt marinade for the chicken comes together in seconds, and while [toasting and grinding whole spices](#) improve their flavor and aroma considerably, you can use pre-ground spices for a small tradeoff in flavor. It may seem complicated to cook the chicken and sauce separately, but the reality is that it's dead easy, and the extra flavor you get from that char is absolutely worth it. For the sake of clarity, the recipe was broken up into two parts, but the chicken can be broiled as the sauce simmers, then set aside as you finish the sauce.

This is a stovetop adaptation of our [pressure cooker butter chicken recipe](#), which you can refer to for the full recipe-testing notes. While this recipe takes about 40 minutes longer to prepare than the pressure cooker version, most of that time is hands-off, and the flavor is even better than the already-great pressure-cooked version.

Why It Works

- Toasting whole spices before grinding improves their aroma and flavor.
- Coating the chicken in a spiced marinade and broiling it produces tender, juicy chicken morsels with a little bit of char, which boosts the final flavor of the dish.

YIELD: Serves 4-6 as a main course, with rice
TOTAL TIME: 1 hour and 30 minutes

ACTIVE TIME: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For Marinating the Chicken:

1 tablespoon *kasuri methi*
(fenugreek leaves) or,
alternatively, 2 teaspoons
fenugreek seeds (see note)

1/4 cup (60ml) plain Greek
yogurt, [store-bought](#) or

Directions

1. **To Marinate the Chicken:** In a small skillet, toast fenugreek leaves (or fenugreek seeds, if using) over medium heat, tossing them constantly, until quite fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer toasted leaves to spice grinder or mortar and pestle and grind to fine powder. Set aside.
2. In the center of a rimmed baking sheet, create a roughly 9- by 13- inch aluminum-foil boat with 1-inch sides, and set aside.
(Alternatively, if you have a 1/4 rimmed baking sheet, use that

homemade

1 tablespoon garam masala,
store-bought or homemade

2 teaspoons Diamond Crystal
kosher salt (if using table salt,
use half as much)

1 teaspoon *kala namak* (black
salt) (optional, see note)

One 1-inch piece fresh ginger
(1/2 ounce; 14g), peeled and
finely grated

2 pounds (900g) boneless,
skinless chicken thighs (about
4), cut into bite-size, 1-inch
pieces

For the Makhani Sauce:

1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons
kasuri methi (fenugreek
leaves) or, alternatively, 1
tablespoon fenugreek seeds
(see note)

2 whole dried chile de arbol
(see note)

1 pod brown cardamom or,
alternatively, 1 pod green
cardamom (see note)

1 whole clove

1 tablespoon garam masala,
store-bought or homemade

1 tablespoon Diamond Crystal
kosher salt (if using table salt,
use half as much)

One 28-ounce (800g) can
whole fire-roasted tomatoes

instead, omitting foil.) In a medium mixing bowl, stir together yogurt,
garam masala, salt, black salt, grated ginger, and ground fenugreek
leaves.

3. Add chicken thigh pieces to bowl and, using clean hands, toss with
marinade until evenly coated. Transfer chicken to prepared baking
sheet, arranging pieces in a single, even layer in the aluminum-foil
boat.
4. **For the Makhani Sauce:** Add fenugreek leaves (or seeds, if using),
chiles de arbol, brown cardamom (or green cardamom, if using), and
clove to small skillet and place it over medium heat. Toast, tossing
frequently, until spices are quite fragrant, about 1 to 2 minutes.
Transfer spices to spice grinder or mortar and pestle along with
garam masala and salt and grind to a fine powder. Set aside. (See the
note section for instructions on a shortcut spice mix using pre-
ground spices.)
5. In a small, microwave-safe bowl, combine cashew nuts and 1/4 cup
(60ml) water. Microwave on high until cashews look plump and have
softened slightly, about 1 minute. Set aside.
6. In a Dutch oven, heat canola oil over medium-high heat until
shimmering. Add onions and baking soda and, using a wooden
spoon, stir to coat onions in oil and distribute baking soda. Cook,
stirring occasionally, until onions have completely broken down,
most of their moisture has cooked off, and they begin to brown, 14 to
17 minutes. If at any point onions seem to be browning too quickly or
unevenly, add a tablespoon (15ml) of water and scrape up any brown
bits that form on the bottom of the pot.
7. Reduce heat to medium low. Add ginger and garlic to pot and cook,
stirring constantly, until quite fragrant, about 1 minute. Using a
wooden spoon, push onions into center of pot to form a mound. Add
ground spice mixture to the mounded onions to prevent spices from
scorching. Cook, stirring constantly, until onions are coated in spices
and mixture is very fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add cashews and
their soaking liquid, scraping up any bits stuck to the bottom of the
pot. Add tomatoes and their juices plus 1 cup (240ml) water and,
using the back of wooden spoon, crush tomatoes.

with their juices (see note)

1 oz (28g) raw cashews (about 12 to 15)

1 1/4 cups water (295ml),
divided

2 tablespoons (30ml) canola
oil or other neutral-flavored oil

1 medium white onion, peeled
and cut into 1/2-inch dice

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

One 1-inch piece of ginger
(1/2 ounces; 14g), peeled and
thinly sliced

4 medium cloves garlic,
smashed and roughly chopped

1/2 cup (120ml) heavy cream,
plus more for drizzling

4 tablespoons (60g) unsalted
butter, cut into 4 pieces

Warm long-grain rice, for
serving

8. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain gentle simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes are completely broken down and liquid has reduced, about 40 minutes.
9. Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to about 3 inches below broiler element and preheat broiler on high. Transfer chicken to broiler. Cook, checking the chicken frequently to ensure it's not burning, until chicken is charred in spots and is fully cooked through, about 14 minutes (time will vary depending on the strength of the broiler). Remove chicken from broiler and set aside.
10. Using an immersion blender and off the heat, blend contents of Dutch oven until completely smooth, about 2 minutes. Alternatively, transfer contents of pot to blender and blend until completely smooth, about 2 minutes. Add butter and cream, and blend until completely smooth and emulsified, about 2 minutes. At this point, you may remove 1 1/2 (360ml) cups of sauce and reserve it for another use.
11. **To Finish:** Add reserved broiled chicken along with any juices in the sheet pan to sauce and stir until chicken is well incorporated and warmed through. Ladle chicken and sauce into serving bowl and drizzle with additional heavy cream. Serve immediately with rice alongside.

Special Equipment

Dutch oven; **spice grinder**; **immersion blender** or blender.

Notes

If you cannot find kala namak, or black salt, you can substitute a 1/2 teaspoon of Diamond Crystal kosher salt. (Read more about black salt in our [guide to salt](#)).

If you'd prefer to forego toasting and grinding the spices yourself, you can use pre-ground spices. You can substitute 1 tablespoon of ground fenugreek for the 2 teaspoons of fenugreek called for in the marinade, and 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon of ground fenugreek for the 1 tablespoon of fenugreek seeds called for in the sauce; you can substitute 1/4 teaspoon of ground cardamom for the 1 green cardamom pod called for in the sauce; you can substitute 1/8 teaspoon of ground clove for the 1 clove called for in the sauce; you can substitute 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne pepper for the chile de arbol (more, if you like it spicier).

Brown cardamom is sometimes called black cardamom, but note that it's not the same as Chinese black cardamom (also sometimes called red cardamom).

Fire-roasted whole canned tomatoes are preferred, but plain whole canned tomatoes can be used as well.

Make-Ahead and Storage

Sealed in an airtight container, butter chicken will keep for up to a week in the refrigerator.

12/27/22 It's alright... DON'T
overcook (chaz at all) the chicken!