Ingredients

FRIED ONIONS

▢¾ lb onions yellow, finely sliced

▢1½ cups peanut oil

CHICKEN MARINATION

▢1½ lb chicken with bone, cut and clean

▢⅔ cup yogurt plain

▢1½ tbsp ginger garlic paste or grated ginger and garlic

▢1 tsp salt adjust per taste

▢1 tsp chili powder

▢½ tsp turmeric ground

▢1 chili pepper jalapeno, serrano or cayenne, adjust per taste

SPICES (see note)

▢1 cinnamon stick

▢1 black cardamom

▢5 green cardamom

▢5 cloves

▢1 bay leaves large

▢1 tsp shah Jeera see note

▢½ tsp ground black pepper

BIRYANI

▢2 cups basmati rice long grain

▢1 tsp salt adjust per taste

▢2 tbsp olive oil

▢2 tbsp lemon juice

▢¼ cup cilantro fresh, chopped

▢2 tbsp mint fresh, chopped

▢1 tsp saffron ground and dissolved in 2 tbsp hot water

▢2 tbsp ghee optional

WHOLE SPICES FOR RICE

▢1 black cardamom

▢3 green cardamom

▢4 cloves

▢2 bay leaves

▢½ cinnamon stick

US Customary - Metric

Equipment

▢

Rice Cooker

▢

Wide Frying Pan

▢

Candy/Fry thermometer

▢

Spice Grinder

▢

Oven Proof Cooking Pot

Cook Mode

Prevent your screen from going dark

Instructions

FRIED ONIONS

Heat oil at medium high in a wide frying pan. If you place your palm about 3 inches over the surface of oil, you should feel the heat. Or use a candy/fry thermometer.

Fry onions in batches. Do not crowd the pan. Fry until crisp light golden brown. Set aside.

CHICKEN MARINATION

Combine chicken with all marinade ingredients and ⅓ of fried onions.

TIP: Add yogurt, starting with ½ cup and increase as needed to ¾ cup. The mixture should be thick and not runny.

Grind biryani spices in a spice grinder. Add to chicken marinade and combine. Marinate for about 3 to 5 hours.

RICE PREPARATION WITH RICE COOKER

Rinse rice 4 to 5 times in lots of water until it is clear. Drain well. Soak ⅓ cup basmati rice in water for one hour. Save the rest.

Bring 2¼ cups of water to a rolling boil in a rice cooker. Add ¾ teaspoon salt, 1½ tablespoons olive oil and whole spices (see note). Then add remaining 1⅔ cups basmati rice and stir. Let it cook just until all the water is absorbed (see notes).

It is important to NOT let the rice steam until it is fully done. Just when all the water is well absorbed, transfer cooked rice immediately to another wide open pan. In my rice cooker the whole process takes about 15 to 20 minutes.

ASSEMBLY OF RICE AND CHICKEN LAYERS

Transfer chicken with marinade to a 4 to 5 quart wide thick bottomed oven proof cooking pot (9 to 10 inch diameter). Make sure there is not too much marinade around chicken pieces and that it is not runny.

Scatter cilantro, mint, half the lemon juice and ½ tablespoon olive oil over the chicken/marinade. Then scatter most of the fried onions.

Drain the soaked basmati rice very well and spread it over the fried onion layer. (This raw soaked rice will get cooked with the juices from chicken).

Next, layer all the cooked rice. Top with remaining lemon juice, saffron water, fried onions and ghee.

TIP: If you prefer, you may pick out the whole spices from cooked rice before steaming.

FINAL STEAMING

Place one sheet of parchment paper, followed by one to two sheets of aluminum foil over the cooking pot. Place the lid tight over it. Bake biryani in a preheated oven at 350ºF for one hour, until steam builds up well.

Alternatively, it can be cooked on a stove in a thick bottomed cooking pot. Heat the biryani at medium high for about 10 to 15 minutes and then reduce to low and cook for one hour until steam builds up well.

Let it cool five minutes and gently mix rice and chicken. Using a spatula mound the biryani on a serving plate, making sure to present the rice in various colors - white, yellow, orange and brown. Place some chicken pieces on the top. Scatter browned onions, chopped herbs and extra saffron rice on top.

Serve chicken biryani with Hyderabadi tomato egg curry and/or raita prepared with creamy yogurt, chopped red onions, deseeded jalapenos and cilantro.

Notes

Rinse basmati rice several times until the water is clear and not starchy.

Perfectly fluffy rice grain is essential for the taste of biryani.

Basmati rice typically will need less water than other long grain rice varieties to yield fluffy cooked rice.

Rice cooker: use minimal water to cook the rice. With a new batch of basmati rice, test 1 ¼ to 1 ½ cups water per cup of rice and check what works.

Aged basmati rice will give the best results and is more fragrant.

Additional moisture: Keep in mind moisture from other ingredients such as the chicken, herbs and yogurt. So the cooked rice should be fluffy, separate, retain shape well, not too wet and delicate. The soaked rice should be drained very well. Chicken should be just lightly coated with the marinade. If the marinade is excessive it can result in the rice becoming soggy.

Slice onions finely: I used the 7.5 mm setting on my mandolin slicer.

Adjust oil as needed: If frying directions are followed properly, then oil absorbed by onions should be about 1½ tablespoons. But if not followed, then more oil will be absorbed and amount needed should be adjusted.

Alternative to frying onions: If you are unable to fry onions then saute them until crisp golden brown like in this Persian noodle soup recipe and adjust oil used for rice and chicken.

Branded biryani spice mixes may include salt and chili powder. If using that, then salt and chili powder should be adjusted. I do not use commercial biryani spice mix, but have been told that the Shaan Sindhi biryani mix can be a close substitute. It is spicy so use carefully.

Chicken: It is best to use whole chicken, with bone, cut and clean. You may use chicken leg quarters or thighs too, but avoid chicken breast as it will be too dry.

Optimal amount of salt and oil is very important. If everything else is perfect and you don't use right amount of salt, that alone can ruin the taste of biryani. I use a minimum of 2 tablespoons of oil per cup of raw rice, as there are additional ingredients - chicken, onions, etc.

Whole spices can also be cooked wrapped in a muslin cloth, like the one used for boquet garni or a metal mesh cooking infuser. If using whole spices for the marinade, just double the amount of spices in the recipe. When whole spices are ground, the flavors are more intense.

Make Ahead: Chicken can be mixed with the marinade a day before. Make the fried onions ahead.

Storage and Freezing: Biryani freezes beautifully. Leftovers can be stored in refrigerator for 3 to 4 days or frozen for later.

Scale Recipe: Click on number of servings and slide. Adjust the cooking pot size.

Ghee: It is available at many supermarkets and Indian grocery stores. You can easily make it at home from butter following the instructions in this chickpea cookie recipe notes section.

Shajeera: These are referred to as black cumin or black caraway seeds in Indian stores. The labeling is not consistent. Ask your Indian grocer for “shahjeera”.