

# Chana Masala

Prep: 10 mins

Cook: 58 mins

Total: 68 mins

Servings: 2 to 3

Yield: 4 1/2 cups

Chana masala, when paired with a hot, flaky paratha is what Indian brunch dreams are made of. The combination of spicy-sour flavors makes it an ideal Sunday lunch contender, whether it is made dry, like the version I have chosen for my recipe, or slightly liquidy with an addition of an onion-tomato gravy.

## What's the Difference Between Chana Masala and Chole Masala?

In many Indian households, chana masala and chole masala are frequently used interchangeably. However, chana masala refers to a dry, non-gravy-based dish, while chole has a rich, thin gravy coating the chickpeas. For me, it's the dry version that hits the spot. It's unembellished, rustic, and straight from the heart to the hearth.

## Spice Makes it Nice

To flavor this dish, most homes traditionally prefer to make their own spice blend, but ready-to-use chana masala powder is a good fix to make this dish at home. The blend back home is a combination of ingredients such as cardamom, cloves, cumin, pepper, chilli powder, and mace. These are the usual spices that go into blends for Indian gravies.

For this dish, it's the addition of dry mango powder, or amchur, that gives the chana masala mix its refreshing sweet-sour tang. Amchur is powdered after drying out unripe green mangoes in the sun and the result is an umami-rich, fruity powder which when added to a dish, blooms to give it a true Indian flavor.

## What to Serve With Chana Masala

While chole masala—colloquially known only as “chole”—is traditionally eaten with bhature (deep-fried Indian bread made of refined flour), chana masala is eaten with everything from homely chapatis, heaps of fluffy rice, paratha, or the aforementioned bhature.

## Tips for Making Chana Masala

- Use a pressure cooker for the chickpeas — You can also cook your chickpeas in a pressure cooker or Instant Pot for 25 to 30 minutes on high pressure. If using an Indian pressure cooker, it should take about four whistles.
- Where to find red chilli powder — You can find the red chilli powder at an Indian grocery store. Laxmi is a commonly available brand. Be sure to taste a bit of the chilli powder before using to assess the spice level. Depending on how spicy it is, you may wish to add more or less.
- Making roasted cumin powder — For roasted cumin powder, roast cumin seeds in a small skillet over medium heat, shaking the pan occasionally, until fragrant. Then grind the seeds in a spice grinder. Roasting the cumin gives it a richer flavor and heightened aroma, but regular ground cumin can be substituted in a pinch.
- Make ahead — The chickpeas can be cooked up to 3 days ahead of time and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

## Ingredients

- 1 cup dry chickpeas, soaked overnight in enough water to cover
- 8 cups filtered water
- 2 tablespoons ghee or clarified butter
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 pinch asafoetida, optional
- 1 small green chilli, such as serrano, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons ginger-garlic paste or 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger plus 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon red chilli powder, more to taste
- 2 teaspoons ground roasted cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon yellow chilli powder, optional
- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt, more as needed
- 2 teaspoons amchur powder
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 1/2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 5 to 6 julienned pieces fresh peeled ginger, for garnish

## Steps to Make It

1. Gather the ingredients.
2. Drain the soaked chickpeas. Set aside.
3. Add the water to a large pot. Add a generous pinch of salt and bring to a boil over high heat. Add the chickpeas, lower the heat to medium, and partially cover the pot. Cook until the chickpeas are tender, 35 to 45 minutes. Drain and set aside.
4. Heat the ghee in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the mustard seeds, cumin seeds, asafoetida, if using, and green chilli. Cook, stirring frequently, until the seeds begin to crackle.
5. Add the ginger-garlic paste and onion. Sauté until the onion turns golden brown, 4 to 5 minutes.
6. Add the red chilli powder, roasted ground cumin, yellow chilli powder, if using, garam masala, and salt. Cook, stirring constantly until the spices are just fragrant, about 30 seconds.
7. Add the chickpeas, stir well and continue to cook until the mixture is well coated, 5 to 6 minutes more. Add the amchur, and continue to cook, stirring often until the mixture is well combined, about 2 minutes more. Taste and add more salt as desired.
8. Once the masala (the spice mixture) has coated the chickpeas, remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the cilantro and lemon juice.
9. Garnish with the julienned ginger, and serve.

## How to Store

Store leftover chana masala in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Reheat in the microwave or in a skillet with a splash of water.