

Title:

Fusion Cooking - Blended Cuisines

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Summary:

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Article Body:

What do you get when you cross hot Indian food with the English love of tomatoes and all things creamy? Chicken Tikka Masala is a famous combination of chicken tikka and masala. Chicken tikka is a marinated piece of meat cooked in a tandoor, an Indian oven made of clay and coal-fired. Masala is gravy commonly made out of some kind of tomato gravy or puree with cream and various Indian spices. It is technically a mild curry dish, though the addition of sometimes large amounts of tartrazine causes the dish to often look orange. In other recipes, it can look anything from red to orange to green.

Chicken Tikka Masala is possibly the most popular Indian dish in the world, and has arguably replaced tandoori chicken as the flagship of Indian food, including on the subcontinent itself; it even has a musical written singing its praises. In the United Kingdom alone, Marks & Spencer, the famous English retailer, claims to sell 18 tons a week of the chicken in Tikka Masala Sandwiches, while 23 million servings a year are sold at Indian restaurants. Sainsbury's, another retailer, sells 1.6 million dishes every year, and stocks 16 different products containing what is affectionately known as CTM. 10 tons a day are manufactured by Noon Products to later be sold at supermarkets.

The chicken, though widely considered an Indian dish, does not hail from India. Kitchens from London to Glasgow claim to have originated the dish, which was first seen in the late 1960s. According to urban legend, the dish was created by

a Bangladeshi chef in Britain when he served chicken tandoor to an Englishman only to be asked, "where's my gravy?" The result? A mixture of cream of tomato soup and spices, which he called masala. And like that, chicken tikka masala was born, an early example of what we would now call fusion cooking. It is now so popular that British politician and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook once described it as, "a true British national dish," citing its combination of authentic Indian cooking with the British desire to have their meat served with gravy.

What goes into a chicken tikka masala? Well, a 1998 survey indicated that of 48 versions, the only common ingredient was chicken. A common recipe includes chicken marinated overnight in yogurt, ginger, garlic, cardamom powder, cumin, white pepper, and other spices. The chicken is cooked briefly in the hot tandoor, and is then served with a sauce made of tomato, ginger, garlic, cream, green and red pepper, and an assortment of spices. The sauce is poured over the chicken after it is cooked. In contrast to tandoori chicken, on which it is based, the taste is mild and creamy, rather than spicy.

Is chicken tikka masala an English or an Indian dish? The answer is unclear, as it has been adopted so readily that it is served in almost every Indian restaurant, an indication that Indians have accepted it as their own. Several English firms now specialize in exporting the dish back to India. Whatever its origins, however, it is now enjoyed by millions each year.