Curry Stand Tikka Masala Sauce

A tikka masala sauce from a classic curry-stand recipe. This is not haute cuisine; it's the kind of nuclear-orange tikka masala you crave when you stumble out of a pub at 2 a.m. I make vast quantities of this sauce at one time as it freezes well. I also use more cayenne pepper than 1 teaspoon, but I give out the recipe like this for people who don't like heat.

Prep Time: 15 mins | Cook Time: 1 hr 5 mins | Total Time: 1 hr 20 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons ghee (sub oil)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste (Optional)
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 (14 ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream (sub plain yogurt)
- 1 tablespoon white sugar, or more to taste (Optional)
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut into bite-size pieces (sub diced firm tofu or paneer cheese)
- ½ teaspoon curry powder

Directions

1. Heat ghee in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion; cook and stir until translucent, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic; cook and stir just until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir cumin, 1 teaspoon salt, ginger, cayenne pepper, cinnamon, and turmeric into onion mixture; fry until fragrant, about 2 minutes.
2. Stir tomato sauce into onion and spice mixture; bring to a boil and reduce heat to low. Simmer sauce for 10 minutes, then mix in cream, 1 tablespoon sugar, and paprika. Bring sauce back to a simmer and cook, stirring often, until sauce is thickened, 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Heat vegetable oil in a separate skillet over medium heat. Stir chicken into hot oil; add curry powder. Sear chicken until lightly browned but still pink inside, about 3 minutes; stir often.
4. Transfer chicken and any pan juices into sauce. Simmer chicken in sauce until no longer pink, about 30 minutes; adjust sugar and salt to taste.

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