

Chicken and Apricot Masala

NIGELLA LAWSON - Time 45 minutes – Yield 6 servings

Jonathan Player for The New York Times

I love curry, but on the whole I am not interested in cooking that involves too much spice-grinding or many-layered processes. Thus this chicken masala is my version of a curry: it demands little effort and delivers a huge amount of flavor.

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INGREDIENTS

- **1 cup dried apricots**
- **1/2 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes**
- **1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- **1 teaspoon ground coriander**
- **4 cloves**
- **4 cardamom pods, lightly crushed**
- **1 tablespoon minced garlic**
- **1 tablespoon minced ginger**
- **1/4 cup peanut oil**
- **1 cinnamon stick**
- **2 onions, peeled and finely chopped**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, diced**
- **4 medium tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch dice**
- **2 tablespoons tomato paste, diluted in 1/2 cup water**
- **3 tablespoons chopped cilantro leaves**

PREPARATION

1. Soak apricots overnight in 2 cups cold water, or cover with 2 cups hot water and soak until swollen and softened, 2 to 3 hours.
2. Prepare masala: In a small bowl, combine hot pepper flakes, cumin, coriander, cloves, cardamom, garlic and ginger. Add 1/4 cup water, and stir to make a paste. Set aside.
3. In a large sauté pan over medium heat, heat oil and cinnamon stick. Add onions and salt, and sauté until onions begin to soften, 2 to 3 minutes. Add masala, and stir. Add chicken, and stir for about 5 minutes. Add apricots and their soaking liquid, diced tomatoes and diluted tomato paste.
4. Cover and simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 30 minutes. Check cooking liquid about halfway through; if chicken is covered with liquid, remove cover for remainder of cooking. Transfer to a large bowl, sprinkle with cilantro and serve hot.