

FOOD & DINING

Traditional Indian cuisine sans the spiciness

In spite of its reputation, Indian food is not always spicy. For example, Northern Indian uses cashews to make a sauce that's complex despite its minimal ingredients. Those who love Indian food but want to scale back on the spice can consider the following recipe for "Chicken in Cashew Nut Sauce" from Ruta Kahate's "5 Spices, 50 Dishes" (Chronicle Books).

CHICKEN IN CASHEW NUT SAUCE Serves 4

- 3 tablespoons canola oil, divided
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 3/4 cup water, divided
- 4 ounces finely ground raw unsalted cashews
- 1 teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger

- 1 teaspoon finely grated garlic (about 2 large cloves)
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts (about 1 1/2 pounds), tenderloins removed
- 1/2 cup plain whole or low-fat yogurt, whisked

Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a medium skillet and fry the onion until well browned. Cool slightly and then use a food processor to grind the browned onion with 1/4 cup of the water, the cashews, ginger, garlic, and cayenne until it forms a smooth, thick paste.

In a large saucepan, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil along with the butter. Add the cashew-onion paste and stir constantly over medium heat, deglazing the pan by adding a few tablespoons of water and using a spatula to loosen the browned bits until the sauce has browned evenly. This should take about 5 minutes.

Thin out the sauce with the remaining 1/2 cup water and stir in the salt. Add the chicken and turn to coat well with the sauce. Simmer, covered, over low heat until the chicken is cooked through but is not overdone, 8 to 10 minutes. You can discreetly pierce the thickest part of a breast with a paring knife and check for doneness. Carefully turn the chicken breasts over once during cooking. Turn off the heat.

Remove the chicken breasts to a serving platter, gently stir the yogurt into the sauce and mix well. Immediately pour the sauce over the chicken and serve. If the dish has to sit for a while, return the chicken breasts to the pan after you have stirred in the yogurt and cover to keep warm.



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