

CHICKEN TIKKA MASALA or REZALA

Chicken Pieces in Tandoori Sauce

I use three methods for achieving tandoori/tikkas. Firstly for small quantities I use the grill, secondly for large quantities I use the oven, and I have recently been experimenting with a third method, stir-frying, which is easier to control than the grill – the chicken cooks more evenly and does not burn so easily. My method of stir-frying also imparts a rich colour at the same time as sealing the chicken, and if you want to blacken the edges (it does add a little to the effect and taste) at the end of the stir-fry phase, just heat under the grill for a few seconds.

Putting tandoori-cooked items into a rich red tomato sauce which uses spare tandoori marinade is a relatively recent restaurateur's invention, and it has become the diners' favourite dish. The dish is encountered under several names – tikka masala, tandoori masala, tandoori or tikka makhani (butter) or makhanwalla (cooked in butter) or choosa masala or rezala. Indeed some restaurants offer most of their curries combined with the tandoori/tikka sauce so you get bhoona tikka masala or pasanda tikka masala, etc.

*This recipe is an amalgam of those from several restaurants, in particular the **Oakham Tandoori**, 18 Mill Street, Leicester, the **Dilruba**, 155 Railway Terrace, Rugby, where they call the dish rezala, and one from Wales, the **Koh-i-noor**, Chepstow Road, Newport, Gwent.*

Tikka/tandoori

either 1½ lb (675 g) chicken breast, skinned and cubed, or a 2½–3 lb (1.1–1.3 kg) spring chicken, skinned and quartered

juice of 2 lemons (or PLJ)

8 fl oz (250 ml) tandoori marinade

The Sauce

6 tablespoons vegetable oil

6 tablespoons curry masala gravy

2 teaspoons tandoori paste

2 tablespoons tandoori marinade

2 teaspoons tomato purée

½ green capsicum pepper, seeded and chopped

1–4 fresh green chillies, chopped (to taste)

1 tomato, chopped

2 tablespoons natural yoghurt

2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander leaves (or purée)

1 tablespoon ground almonds

1 tablespoon single cream

**1 teaspoon sugar (optional)
salt to taste**

- 1 In the case of the quartered chicken, cut short, shallow slashes on the flesh. This gives an interesting appearance to the finished dish, and a greater surface area for the marinade to adhere to.
- 2 Rub the flesh with the lemon juice and let stand for 15 minutes. This degreases and tenderises the meat, preparing it for the marinade.
- 3 Shake off excess lemon juice (reserve any left, to use later in the sauce) and, using a deep bowl, thoroughly coat the chicken flesh with the tandoori marinade. Ensure the marinade reaches all parts generously. Leave to stand overnight, but preferably for 24 or even 30 hours – a minimum of 6 hours. The longer you leave it the deeper the marinade penetrates (but for the instant method see below).

4 *Cooking the Chicken*

To cook in the *tandoor* or over a barbecue, place the pieces or quarters on skewers. Place the skewers over the coals. Cook for 15 minutes, turning once or twice. Test for when ready, then remove.

To grill, arrange the pieces on a grill rack and place the pan about 6 inches (15 cm) below the heat which should be at three-quarters full. Cook as above.

To bake, place the pieces on an oven tray – don't cram them together, or they won't cook evenly. Place in an oven preheated to 325°F/160°C/Gas 3, and cook for 15–20 minutes.

An instant stir-frying – for *tikka* only – has worked for me very satisfactorily when I forgot to do even a 6-hour marinating. (It also works – better flavour – after a 30-hour marinating.) Simply coat the tikkas in the marinade. Heat some oil in the karahi, and stir-fry with about 4 tablespoons of excess marinade. Place the tikkas in the karahi and stir-fry for 15 minutes.

- 5 For the sauce, heat the oil in a karahi, and simmer the gravy, paste, marinade and purée. After 2–3 minutes add the peppers, chillies and tomato, and continue to simmer for 5 minutes or so.
- 6 Add all the remaining ingredients, and mix. When simmering, add the chicken, and stir through. Serve when hot.

Serves: 4