

## Chicken Biryani for a Crowd *serves 20* adapted from Cooks Illustrated

*Biryani is traditionally served with various raitas and chutneys.*

30 cardamom pods , preferably green, smashed with chef's knife  
5 cinnamon sticks  
7 inch piece fresh ginger, cut into 1/2-inch-thick coins & smashed with chef's knife  
2 teaspoon cumin seed  
12 quarts water & table salt  
20 boneless skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of excess fat & patted dry  
ground black pepper  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter  
12 cups thinly sliced sweet onions  
3 medium jalapeño chiles , with seeds and ribs removed and chopped fine  
12 medium cloves garlic , minced or pressed through garlic press  
6¼ cups basmati rice  
2 teaspoon saffron threads , lightly crumbled  
1¼ cup dried currants or raisins  
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves  
½ cup chopped fresh mint leaves

Preheat oven to 350° .

Wrap cardamom pods, cinnamon stick, ginger, and cumin seed in small piece of cheesecloth and secure with kitchen twine. In a very large (or 2 large) heavy-bottomed Dutch oven, bring water, spice bundle, and 1 tablespoon salt to boil over medium-high heat; reduce to medium and simmer, partially covered, until spices have infused water, about 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, season chicken thighs with salt/pepper and set aside. Heat 2 tablespoons butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until foaming subsides; add half of onions and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and dark brown about edges, 10 to 12 minutes. Add half of jalapeños and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Transfer onion mixture to medium bowl, wipe skillet clean with paper towels, and repeat with second batch of onions, jalapenos, and garlic. Transfer to bowl with rest of onion mixture, season lightly with salt, and set aside.

Wipe out skillet with paper towels, return heat to medium-high, add 1 tablespoon butter and when foam subsides, place half the chicken thighs in skillet (there should be a slight space between each piece); cook, without moving chicken, until well browned, about 6 to 8 minutes. Flip chicken and brown second side, 4 to 5 minutes longer; transfer chicken to plate. Repeat with last of butter and chicken. Tent with foil to keep warm.

If necessary, return spice-infused water to boil; stir in rice and cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain rice through fine-mesh strainer, reserving 3 cups cooking liquid; discard spice bundle. Transfer rice to large bowl; stir in saffron and currants (rice will turn splotchy yellow) & season with salt.

Spread half of rice evenly in bottom large baking dish. Scatter half of onion mixture over rice, then place chicken thighs, on top of onions; add any accumulated chicken juices. Evenly sprinkle with cilantro and mint, scatter remaining onions over herbs, then cover with remaining rice; pour 1 1/2 cups reserved cooking liquid evenly over rice.

Cover with foil and place in preheated oven. Cook for 30-40 minutes. Uncover and check bottom of pan. If dry, add up to 1 cup reserved cooking liquid. Cook about 20 minutes more or until rice is tender and chicken is cooked through. Run heatproof rubber spatula around inside rim of Dutch oven to loosen any affixed rice. Stir rice thoroughly.

## **Yogurt-Mint Raita** *Yields 2 ½ cups*

2 cup whole milk or low-fat plain yogurt  
2 medium clove garlic, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1 teaspoon)  
4 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro leaves  
4 tablespoons minced fresh mint leaves  
Table salt and ground black pepper

Combine first four ingredients in small bowl; season to taste with salt and pepper.

Let stand at least 30 minutes to blend flavors.

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## **Yogurt-Cucumber Raita** *Yields 2 ½ cups*

*A cool, creamy side is a must with spicy Indian food. Whole-milk yogurt soothes the palate.*

*Make this within an hour of serving: It will become watery if it stands too long.*

1 English cucumber, coarsely shredded (about 2 cups)  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
2 cups whole-milk yogurt  
1/2 cup finely chopped red onion  
1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro  
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice  
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander  
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
Dash each of ground nutmeg, ground cinnamon, & ground cardamom

Place cucumber in a colander, and sprinkle with salt. Toss well; drain for 30 minutes. Rinse with cold water; drain.

Place cucumber on several layers of paper towels; cover with additional paper towels. Let stand 5 minutes, pressing down occasionally.

Combine the cucumber, yogurt, and remaining ingredients.

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## **Mango Raita** *Yields 2 cups*

1/2 English hothouse cucumber, diced (about 1 cup)  
1 mango, peeled, diced (about 1 cup)  
1/4 cup plain yogurt  
2 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh mint leaves  
2 teaspoons honey

Toss all ingredients in medium bowl to combine.

Raita can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.

## **Peach Mustard Chutney** *Yields 2 ½ cups*

- 1 tablespoon ghee (clarified butter)
- 1 medium shallot, diced
- 1 clove garlic roughly chopped
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound frozen peaches (about 2 1/2 cups) thawed and roughly chopped
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup dried cherries or dried cranberries
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

Melt ghee in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallot and garlic season with the salt and pepper, and cook until tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in the peaches, brown sugar, cherries, and mustard. Cook mixture, stirring occasionally, until the peaches get nice and juicy and turn into a thick chunky compote, about 8 minutes.

Cool and serve at room temperature. Chutney can be prepared 3 days ahead. Cover & refrigerate.

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## **Carrot Chutney** *Yields 2 cups*

- 3 large carrots, peeled (organic preferably)
- 1 cup shredded unsweetened coconut
- 1 small, mild green chili, seeded, ribbed & chopped finely
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 2 teaspoon ghee or mild cooking-oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh, chopped cilantro
- 2 teaspoons black gram dhal
- ¼ teaspoon brown mustard seeds
- pinch hing powder (optional)
- salt - to taste

Grate the carrots. Chop green chili and tomato. Heat 1 teaspoon ghee/oil in a pan and fry the carrot and green chili till they are cooked. Add tomato and fry till it gets soft. Remove from pan and allow it to cool.

Grind coconut, salt, the fried items, add the carrot - tomato mixture into a smooth paste adding three quarter cup of water.

Heat the remaining ghee/oil and fry black gram dhal till the dhal turns light brown in color; then add the mustard seeds and hing powder and when the mustard splutters, pour into the cool chutney.

Serve cold, garnished with cilantro leaves. Chutney can be prepared 3 days ahead. Cover and refrigerate.

**Paneer** *makes about 3/4 of a pound*

10 cups whole milk (preferably organic)  
1/3 cup fresh lemon juice  
Special equipment: cheesecloth

Bring milk to a full boil in a 6-quart heavy pot, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low and slowly stir in lemon juice. Cook until milk begins to separate, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove pot from heat and let milk stand 10 minutes.

Pour mixture into a colander lined with a triple layer of cheesecloth. Rinse cheese curds under gently running lukewarm water. Gather up edges of cheesecloth, twisting gently to squeeze out as much water as possible, and transfer cheese in cheesecloth to a bowl, flattening into a disk. Weight cheese with a bowl filled with water or a large can.

Let paneer stand at room temperature 1 hour, or until firm, and pour off any liquid that has accumulated in bowl.

Paneer keeps, wrapped well in plastic wrap and refrigerated for 3 days.

## Broiled Cardamom-scented Pineapple with Vanilla Frozen Yogurt

*Serves 24*

1 cup mild-flavored (light) molasses  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces  
20 whole cardamom pods, lightly cracked  
2 Tablespoons fresh lime juice

3 pineapples, peeled, cut each pineapple crosswise into twelve rounds  
3 tablespoons peanut oil  
Salt & white pepper

Vanilla frozen yogurt

Bring molasses, butter, and cardamom to boil in heavy medium saucepan over high heat, stirring occasionally to melt butter. Reduce heat to low and simmer until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in lime juice & remove cardamom pods. (Can be made 1 day ahead. If made in advance, let stand out of fridge until room temperature. Whisk before using.)

Brush pineapple rounds with peanut oil. Sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper. Place on foil-lined, rimmed cookie sheet so there are no overlaps and broil about 4-5 inches away from flame until golden brown and slightly charred, brushing with glaze on each side during last 30 seconds of cooking, about 4 minutes per side.

Can be made a day in advance and refrigerated at this point.

To serve, briefly reheat under broiler and place decoratively on a platter. Serve with vanilla frozen yogurt and remaining glaze.