

Brazilian Peppered Chicken

This is an adaptation of a South Indian recipe. The key to it is a lot of fresh good quality ground black pepper – for the quantities below you'll need about half a small jar (25 grams) of coarse ground pepper or a similar quantity of whole peppercorns, ground in a mill or a pestle and mortar.

Quantities for 4 largish portions:

1 kilogram chicken thighs, skinned and on or off the bone
coarse ground black pepper
salt
2 large red onions
vegetable oil
8 garlic cloves
50 gram piece of fresh ginger
2 rounded teaspoons ground turmeric
390 gram can/carton chopped tomatoes
bunch of coriander leaves

Pre-heat the oven to 250 C.

1 First make a few knife cuts on all sides of the chicken thighs (if on the bone) or cut the meat into bite size pieces (if off the bone). Put the chicken pieces close together on a roasting rack or trivet placed in a roasting tray, liberally pepper and lightly salt them, turn all of them over and liberally pepper and lightly salt the other sides. Then place them in a hot oven (250 C) for 20 minutes. [This is akin to the Indian tandoori oven process.]

2 Transfer the cooked chicken into an ovenproof earthenware or stainless steel shallow dish and set aside.

3 Next make the sauce. Peel, halve and thinly slice the onions and sauté them gently in a little oil in a large saucepan until they are soft but not brown.

4 Meanwhile crush the garlic cloves and peel and grate the ginger, add both to the onions, and cook for a few minutes longer.

5 Then stir in the turmeric, add the chopped tomatoes, bring to the boil and simmer gently with a lid on the pan for at least 30 minutes. If the sauce is not fluid at this point add a little boiling water so that it is sloppy but not too runny. Taste the sauce and add a little salt if desired. [Please note that if you stir with a wooden spoon or spatula it will forever be yellow.]

6 Pour the cooked sauce over the chicken, cover the dish with foil and place in a moderate oven (150 C) for at least 40 minutes to allow the flavours to intermingle.

7 Take the dish out of the oven, remove the foil and liberally sprinkle with chopped coriander leaves. Serve with basmati rice or couscous and a green vegetable or two.