

# Sri Lankan Chicken Curry with Toasted Coconut Sambal



I love a good curry and I particularly love the eclectic mix of spices and aromatics in a good Sri Lankan Chicken curry. It is like they have taken the best flavours in all Asian cuisine and put them into one pot, resulting in a flavour extravaganza. Of course, this is probably not authentic and when researching Sri Lankan curries it was fairly clear to me that there are no hard and fast rules, just a perfect blend of spices with the ever present flavour balance of hot, salty, sweet and sour. The toasted coconut sambal was my own addition that added to the complexity of flavours and gave it a fresh burst of flavour with every mouthful. This was a gooden!

While there appears to be a long list of ingredients it is mainly spices that most people have in their pantry. It is actually a very simple curry to make and all of those spices make for a very tasty curry!

Prep time: 30 Minutes  
\$\$ Medium Budget

Cooking time: 45 Minutes

Serves 4-6

1 tbs of Ghee or Oil for frying  
1kg of chicken thigh fillets, cut into largish chunks (2.5cm)  
1 brown onion, roughly chopped  
3 garlic cloves, peeled  
5cm piece of ginger, peeled and roughly chopped  
5 cardamom pods, bruised with the flat of your knife  
3 cloves  
1 cinnamon stick  
1 tbs of ground cumin  
1 tbs of turmeric  
2 tsp of smoked paprika  
2 tsp of ground coriander  
1/2 – 1 tsp of ground chillies (depending on heat preference)  
1 tbs of tamarind puree  
400gm tin of coconut milk (shake really well before opening)  
1 cup of water  
1 bag of baby spinach leaves  
1/2 a bunch of coriander, roughly chopped  
Sea salt and cracked pepper  
Brown or white basmati rice and pappadums to serve

For the Sambal:

1/2 cup of unsweetened coconut flakes, toasted until golden in a dry pan  
1/2 a red onion, thinly sliced top to bottom  
Juice of 1 lime  
1 tsp of caster sugar

1 green chilli, deseeded and thinly sliced

1/2 cup of coriander leaves

Place the onion, garlic and ginger in a food processor or blender and whizz until you have a nice paste like consistency. Heat a large pan and melt the Ghee or heat the oil. Add the onion mixture to the pan and fry for a few minutes until aromatic and softened. Add the cardamom pods, cloves and cinnamon and fry for a couple more minutes before placing the chicken in the pan. Have the pan on a nice high heat and stir the chicken until it is opaque in colour on all sides and then stir in the cumin, turmeric, smoked paprika, chilli and coriander. Stir to combine and continue to toss for about 1 minute until you can really smell all of the spices before adding the tamarind, coconut milk and water. I place the water in the coconut milk can and give it a swirl around to get all of the creamy bits from the can. Stir to combine, season generously (or to your taste) with sea salt and a little pepper before reducing the heat to a simmer. Cover with a lid and leave for about 25 minutes.

To make the sambal, place the onion, chilli, lime juice and sugar in a bowl, season with a little salt and stir to combine. Set aside and allow the onion to pickle slightly. Just before serving add the toasted coconut and coriander leaves. You don't want to do this too early as you want the coconut to remain crunchy.

Remove the lid from the curry and allow it to reduce for about 10 minutes before stirring through the baby spinach and coriander leaves, allowing them to wilt for a few minutes.

Divide rice between serving bowls and top with the curry and a handful of the crunchy coconut sambal. Serve with pappadums if you so desire.