**Chicken Tikka Masala**

**(Tip: Begin the night before, if there’s time)**

Marinade (prepare first):

* 4 pounds (2 KG) **chicken thighs**, boneless & skinless, cut into bite-sized pieces (trad) or strips (less work)
* 2 cups plain (not Greek) **yogurt**
* 3 TBSP minced **garlic**
* 2 TBSP **ginger**
* 1 TBSP **garam** **masala**
* 2 tsp **turmeric**
* 2 tsp **cumin**
* 2 tsp Kashmiri **chili** (or substitute: ½ tsp red chili. My improvised substitution: 1 packet of crushed red pepper flakes plus 2 packets Wendy’s hot chili sauce)
* 2 tsp **salt**

Cooking (next day):

* 4 TBSP **vegetable oil**
* 4 TBSP **butter**
* 2 large **onions** (or 4 small onions), finely diced
* 3 TBSP **garlic**, finely minced
* 2 TBSP **ginger**
* 1 TBSP **garam masala**
* 1 TBSP **cumin**
* 2 tsp **turmeric**
* 2 tsp **coriander**

*\* The recipe originally called for 2 cups heavy cream, but I’ve reduced the quantity to 1 cup. The dish remains rich, but much lighter and easier to digest.*

* 28 oz (800g) aka 2 cans **tomato sauce**
* 1 tsp **salt**
* 2 tsp Kashmiri **chili** (or substitute as before)
* 2 tsp red **chili**
* 1 cup **heavy cream\*** (or substitute evaporated milk)
* 2 tsp **brown sugar**

To garnish:

* **Fresh cilantro**, baby cilantro, or coriander

Logistics:

* To prepare the entire recipe, you’ll need 2 skillets—and your cookware matters. You’ll be brown­ing/‌searing/‌charring over a high flame, and reincorporating the “black” into the dish. My experimentation shows:
  + Best choice: A ridged nonstick grill. (I haven’t tried the recommended Dutch oven yet.)
  + Poor choice: (Even when using a low flame and lots of oil) my chef quality stainless steel skillet burns the wet ingredients quickly, making most of the char unusable.

Marinade:

* In a large mixing bowl, combine all **marinade ingredients**. Mix thoroughly.
* Add sliced **chicken**, ensuring to coat each piece thoroughly.
* Cover and refrigerate and let marinate overnight, if time allows. Otherwise, 1 hour minimum.

Everything else:

* Heat **oil** in 2 skillets, over **medium-high** heat.
* When sizzling, add a single layer of **chicken** to each skillet. Sauté each side **3 minutes**, until browned. Set aside and keep warm. (You will finish cooking the chicken in the sauce.)
* In the same 2 skillets, melt **butter**. Sauté the **onions** **3 minutes** while you use a wooden spatula or spoon to scrape up any browned bits stuck on the bottom of the skillets.
* Add **garlic** and **ginger** and sauté for **1 minute**, until fragrant.
* Add **garam masala**, **cumin**, **turmeric** and **coriander**. Constantly stir as you sauté for about **20** seconds, until fragrant.
* Pour in the **tomato sauce**, **chilis** and **salt**. Simmer **10-15 minutes**, stirring occasionally until sauce thickens and becomes a deep brown red color.  
    
  **Tip:** Now is when to prepare your rice, which combines really beautifully with this dish. Tradition says to serve with fresh, hot basmati rice—but we have great success with short grain brown rice too!
* Stir the **cream** and **sugar** through the sauce.
* Add the **chicken** and its **juices**. Cook **8-10 minutes**, until sauce is thick and bubbling. If too thick, add a bit of **water**.
* If serving with rice, scoop rice into a bowl and top with **chicken tikka masala**. Otherwise, just dish up the **chicken tikka masala**.
* Garnish with plenty of fresh **cilantro**.