

Easy Chicken or Vegetable Biryani

An easy version of a biryani, a great one pot meal for sharing with friends. You can easily halve the quantities for a smaller meal, and swap the chicken for a range of vegetables for a vegetarian version.

Ingredients

4 onions, roughly chopped

4-5 tbsp sunflower oil

Cinnamon stick

2 bay leaves

3-4 cardamom pods

2-3 star anise

2-3 cloves

600g basmati rice

4-6 garlic cloves

3cm root ginger

2 green chillies, chopped

4 tomatoes, finely chopped

Salt

2 tsp chilli powder

1 heaped tsp turmeric powder

2-3 tsp garam masala

6 tbsp plain yoghurt

Rose water (kewra water)

Fresh coriander, chopped

Fresh mint, chopped

Chicken version – serves 8

1 whole chicken, cut into pieces

Vegetarian version – serves 4

3 potatoes, peeled and diced

1 carrot, peeled and diced

1 cup frozen peas

Method

Heat a pan and add a good glug of sunflower oil. Add the cinnamon stick, bay leaves, cardamom pods, star anise and cloves and let them sizzle for a few seconds. Next add the chopped onions and cook on a low heat for 12-15 minutes until golden.

While the onions are cooking, start to cook enough basmati rice for 8, in salted water. Drain the rice when it is half cooked as it will continue to cook when the biryani is baked.

Grate the garlic cloves and ginger, add to the onions and continue to cook for another few seconds before adding the chillies and tomatoes. Cook this mixture for another 10 minutes and then add the rest of the spices: 2 teaspoons of salt, chili powder, turmeric and garam masala and mix well. Remove from the heat before adding the yoghurt, to avoid it splitting, and mix well.

Chicken version

Add the chicken pieces to the yoghurt onion mix, cover and return to the heat. Cook on a low heat for 30 minutes and then rest for another 30 minutes. Cover the chicken mixture with the semi-cooked rice, press down and reduce the heat to the lowest that it can go. Sprinkle with a generous amount of chopped fresh coriander and a little fresh mint, and a few drops of rose water. Cover and cook for 30 minutes.

Vegetarian version

Fully cook the rice (300g) for the vegetarian version. Add the chopped potatoes and carrots to the yoghurt onion mix, along with 50-100ml hot water. Mix well, cover and cook for 20 minutes or until the vegetables have softened. Remove from the heat. Add the frozen peas to the cooked rice and spread the rice on top of the vegetable yoghurt mixture. Add chopped fresh coriander and mint and a few drops of rose water. Cover

and simmer on the lowest heat for 10 minutes.

When the biryani is cooked, fluff up the rice and gently stir to combine, without breaking up the chicken or the vegetables. Serve hot with yoghurt or chutneys.