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GUEST COLUMNIST

## May it Please the Palate

### *Desi Chicken Curry*

The adjective “desi” means local or indigenous and when used in the context of food, brings back nostalgic and evocative memories of feasts, family get-togethers, and memorable meals of my childhood in India. A desi curry was and continues to be the ultimate comfort food for me. It’s what I want when I return home after an extended trip. It’s what “hits the spot” when nothing else will quite suffice. It’s what I make when we have friends over for dinner. Best of all, the curry, like all curries, tastes better the next day after the flavors have had time to meld, so make more and save some for the next day (you can also freeze some for a “rainy day”).

You can make the desi curry with the ingredient of your choice: chicken, beef, lamb, fish, hard boiled eggs, tofu, or a root vegetable of your choice (potato, turnip, yam). If you are like me, you can mix and match the ingredients: say chicken together with some hard-boiled eggs. Be bold with the spices and throw caution to the wind when adding ghee / oil to the dish. You want this dish to be fragrant, fiery red in color, and spicy. Put some Bollywood music on, pour yourself a dram of good scotch and get started.

#### Ingredients

2 lbs. skinned chicken drumsticks  
2 lbs. skinned chicken thighs  
4-6 tablespoons of ghee (clarified butter) or canola oil  
3 large red onions, chopped  
4-5 cloves of garlic, minced  
2 inches of ginger, minced (with a bit chopped into matchsticks for the garnish)  
½ jalapeno or serrano green chili, chopped (save a bit for the garnish)  
1-2 whole dry red chilies (preferably Rajasthani Mathania)

1 tablespoon Cumin Seeds  
2 bay leaves  
½ cinnamon (Stick)  
3 – 4 Cardamoms  
4 – 5 Peppercorns  
4 – 5 Cloves  
2 tomatoes (medium sized, chopped)  
2 tablespoon of tomato paste  
½ teaspoon turmeric powder (haldi)  
1-2 teaspoon chili powder, Red (mirchi)  
2 tablespoons coriander powder (dhania)  
1 teaspoon garam masala powder salt, to taste  
1 bunch of fresh coriander, chopped  
2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and halved  
Slice of lemon

#### Directions

1. Heat ghee in a heavy-bottomed pot or a Dutch oven. Add cumin seeds, bay leaves, cardamoms, peppercorns, cloves, and dry red chilies. Once the dry whole spices start spluttering (don’t let them burn and turn black), add onions. Sauté / fry the onions (add ghee / oil if necessary, to avoid the onions sticking to the bottom) until they are golden brown—this is crucial, the onions must be golden brown, not just translucent golden.

2. Add garlic, ginger, and green chilies. Sauté for a couple of minutes. Lower the heat and add the turmeric-red chili-coriander powder and fry for 10-20 seconds.

3. Raise the heat, add chicken to the mixture, and thoroughly fry it in the spice mixture. This technique—known as bhunao—seals the meat and infuses it with the spices. Add a few tablespoons of water if necessary, to avoid the chicken / spices from getting

burnt. Continue to fry the chicken for about 10-15 minutes, stirring.

4. Add chopped tomatoes, tomato paste, and salt to taste. Cook for about 25-30 minutes at a medium heat with the pot / pan covered.

5. To finish, raise the heat, and cook for a couple of minutes with the pot / pan uncovered. The ghee / oil should have risen to the top. Switch off the heat. Add the hard-boiled eggs. Squeeze a bit of lemon. Garnish with bits of chopped chilies, ginger matchsticks, and fresh coriander.

6. Serve with hot naan bread and/or plain boiled rice. Traditionally, a plate of freshly cut onions (thin slivers of half-moons) together with a couple of slices of lemon would be handy to serve as a side dish.

7. A quick accompaniment to this curry would a cooling Raita: take 1 cup Greek / whole milk yogurt, add minced cucumber, chopped mint leaves, ½ teaspoon of cumin powder, salt to taste, and mix it well.

This curry is the perfect antidote to gray skies and Michigan winter evenings. Eat it with family, friends, or if you are like me, with a book in hand and a game of cricket on the T.V. Enjoy!

*Ashish Joshi is the owner and managing partner of Joshi: Attorneys + Counselors. He serves as the lead counsel in high-stakes, complex family law and divorce cases including cases involving severe parental alienation. He has counseled and/or represented clients in state and federal courts across the United States and internationally. Mr. Joshi serves as a senior editor of Litigation, the flagship journal of the ABA's Section of Litigation.*