GENERAL

authentic butter chicken recipe by sanjeev kapoor

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Introduction

Butter chicken, also known as *murgh makhani*, is one of the most beloved dishes in Indian cuisine. Its silky tomato gravy, fragrant spices, and tender chicken pieces have made it a staple in restaurants and homes across the globe. When you hear the name Sanjeev Kapoor, a renowned chef and culinary icon from India, the first thing that comes to mind is his signature take on butter chicken. In this article, we'll dive deep into the **authentic butter chicken recipe by Sanjeev Kapoor**, uncover the secrets behind its creamy richness, and guide you step-by-step to recreate this iconic dish in your own kitchen.

Why Sanjeev Kapoor's Butter Chicken Stands Out

Sanjeev Kapoor, often hailed as the "Chef of India," has built his reputation on delivering flavors that are both true to tradition and accessible to home cooks. His butter chicken recipe is no exception. It blends the smoky undertones of tandoor-cooked chicken with a luscious tomato cream sauce that's been perfected over decades.

His Culinary Philosophy

Kapoor believes that the essence of Indian cooking lies in balancing flavors—sweetness, acidity, spiciness, and umami—while respecting the integrity of each ingredient. This philosophy is evident in his butter chicken, where the chicken is marinated to perfection, the tomato base is cooked until it's a deep, rich red, and the finishing touches of butter and cream elevate the dish without overpowering its core spices.

Signature Flavor Profile

Unlike some commercial versions that lean heavily on artificial flavor enhancers, Kapoor's recipe relies on fresh spices, fresh cream, and real butter. The result is a gravy that is silky, slightly tangy, and richly aromatic, with a subtle smoky note that hints at the tandoori origin of the dish.

Ingredients for the Authentic Butter Chicken Recipe by Sanjeev Kapoor

Below is a comprehensive list of ingredients you'll need. Feel free to adjust quantities to suit your taste preferences, but keep the proportions balanced for the best outcome.

- Chicken: 1 kg boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts, cut into bite sized pieces
- Yogurt (plain, unsweetened): 1 cup
- Lemon juice: 2 tablespoons
- Garlic paste: 1 tablespoon
- Ginger paste: 1 tablespoon
- Red chili powder: 1 teaspoon (adjust to taste)
- Turmeric powder: ½ teaspoon
- Garam masala: 1 teaspoon
- Salt: to taste
- Oil (vegetable or canola): 2 tablespoons
- Butter: 4 tablespoons (unsalted)
- Fresh cream: ½ cup

- Tomato puree: 1 cup (or 4 fresh tomatoes blended)
- Onion: 1 large, finely chopped
- Garlic cloves: 4, minced
- Ginger: 1 inch, minced
- Kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves): 1 teaspoon, crushed
- Fresh cilantro: for garnish
- Optional: a splash of lemon juice or a pinch of sugar to balance acidity

Step-by-Step Preparation Guide

Follow these detailed steps to achieve the same velvety texture and depth of flavor that Sanjeev Kapoor's butter chicken is celebrated for.

1. Preparing the Chicken Marinade

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the yogurt, lemon juice, garlic paste, ginger paste, red chili powder, turmeric powder, garam masala, and salt.
2. Add the chicken pieces to the bowl, ensuring each piece is fully coated with the mixture.
3. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight. This step allows the spices to penetrate the meat, resulting in a tender bite.

2. Cooking the Tomato-Based Gravy

1. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pan over medium heat.
2. Add the finely chopped onions and sauté until they turn translucent and lightly golden.
3. Add the minced garlic and ginger, cooking for another 2 minutes until fragrant.
4. Stir in the tomato puree and let it simmer for about 10 minutes, allowing the raw tomato flavor to cook down into a rich sauce.
5. Reduce the heat to low, then add the remaining butter (3 tablespoons). Stir until the butter melts and blends seamlessly with the tomato mixture.
6. Season the gravy with salt to taste. If you prefer a slightly sweeter sauce, add a pinch of sugar at this stage.

3. Combining the Chicken and Gravy

1. Remove the marinated chicken from the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature for about 15 minutes.
2. In the same pan used for the gravy, heat the remaining oil.
3. Add the marinated chicken pieces, cooking them until they are browned on all sides but not fully cooked through. This should take roughly 5–7 minutes.
4. Once the chicken is browned, pour the prepared tomato gravy over the chicken. Stir gently to coat all the pieces.
5. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to low, and let the dish simmer for 20–25 minutes. The chicken should be tender and fully cooked, and the gravy should thicken slightly.

4. Finishing Touches: Cream and Ghee

1. Stir in the fresh cream and the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter. The cream adds a luxurious mouthfeel while the butter contributes a subtle richness.
2. Sprinkle the crushed kasuri methi over the top, and stir gently. The fenugreek leaves add a hint of bitterness that balances the sweetness of the cream.
3. Simmer for an additional 5 minutes, allowing all flavors to meld together.
4. Adjust seasoning as needed—add more salt, a splash of lemon juice for acidity, or a pinch of sugar if you prefer a sweeter finish.

Tips for Perfect Butter Chicken

- Use chicken thighs: They remain juicy and tender, especially when marinated.
- Marination time matters: The longer you marinate, the more flavorful and tender the chicken becomes.
- Simmer gently: High heat can scorch the butter and cream, leading to a bitter taste.
- Fresh spices: Ground cumin, coriander, and garam masala are best when freshly ground.
- Optional smoky flavor: If you have a stovetop grill or a preheated oven, briefly sear the chicken pieces before adding them to the gravy.
- Thickening the gravy: If you prefer a thicker sauce, simmer uncovered for a few extra minutes or add a small amount of besan (gram flour) dissolved in water.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings

Butter chicken is a versatile dish that can be paired with a variety of sides to create a complete meal.

Rice and Bread

- Jeera Rice: Cumin-flavored basmati rice complements the richness of the gravy.
- Garlic Naan: Warm, fluffy naan is perfect for scooping up the sauce.
- Plain Roti: For a lighter option, serve with plain whole-wheat rotis.

Vegetable Sides

- Saag Paneer: The creamy spinach and paneer provide a contrasting texture.
- Mixed Vegetable Curry: A medley of bell peppers, peas, and carrots adds color and nutrition.
- Fresh Salad: A simple cucumber and tomato salad with lemon dressing balances the heaviness of the dish.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I use boneless chicken breasts instead of thighs? Yes, but keep an eye on cooking time to avoid drying out the meat.
2. What if I don’t have fresh cream? You can substitute with coconut milk or a light yogurt cream blend for a slightly different flavor profile.
3. How do I store leftovers? Keep the butter chicken in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Reheat gently on the stovetop, adding a splash of water or milk to loosen the gravy.
4. Can I make this dish gluten-free? Absolutely. Use gluten-free naan or serve with rice.
5. Is this recipe suitable for a spicy palate? Increase the red chili powder or add a few green chilies to the gravy for extra heat.

Conclusion

The **authentic butter chicken recipe by Sanjeev Kapoor**encapsulates the essence of Indian culinary artistry—balancing robust spices with creamy textures, while keeping the process approachable for home cooks. By following the steps outlined above, you’ll be able to bring this iconic dish from a global favorite to your own dining table. Whether you’re preparing a family dinner,

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