GENERAL

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Butter Chicken Recipe of Sanjeev Kapoor

When you think of the rich, velvety delight that is butter chicken, you'll almost always picture the iconic dish that has taken the world by storm. While countless chefs have put their own spin on this classic, none has captured the essence of the original as effectively as Sanjeev Kapoor. Known for his culinary genius and a passion for bringing authentic Indian flavors to the global stage, Kapoor's butter chicken recipe has become a staple in households and restaurants alike. This article dives deep into the secrets behind his recipe, offers a step by step guide, and provides practical tips to help you recreate this mouth watering dish at home.

Who is Sanjeev Kapoor?

Sanjeev Kapoor, often referred to as the "Chef of India," is a culinary icon whose influence transcends borders. With a career spanning over three decades, Kapoor has authored more than 30 cookbooks, hosted 30+ television shows, and launched a highly successful line of cookware and kitchen appliances. His signature style blends traditional Indian techniques with modern twists, making complex flavors accessible to the average home cook.

Kapoor's butter chicken is perhaps one of his most celebrated creations. It embodies the warmth of Indian hospitality, the richness of South Indian spices, and the comforting familiarity of a dish that feels both luxurious and approachable. His recipe has earned a place in countless cooking blogs, food magazines, and, most importantly, in the hearts of millions who crave that silky, buttery sauce with succulent chicken.

Why Kapoor's Butter Chicken Stands Out

- Balanced Flavor Profile – Kapoor masterfully balances the sweetness of tomatoes, the creaminess of butter, and the subtle heat of spices.
- Texture Matters – The chicken is tender, the sauce is smooth, and the finishing butter creates a glossy, mouth watering sheen.
- Authentic Spices – He uses a blend of garam masala, cumin, coriander, and a touch of cardamom, ensuring the dish feels genuinely Indian.
- Versatility – Whether you're serving it with naan, rice, or even pasta, Kapoor's butter chicken adapts beautifully.

Ingredients for Sanjeev Kapoor's Butter Chicken

Below is the complete list of ingredients you'll need to create a restaurant quality butter chicken at home. All quantities are based on serving four people.

Marinade

- 500 /g boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite size pieces
- 1 /cup plain yogurt
- 1 /tbsp lemon juice
- 1 /tbsp ginger garlic paste
- 1 /tsp red chili powder (adjust to taste)

- 1 /tsp ground cumin
- 1 /tsp ground coriander
- Salt to taste

Sauce

- 3 /tbsp butter (plus extra for finishing)
- 1 /tbsp oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, pureed
- 1 /tbsp tomato paste
- 1 /tbsp ginger garlic paste
- 1 /tsp garam masala
- 1 /tsp ground cumin
- 1 /tsp ground coriander
- 1 /tsp ground turmeric
- 1/2 /tsp ground cardamom
- 1/2 /tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 /tsp ground cloves
- 1/4 /tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 /cup heavy cream
- Salt to taste

Garnish

- Fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- 1 /tbsp butter (for finishing)
- Optional: a pinch of kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves)

Step by Step Preparation

1. Marinate the Chicken

1. In a large bowl, combine the yogurt, lemon juice, ginger garlic paste, red chili powder, cumin, coriander, and salt.
2. Add the chicken pieces and mix thoroughly so every piece is coated.
3. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 /hour, preferably 3–4 /hours, or overnight for deeper flavor.

2. Cook the Chicken

1. Heat a skillet or pan over medium heat and add 1 /tbsp of butter.
2. Once melted, add the marinated chicken pieces.
3. Cook for about 6–8 /minutes, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is no longer pink and has a slight sear.
4. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside.

3. Prepare the Sauce

1. In the same pan, add the remaining 2 /tbsp of butter and 1 /tbsp oil.
2. Once the butter melts, add the chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.
3. Add the ginger garlic paste and sauté for 1 /minute until fragrant.
4. Pour in the tomato puree and tomato paste, stirring well.
5. Let the mixture cook for 5 /minutes, allowing the tomatoes to reduce slightly.
6. Add all the spices: garam masala, cumin, coriander, turmeric, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and salt.

7. Stir continuously for 2–3 /minutes so the spices release their aromas.
8. Pour in the heavy cream, reduce the heat to low, and let the sauce simmer gently for 5 /minutes.

4. Combine Chicken and Sauce

1. Return the cooked chicken to the pan, ensuring each piece is coated in the sauce.
2. Simmer on low heat for 5–7 /minutes, allowing the chicken to absorb the flavors.
3. Optional: If you like a thicker sauce, let it reduce for an additional 2–3 /minutes.

5. Finish and Garnish

1. Turn off the heat and stir in 1 /tbsp of butter for a glossy finish.
2. Sprinkle chopped cilantro and a pinch of kasuri methi over the top.
3. Serve hot with naan, steamed rice, or your favorite side.

Tips & Tricks for the Perfect Butter Chicken

- Use Chicken Thighs – They remain juicy and tender, especially when cooked in a rich sauce.
- Marinate Longer – The yogurt not only tenderizes but also infuses the chicken with flavor. Overnight marination is ideal.
- Control the Heat – Adjust the chili powder to suit your spice tolerance. You can also add a dash of cayenne for extra heat.
- Blend the Tomato Puree – For a smoother sauce, blend the tomatoes before cooking.
- Use Fresh Spices – Ground spices lose potency over time. Freshly ground spices elevate the dish dramatically.
- Finish with Butter – A final swirl of butter gives the sauce a luxurious sheen and depth.
- Serve Immediately – Butter chicken is best enjoyed hot. If you need to reheat, do so gently over low heat.

Variations & Personal Touches

While Sanjeev Kapoor's butter chicken is a classic, you can customize it to suit your palate or dietary preferences.

Low Fat Version

Replace heavy cream with a mixture of Greek yogurt and a splash of milk. Use a non stick pan and reduce the butter to 1 /tbsp.

Vegetarian Butter Chicken

Swap the chicken for paneer cubes or tofu. Marinate the paneer in yogurt and spices for 30 /minutes before cooking.

Spicy Extra Heat

Add a tablespoon of finely chopped green chilies or a splash of hot sauce during the simmering stage.

Smoky Flavor

Introduce a pinch of smoked paprika or a small amount of liquid smoke for a subtle smoky undertone.

Serving Suggestions

- Naan or Roti – Soft, warm bread is perfect for scooping up the creamy sauce.
- Steamed Basmati Rice – The aromatic grains complement the richness of the dish.
- Raita – A cool yogurt side balances the heat.
- Pickled Vegetables – Adds crunch and a tangy contrast.
- Fresh Salad – A light cucumber or tomato salad provides a refreshing counterpoint.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use chicken breast instead of thighs?

Yes, but chicken breast is leaner and may dry out if overcooked. Use a lower heat and cook for a shorter time to keep it moist.

What if I don’t have all the spices?

Use a pre made garam masala mix or combine cumin, coriander, and a pinch of turmeric to approximate the flavor.

How long can I store leftovers?

Refrigerated leftovers stay good for up to 2 days. Reheat gently on the stove or in the microwave, adding a splash of milk or cream to restore creaminess.

Is the dish suitable for a low sodium diet?

Reduce the added salt to 1/2 /tsp and use low sodium or no salt added chicken stock if you’re using stock.

Can I use a pressure cooker?

Absolutely! Pressure cooking the chicken with the spices reduces cooking time and locks in flavors.

Conclusion

Recreating Sanjeev Kapoor’s butter chicken at home is both an art and a science. By following the detailed steps, using fresh ingredients, and adding your personal flair, you’ll produce a dish that is creamy, fragrant, and utterly unforgettable. Whether you’re feeding a crowd or indulging in a quiet family dinner, this recipe guarantees a taste of authentic Indian hospitality. So, gather your spices, preheat that pan, and let the kitchen become a haven of buttery aromas. Happy cooking!

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