

Chicken Biryani

Biryani (bear-e-ah-nee) is a baked Indian dish of spiced rice combined with chicken, seafood, or other meats. This version omits the baking step while maintaining the authentic flavors. Whole-milk yogurt keeps its creamy texture when cooked; if you substitute low-fat yogurt, it may curdle.

3 cups water
2 teaspoons salt, divided
1/4 teaspoon saffron threads, crushed
1 1/2 cups uncooked basmati rice
1 (3-inch) cinnamon stick
1 pound skinless, boneless chicken thighs **or** breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 cup chopped onion
2 teaspoons curry powder
1 teaspoon minced peeled fresh ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 serrano chiles, seeded and minced
1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
1/2 cup raisins (black or golden)
1/2 cup chopped dry-roasted cashews **or** walnuts
1/4 cup fresh cilantro

Bring water, 1 teaspoon salt, and saffron to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add rice and cinnamon stick to pan. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Discard cinnamon stick.

Sprinkle chicken with 1/2 teaspoon salt. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken; sauté 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove chicken from pan; cover and keep warm. Add onion and 1/2 teaspoon salt to pan.

Cover, reduce heat to low, and cook 10 minutes or until lightly browned, stirring occasionally. Add curry and the next 5 ingredients (curry through serrano chiles); cook 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Add chicken, nuts and raisins; cook 4 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Remove from heat and add yogurt stirring with a wooden spoon or spatula. Scrape pan to dissolve all caramelized juices and spices. Add rice; stir well to combine. Sprinkle evenly with cilantro.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 1 1/3 cups)

CALORIES 435 (26% from fat); FAT 12.7g (satfat 3.2g, monofat 5.1g, polyfat 3.2g); PROTEIN 22.8g; CARBOHYDRATE 59.2g; FIBER 1.9g; CHOLESTEROL 68mg; IRON 2.3mg; SODIUM 942mg; CALCIUM 84mg;
Adapted from Cooking Light, MARCH 2004