

SURVEY

WSJ wants to hear from you. Take part in this short survey and share your feedback with the Journal. [Take Survey](#)

SHARE

TEXT

FOOD & DRINK | SLOW FOOD FAST

This Recipe Will Make Your House Smell Heavenly

Chef Nasim Alikhani of Sofreh, in Brooklyn, builds flavor layer by layer in this delicious and highly aromatic dish of chicken thighs infused with turmeric, saffron and sumac



Sofreh Turmeric Chicken with Caramelized Onions and Saffron PHOTO: TED + CHELSEA CAVANAUGH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FOOD STYLING BY SARAH KARNASIEWICZ, PROP STYLING BY CARLA GONZALEZ-HART

By *Kitty Greenwald*

June 24, 2019 3:35 pm ET

THE CHEF: NASIM ALIKHANI



ILLUSTRATION: JOE MCKENDRY

Her Restaurant: Sofreh, in Brooklyn, N.Y.

YOU GET A STRONG sense of mission when chef Nasim Alikhani talks about her restaurant, Sofreh, in Brooklyn, N.Y. “No one else is doing what we’re doing,” she said. “We’re explaining traditional Iranian cooking to the public.” Still, the experience of sitting down to a meal in the inviting dining room feels more intimate than didactic. The dishes tap into memories of growing up in Iran that Ms. Alikhani has held fast to since moving to New York in 1983. Her mother still ships ingredients to her from Isfahan.

In the chef’s first Slow Food Fast recipe, chicken thighs stew with onions and plenty of turmeric until the meat is tender and seasoned straight through. “Homes should smell of onions and turmeric,” Ms. Alikhani proclaimed. Saffron further perfumes the dish, and sumac gives it a

Recommended Videos

1. Support Grows for a Presidential Candidate Who Can Beat Trump
2. These Scooters, Segways and Skates Make Getting Around a Breeze
3. Apollo’s Code: Meet the Computer Programmer Who Landed Us on the Moon
4. Arctic Melt Heightens U.S. Rivalry With Russia on the Northern Front
5. How Boeing’s 737 MAX Troubles Ripple Through the Industry

Most Popular Articles

1. Opinion: Kavanaugh Fight Was No ‘Win’
2. The Amazon Prime Day Deal That Walmart and Target Can’t Match
3. Black Homeownership Drops to All-Time Low
4. Large-Scale Immigration Raids Fail to Materialize
5. Manufacturers Move Supply Chains Out of China

What She's Known For: Honoring the culinary traditions she grew up with in Iran. Tending to every detail in her restaurant to ensure a gracious welcome.

tart edge.

Ms. Alikhani builds flavor gradually, in layers. “I get the onions very golden and a little brown at the edges,” she said. “They reduce by about a third and get very sweet. The turmeric gives nuttiness.” The recipe is designed expressly for

skinless chicken thighs. “I wouldn’t do this with breasts because they don’t have the same juices. And I don’t use thighs with skin because the skin gets flabby,” she said. She recommends filling out the meal with some rice, perhaps a salad, and some bread and yogurt, as well. Everyone should leave the table satisfied. In her words, “This is food that fulfills you.”

TOTAL TIME: 35 minutes **SERVES:** 4

Generous pinch saffron threads or powder (about 1/8 teaspoon)

1 cup warm water

8 skinless and boneless chicken thighs, (about 2½ pounds)

¼ cup olive oil

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 large onions, finely diced

4 tablespoons turmeric

4 tablespoons sumac

Cooked jasmine rice, for serving

1. In a small bowl, combine saffron and warm water. Set aside to steep until saffron dissolves and colors water. Meanwhile, pat chicken thighs dry and season all over with salt and pepper.

2. Heat olive oil in a wide, lidded pot over medium heat. Once hot, lay in chicken thighs and lightly brown both sides, about 5 minutes total. Remove chicken from pot and stir in onions. Once onions soften and turn light golden, after about 7 minutes, stir in turmeric and sauté until fragrant, about 1 minute more. Stir in sumac and saffron water to form a uniform sauce.

3. Nestle chicken thighs into pan and spoon sauce over chicken. Cover pot and lower heat to medium-low. Gently simmer until meat is tender and cooked through and sauce thickens, about 20 minutes. Check during cooking, and if sauce looks dry, add splashes of water to prevent sticking or scorching. The sauce should be wet but not soupy.

4. Serve chicken and onion sauce over rice. Bread, yogurt and/or a summer salad also make nice accompaniments.

Appeared in the June 29, 2019, print edition as ‘Turmeric Chicken With Caramelized Onions and Saffron.’