

Chicken Machboos (Bahrain)

Serves 4–6 • 60–75 min • One-pot spiced rice



Photo: Lambros

Ingredients

- 700–900 g chicken thighs/drumsticks (bone-in) or 600–700 g boneless thighs
- 2 tbsp oil or ghee
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 tomatoes, chopped (or 1 can chopped tomatoes, drained slightly)
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves or allspice (optional)
- 2–3 dried black limes (loomi) OR 1 tsp lime zest + 2 tbsp lemon juice (Sweden-friendly swap)
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cups basmati rice (about 400 g), rinsed well
- 750–900 ml chicken stock or water (adjust to your rice)
- Salt + black pepper
- Optional toppings: toasted almonds/cashews, raisins, chopped parsley/coriander

Steps

1. Rinse the rice until the water runs mostly clear. Soak in cold water while you start the base (optional but helps).
2. Brown chicken: season with salt/pepper. Heat oil/ghee in a pot, brown chicken 2–3 min per side. Remove to a plate.
3. Build the sauce: sauté onion until golden, 8–10 min. Add garlic 30 seconds. Stir in tomato paste 1 min.
4. Add tomatoes + spices (cumin, coriander, turmeric, paprika, cinnamon, clove). Cook 2–3 min until fragrant.
5. Add stock/water + bay leaves + dried limes (pierce them) or the zest/lemon swap. Return chicken. Simmer 20–25 min (until chicken is cooked; bone-in may take longer).
6. Remove chicken and keep warm. Taste the broth: it should be slightly salty and aromatic (rice will absorb salt).
7. Add drained rice to the pot. Add more hot stock/water if needed so liquid sits about 1.5–2 cm above rice. Bring to a gentle boil, then cover and cook on low 12–15 min.
8. Rest 10 min off heat. Meanwhile, you can quickly toast nuts/raisins in a dry pan.
9. Fluff rice. Serve chicken on top, sprinkle nuts/raisins/herbs. Add extra lemon wedges at the table.

Notes

- Fish machboos: use firm white fish (cod/haddock). Simmer the sauce 15 min, then nestle fish on top for 8–10 min right before serving (don't overcook).
- If using boneless chicken, reduce simmer time to ~15–18 min before adding rice.
- Leftovers: reheat with a splash of water in a covered pan or microwave.