**CHICKEN KORMA**

**EF, WF, GF**

Chicken korma cooked at home is unlike any restaurant version. Originating from Mughlai cuisine, a real korma is rich, decadent and very special. It’s usually made with a mixture of whole spices, yoghurt and ghee, and cooked slowly to create the kind of depth of flavour you really can’t get in a hurry. There’s no sugar or colourings, which is often the case when you order the curry house version and sometimes a little nut paste is added which makes the dish even more opulent and perfect for feasting. There are many variations of korma across the Indian subcontinent and I’ve based mine on the ones I’ve grown up eating. I use Greek yoghurt for a mellow, creamy flavour, less tangy than natural yoghurt. Whole green chillies are used for fragrance instead of heat so don’t be tempted to cut them as korma is meant to be mild. I find that a mixture of thigh and breast meat gives the best result, but you can use one or the other if you prefer.

**INGREDIENTS**

Serves 2-4

100ml oil

2 tbsp ghee

2 tbsp crushed garlic

2 tbsp crushed ginger

1 tsp panch phoron

3 medium onions, finely sliced

3 dried red chillies

2 bay leaves

8 cardamom pods

4 cloves

6 black peppercorns

2 cinnamon sticks

1 star anise

1½ tsp salt

1 1/3 tbsp ground cumin

1 1/3 tbsp ground coriander

1/2 tsp chilli powder

1/8 tsp ground turmeric

800g skinless chicken breast & thigh meat, chopped into bitesize pieces

300g Greek yoghurt

6 whole green chillies

**METHOD**

Heat the oil and ghee in a large pan on medium-high heat and add the garlic, ginger and panch phoron. After a minute add the onions, dried red chillies, bay leaves, cardamom, cloves, black peppercorns, cinnamon sticks, star anise and salt and sauté until golden – around ten minutes. Add 200ml water, cover and simmer on low heat for 20 to 25 minutes, until the onions have broken up and the oil has separated. Keep checking regularly and if the mixture gets too dry or catches at the bottom of the pan add a dash of water and continue cooking.

At this point stir in the cumin, coriander, chilli powder and turmeric and turn up the heat to medium. Cook for two to three minutes until the spices are fragrant and have separated from the oil. Add a dash of water if needed, then cover for a few minutes. Now take the chicken pieces and add them to the pan. Stir this around for a couple of minutes to seal the meat, then cover and cook for ten minutes, checking now and then to make sure nothing’s burning. Towards the end of the ten minutes you’ll notice the chicken releasing moisture, which indicates that it’s almost fully cooked.

Take the pan off the heat, wait for a minute and then gradually add the yoghurt, a little at a time so it doesn’t curdle. Finally toss in the green chillies, return to the pan and simmer on very low heat for another eight to ten minutes, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is tender and the gravy is thick and silky. Serve with pilau rice.

*Cook’s tip – to ensure the very best korma it is absolutely essential that you take your time over the onions. They should slowly soften, until they almost caramelise and disintegrate. Add a dash of water now and then if they brown too quickly and be patient!*