

Chole Chawal (Gravy chickpeas and rice)

With many thanks to the team at Finovista, India, for sharing this recipe and background.



Chole chawal (image credit: Finovista).

Indian cuisine is known for its large assortment of dishes. The cooking style varies from region to region and is largely divided into South Indian & North Indian cuisine. The traditional food of India has been widely appreciated for its fabulous use of herbs and spices. All across India, food is central to cultural and religious practices. Chole rice is one of India's most popular and relished main course dishes, especially in the North. This is a great vegan and vegetarian option that is full of protein and great flavours. Chole can be prepared with a mild gravy, but can also be made dry called a Pindi chole. Chickpeas can also be served alongside piping hot bhature, poori, or even parathas and boiled rice.

History and the Culinary Origin

Diversification of food in Indian cuisines could be mainly from the onset of Central Asian dynasties known as the Sultanates to the great Mughal in the sixteenth century. Architectural progress during the Mughals is a landmark in world art and it has influenced several parts of India resulting in beautiful monuments, including some world heritage sites. This Persian influence is not only restricted to art and architecture but also to food. The Mughals brought new foods to the subcontinent from Central Asia, including dried fruits, pilafs, leavened wheat breads, stuffed meat, poultry, certain pulses and fruits. The Mughals also brought new cooking processes such as baking bread and cooking in the *tandoor* (a clay oven). Chole is one such dish introduced to Indian palate by the Mughal dynasty in the sixteenth century.

India has a tradition of a heavy lunch culture and a belly full of this dish will sustain individual through the day. Chole chawal is also a balanced and economical meal. It has ample protein and carbs to take care of nutrition. This dish is also popular due to the distinct taste of dishes as it contains spiciness from different spices, sourness

from tomatoes, sweet flavour/taste from onions, salt & nuttiness from the chickpeas itself which balances the dish. Many Indians consider it to be one of their favourite lunch or dinner dishes. Predominately, this dish is served in almost all school and college canteens across the country. Whether it's a birthday party, a wedding ceremony, or a festival celebration, chole chawal is always a part of the festivities since no celebration is complete without it. Majorly in Northern India, numerous shops on street serving chole chawal are very trendy and often flocked by students and office-going people. This dish, in popular, mass-customized versions, is the staple of the *dhabhas* (highway eateries) or roadside eateries all over India.

Nutritional status

One serving of Chole gives **223 calories**. Out of which carbohydrates comprise 108 calories, proteins account for 29 calories and remaining calories come from fat which is 88 calories.

Cooking Technique

Chole chawal is the combination of dishes which are generally slow cooked, as a result of which maximum nutrients and taste is retained. Chole have been soaked overnight and subjected to pressure boiling for 30-40 minutes. Once softened, this dish is heavily marinated with spices, then grilled and braised in thick tomato or cream-based sauces and served with rice. For pressure boiling, a normal pressure cooker or for efficient cooking an electric pressure cooker could be used. The sautéing process is done on a thick bottom pan or wok and cooker for 20-30 minutes for enhanced taste. Similarly, rice can also be cooked either on a thick flat bottom pan, rice cooker or EPC. For speeding up the cooking process, rice can be soaked prior for 15-20 minutes.

Recipe

Chole (Gravy chickpea)

Ingredients:

- 250 gm chickpeas
- 1 tbs vegetable oil
- 2 black cardamoms
- 1 inch cinnamon
- 3 to 4 peppercorns
- 2 cloves
- 1 medium tej patta (Indian bay leaf) or 2 small tej patta
- ¼ tsp carom seeds (ajwain)
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- ½ tsp dry pomegranate seeds
- 1 or 2 dry red chilies
- ½ tbsp ginger garlic paste
- 1 finely chopped onion
- 2 finely chopped tomatoes
- Coriander, finely chopped

Method:

1. Wash and soak 2 and half cup chickpeas (chana or chole) in enough water overnight. Add enough water to take into account that the chickpeas increase in size during soaking. Rinse the soaked chickpeas in water.
2. In a pressure cooker add the chickpeas along with 2.5 to 3 cups water.
3. Season with 1 tsp salt. Stir very well.
4. Pressure cook the chickpeas for 8 to 10 whistles. The chickpeas should be cooked well and softened. The chickpeas should be soft when mashed with a spoon. If you do not have a pressure cooker, then cook the chickpeas in a pot with plenty of water. Depending on the quality of chickpeas, it can take less or more time.
5. Meanwhile, in a pan, take all the whole spices for the chole masala and on a low heat begin to roast them. The spices used for masala are 2 black cardamoms, 1 inch cinnamon, 3 to 4 peppercorns, 2 cloves, 1 medium tej patta (Indian bay leaf) or 2 small tej patta, ¼ tsp carom seeds (ajwain), 1 tsp cumin seeds, 1 tsp coriander seeds, 1 tsp fennel seeds, ½ tsp dry pomegranate seeds, 1 or 2 dry red chilies
6. Stir often and roast the spices until they get extra browned and fragrant.
7. Heat 1.5 to 2 tbsp oil in a pan or kadai. Add ½ tsp ginger-garlic paste and sauté until the raw aroma goes away.
8. Then add 1 medium sized finely chopped onion and sauté until the onions turn translucent or light brown.
9. Add 2 medium sized finely chopped tomatoes. Sauté the tomatoes until they soften and the oil starts to leave the sides of the masala. Then add the powdered spices, along with ½ teaspoon red chili powder and ¼ teaspoon turmeric powder.
10. Stir well. Then add 2 to 3 slit green chillis to the onion-ginger-tomato mixture.
11. Add the cooked & drained chickpeas. Reserve the stock.
12. Season with salt as per requirement. Mix again. Keep the addition of salt in check as salt is also there in the stock.
13. Add about 1 to 1.25 cups of the reserved stock or water. Stir well.
14. Cover and simmer on a low to medium heat for 15-20 minutes. The gravy will thicken and reduce. Mash a few chickpeas. This will help thicken the chickpea curry.
15. The chole is ready to be served.
16. Garnish with chopped onions and cilantro (coriander leaves).
17. Enjoy!

Boiled Rice**Ingredients:**

- 2 cups Basmati rice
- 4 cups water

Method:

1. Clean and wash 2 cup rice gently in cold water, until the water runs clean. Soak for 20-30 minutes.
2. Before cooking, strain the rice in a wire strainer or sieve to drain off all the water.
3. Measure the water - twice the amount by volume, which is 4 cups of water for 2 cups of rice. For soaked rice, reduce it slightly, 3/4 cup of water for 1 cup of rice.
4. Bring the measured water to boil in a flat-bottomed pan that has a tight-fitting lid.
5. Add drained rice and bring to boil again. After about 20 seconds of brisk boiling/bubbling, close the lid and reduce the heat to minimum.
6. Cook for 10-15 minutes, at a minimum heat, until all the water has absorbed.
7. At the end of the cooking, when water is nearly evaporated, open the lid gently and pick up a couple of grains of rice. To check if it is ready, squeeze the picked grains between your forefinger and thumb, no grit should

be felt. Some cooks prefer to leave one grain when they turn the heat off, to keep it an al dente. If it has 2-3 grains left when squeezed and feels undercooked, sprinkle a little water on top, close the lid and cook for further 4-5 minutes.

8. Allow to rest or stand for a 5-10 minutes before serving. This makes sure that all the rice is evenly cooked.

