

CHICKEN PAPRIKASH

SERVES 4

In this rendition of the Hungarian classic, the natural juices of Chicken, bell peppers, onion, and tomatoes are released during the braising process and then enriched with sour cream to create a dish that's especially comforting in cold weather. Serve with buttered egg noodles; rice or mashed potatoes are also good options.

Ingredients

8 (5- to 7-ounce) bone-in chicken thighs, trimmed

Salt and pepper

1 teaspoon vegetable oil

1 large onion, halved and sliced thin

1 large red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, halved widthwise, and cut into thin strips

1 large green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, halved widthwise, and cut into thin strips

3 1/2 tablespoons paprika

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon dried marjoram

1/2 cup dry white wine

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained

1/3 cup sour cream

2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add 4 chicken thighs, skin side down, and cook without moving them until skin is crisp and well browned, about 5 minutes.

Using tongs, flip chicken and brown on second side. Transfer to large plate. Add remaining 4 chicken thighs to pot and repeat, then transfer to plate and set aside. Discard all but 1 tablespoon fat from pot.

2. Add onion to fat left in Dutch oven and sauté over medium heat until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Add bell peppers and sauté until onions are browned and peppers are softened, about 3 minutes. Stir in 3 tablespoons paprika, flour, and marjoram and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add wine, scraping pot bottom with wooden spoon to loosen brown bits. Stir in tomatoes and 1 teaspoon salt. Remove and discard skins from chicken thighs, then

nestle chicken under onion and peppers and add accumulated juices to pot. Bring to simmer, cover and place pot in oven. Cook until chicken offers no resistance when poked with tip of paring knife, but still clings to bone, about 1 ¼ hours. (Stew can be cooled to room temperature, covered, and refrigerate for up to 3 days. Bring to simmer over medium-low heat before proceeding.)

3. Combine sour cream and remaining 1/2 tablespoon paprika in small bowl. Remove chicken from pot and place portion on each plate. Stir few tablespoons of hot sauce into sour cream to temper, and then stir mixture back into remaining peppers and sauce. Ladle peppers and enriched sauce over chicken, sprinkle with parsley, and serve immediately.

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Chicken paprikash is an easy-to-make braise with succulent chicken, a balance of heat, spice, and aromatics, and a rich, flavorful sauce with paprika at center stage. To get to this goal, we pared down the usual mile-long ingredient list. Sautéing a handful of aromatics and vegetables in the fond led to a rich base for our sauce, which we enhanced with paprika twice: once while sautéing the vegetables to let its flavor bloom, then once again when adding sour cream to finish the dish.

DITCH THE SKIN Just as for Chicken Provençal, we ditch the skin after browning to prevent the accumulation of excess fat and a greasy sauce. To do this, grasp the skin from one end of the browned and cooled chicken thighs and simply pull to separate it from the meat.

Choosing Your Paprika

The brilliant red powder we call “paprika” comes from dried pods (fruit) of the plant species *Capiscum annum L.*, the family of peppers that range from sweet bells to the very hottest chilies. Several varieties of this clan are used to produce paprika and as a result there are many different kinds of paprika. We found that chicken paprikash is best flavored with Hungarian sweet paprika. Other sweet paprika can deliver good results but don’t use hot paprika in this dish.

Temper, Temper If sour cream is added directly to the pot it can curdle—especially when added to a hot sauce made acidic with tomatoes. The tomato acid neutralizes some of the electrical charges on the proteins in sour cream (mostly proteins called casein), causing them to be more prone to clump together (coagulate) and separate (curdle). Tempering the sour cream (stirring some of the hot liquid from the stew pot together with the sour cream in a small bowl, then adding the warmed mixture to the pot.) helps to prevent curdling, however. This is because the addition of a small amount of the warm liquid dilutes the protein in the sour cream and gradually brings them all up to temperature. Any extra fat in the cooking liquid also helps to coat the proteins and prevent them from clumping.