

Easy One-Pan Cajun Chicken Rice

When it comes to quick dinners that don't sacrifice flavor, this **Easy One-Pan Cajun Chicken Rice** is unbeatable. Packed with bold spices, juicy chicken, and tender rice, this Southern-inspired dish brings serious comfort to the table. Everything cooks in a single pan for easy cleanup, and the flavor payoff is incredible. It's smoky, savory, and full of warmth—a meal that turns an ordinary night into something special in under 45 minutes.

The Magic of One-Pan Meals

Why One Pan Makes It Perfect

There's something satisfying about making an entire meal in one skillet. No piles of dishes, no complicated prep—just one pan and pure comfort. This Cajun chicken rice recipe proves that convenience doesn't mean cutting corners. Each step builds layers of flavor, from searing the chicken to simmering the rice in spiced broth. The result? Perfectly tender chicken, fluffy rice, and a sauce infused with deep, smoky Cajun spices.

A Taste of the South

This dish draws its inspiration from Louisiana's bold Cajun cooking traditions. The key to Cajun flavor is balance—just enough spice to wake up your taste buds, tempered by hearty ingredients like chicken, rice, and bell peppers. Each bite delivers warmth and soul, the kind of food that brings families together. It's like a lighter, skillet version of jambalaya, perfect for busy weeknights or casual gatherings.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)

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Description

A bold, flavorful Easy One-Pan Cajun Chicken Rice made with juicy chicken, smoky spices, and tender rice. A Southern-inspired dinner ready in under 45 minutes.

Ingredients

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☐ 1 lb boneless skinless chicken thighs or breasts

☐ 1 tbsp olive oil

☐ 1 tbsp Cajun seasoning

☐ ½ tsp salt

☐ ¼ tsp black pepper

☐ 1 small yellow onion, diced

☐ 1 red bell pepper, diced

☐ 1 green bell pepper, diced

☐ 3 cloves garlic, minced

☐ 1 cup long-grain white rice

☐ 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth

☐ 1 tsp Cajun seasoning

☐ ¼ tsp smoked paprika (optional)

☐ Chopped parsley or green onions for garnish

☐ Lemon wedges for serving

☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark

Instructions

1. Toss chicken with Cajun seasoning, salt, and pepper.
2. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
3. Sear chicken 4–5 minutes per side until browned. Remove and set aside.

4. Add oil, onion, and bell peppers to skillet. Sauté 4–5 minutes, then add garlic.
5. Stir in rice and toast for 1 minute.
6. Add broth, Cajun seasoning, and smoked paprika. Stir well.
7. Nestle chicken back into skillet, cover, and simmer 20–25 minutes.
8. Remove from heat, rest 5 minutes, then fluff rice.
9. Garnish with parsley or green onions and serve with lemon wedges.

Notes

Adjust spice level by adding or reducing Cajun seasoning.

Add sausage or shrimp for variety.

Store leftovers in the fridge up to 3 days.

Reheat with a splash of broth for best texture.

Did you make this recipe?

Share a photo and tag us—we can't wait to see what you've made!

Gathering the Ingredients

What You'll Need

To make this easy one-pan meal, you'll need:

For the chicken: one pound of boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts, one tablespoon olive oil, one tablespoon Cajun seasoning, half a teaspoon salt, and a quarter teaspoon black pepper.

For the rice and vegetables: one tablespoon olive oil, one small yellow onion (diced), one red bell pepper, one green bell pepper, three cloves of minced garlic, one cup of long-grain white rice, two cups of low-sodium chicken broth, one teaspoon Cajun seasoning, and a quarter teaspoon smoked paprika (optional).

For serving: chopped parsley or green onions and lemon wedges.

Ingredient Tips

Use chicken thighs for juicier texture or chicken breasts for a leaner option. The Cajun seasoning brings that signature smoky-spicy flavor, but you can adjust the amount to your heat preference. For extra flavor, use smoked paprika or a pinch of cayenne. Adding sausage turns it into a hearty jambalaya-style dish. If you enjoy creamy versions, stir in a splash of cream before serving—similar to the rich twist found in the [Easy No-Peek Chicken & Rice Dish](#).

Preparing and Searing the Chicken

Getting the Chicken Ready

Start by patting the chicken dry, then toss it in a bowl with Cajun seasoning, salt, and black pepper. Coat it evenly so every bite carries that signature Cajun spice. The blend of paprika, garlic, onion, and cayenne gives the chicken an earthy depth with just a touch of heat. Marinating it for a few minutes while prepping other ingredients allows the flavors to soak in.

Building Flavor with a Sear

Heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the seasoned chicken and sear for about four to five minutes per side until golden brown. The goal is not to cook it through yet but to create a flavorful crust that will later mix into the rice. Once browned, transfer the chicken to a plate. The browned bits in the pan will form the flavor base for the rest of the dish.

Cooking the Vegetables and Rice

Sautéing the Vegetables

In the same skillet, heat another tablespoon of olive oil. Add the diced onion, red bell pepper, and green bell pepper. Sauté for about four minutes until softened and fragrant. Then, stir in the minced garlic and cook for another 30 seconds. The combination of peppers and garlic creates that distinctive Cajun aroma that sets the tone for the dish—vibrant, slightly sweet, and savory.

Toasting the Rice

Once the vegetables are softened, stir in the uncooked rice. Toasting the rice for a minute helps it soak up all those rich flavors and prevents it from becoming mushy later. You'll notice the grains turning slightly translucent—that's the sign it's ready for the liquid. This step adds a nutty undertone and ensures every bite of rice carries the smoky-spicy essence of the skillet.

Simmering It All Together

Adding Broth and Spices

Pour in the chicken broth and sprinkle the remaining Cajun seasoning and smoked paprika. Stir well, scraping the bottom of the pan to release the flavorful bits left from searing the chicken. Bring the mixture to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low. Nestle the seared chicken pieces back into the skillet, letting them sit comfortably in the liquid.

Perfecting the Cook

Cover the skillet and let it simmer for 20 to 25 minutes. During this time, the rice will absorb the seasoned broth, and the chicken will finish cooking, becoming tender and juicy. Avoid lifting the lid too often—it's called "one-pan magic" for a reason. The steam helps cook everything evenly, locking in flavor and moisture. When done, the rice should be fluffy, and the chicken should be cooked through with a beautiful reddish hue.

Finishing Touches and Garnish

Resting and Fluffing

Once the chicken and rice are cooked, remove the skillet from the heat and let it rest, still covered, for five minutes. This resting time allows the steam to finish cooking the rice while keeping it light and fluffy. After resting, gently fluff the rice with a fork. You'll see how the grains are perfectly tender, the chicken juicy, and the aroma absolutely irresistible.

Garnish and Serve

Top your dish with chopped parsley or sliced green onions for freshness. A squeeze of lemon juice right before serving brightens the smoky spices and ties everything together. You can even add a sprinkle of extra Cajun seasoning for a bit more kick. Serve it hot straight from the skillet for a rustic presentation that feels as authentic as a Southern kitchen.

Variations and Customizations

Flavor Upgrades

You can make this recipe your own in countless ways. Add sliced andouille sausage for an extra smoky kick or stir in shrimp during the last five minutes of cooking for a seafood twist. A handful of diced tomatoes adds richness, while a splash of cream turns it into a creamy Cajun risotto-style dish. Want extra crunch? Sprinkle fried onions or crispy bacon on top before serving.

Healthier Adjustments

If you're watching calories, use brown rice for more fiber and nutrients. Just remember to add a bit more broth and increase the simmer time to about 35 minutes. You can also use olive oil spray instead of full tablespoons to cut fat. For lower sodium, make your own Cajun seasoning with paprika, garlic, thyme, and cayenne so you can control the salt level. However you tweak it, this one-pan dish stays deliciously comforting.

Storing and Reheating

Storing Leftovers

Cool the Cajun chicken rice before transferring it to airtight containers. It keeps well in the refrigerator for up to three days. This dish actually tastes even better the next day, as the spices have more time to meld. The rice stays tender, and the flavors deepen, giving you a quick and satisfying lunch or dinner without any extra effort.

Reheating Tips

To reheat, add a small splash of chicken broth or water to the skillet or microwave dish before warming. This brings back the moisture and keeps the rice from drying out. Heat on low until warmed through, stirring occasionally. The texture remains just as creamy and fluffy, and the spice retains its bold flavor. It's one of those dishes that truly gets better with time.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I make this with precooked chicken?

Yes, but skip the searing step. Add the cooked chicken when you return the rice to simmer, just long enough to heat it through. You won't get the same crust, but it'll still be flavorful.

Can I use brown rice instead of white rice?

You can, but increase the broth by half a cup and cook for 35–40 minutes. Brown rice takes longer to absorb liquid, so patience is key.

Can I make this vegetarian?

Absolutely. Swap the chicken for mushrooms or tofu and use vegetable broth. The Cajun spices will still provide that deep, smoky flavor.

How spicy is this recipe?

It's moderately spicy. If you prefer mild, use half the Cajun seasoning. If you like heat, add cayenne or hot sauce. It's easy to customize for your spice level.

What sides go well with this dish?

This meal is complete on its own, but it pairs wonderfully with cornbread, a crisp salad, or roasted green beans. A cold drink or sweet iced tea balances the heat perfectly.

Conclusion

The **Easy One-Pan Cajun Chicken Rice** is proof that flavor doesn't need complexity. In one skillet, you get perfectly seasoned chicken, tender rice, and that unmistakable Cajun warmth. It's bold, comforting, and incredibly easy to make. Whether it's a weeknight dinner or weekend comfort meal, this dish delivers soul-satisfying taste with minimal effort. One bite, and you'll understand why this recipe deserves a permanent spot in your rotation.