

## Piri Piri Chicken

*Start to finish: 2½ hours (30 minutes active) | Servings: 4*

**F**OR MILK STREET'S PIRI PIRI CHICKEN, we wanted meat that was boldly flavored, tender and cooked as effortlessly as we'd witnessed at Mzoli's. Whole birds cook too slowly and unevenly on the grill. For ease and speed of grilling, we opted for a spatchcocked bird—that is, we cut out the backbone and flattened the chicken (go to [177milkstreet.com/spatchcooking](http://177milkstreet.com/spatchcooking) for step-by-step instructions). To achieve layers of flavor rather than a one-note sweet sauce, we used some of the primary flavors of piri piri—chili peppers, cumin, coriander, salt and paprika—to create a dry rub to season the chicken under the skin. The same mixture formed the base of our sauce, to which we added fresh chilies, garlic, vinegar and sugar. Taking a cue from Dias Tavern, we brushed part of the sauce on the outside of the chicken, then rested it a bit before grilling. The remainder of the sauce was held for the near-end of grilling and as a final paste—another lesson from Mzoli's. This gave us the richly lacquered saucing we'd loved.

Ancho, chipotle and blended chili powders didn't work in this recipe; the flavors weren't right. We liked New Mexico or California chili powders. If you can't find them, both are sold as dried, whole chilies that can be ground. Or simply leave the chili powder out and increase the paprika to ¼ cup. Fresno chilies are fresh red chilies similar in size and shape to jalapeños but with pointy tips; if they are unavailable, fresh cherry peppers work well, too. If you can't find any red chilies, four or five jalapeños (5 to 6 ounces) will give you a similar heat.

**Don't reduce** the number of fresh chilies in the sauce; all eight were needed for flavor and color. For milder heat, remove some or all of the seeds and ribs before processing.

—BIANCA BORGES

- 3 tablespoons New Mexico or California chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 tablespoon sweet paprika
- 1½ tablespoons kosher salt
- 4- to 4½-pound whole chicken, spatchcocked
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 8 medium Fresno chilies, stemmed and quartered
- 3 medium garlic cloves
- ⅓ cup lemon juice (2 to 3 lemons)
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 cup fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems, finely chopped



**Rubbed, sauced and grilled**, piri piri chicken stays moist while developing layers of rich, tangy flavor.

### On the Grill

■ **In a medium bowl**, mix together the chili powder, cumin, coriander, paprika and salt. Transfer 2 tablespoons of the mixture to a small bowl, setting the rest aside. Loosen the skin over the chicken's breast and thighs by gently working your fingers between the skin and the flesh. Using a small spoon, evenly distribute the 2 tablespoons of spice mixture under the skin, then rub it into the flesh. Set the chicken on a baking sheet.

■ **In a food processor**, combine the remaining spice mixture, the sugar, chilies and garlic. Pulse until finely chopped, scraping down the bowl as needed. With the machine running, pour in the lemon juice and vinegar; process until smooth, scraping down the bowl once or twice. Measure out  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the sauce, reserving the rest. Brush the  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup evenly over the chicken, including the bone side. Let stand at room temperature for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

■ **Meanwhile, prepare a grill** for indirect high-heat cooking. For a charcoal grill, spread a large chimney of hot coals evenly over one side of the grill bed; open the bottom grill vents. For a gas grill, set half of the burners to high. Heat the grill, covered, for 5 to 10 minutes, then clean and oil the cooking grate.

■ **Set the chicken** skin side up on the cooler side of the grill. Cover and cook for 25 minutes. Using tongs, rotate the chicken 180 degrees to bring the

far side of the chicken closest to the heat. Cover and continue to cook until the thickest part of the breast reaches 160°F and the thighs reach 175°F, another 25 to 35 minutes.

■ **Brush the chicken** with 2 tablespoons of the reserved sauce, then use tongs to flip it skin side down onto the hot side of the grill. Cook until the skin is lightly charred, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer, skin side up, to a cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes.

■ **Stir the cilantro** into the remaining sauce, then baste the chicken once more. Serve with the remaining sauce on the side.

### In the Oven

■ **Heat the oven to 425°F** with a rack in the middle position. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil and spread 1 cup kosher salt over it. Mist a wire rack with cooking spray, then set over the salt. Arrange the seasoned, sauce-brushed chicken skin side up on the rack and let stand at room temperature for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Roast the chicken until well browned, 45 to 50 minutes. Brush with 2 tablespoons of the reserved sauce, then continue to roast until the thickest part of the breast reaches 160°F and the thighs reach 175°F, another 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest for 10 minutes. Stir the cilantro into the remaining sauce, then baste the chicken once more. Serve with the remaining sauce on the side.