

Creamy Cajun Chicken Linguine: Restaurant-Style Comfort

Get ready to transport your taste buds straight to the heart of Louisiana with this incredible



TIME

8-10 min

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ChefManiac

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound boneless chicken breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons Cajun seasoning (your favorite blend)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 pound linguine pasta
- 4 Tablespoons butter (unsalted or salted)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ... cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup chicken broth (low sodium preferred)
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Red pepper flakes for extra heat (optional)

Swaps and Notes:

Chicken: Chicken thighs can be used instead of breasts for a juicier result, just adjust cooking time as needed. You could also use shrimp for a Cajun Shrimp Linguine, cooking it quickly before making the sauce.

Cajun Seasoning: Adjust the amount of Cajun seasoning and red pepper flakes to control the heat level. If you prefer less spice, use a milder blend or reduce the quantity.

Pasta: While linguine is classic, fettuccine, spaghetti, or even penne would work well with this creamy sauce.

Milk: Whole milk creates the creamiest sauce, but 2% milk can be used for a slightly lighter version.

Cream Cheese: Ensure your cream cheese is softened to room temperature for easier blending into the sauce.

Cheese Blend: Feel free to experiment with other cheeses like Monterey Jack for extra meltiness or a sharper provolone.

Vegetables: For added nutrition and color, you could sauté some sliced bell peppers or onions with the chicken, or stir in some fresh spinach or chopped cherry tomatoes at the end.

Directions:

Season Chicken: In a medium bowl, add the bite-sized chicken pieces. Drizzle with olive oil, then sprinkle generously with Cajun seasoning and smoked paprika. Toss until the chicken is evenly coated.

Cook Pasta: Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the linguine pasta and cook according to package directions until it's al dente (firm to the bite). Drain the pasta and set it aside, reserving about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the pasta water in case you need it later for the sauce.

Cook Chicken: While the pasta cooks, heat a large skillet (or Dutch oven) over medium-high heat. Add the seasoned chicken pieces in a single layer and cook for about 8-10 minutes, flipping occasionally, until they are golden brown on the outside and cooked through. Remove the cooked chicken from the skillet and set it aside on a plate.

Melt Butter & Sauté Garlic: In the same skillet (no need to clean it - those browned bits add flavor!), melt the 4 tablespoons of butter over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and cook for about 1 minute, stirring constantly, until it's fragrant. Be careful not to burn the garlic.

Make the Roux: Whisk in the ... cup of all-purpose flour into the melted butter and garlic. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly, to create a light roux. This will act as the thickening agent for your sauce.

Whisk in Liquids: Gradually whisk in the 3 cups of whole milk and 1 cup of chicken broth into the roux. Continue whisking until the mixture is smooth and lump-free. Bring the sauce to a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally, allowing it to thicken slightly.

Add Cream Cheese: Reduce the heat to low. Add the softened cream cheese to the simmering sauce and stir continuously until it is completely melted and the sauce is smooth and creamy.

Melt Cheeses & Season: Stir in 1 ½ cups of the shredded mozzarella cheese and the ½ cup of grated Parmesan cheese. Continue stirring until all the cheese is melted and the sauce is wonderfully creamy and smooth. Season the sauce with salt and black pepper to taste. If you like extra heat, stir in a pinch or two of red pepper flakes now.

Combine Pasta & Chicken: Add the cooked linguine and the cooked chicken pieces to the creamy sauce in the skillet. Toss everything gently to ensure the pasta and chicken are evenly coated in the rich sauce.

Broil for Cheesy Finish: Transfer the pasta mixture to an oven-safe serving dish (if your skillet isn't oven-safe). Sprinkle the remaining ½ cup of mozzarella cheese evenly over the top of the pasta. Place the dish under the broiler in your oven for about 3 minutes, or until the cheese is melted, bubbly, and slightly golden brown. Watch carefully as broilers can quickly burn!

Serve Immediately: Remove from the oven and serve hot!

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Season : Chicken:** In a medium bowl, add the bite-sized chicken pieces. Drizzle with olive oil, then sprinkle generously with Cajun seasoning and smoked paprika. Toss until the chicken is evenly coated.
- 2. Cook : Pasta:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the linguine pasta and cook according to package directions until it's al dente (firm to the bite). Drain the pasta and set it aside, reserving about ½ cup of the pasta water in case you need it later for the sauce.
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11. **Serve : Immediately:** Remove from the oven and serve hot!
12. **Tips for Success: Soften Cream Cheese:** Ensure your cream cheese is at room temperature and softened. This prevents lumps in the sauce.
13. **Whisk : Gradually:** When adding milk and broth to the roux, whisk gradually to ensure a smooth sauce without lumps.
14. **Don't : Overcook Chicken:** Cook the chicken until just done to keep it juicy. It will finish cooking briefly in the sauce.
15. **Al Dente : Pasta:** Cook your linguine only to al dente, as it will continue to absorb liquid and cook slightly when tossed with the hot sauce.
16. **Reserved : Pasta Water:** If your sauce becomes too thick, you can add a splash of the reserved pasta water to thin it out to your desired consistency.
17. **Watch the : Broiler:** Broilers work fast! Keep a close eye on the dish during the final broiling step to prevent the cheese from burning.
18. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** This Creamy Cajun Chicken Linguine with Garlic Mozzarella Sauce is a hearty and complete meal on its own. However, it pairs beautifully with simple sides that complement its rich flavors:
19. A crisp side salad with a light vinaigrette to cut through the creaminess.
20. Warm, crusty garlic bread or : Texas toast for soaking up the delicious sauce.
21. Steamed green beans or asparagus for a fresh vegetable accompaniment.
22. For other flavorful chicken dishes, consider:
23. **My This : Cajun Chicken Sausage Gumbo is My Favorite Bowl of Southern Comfort** for another taste of Louisiana.

24. Or my A : Light, Tangy Chicken Salad I Actually Crave (and There's No Mayo in Sight!) for a lighter chicken option.
25. Storage and Leftover Tips: Leftover Creamy Cajun Chicken Linguine can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2-3 days. When reheating, the sauce may thicken further. To revive it, add a splash of milk or chicken broth and gently warm on the stovetop over low heat, stirring frequently, or in the microwave. The pasta may absorb more liquid and become softer upon reheating.

SWAPS & NOTES

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS

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