

Gong Bao Chicken With Peanuts From ‘Every Grain of Rice’

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Gong bao chicken with peanuts. Chris Terry

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Gong Bao Chicken With Peanuts

Adapted from “Every Grain of Rice: Simple Chinese Home Cooking,” by Fuchsia Dunlop (W.W. Norton & Company, 2013)

Time: 40 minutes

Yield: 2 to 3 servings

For the chicken:

2 boneless chicken breasts (11 to 12 ounces total), with or without skin

3 garlic cloves

An equivalent amount of ginger

5 spring onions, white parts only

A handful of dried chiles (about 10)

2 tablespoons cooking oil

1 teaspoon whole Sichuan pepper

3 ounces (75 grams) roasted peanuts (see note)

For the marinade:

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons light soy sauce

1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine (or use dry sherry or dry vermouth)

1 1/2 teaspoons potato starch or cornstarch

For the sauce:

1 tablespoon sugar

3/4 teaspoon potato starch or cornstarch

1 teaspoon dark soy sauce

1 teaspoon light soy sauce

1 tablespoon Chinkiang vinegar (or use balsamic vinegar)

1 teaspoon sesame oil

1 tablespoon chicken stock or water

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut chicken as evenly as possible into half-inch strips, then cut strips into small cubes. Place in a small bowl. Add marinade ingredients and 1 tablespoon water to bowl. Mix well and set aside.
2. Peel and thinly slice garlic and ginger. Chop spring onions into chunks as long as their diameter (to match the chicken cubes). Snip chiles in half or into sections, discarding their seeds.
3. In a small bowl, combine the sauce ingredients.
4. Heat a seasoned wok over a high flame. Add oil, chiles and Sichuan pepper and stir-fry briefly until chiles are darkening but not burned. (Remove wok from heat if necessary to prevent overheating.)
5. Quickly add chicken and stir-fry over a high flame, stirring constantly. As soon as chicken cubes have separated, add ginger, garlic and spring onions and continue to stir-fry until they are fragrant and meat is just cooked through (test one of the larger pieces to make sure).
6. Give sauce a stir and add to wok, continuing to stir and toss. As soon as the sauce has become thick and shiny, add the peanuts, stir them in and serve.

Note: Store-bought roasted peanuts work well here, but if you want to roast your own peanuts, heat oven to 250 degrees. Place raw nuts on an oven tray and roast for 15 to 20 minutes, until fragrant and very slightly golden. (Keep an eye on them, as they are easily burned.) Cool nuts on a plate, then rub nuts between your fingertips to loosen their skins. Shake nuts as you blow over them; skins will blow away.