



# Three-Cup Chicken



## WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

We modified the traditional recipe to produce a dish that remains true to its Asian roots but can easily be made in an American home kitchen. By calling for boneless, skinless chicken thighs, we eliminated the need to butcher a whole chicken with a cleaver. We also thinly sliced the scallions and ginger and halved the garlic cloves instead of mincing them to deliver balanced flavors and textures. We scaled the volume of the liquids to less than one-third the amount called for in the original recipe, using just  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup each of soy sauce and dry sherry, our substitute for rice wine, and cutting down the sesame oil to just a tablespoon of the toasted kind, which we added at the end. For deep flavor, we marinated the chicken in the soy sauce and sherry along with a touch of brown sugar. Finally, skipping browning allowed the chicken and the sauce to cook in about 30 minutes, making this recipe a viable weeknight choice.

## INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup soy sauce
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup Shaoxing wine or dry sherry
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar

## INSTRUCTIONS

- We prefer the flavor of Thai basil in this recipe, but you can substitute sweet Italian basil, if desired. For a spicier dish, use the larger amount of red pepper flakes. Serve with white rice.
1. Whisk soy sauce, wine, and sugar together in medium bowl. Add chicken and toss to coat; set aside.

## SERVES 4

- 1**  $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 3** tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1** (2-inch) piece ginger, peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced into thin half-rounds
- 12** garlic cloves, peeled and halved lengthwise
- $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 6** scallion, white and green parts separated and sliced thin on bias
- 1** tablespoon water
- 1** teaspoon cornstarch
- 1** cup Thai basil leaves, large leaves sliced in half lengthwise
- 1** tablespoon toasted sesame oil

- 2.** Heat vegetable oil, ginger, garlic, and pepper flakes in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until garlic is golden brown and beginning to soften, 8 to 10 minutes.
- 3.** Add chicken and marinade to skillet, increase heat to medium-high, and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in scallion whites and continue to cook until chicken registers about 200 degrees, 8 to 10 minutes longer.
- 4.** Whisk water and cornstarch together in small bowl, then stir into sauce; simmer until sauce is slightly thickened, about 1 minute. Remove skillet from heat. Stir in basil, sesame oil, and scallion greens. Transfer to platter and serve.

## Technique: Peeling Ginger



Using a paring knife or a peeler on ginger is overkill since it removes too much of the flesh. Simply scrape the edge of a spoon along the ginger to remove the skin. Unlike the straight blade of a knife, the curved spoon is easy to maneuver around the root's irregular shape.

## Shopping: Chinese Cooking Wines

Many Chinese recipes (ours included) call for Shaoxing rice wine, an amber-colored specialty of Shaoxing, China, that contributes distinctive savory, nutty flavors. But shopping for Shaoxing wine in the United States can be confusing because there are multiple products with similar names: authentic Shaoxing wine and Shaoxing cooking wine. To see how each functioned in a recipe, we tasted them, as well as dry sherry

(a common substitute for Shaoxing), in a beef stir-fry. All the products were acceptable, but we preferred the more complex, less salty flavors of the authentic Shaoxing wine and the dry sherry.

**Best choice:** Authentic Shaoxing wine

**Tip:** This is sold in an elaborate bottle and only in liquor stores.

**Good alternative:** Dry sherry

**Tip:** Our favorite option, Lustau Palo Cortado Península Sherry (\$19.99), delivered nutty, complex flavor. Avoid “sherry cooking wine,” which lacks complexity and contains salt that we could taste.

**Only in a pinch:** Shaoxing cooking wines

**Tip:** These are made by adding salt (you'll see it listed on the label) to lower-quality wines so they become “undrinkable” and can therefore be sold in markets that aren't licensed to sell alcohol. We could taste the salinity, even in a stir-fry.