

Taiwanese Popcorn Chicken

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS FOR THE JIAO YAN (Chinese salt and pepper)

- 2 tbsp of Sichuan peppercorn
- 1 tbsp of white pepper
- 2 tbsp of salt

INGREDIENTS FOR THE POPCORN CHICKEN

- 500 grams of chicken breast
- 1 tbsp of soy sauce
- 1 + 1/4 tsp of salt
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1 tsp of ginger
- 1 tsp of five-spice powder
- a shake of onion powder
- 1 egg white
- 2 tbsp of all-purpose flour
- Orange juice from 1/4 of an orange 1.5-2 tbsp
- 1 cup of sweet potato starch

OTHERS

- A hand full of basil leaves
- Chili flakes optional
- Few shakes of the salt and pepper that we made

Instructions

1. Make the Chinese salt and pepper: Toast 2 tbsp of Sichuan peppercorn, 1 tbsp of white peppercorn, and 1.5 tbsp of salt on a cast-iron skillet. Grind them in a blender.
2. Store the Jiao Yan in a sealed container. It will last a couple of months at room temperature.
3. Cut the chicken breast into about 2/3 inch cubes.
4. Marinade it with 1 tbsp of soy sauce, 1 tsp + 1/4 tsp of salt, 1 tsp of five-spice powder, 3 cloves of garlic, 1 tsp of grated ginger, a few shakes of onion powder, 2 tbsp of all-purpose flour. Crack in 1 egg white. The last ingredient is my secret: fresh juice from 1/4 of an orange.



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4.36 from 93 votes

5. Mix until everything is well combined. Cover it, let's it sit for 15 minutes. Do not let it sit for too long or else the enzyme will over tenderize the meat.
6. Normally, people use bread crumbs to create that crunchy outside layer. Today we are using sweet potato starch - the thick version. It is still sweet potato starch but comes in a chunkier form. That makes the popcorn chicken extra crunchy and it is gluten-free. Cornstarch and regular potato starch are a great replacement for sweet potato starch.
7. You can use a spray bottle to turn the powder form starch into the thick chunky form. Super simple, I showed how to do that in my sesame chicken recipe: <https://youtu.be/C2CVlvSSFO4>.
8. We will need 1 cup of sweet potato starch. Get a clean bowl. Cover the bottom with a layer of sweet potato starch. Then add in the chicken. Not all of them, just 10- 12 pieces depends on how big your bowl is. Slightly dust more sweet potato starch to cover the chicken. Use chopsticks to stir it a little bit so they can be coated well. If you see 2 pieces are sticking together, go ahead and separate them. Toss it a few times. It is gonna be a little dusty but it is way faster compared coating the chicken piece by piece.
9. Take out the chicken. Make sure to shake off the excess starch. Put it away. There will be some starch left in the bowl. Just use that for the next batch.
10. Once you finished everything, let them sit for 10 to 15 minutes so the coating has enough time to bond together.
11. During this time, we gonna start heating the to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Add in the chicken. Don't put them all in one time because you don't want to crowd the wok. Or else it will take forever for them to get crispy and by that time, the chicken is already dry out. So definitely fry them in batches. Gently push them so they don't stick together.
12. After you add the chicken, the temperature will drop a little bit. Keep frying them at medium heat and wait until the temperature rise back up to 350It will take a few minutes.
13. During this time, prepare a hand full of basil. The leaves look pretty clean so I am not going to wash them or else it will be hard to dry them completely.
14. Go back and check the chicken. It should become a light golden color. Let's see the temperature, it should around 350If you don't have a thermometer, you can just go by color. These chicken pieces are so small, you can't go wrong with it. At this point, I am going to quickly add in the basil. Block the oil splashing with a lid and wait for the intense bubbling to stop. I will suggest frying the basil for less than 10 seconds in total or else you will burn them.
15. Turn off the heat, take everything out. There will be some little crunchy bits left in

the wok. Get a strainer to fish them out and fry the next batch. You probably need to fry everything in 3 batches. Normally, I will double fry the chicken but I not doing that today because we are using chicken breast and the pieces are so small. We don't want the chicken to be dry on the inside. If you use chicken thigh and you cut the pieces bigger, you can double fry it so the crunchiness last longer.

16. Serve the popcorn chicken with some Jiao Yan. Add a few shakes of chili flake. Enjoy!