

FOOD52

Negima Yakitori

By Kathleen Morimoto

Food52 Editors' Comments: On the hunt for a great scallion recipe, we tried out this Yakitori dish from Hapanom. It had all the key flavors we craved -- garlic, ginger, soy, and sugar -- and a nice richness from the sake and mirin. The taste was excellent, and as advertised, the scallions were a highlight. I did find that the cornstarch wasn't totally needed, as the sauce thickened up fairly nicely on its own, and that the instructions to baste with the sweet sauce while the skewers were cooking resulted in a lot of smoke (and some sticky charring on the chicken). In short, it was a lot messier than I wanted for a weeknight dinner, but I'd recommend this on an outdoor grill in the summer for sure.

Yakitori is a very popular Japanese grilled chicken skewer, generally served at an izakaya (similar to a bar), or a yakitori-ya. Negima Yakitori is a type of yakitori that is made with chicken thighs and scallions. The scallions play a vital role, serving as a bright counterpoint to the umami-rich chicken.

Serves 4

- 1/2 cup light soy sauce
 - 1/4 cup sake
 - 1/4 cup mirin
 - 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
 - 2 tablespoons sugar
 - 2 garlic cloves, crushed
 - 1 inch fresh ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
 - 2 bunches of scallions
 - 1 teaspoon cornstarch
 - 2 pounds chicken thighs, boneless and skinless, cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
 - Canola or vegetable oil, for cooking
 - 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds for garnish
 - Eight to ten 6-inch wooden skewers
1. Soak the wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes. Cut the scallions in half, right where the dark green tops meet the lighter bottoms.
 2. In a small saucepan over high heat, combine the first 7 ingredients and the dark green parts of the scallions. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook for 8 minutes, until the mixture begins to thicken slightly. Sprinkle the cornstarch on top of the sauce, stir well, and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes -- the sauce will continue to thicken. Set aside to cool.
 3. Once the sauce is cool, spoon enough onto the chicken to coat it. Let it sit for 30 minutes or so to marinate.
 4. Cut the lighter parts of the scallions in 1 1/2-inch pieces. Take a skewer and thread a piece of marinated chicken onto it, piercing both ends to form a folded slice. Thread on a piece of scallion perpendicular to

the skewer. Continue alternating between chicken and scallions in this fashion, until you've filled all of your skewers.

5. Lightly oil a cast iron pan and place it over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the skewers. Cook for 2 minutes on each side, then begin brushing the skewers with the yakitori sauce. Turn and baste the skewers every 30 seconds for another 4 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through. Between each batch, wipe away any excess sauce and re-oil the pan. Transfer yakitori to a serving plate and sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds. Serve immediately.