

CANTONESE CHICKEN SALAD

(Sau See Gai)

2 whole chicken breasts, or 2 lb.
chicken thighs
1½ c. cold water
⅓ c. raw peanuts or unsalted roasted
peanuts
2 c. oil for deep-frying
1½ oz. rice sticks (py mei fun)
¼ c. raw white sesame seeds
15 snow peas (optional)
1 stalk celery
¼ head iceberg lettuce
1 tbsp. oil for stir-frying
1 green onion, slivered
salt and sugar

Seasoning:

½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. sugar
1 tsp. thin soy sauce
1 tsp. oyster sauce
⅛ tsp. five-spice powder

Spices for Salad:

½ tsp. dry mustard
1 tsp. cold water
1 tsp. sugar
¾ tsp. flavored salt*
1½ tbsp. oyster sauce
1½ tbsp. sesame oil
1 tsp. hoisin sauce

*To make flavored salt, heat 2 tbsp. salt in a dry (no oil) frying pan for 2 minutes over medium heat. Remove from the heat and stir in ⅛ tsp. five-spice powder. Mix well. Any leftover flavored salt will keep indefinitely if stored in an airtight container.

Serves 6

1. Rub seasoning ingredients on the chicken.
2. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
3. Pour water into a roasting pan. Put rack in the pan and arrange chicken pieces on rack. Roast, uncovered for 40 minutes, basting twice with the pan juices. (If the chicken hasn't browned after 15 minutes, increase the oven temperature to 400 degrees, or as needed.) Turn the chicken and roast an additional 30 minutes, again basting twice with pan juices (1 hour and 10 minutes total cooking time). Remove from the oven and let cool.
4. If using raw peanuts, toast in a 325-degree oven until golden brown (about 15 minutes).
5. Heat 2 c. oil in wok to 350 degrees. Drop rice sticks into hot oil. They will puff up within seconds. Remove with wire strainer and drain on paper towels.
6. Toast sesame seeds in a dry (no oil) frying pan over medium heat until golden brown (about 1 minute).
7. Remove tips from snow peas. Cut into strips, julienne style.
8. Peel celery. Cut into 1½"-long pieces. Cut each piece lengthwise into strips, julienne style.
9. Finely shred iceberg lettuce. You should have about 1 c.
10. Heat wok and add 1 tbsp. oil. Add snow peas, celery, and green onion and stir-fry for 2 minutes over high heat, sprinkling vegetables lightly with salt and sugar to taste. Do not overcook. Remove from wok and set aside.
11. Remove and discard skin from cooled chicken. Remove bones. Shred chicken meat by hand into a large bowl.
12. To make the salad spices, mix mustard with water. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Add to chicken and toss until well mixed.
13. Add the stir-fried vegetables and lettuce. Mix well again.
14. Add the "crispies" (peanuts, sesame seeds, and rice sticks). Mix lightly and serve.

Advance preparation: The "crispies" (steps 4, 5, and 6) may be prepared 2 weeks in advance. They will retain their freshness if kept in closed containers at room temperature. The remaining steps through step 12 may be completed a few hours in advance and kept at room temperature.

Serving suggestion: This delicious salad makes a delightful light summer meal. Its charm and appeal is in the natural taste of the ingredients, which are not overpowered by a heavy dressing. It is ideal as a party dish or as a part of a multicourse dinner, since it requires no attention at the last minute.

Note: Chicken cooked this way is moist, juicy, and flavorful. Use it for any recipe calling for cooked chicken. The pan juices make a good gravy when thickened with a mixture of cornstarch and cold water.

Jennie Low,
Chopsticks, Cleaver,
and Wok
Chronicle Books,
San Francisco,
c1997

