

Hainanese Chicken

Swick

Serves 1 | Active Time: 1 hour | Total Time: 1 hour 45 minutes

Chef's Notes

The first few times you make this dish, it may take a bit of time to make. Once you get used to it though, it becomes quicker and easier and the effort sure will pay off once you sit down to eat. The wonderful flavors in this dish are fresh and bold. This dish is served with many varieties of condiments: from sweet soy sauce-based sauces to super spicy, so feel free to experiment to suit your likes.

This dish is of Chinese origin; however, it is very popular in Singapore and Malaysia.

Step 1: Preparing the Court Bouillon

- 1 stalk lemongrass
- 2 shallots
- 1" -inch piece ginger
- 6 cloves garlic
- 5 green onions
- 2 pandan leaves
- 2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 1 tsp white, black or Szechuan peppercorns
- 1 tbsp kosher salt

Cut off the white and light green part of the lemongrass. To bring out more of the flavor, cut it in half and then smash it with the back of a knife. Peel and roughly chop the shallots and ginger. Smash the garlic. Cut the green onions into 3" -inch pieces. Tie the pandan leaves into knots.

To prepare the court bouillon, fill a pot, large enough to hold the chicken, with cold water, about 3 liters/quarts should do. You want to use just enough so that the chicken is fully covered, but not so much that the liquid becomes really diluted.

Next, place all of the ingredients into a pot and then add the rice wine vinegar, peppercorns and salt. Bring to a simmer over low heat. Let simmer for about 20 minutes to allow the ingredients to infuse the water.

Step 2: Preparing the Chicken

- 1 whole chicken (approx. 3 lb)
- 1" -inch piece ginger
- 5 cloves garlic
- 5 green onions
- 1 tsp kosher salt

Cut off the excess fat from the chicken, reserving it for later, to cook the rice. This is optional, but it does add a very unique and authentic flavor to the rice.

Next, peel the ginger and garlic and roughly chop. Then stuff them into the cavity of the chicken, along with the green onions and salt.

Note: this can be done several hours ahead and refrigerated until ready to cook.

Step 3: Cooking the Chicken

Once the court bouillon is ready, place the chicken into the liquid and poach for about 1 to 1 1/2 hours or until the chicken is just fully cooked through. This will depend on the size of chicken you have used and the temperature of the court bouillon.

Step 4: Checking Temperature of Court Bouillon

As the chicken cooks, it's a good idea to every now and again check the temperature of the court bouillon. The proper poaching temperature should be between 160°F to 180°F (or 70°C to 85°C). Cooking the chicken at the proper poaching temperature will ensure it is moist and juicy.

Step 5: Making the Ginger-Garlic Sauce

- 1 tsp fresh ginger
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 tbsp sriracha sauce (Asian chili sauce)
- 1/2 fresh lime (juice only)
- 2 tbsp chicken broth
- pinch of kosher salt (or to taste)

To prepare the sauce, finely mince the ginger and garlic. Add these to the sriracha sauce, along with the lime juice, chicken broth and salt. Mix together.

Step 6: Checking the Chicken for Doneness

Carefully remove the chicken from the poaching liquid and check the thickest part of the thigh. If the meat is no longer pink and the juices run clear, the chicken is done.

Step 7: Chilling the Chicken

As soon as the chicken has finished cooking place it directly into an ice bath. Make sure to reserve the cooking liquid. Turn the chicken over a few times to expose all of the chicken to the ice water. Let the chicken sit in the water for about 10 to 15 minutes until cool. This process gives the chicken and the skin a unique texture that is rather authentic to this dish.

Step 8: Cutting the Chicken

Remove the chicken from the ice water and discard the herbs from inside the cavity. Discard the ice water.

To prepare the chicken, remove the breast and legs and debone if desired. If serving the chicken in the next 1/2 hour or so, slice it into uniform pieces and leave it at room temperature; otherwise, cover the chicken with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use. Bring to room temperature before slicing and serving.

If desired, you can save the bones and add them to the broth for added depth of flavor (see next step).

Step 9: Finishing the Broth

- 1 to 2 tbsp fish sauce (or to taste)
- To finish the broth, add the reserved bones and continue to cook for another 30 minutes or so. In the meantime, you can jump ahead and start the rice (step 10).

Once the broth is done, strain and remove any excess fat. Then finish the broth with the fish sauce and taste for seasoning. If needed, add a bit more fish sauce until you reaches the desired saltiness.

Step 10: Starting the Rice Pilaf

To start the rice, heat the reserved chicken fat in a pot over medium heat. Once the fat has rendered down to about 2 tablespoons remove any excess pieces and discard. While the fat renders, go ahead and prepare the rest of the ingredients for cooking the rice.

Step 11: Finishing the Rice Pilaf

- 2 gloves garlic
- 2 inch piece ginger
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 cup Jasmine or long grain rice
- 2 cups of chicken broth (from Step 9)
- 1 pandan leaf

To finish the rice pilaf, finely mince the ginger and garlic and set aside. Once the fat has rendered, add the rice and fry for a few minutes until translucent and starting to toast a bit. Then add the ginger and garlic and fry for a minute or so, just to bring out their aroma. Then add the broth and pandan leaf. Bring to a boil and then turn the heat down to a simmer. Cover and let cook for about 20 minutes (or according to the cooking instructions on the package of rice).

Once cooked, do not disturb, simply remove from the heat and let rest for at least 10 minutes.

While the rice cooks, you can go ahead and finish the chicken.

Step 12: Finishing the Chicken

- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- ½ tsp brown sugar

Finely mince the garlic and place into a bowl. Add the sesame oil, soy sauce and brown sugar. Mix well. Brush or pour over the chicken.

Step 13: Serving the Dish

- 1 to 2 ripe tomatoes (or 1 basket grape tomatoes)
- 1/2 cucumber (or 4 Japanese cucumbers)
- 1/2 bunch cilantro
- 1/4 bunch mint (optional)

To serve the dish, first slice the tomatoes and cucumber. Make the sure the herbs are clean and spun dry. Then fluff the rice after it has rested.

Place a scoop of rice onto a plate (the rice is often pressed into a cup and then unmolded onto the plate). Next, place some of the chicken around the rice, followed by a few slices of tomato and cucumber. Garnish with a few sprigs of cilantro and mint and serve with the ginger-garlic sauce.

If desired, serve with a bowl of the hot court bouillon/broth.