

Chengdu Chicken Recipe

Ingredients: Serves 4

450g boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch cubes

1 large egg

¼ cup cornstarch

½ teaspoon salt

Vegetable oil, for deep-frying

Sauce:

¼ cup minced sweet gherkins

3 tablespoons distilled white vinegar

3 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons rice wine or dry sherry

1 tablespoon Vietnamese or Thai fish sauce

2 teaspoons hot bean paste

1 teaspoon cornstarch

1 scallion, white and green parts, trimmed and minced

2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced ⅛ inch thick

1 small hot chili pepper, such as Thai or cayenne, seeded and minced

6 cilantro sprigs, for garnish

Method:

Mix the chicken, egg, cornstarch, salt and 1 tablespoon water in a medium bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Heat a large wok over high heat. Add enough oil to come about 1½ inches up the sides of the wok, and heat it to 180°C. In two batches, add the chicken pieces to the oil, a few pieces at a time (so they don't splash or stick together), and stir gently, keeping the pieces separate and cooking until the coating looks set but not browned, about 45 seconds. Using a wide wire-mesh skimmer, transfer the chicken to a colander to drain. Using a fine-mesh strainer or skimmer, remove any bits of fried chicken or batter from the oil. Reheat the oil to 180°C. Return the chicken to the wok, and deep-fry again until it is golden brown and crispy, about 2 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Discard all but 2 tablespoons of the oil from the wok. To begin the sauce, mix the pickles, vinegar, sugar, soy sauce, rice wine, fish sauce, and hot bean paste in a small bowl. Dissolve the cornstarch in 1 tablespoon cold water in another small bowl. Set the bowls aside. Return the wok with the oil to high heat. Add the scallion, garlic and chili and stir-fry until the scallion wilts, about 15 seconds. Return the chicken to the wok and add the pickle mixture. Stir-fry for 20 seconds. Add the cornstarch mixture and stir-fry until the sauce thickens, about 10 seconds. Garnish the chicken with the cilantro, and serve immediately.

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