

Chicken Manchurian

By Zainab Shah

Updated March 28, 2023

Total Time 45 minutes

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (1,535)



Kerri Brewer for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Simon Andrews.

A stalwart of Desi Chinese cooking, chicken Manchurian is immensely popular at Chinese restaurants across South Asia. Nelson Wang, a third generation Chinese chef who was born in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), is credited with inventing the dish in Mumbai in the 1970s. This recipe comes from attempts at recreating the version served at Hsin Kuang in Lahore, Pakistan, in the late '90s. At restaurants it's almost always served on a sizzler platter, the tangy, sweet-and-sour sauce bubbling and thickening on its way to the table. Making it at home doesn't compromise any of the punchy flavors. Velveting the chicken in egg and cornstarch means it'll stay tender through the short cooking process; bell pepper and spring onions add freshness and crunch to the otherwise intense flavors from ketchup and chile-garlic sauce.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste or freshly grated garlic
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- Fine sea salt
- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into ¾-inch cubes
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 3 whole dried dundicut chiles or bird's-eye chiles
- ½ cup ketchup
- ¼ cup chile-garlic sauce

PREPARATION

Step 1

Velvet the chicken: In a medium bowl, whisk the egg. Continue whisking and gradually add 4 tablespoons of cornstarch until there are no lumps. Stir in garlic, black pepper and ½ teaspoon salt. Add the chicken pieces and stir until well coated. Cover and set aside for 30 minutes.

Step 2

In a large wok or deep, high-sided skillet, heat oil on medium for 45 seconds. Add chicken (in batches, if necessary to avoid crowding) and cook until it starts turning white, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip the pieces and continue cooking until the chicken starts to turn golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove chicken and set aside.

Step 3

Add dried chiles and cook on medium for about 1 minute, stirring occasionally.

2 tablespoons light soy sauce (or regular soy sauce)
1 cup chicken stock (optional)
1 bell pepper, halved, seeded and cut into ¾-inch pieces
3 spring onions or 1 medium scallion, trimmed and thinly sliced
Cooked white rice or fried rice, for serving

Step 4

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, stir together ketchup, chile-garlic sauce, soy sauce, ½ teaspoon salt and, if using, chicken stock (if not using chicken stock, stir in 1 cup water). Add to mixture in pan along with bell pepper and stir to combine.

Step 5

Separately, mix the remaining 1 teaspoon cornstarch with ¼ cup water until smooth. Stir it into the wok and simmer until the sauce thickens and starts to turn glossy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add chicken and stir to combine. Top with spring onions. Serve with rice.

Private Notes

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