

Kung Pao Chicken

宫保鸡丁
gōngbǎojīdīng
By Sally Liu

“Bread is the staff of life.” People cannot live without food. Every country creates a representative food, and Kung Pao Chicken is but one of these. Kung Pao Chicken is a typical, traditional Chinese dish; it tastes savory, crisp, and a little oily, but not greasy. Because of its simple cooking method, not only do Chinese, but also most foreigners, like to eat it.

INGREDIENTS

Main materials:

Boneless chicken breast 200g

Peanuts 50g

Subsidiary materials:

Amylum 3g

Scallions 5g

Garlic 2g

Dried red chilies 25g

Ginger 3g

Soy sauce 3g

Cooking wine 3g

Rice vinegar 3g

Salt 2g

Sugar 1.5g

Sesame oil 50g

Prickly ash 10g [essential]

Water 3 teaspoons



EQUIPMENT

In the process of making this dish, we will use a wok of common size, a spoon, a bowl, and a knife.

DIRECTIONS

First, pat the chicken with the back of the knife blade -- like clapping hands, because the fiber of chicken is tough. After patting, it will be easier to cook and will taste tender. Then dice the chicken into 1-centimeter cubes. Next, mix the chicken with amylum 2g, cooking wine 3g, salt 1g, and 2 spoons of water. After that, marinate it for 30 minutes.

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Second, fry the peanuts. They are easy to cook. First, wash these peanuts in order to take away the farming dust. Air the wet peanuts* for a while. At the same time, pour 2 spoons of oil into the wok; then put those peanuts and turn up the heat. Begin to deep-fry. When the peanuts turn yellow, scoop them up. Peel the red hulls from the peanuts after they cool.

Third, prepare the sauce. Remove the seeds from the dried red chilies then cut them and scallions into pieces, then chop the garlic and ginger. In the bowl, put amyllum 1g, rice vinegar 3g, soy sauce 3g, sugar 1.5g, salt 1g, oil 10g and 1 spoon of water together and mix well; you should be heating the oil in a wok synchronously.

Now, start to fry the chicken. Stir-fry the chicken over high heat until the cubes separate and turn white, then move it onto paper towel to drain off the oil. Re-heat the remaining oil and fry the dried red chilies until aromatic. After that, add the prickly ash and scallions; sauté for 30 seconds.

Finally, return the chicken to the wok and stir-fry for 1 minute; then add sauce mixture and fry again. Last, turn off the heat and sprinkle on the peanuts. Mix it all round and serve hot with rice.

The ancient story behind this dish is related to the late Qing Dynasty [1644 - 1912]. Ding Baozhen, who was granted the title Shao Bao (which means the protector of the prince), was respectfully called Ding Gongbao by other people. One day, Ding Gongbao made an inspection of the Sichuan Province with his chamberlains [an officer who manages the household of a king or nobleman]. Because of their busy schedule, lunch was delayed. Consequently, they had to eat lunch in a small restaurant by the roadside.

Unfortunately, most vegetables at the restaurant had sold out that day, so there was not much food to cook. Everybody was famished and they did not want to wait to go to another restaurant. Hence, the chef fried some residual chicken pieces, vegetables, and other bits of food left aside (dried red chili, ginger, amyllum, and so on) hastily to make just any kind of lunch for the group to eat. After Ding Gongbao ate up this dish, he found it tasted fresh and pleasing, so he was very satisfied and asked the roadside cook to tell his chamberlain how to prepare it. Ding Gongbao was very fond of peanuts, so he ordered his cook to add peanuts to this recipe upon their return from Shichuan. Contrary to expectations, it was tastier than before. From then on, Gong Bao Chicken, named by Ding Gongbao of the Qing Dynasty, became well-known all over China. Today, in some foreign countries people call it Kung Pow Chicken.

*[Or use peanuts of your choice, such as dry roasted, spicy, honey-roasted...]

