

Oriental Journey

A Cook's Journal

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Time to fly to the Orient to sample some of the excellent dishes we can easily prepare in our northern Maine kitchens. Takeout never tasted as good as your own, freshly prepared, delectable Korean Beef Lettuce Wraps, Sticky Sweet Chicken, or Thai Peanut Chicken Noodles.

KOREAN BEEF LETTUCE WRAPS

Korean BBQ can be made at home with these light, refreshing lettuce wraps! These are SO good. They can also be made/prepped ahead of time! I used boneless pork one time, and that was good, too.

Ingredients

- ½ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup thinly chopped green onions, both tops and white ends
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tablespoons toasted sesame oil (in the Ethnic aisle)
- 2 Tablespoons freshly grated ginger (or 1 teaspoon ginger powder but the flavor will not be as bright)
- Pinch of cayenne
- 1½ pounds sirloin steak, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup white rice
- 1 head butter lettuce
- ½ teaspoons sesame seeds

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together soy sauce, brown sugar, green onions, garlic, sesame oil, ginger, and cayenne. Reserve ¼ cup and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine soy sauce mixture and steak; marinate for at least 1 hour to overnight, turning the bag occasionally. Drain steak from marinade.
3. In a large saucepan of 2 cups water, cook rice according to package instructions; set aside.
4. Preheat a cast iron pan to medium-high heat. Add steak and cook, flipping once and basting with reserved ¼ cup marinade until cooked through, about 1-2 minutes each side.
5. Spoon rice into the center of a lettuce leaf; top with steak, garnish with sesame seeds. Roll up, taco-style.

STICKY SWEET CHICKEN

This is a tasty way to prepare chicken. You can use tenders if they are a better bargain at the store. Serve with a green vegetable and rice or noodles.

Ingredients

- 1 Tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 Tablespoons honey
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 Tablespoons finely chopped fresh ginger root (You can sub 1 teaspoon ginger powder but the flavor will not be as bright)
- 2 teaspoons chopped garlic
- 2 Tablespoons hot sauce, optional (or sub a pinch of cayenne)

- salt and pepper to taste
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves cut into ½-inch strips
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil

Directions

1. Mix together brown sugar, honey, soy sauce, ginger, garlic and hot sauce or cayenne in a small bowl.
2. Lightly salt and pepper the chicken strips.
3. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken and brown quickly about 2 minutes per side till caramelized.
4. Pour sauce over chicken. Simmer uncovered until sauce thickens, 8-10 minutes.

TIP:

Never bought or dealt with fresh ginger root? Here is a handy online tutorial about how to prepare it.
http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/how_to_peel_and_chop_ginger/

THAI PEANUT CHICKEN NOODLES

The surprising flavor of peanuts gives this dish an unusually delicious edge. Add additional veggies like bean sprouts or pea pods if you like. Whip this up in less than thirty minutes. Flavorful, and can be served as a side or main dish!

Ingredients

- 2 packages dried ramen noodles, seasoning sauce packets discarded
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 boneless chicken breasts or 8 chicken tenders, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 cups shredded cabbage (or use prepared slaw mix)
- 2 carrots, peeled and shredded
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons chopped peanuts

For the sauce

- ¼ cup peanut butter
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil (in Ethnic aisle)
- 1 teaspoon Sriracha or Tabasco, optional

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together peanut butter, soy sauce, garlic, honey, ginger, vinegar, sesame oil and Sriracha or Tabasco, if using; set aside.
2. In a large pot of boiling water, add noodles and boil until soft, about 1-2 minutes; drain well.
3. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken to skillet and cook until golden brown, about 4-6 minutes.
4. Stir in cabbage, carrots and green onions until heated through, about 1 minute.
5. Stir in cooked noodles and peanut butter mixture. Serve immediately, garnished with peanuts, if desired.