



FUCHSIA DUNLOP

**EVERY
GRAIN**
of **RICE**

*Simple CHINESE
HOME COOKING*

'Delicious and authentic
Chinese food made clear,
easy and accessible. Brilliant.'

JAMIE OLIVER

COLD CHICKEN WITH A SPICY SICHUANESE SAUCE

LIANG BAN JI 涼拌雞

This is one of the most marvellous of all Sichuanese culinary ideas. It's a salad dressed with seasonings that generally include soy sauce and chilli oil, with sugar, sesame oil, vinegar, crushed garlic and ground, roasted Sichuan pepper added according to taste or mood. It's very easy to make and stunningly delicious, as I hope you'll agree. Ever since I first lived in Sichuan, this kind of dish has been part of my everyday kitchen repertoire. I've often served a spicy chicken salad alongside other dishes that are more ambitious or complicated to make, and yet this tends to be the one that everyone raves about the most.

I don't actually use a recipe for this, any more than I would use a recipe to mix up a vinaigrette, so it's different every time I make it. The following version and its variation, which I've measured, are lip-smackingly wonderful, but do please think of them as templates rather than immutable instructions, and improvise as you will. You might want to add more chilli oil in winter, or more refreshing vinegar when the weather is hot and sultry, while a spritz of crushed garlic can be quite enlivening. You can also serve the dressed chicken on a bed of sliced cucumber, or toss some salad leaves, perhaps rocket or watercress, into the mix.

In China, they normally poach a whole chicken (see overleaf), then chop it up bones and all, but you can equally well use boneless meat. And don't forget that this is also a marvellous way of using

300-350g cold, cooked chicken, without bones (see overleaf for poaching instructions)

3 spring onions

¼ tsp salt

1 tsp sesame seeds (optional)

Cut or tear the chicken as evenly as possible into bite-sized strips or slivers and place them in a deep bowl. Cut the spring onions at a steep angle into thin slices. Mix them and the salt with the chicken. If using sesame seeds, toast them gently in a dry wok or frying pan for a few minutes, until they are fragrant and starting to turn golden, then tip out into a small dish.

Combine all the sauce ingredients in a small bowl.

When you are ready to eat, pour the sauce over the chicken, and mix well with chopsticks or salad servers. Arrange on a serving dish and sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired.

VARIATION

Another sauce for cold chicken

2 tbsp light soy sauce

2 tsp finely chopped or crushed garlic

2 tbsp chicken stock

3 tbsp chilli oil (with or without its sediment)

½ tsp ground, roasted Sichuan pepper

½ tsp sesame oil

up leftover roast chicken or turkey: the meat won't be quite as moist and fresh-tasting as that of a poached bird, but it's still delicious (and you can add extra chicken stock to the sauce to moisten, if necessary).

For the sauce

2 tbsp light soy sauce

1½ tsp Chinkiang vinegar

1½ tsp caster sugar

1 tbsp chicken stock

3-4 tbsp chilli oil with ½ tsp of its sediment (or more, if you wish)

¼-½ tsp ground, roasted Sichuan pepper, to taste

1 tsp sesame oil



SWEET-AND-SOUR SPARE RIBS

TANG CU PAI GU 糖醋排骨

Sweet-and-sour ribs are not difficult to make, but they do take a little time because the recipe has several stages. However, they can be prepared a day or two in advance and refrigerated (just return them to room temperature before serving). In my experience they are always incredibly popular, with their sticky sauce and chewily tender flesh. They are served as an appetiser in many parts of China: this particular recipe is from my *Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook*.

Ask your butcher to cut the spare ribs into bite-sized sections. You can do this at home but it's quite a job, for which you need a heavy cleaver. And, as suggested in the recipe, you can omit the deep-frying, but the ribs won't be quite as compellingly fragrant if you do. The following recipe yields a good bowlful of ribs, but given their popularity and the slightly time-consuming cooking method, it's a good idea to make double, saving some for another meal.

500g meaty spare ribs, cut into bite-sized sections
2 x 30g pieces of ginger, crushed
4 spring onions, white parts only, crushed
1 tbsp Shaoxing wine
Salt

Cooking oil, for deep-frying (optional), plus 3 tbsp more
2 tsp dark soy sauce
60g caster sugar
1 tbsp Chinkiang vinegar
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp sesame seeds (optional)

Place the ribs in a panful of water and bring to a boil over a high flame. Skim the water, then add one of the pieces of ginger, two spring onion whites, the Shaoxing wine and about 1 tsp salt. Boil for 15 minutes until the meat is cooked and tender. Drain thoroughly and set aside, reserving 200ml of the cooking liquid.

If you are going to deep-fry the ribs, heat the deep-frying oil to 180–200°C (350–400°F). Add the ribs and fry until golden. Drain and set aside.

Pour the 3 tbsp oil into a seasoned wok over a high flame. Add the rest of the ginger and spring onions and fry until fragrant. Tip in the ribs and toss for a couple of minutes in the fragrant oil. Pour in the reserved cooking liquid and add the soy sauce and the sugar. Boil over a high flame, spooning the liquid over the ribs, until the sauce has reduced to a heavy, syrupy consistency. Season with salt to taste if you need it (remember the liquid will be reduced to a glaze, so take care not to over-salt). Add the vinegar and cook for another minute or two until the flavours have fused. Off the heat, stir in the sesame oil and leave to cool. (The ribs are normally served at room temperature.)

If you are using the sesame seeds, toast them very gently in a dry wok or frying pan until they are fragrant and starting to turn golden. Scatter them over the ribs just before serving.

