

Brandy Chicken

If you go to New Orleans, or really most food courts in America, you will find Bourbon Chicken on the menu. These chicken nuggets in a sweet, savory, spicy, boozey sauce are wildly popular wherever they're sold. Here in Lodi, we can certainly find good bourbon to make this dish, but we prefer to use our local distilled beverage: brandy! Back before the European varietals like Cabernet sauvignon and Chardonnay became Lodi's main wine grapes, Lodi was known for its Tokay grapes, from which we made brandy. My father helped make "Ceremony" brandy for Guild Wineries and Distilleries. East Side (now Oak Ridge) winery made the other great Lodi brandy, "Royal Host." Today, the closest thing you can get to a good Lodi brandy is E&J (for Earnest and Julio) made by Gallo. Most of the grapes for Gallo brandy still come from Lodi. This sure-to-please chicken dish is pretty quick and easy to make and virtually foolproof.



Ingredients

- 2-1/2 pounds chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 TBS zero sodium chicken bullion powder
- 1-1/2 tsp Goya Adobo all-purpose seasoning (blue cap, sin pimenta)
- 4 TBS corn starch
- 1/3 cup water
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 3 TBS apple cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup apple juice
- 1/3 cup low sodium soy sauce
- 1/3 cup low sodium chicken broth
- 1/3 cup Heinz Simply tomato ketchup
- 1/2 cup Lodi brandy
- 3/4 tsp browning (Kitchen Bouquet)
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes
- 3 TBS canola oil
- 5 cloves garlic, cut fine brunoise
- 5 green onions, cut into 1/4 inch slices
- 1-1/2 TBS ginger paste
- 1-1/2 TBS chives or green onions cut into 1/8 inch pieces (optional)
- 3 tsp Sesame seeds (optional)

Put the chicken in a 2-1/2-quart mixing bowl and season with the chicken bullion and Goya Adobo all-purpose seasoning. Stir the chicken pieces to evenly spread the seasoning. Let the chicken sit for about 15 minutes. Add 3 TBS of cornstarch and mix until the chicken pieces are

evenly coated. Prepare a slurry of 1 tablespoon of corn starch and 1/4 cup of water in a glass or cup. Stir the slurry until the cornstarch is dissolved.

In 2-1/2-quart mixing bowl, add the brown sugar, apple cider vinegar, apple juice, soy sauce, chicken broth, and ketchup. Whisk the ingredients. Add the brandy, whisk, then add the browning and red pepper flakes and whisk.

Heat a sauteuse pan or a large fry pan to medium heat. Coat the pan with canola oil. Carefully lay each piece of chicken in the pan with space between pieces. Do not overcrowd the pan. You may need to cook the chicken in two or three batches. Cook the chicken about 2 to 3 minutes on each side. The pieces should have a nice brown crust but not burned. Remove the chicken to a clean plate. Dump any excess oil but keep the brown crud on the bottom of the pan (the "fond").



Reduce the heat to medium low. Coat the pan with canola oil. Add the garlic and green onions to the pan and stir until the garlic is fragrant (about 30 seconds). Add the sauce and stir. Increase heat to medium and bring the sauce to a boil while scraping the fond off the bottom of the pan. Add the ginger paste and stir. When it starts to boil, reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 to 12 minutes. Stir the corn starch slurry, add it to the sauce and stir. The sauce will begin to thicken. Increase the heat to medium to bring the sauce to a boil while stirring continuously. Add the chicken to the sauce and stir to evenly coat the chicken. Cook for about 3 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently.



Serve the chicken with white rice and pour extra sauce over the chicken. Garnish with sesame seeds and chives.

Tips and Tricks

You can adjust the spiciness of this dish if you don't want to pair it with wine. Just add an extra 1/4 or 1/2 teaspoon of red pepper flakes.

Food Court-style dishes like this are typically salt bombs with the all-purpose seasoning, soy sauce, and chicken broth. I've cut the amount of sodium down without sacrificing flavor, at least for me. If you find the sauce a little too bland for your liking, add a teaspoon of all-purpose seasoning to the sauce when you add the red pepper flakes.

I listed ginger paste to simplify the dish for you. Instead, I usually get a 1-1/2 inch piece of ginger root, peel it, and cut it fine brunoise, then I add it to the pan with the garlic.

Goya Adobo with the blue cap sin pimienta (without pepper) is getting a little hard to find. If you can't find it in your grocery store, you can order it online or use another all purpose seasoning that does not contain pepper.