

# GRILLED CHICKEN THIGHS

Now that it's grill season, it's time to spice things up a bit. Here's a simple marinade for grilled chicken thighs. I like to use bone-in pieces because it takes longer to cook and allows the chicken to absorb more of the smokey flavor.

## INGREDIENTS

### MARINADE

1/2 cup orange juice

1 tablespoon salt

1 teaspoon ground pepper

2 tablespoons molasses

3 chipotle pepper plus 1 tablespoon adobo sauce

### GRILLED CHICKEN

8 Bone-in Chicken thighs

Salt & Pepper to taste

½ cup BBQ sauce for basting, ½ cup for serving\*

## PREPARATION

In a medium sized bowl, mix all the marinade ingredients together. Place inside a large Ziploc bag. Add the chicken pieces and seal tightly. Massage the marinade around the chicken pieces and place in the refrigerator at least 4 hours before you intend to grill it, but it's best to marinate overnight.

OPTIONAL : If you have a smoker pan, soak some wood chips about an hour before you plan to grill.

When you're ready to grill, take the chicken out of the refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature for 30 minutes. Place the chicken pieces on a platter, discard the Ziploc bag and remaining marinade.

Pre-heat your grill to 375 degrees. (Optional: Drain the water from the smoker chips and place the chips in the smoker pan and light as per directions for your grill.)

Place the chicken on indirect heat, close the lid and cook for 20 minutes. Flip the pieces and cook for another 20 minutes. (Cook times depend on how evenly your grill cooks. 40 minutes is approximate. Dark meat chicken is done when internal temperature of the chicken is at 165 degrees.)

To finish, brush some BBQ sauce on top and close lid for 3 minutes. Flip pieces, brush some BBQ sauce on other side and close lid for 3 minutes.

Serve with extra BBQ sauce on the side.

*\*NOTE: I used STUBBS Original BBQ Sauce, but feel free to use your favorite.*

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## BACKYARD PASTA SALAD

So you've been invited to your neighbor's house for a backyard barbecue and they've asked you to bring a side. You're tired of making salads that no one eats, and want something that won't spoil quickly in the heat. Ah ha! How about a pasta salad? You've got tons of tomatoes and cucumbers in your garden and you have that nice bottle of zesty lemon balsamic vinegar you picked up on vacation from that cute little olive oil shop that you've never opened. Why not?

## **INGREDIENTS** (serves 6-8)

### **SALAD**

1 pound dry pasta (something twisty like Barilla Fusilli, Rotini or Gemelli)

1 cucumber, sliced

1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved

1/2 cup pitted olives, sliced

half of a large red onion, thinly sliced

6 ounces crumbled feta cheese (or goat cheese)

### **DRESSING**

1/4 cup extra light virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons zesty balsamic vinegar (or any vinegar of your choice)

zest of one lemon

1 tablespoon freshly-squeezed lemon juice

1 teaspoons dried oregano crushed

1 small garlic clove, minced

1 teaspoon honey

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

salt and pepper to taste

### **PREPARATION**

In a large pot, bring 4 quarts of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta as per box instructions to al dente. Drain the pasta in a colander and rinse with cold water. Allow to cool and set

aside.

Add the remainder of the salad ingredients (except for the feta cheese) into a large bowl. Add the pasta and gently toss. Add in half the feta cheese and lightly toss.

Pour the dressing on top and lightly toss. Cover bowl with clear wrap for at least one hour before serving.

When ready to serve, toss again and sprinkle the remaining feta cheese on top.

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## SAUTEED CHINESE GREENS

I've become obsessed with Chinese greens. I often find myself wandering around the produce section in Asian markets or Chinatowns trying to figure out what to do with all the glorious exotic vegetables. My particular favorites are the *choy* family; *choy sum*, *gai choi*, *bok choi*, *yu choi* and *ong choi*—all variations on greens, some more bitter than others like mustard greens. Whichever you choose, here's an easy and delicious way to serve them.

### **INGREDIENTS** (serves 4)

1 large bunch *yu choi* (or other members of the *choi* family)

4 cloves garlic, minced

2 tbsp canola oil

2 tsp soy sauce

2 tsp oyster sauce

1 tsp chili oil

pinch of sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup veggie steaming liquid

2 tbsp fried shallots

### **PREPARATION**

Remove any yellow or old leaves, and wash the greens thoroughly.

Place a bamboo steamer on your wok and fill the bottom of the wok with water just up to the bottom of the steamer. Bring up to boil. Place the greens loosely in the steamer and steam for 3 minutes. Save at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the steaming liquid.

Remove the steamer basket and set aside. Heat up the wok to medium heat and add canola oil. Once warm, add minced garlic and stir fry for about 1 minute, or until fragrant.

Add soy sauce, oyster sauce, chili oil and sugar. Mix well, then add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the reserved steaming liquid.

Add the greens to the mixture and toss for about one minute. Using tongs, remove the greens and place them on a plate. Pour any remaining sauce on top. Garnish with fried shallots.

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## **LATKE ENCRUSTED COD**

I know what you're thinking, this is a weird one, right? Well, why should latkes be just for Hanukkah? I was planning on making a simple fried fish dinner when the light bulb went off—why not try to encrust the fish in grated potatoes and onion and then fry it? The coating came out nice and crispy and the fish was cooked perfectly. Give it a try!

**INGREDIENTS:** (Serves 2-4)

2 lbs potatoes

1 onion

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup panko or matzo meal

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon baking powder

2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus 1 teaspoon for seasoning

1 egg beaten for potato mixture, 1 egg beaten for fish dredging

fresh ground pepper

canola oil for frying

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour

1 lb filleted cod

**PREPARATION:**

Grate the potatoes and onions using the large hole on your grater. Place the grated veggies in a strainer and squeeze out as much water as possible. Using a clean dishtowel, place the veggies in a pile in the center. Roll up the towel and twist both ends, getting out as much water as you can. The more water you can squeeze out, the better. Place the veggies in a large bowl. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup panko, 1 beaten egg, baking powder, 2 teaspoons salt and fresh ground pepper.

Butterfly the cod if it's a thick piece— $\frac{1}{2}$ " thickness is ideal. Cut into four equal sized pieces.

Using two shallow bowls, place the flour in one, and 1 beaten egg in the other. Season each with salt and pepper. Season the cod fillets with salt and pepper. Dredge each piece first in the flour, then in the egg.

Take a handful of the potato mixture and flatten it just slightly larger than the piece of cod. Place a piece of cod on top and then take another handful of potato mixture and flatten it and try to seal the fish between the two layers of potatoes. Try not to over use the potato mixture, you don't want it too thick—just use enough to seal the fish.

In a medium sized pot, fill the oil to one inch from the bottom. Bring to 350 degrees. Place two pieces of fish gently into the oil. A spatula will help to avoid splatters. Fry for 4-5 minutes until the bottom is a rich, golden brown. If it browns too quickly, lower the heat. Use the spatula to carefully flip each piece and fry for another 4 minutes.

Remove fish from oil and place on paper towel. Lightly dab the top with a paper towel to absorb extra oil. Immediately season with salt. Repeat with remaining fish pieces.

Serve with braised cabbage, greens or a salad.

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## A GRAND MARGARITA

When it's hot outside, there's nothing like a good old frozen margarita to take the temperature down a few notches. Here's a refreshing take on one that uses Grand Marnier rather than triple sec. I find it gives the drink a touch more elegance. I always drink mine without a salted rim, but feel free to salt yours. You can even do a sugar rim if you want to keep things sweet. Enjoy!

### **INGREDIENTS** (serves 1)

2 ounces tequila

1 ounce Grand Marnier, plus drizzle for floater

2 ounces orange juice  
juice of one lime  
12 ice cubes  
lime slice for garnish

### **PREPARATION**

Place all ingredients, except the lime slice, in a blender. Blend until slushy. Pour into a margarita glass. Garnish with lime slice and drizzle more Grand Marnier on top as a floater.

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## **MATZO BREI WITH PECANS**

For those celebrating Passover, the one consolation of giving up all that bread for a week is having an excuse to make Matzo Brei. This egg/matzo omelet is a sweet treat when doused in copious amounts of maple syrup. People will argue about the egg to matzo ratio, but it really depends on how you like it. If you like things eggier, then add an extra egg or two. If you like it on the dry side, then a 1:1 ratio is the way to go. It's a very forgiving recipe, so have fun with it. I've added pecans and orange zest for a little crunch and zing.

### **INGREDIENTS** (Serves 2)

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup pecans  
3 large eggs, beaten  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon vanilla



3 sheets egg matzo

1 tablespoon orange zest

2 tablespoons butter

1/4 cup fresh blueberries for garnish

1 tablespoon confectioners sugar for garnish

maple syrup, warmed for serving

### **PREPARATION**

In a clean skillet, toast the pecans for a minute. Set aside. Wipe the crumbs out of the skillet. Chop pecans into small pieces and set aside.

In a large bowl, combine the eggs, salt and vanilla.

Using cold running water, wet the matzo sheets over a colander. Shake the colander to remove excess water. Crumble the wet matzo sheets into the egg mixture. Add the pecans and orange zest, mix well and set aside for five minutes.

Heat a skillet on medium. Add 1 tablespoon butter to pan. Once melted, pour matzo mixture into pan. Press down with a spatula to flatten.

Cook until bottom is browned, about 5 minutes. Carefully slip out onto a plate. Add 1 tablespoon butter to pan. Carefully flip matzo brei back into pan to cook other side for an additional 4 minutes.

Slide onto serving plate. Garnish with blueberries. Using a small sieve, sprinkle the confectioners sugar on top. Serve with maple syrup.

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# ASIAN MARKET SOUP

Like most New Yorkers, I'm used to small grocery stores where you have to back your cart out of the aisle if someone is coming towards you looking for peanut butter. So, when I'm in the burbs, I'm always astonished by the sheer volume of food on the shelves, not to mention the wide aisles that seem large enough to fit a Buick.

Today we happened upon an enormous Asian market in Westbury—99 Ranch market. OMG! It had every kind of Asian ingredient you could imagine, including fresh produce, fresh noodles and a pick your own fish ball bin. I went a little nuts and came home with an eclectic mix of things. What to do, what to do? When in doubt, make soup!

## **INGREDIENTS (serves 6-8)**

3 dashi packets

3 quarts water

2 Tablespoons miso paste

1 tablespoon mirin

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon sugar

2 teaspoons fish sauce

2 teaspoons chili/garlic sauce

2 teaspoons hoisin sauce

1 Tablespoon canola oil

2 cloves garlic, sliced

1 maitake mushroom, chopped

3 dried Chinese mushrooms, re-hydrated and sliced

2 baby bok choy, chopped

1 dozen fish balls

$\frac{1}{2}$  pound fresh noodles

1 scallion, chopped for garnish

Dried shallots for garnish

### **PREPARATION**

In a large pot, combine the dashi packets and water. Bring to a boil. Add the miso paste, mirin, soy sauce, sugar, fish sauce and chili/garlic sauce. Stir until miso is dissolved.

In a large skillet, heat oil. Add garlic, mushrooms and bok choy. Sauté until wilted, about 2-3 minutes, then add to the soup.

Add in fish balls and bring back to a boil, then put on low heat for ten minutes. Remove dashi packets. Add the noodles and cook as per box/bag instructions.

Serve in large bowls and garnish with scallions and dried shallots.

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## **RAZOR CLAMS**

One of my favorite seafood treats is the razor clam. They're tough to find, although your local Chinatown fishmonger might

have a stash somewhere. Whenever I see them I grab them and make this simple dish. It's full of flavor and has a really nice kick for those of you that are chili heads.

### **INGREDIENTS (serves 2)**

1 dozen razor clams  
1 Tablespoon Canola oil  
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
1 Tablespoon chili-garlic sauce  
1 Tablespoon hoisin sauce  
1 teaspoon soy sauce  
3 Tablespoons water  
1 teaspoon cornstarch  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon sesame oil  
1 Scallion, chopped for garnish

### **PREPARATION**

To clean razor clams, soak them in salted cold water for 20 minutes. Drain and rinse in a colander.

Heat large sauté pan or wok. Add oil for 20 seconds. Add garlic, chili-garlic sauce, and hoisin sauce. Stir for one minute. Add razor clams, and stir one minute. Add soy sauce and 2 Tablespoons of water and stir for one minute. Cover and cook for 3 minutes.

In a small bowl, combine 1 Tablespoon of water and 1 teaspoon of cornstarch. Mix until there are no lumps. Uncover pan and pour mixture over razor clams. Drizzle on sesame oil. Stir everything together until the sauce comes to a boil and thickens, about two more minutes.

Place razor clams on a plate. Pour sauce on top. Garnish with scallions.

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## BUCATINI WITH SHRIMP AND SPINACH SAUCE

I always have my go to pasta sauces, but every now and then I like to experiment. I had an extra bunch of spinach on hand, and I thought I'd play around with it to see if I could turn it into a tasty sauce. This worked on the first try. It's a great way to get everyone to eat their greens without any complaints.

### INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

1 lb medium sized shrimp, peeled and deveined

5 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup + 5 tablespoons olive oil

1 lb bucatini

1 large onion, diced

1 bunch or bag of baby spinach, rinsed and dried – about 6 ounces

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup ricotta cheese

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup Parmesan, grated

3 anchovies

salt and pepper to taste

### PREPARATION

In a small bowl, mix two cloves of minced garlic with a  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of olive oil. Season the shrimp with salt and pepper. Place the shrimp in a Ziploc with the garlic oil,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the red pepper flakes, and marinate for 2-4 hours.

Bring four quarts of water and 1 tablespoon of salt up to a boil. Add in the buccatini and cook as per box instructions until al dente.

While the pasta is cooking, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large skillet. Pour the shrimp and marinade onto the skillet. Cook the shrimp in the pan, turning them until they turn pink and firm, about two to three minutes each side. Set the shrimp aside.

Heat 1 more tablespoon of olive oil and add the onion, sautéing until it begins to brown, about 8 minutes. Add the remaining garlic and cook for one minute. Add the spinach and red pepper flakes and cook until the spinach is just slightly wilted, about two minutes.

Add the spinach mixture to a blender. Add in the remaining olive oil, ricotta, half of the Parmesan and all of the anchovies. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Blend until smooth.

Drain the pasta, reserving one cup of the liquid. Pour the spinach sauce back into the large saucepan and reheat on low. Add in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of pasta water and stir. Add the pasta to the sauce and lightly toss. If too dry, slowly add some of the reserved pasta water until the sauce is at the consistency you like. (I usually end up using about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the pasta water in total.)

Serve in bowls. Place the shrimp on top. Garnish with the

remaining Parmesan.

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## SHOVEL IT!

There's nothing like a great big Brooklyn snowstorm. We used to be able to count on at least one big dump each season, but now these storms are far more infrequent here and less severe, no doubt due to global warning.

In the old days, I remember for a few wonderful hours, everything stopped as branches were laden with white powder and the streets emptied, creating a welcomed silence. I was mesmerized as the falling snowflakes stacked up on our windowsills, sealing us in our warm, cozy home.



As morning broke, cross-country skiers found their way to Prospect Park before the rush of kids descended with their sleds. Little kids made snow angels as snowballs flew across the fields. Well-dressed snowmen seemed to popup every few feet. Everything was beautiful—until it wasn't.



It wasn't long before the sanitation department plowed the streets, piling gray, dirty snow high against everyone's cars. I feared some of my older neighbors might give themselves heart attacks as they dug their cars out. As I shoveled our busy corner hoping to make a path for people, the sanitation guys seemed to take joy plowing me back in. When I was younger, I used to bat my eyes at them and occasionally they would lift up their shovel while passing, but I guess I've lost my charm with the years.





Maybe if I had bribed them with freshly baked cookies and hot chocolate they would take pity of me. What do you think were my odds of that every happening?