

of flavors: 2 teaspoons hot red pepper flakes, 1/3 cup sugar, 1/4 cup fresh lime juice, 1/4 cup white vinegar, and 3 tablespoons fish sauce. But tasters found even this sauce to be overwhelmingly sweet and spicy.

Reducing the hot red pepper flakes was a step in the right direction, as it allowed the other flavors to come through. Everyone liked garlic, but not too much; there was already a lot of garlic on the chicken. A decrease in the amount of fish sauce was welcomed, reducing the fishy flavor of the sauce but not its salty complexity. I found it best to mix the sauce right after the chicken went into the brine, which gave the flavors time to meld.

Traditionally, gai yang is cut into small pieces and eaten as finger food. But my version was just as good (and a whole lot neater) when served whole with a knife and fork. Is this an Americanized dish? Yes. But its flavors are true to its Thai roots, and its ingredients can be found in most grocery stores.

CHARCOAL-GRILLED THAI-STYLE CHICKEN WITH SPICY SWEET AND SOUR DIPPING SAUCE

SERVES 4

even cooking, the chicken breasts should be a comparable size. The best way to ensure this is to buy 2 whole breasts and split them yourself (see page 47). If you prefer to skip this step, try to purchase split bone-in, skin-on breasts that weigh about 12 ounces each.

Chicken and Brine

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup table salt
- 4 split bone-in, skin-on chicken breasts, about 12 ounces each (see note above)
- Disposable aluminum roasting pan

Dipping Sauce

- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1/4 cup juice from 2 to 3 limes
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 3 small garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (1 1/2 teaspoons)
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Rub

- 2/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 1/4 cup juice from 2 to 3 limes
- 12 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1/4 cup)
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons ground coriander
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus more for grill grate

1. **TO BRINE CHICKEN:** Dissolve sugar and salt in 2 quarts cold water in large container or

bowl; submerge chicken in brine and refrigerate at least 30 minutes but not longer than 1 hour. Rinse chicken and pat dry with paper towels.

2. **FOR DIPPING SAUCE:** Whisk ingredients together in small bowl until sugar dissolves. Let stand 1 hour at room temperature to allow flavors to meld.

3. **TO MAKE AND APPLY RUB:** Combine all rub ingredients in small bowl. Slide fingers between chicken skin and meat to loosen skin, taking care not to detach skin. Rub about 2 tablespoons mixture under skin of each breast. Thoroughly rub even layer of mixture onto all exterior surfaces, including bottom and sides. Place chicken in medium bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate while preparing grill.

4. **TO GRILL CHICKEN:** Light large chimney starter filled with charcoal (6 quarts, about 100 briquettes) and burn until all charcoal is covered with layer of fine gray ash, about 20 minutes. Empty coals into grill; build modified two-level fire by arranging all coals in even layer in one half of grill. Position cooking grate over coals, cover grill, and heat until grate is hot, about 5 minutes. Grill is ready when it is medium-hot. (See how to gauge heat level on page 31.)

5. Use grill brush to scrape cooking grate clean. Using tongs, dip wad of paper towels in vegetable oil and wipe cooking grate. Place chicken, skin side down, on hotter side of grill; cook until browned, about 3 minutes. Using tongs, flip chicken breasts and cook until browned on second side, about 3 minutes longer. Move chicken, skin side up, to cool side of grill and cover with disposable pan; continue to cook until instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of breast (not touching bone) registers 160 degrees, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer chicken to platter; let rest 10 minutes. Serve, passing dipping sauce separately.

GAS-GRILLED THAI-STYLE CHICKEN WITH SPICY SWEET AND SOUR DIPPING SAUCE

1. Follow recipe for Charcoal-Grilled Thai-Style Chicken through step 3.

2. Turn all burners to high, close lid, and heat until grill is very hot, about 15 minutes. Scrape cooking grate clean with grill brush; using long-handled grill tongs, lightly dip wad of paper towels in vegetable oil and wipe grate. Turn all but 1 burner to low. Place chicken, skin side down, on hotter side of grill; cook until browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Using tongs, flip chicken breasts and cook until browned on second side, 4 to 5 minutes longer. Move chicken, skin side up, to cool side of grill and close lid; cook until instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of breast (not touching bone) registers 160 degrees, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer chicken to serving platter; let rest 10 minutes. Serve, passing dipping sauce separately.

EQUIPMENT TESTING:

Portable Gas Grills

There are dozens of portable gas grills on the market, ranging from the inexpensive (about \$50) to the truly outrageous (\$1,000 or more, for die-hard tailgaters). We set our ceiling at \$200 and gathered five models to test. Our selection included two models that are truly portable and three that are not—large, heavy, and designed to be deposited directly from the back of the SUV onto the beach. We quickly learned that the smaller models, though conveniently portable, offered little else of value.

Both the Weber Go-Anywhere Gas Grill and the Toolbox Gas Grill have little heat output and flimsy grill grates. The steaks from these grills featured paltry, anemic grill marks and took more than three times as long to cook as they would have on a traditional sedentary gas grill.

The three largest models worked best. They all featured large, cast-iron grilling surfaces (which added to their heft and cooking ability), high heat output, and sturdy design. Even the strongest among us, however, found it difficult to carry these grills more than a few feet. Still, if you're looking for a grill to bring to the beach (that is, drive to the beach), we recommend the reasonably priced Thermos Grill2Go. —K.F.

BEST BUY

➤ THERMOS Grill2Go \$149.99

Heats evenly and includes a handy flat griddle (perfect for pancakes).



RECOMMENDED

➤ WEBER Q Portable Propane Gas Grill \$169.99

The heaviest of the lot but also offers the most even heating.



➤ COLEMAN Road Trip Sport Grill \$169.99

Gets very hot very fast, but the ceramic-coated grill grate is delicate—no grill brush allowed.



NOT RECOMMENDED

➤ WEBER Go-Anywhere Gas Grill \$54.95

Very easy to carry, but where's the heat?



➤ TOOLBOX Gas Grill \$89.00

Cute concept but weak output.

