

Lo Mein to Laksa

by Akira Ohiso



Japanese Chinese Kosher Chicken



Recipe:

- 2 kosher chicken breasts cut into piece
- 2 sliced green peppers
- 1 cup of Duck Sauce
- 1 egg beaten
- 1 cup of cornstarch
- 1/4 cup of olive oil
- 1/8 cup soy sauce
- 1/8 cup rice vinegar
- 5 splashes of sesame seed oil
- 2 tablespoons minced or grated ginger
- 2 cloves of chopped garlic
- 2 diced scallions

Sauce: In bowl add 1 cup of duck sauce, 1/8 cup of soy sauce, 1/8 cup of rice vinegar, 5 splashes of sesame seed oil and stir. Set aside.

Beat egg in bowl and place cube chicken in bowl. Add 1 cup of cornstarch to a large zip lock bag, add chicken, and shake bag until chicken is coated. Place about an inch vegetable oil in deep pot and deep fry chicken until crunchy. Drain and set aside.

In a deep frying pan add garlic and ginger to a 1/4 cup of olive oil. Add sliced green peppers and stir-fry for one minute. Add chicken and lightly stir. Add sauce and stir. When ready to serve sprinkle two diced scallions on top of plated dish.

Serve over Japanese rice with a cold beer.

As a child, I loved watching my Japanese father cook. He had a quiet and meticulous way of preparing each step. The vegetables were cut just so. He sharpened his knife and warned me not to touch. He prepped all components of the recipe before he turned on the stove. For this dish, timing is everything. A stir-fry cannot be overcooked or vegetables get soggy. The actually cooking time is very short in comparison to the prep time.

I learned this recipe by watching my father cook countless times. He cooked many Japanese dishes, but also cooked Chinese food as well. I found this interesting. I learned that prior to the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty of 1871, the Chinese were banned from entering Japan. However, many influential Westerners began bringing legally protected Chinese people to Japan in the mid-1800s to work as servants, clerks, and business translators. Chinese food thus became part of Japanese culture and cuisine.

My father was a man of few words, but when he cooked he didn't need to speak because he translated passion

and love. He wanted me to eat well. He has a survivor's mentality, growing up in World War II Japan, where food was scarce. He was often hungry. Food means life to my father.

My father doesn't follow a recipe. He cooks intuitively like many immigrants. If he doesn't have an ingredient he substitutes. He makes do with what he has. As an adult in America, my father has had all the ingredients he needs, but a good meal still represents safety and freedom to him.

I sometimes take this for granted. My "Chinese Chicken" has been passed down to my three children. They lean on the cutting board, they asked many questions and I tell them it is "Ojichan's recipe." "Ojichan" means "Zaydie" in Japanese. I also tell them not to touch the knife. Tradition. The only difference – kosher chicken. ♪



Akira Ohiso is a writer who published his first book *Surviving* in 2008. He lives in the Catskills with his wife and three children.

His work appeared in *Asian Jewish Life* in the Summer 2010 issue, "The Endless Jewish Audience - A Japanese Jewish Convert Speaks", and in the September 2011 (Issue 7) in "Akira Ohiso on Surviving".