

This recipe has a couple of components drawing on flavours from all over but staying within the Asian taste palette. The cabbage salad was inspired by a Yotam Ottolenghi recipe. The caramel sauce for the chicken is a taste memory from a fish dish we ate in Vietnam, hence the name.

heavenly hanoi chicken salad

Serves 6

Marinade:

¼ cup fresh lemon juice
 ½ cup olive oil
 1 teaspoon chopped garlic
 3 sprigs thyme
 ½ teaspoon salt
 pinch of pepper

6 free-range chicken breasts
 (around 130g each)

Caramel sauce:

1 cup brown sugar
 1 tablespoon fish sauce
 1½ cups chicken stock
 ¼ teaspoon chopped chilli
 ½ tablespoon lemon juice
 2 teaspoons grated ginger
 1½ tablespoons finely
 chopped lemon grass

Vinaigrette:

3 tablespoons lemon juice
 2 tablespoons soy sauce
 2 tablespoons sesame oil
 2 tablespoons maple syrup
 2 teaspoons grated ginger
 ½ cup vegetable oil
 1 teaspoon fish sauce
 pinch of chilli flakes

Salad:

2 cups sliced red cabbage
 2 cups sliced white cabbage
 1 handful rocket
 2 clementines (or naartjies),
 segmented
 1 mango, cut into strips
 1 can litchis, halved
 ¼ cup mint leaves
 ¼ cup coriander leaves
 ½ cup cashews, toasted
 (see page 210)
 salt and pepper

1. Whisk the marinade ingredients together in a mixing bowl.
2. Cut the chicken breasts on the diagonal into 3cm pieces.
3. Toss the chicken with the marinade (in a plastic container with a lid) and marinate for at least 2 hours in the fridge.
4. Preheat a saucepan with a wide bottom over low to medium heat. Add the sugar in an even layer and allow to melt without stirring. Keep the heat on low so that the sugar melts evenly.
5. As soon as most of it is melted, give it a good stir and cook gently until it turns a deep amber shade. (The colour changes quite quickly once it gets to this stage, so engage all your senses.)
6. Combine the rest of the sauce ingredients in a measuring jug.
7. As soon as the desired colour of the sugar is reached, very carefully add the stock mixture to the caramel. Be careful as the boiling hot sugar will bubble up when you add liquid to it.
8. Cook for another 8–10 minutes until it has a syrupy consistency.
9. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.
10. Whisk all the ingredients for the vinaigrette together.
11. Place the cabbage and the rest of the salad ingredients into a bowl, add enough vinaigrette to moisten all of it, and toss together. Let it sit for a few minutes, then season to taste.
12. Thread 4–5 marinated chicken pieces onto a metal or bamboo skewer. Repeat to make six kebabs.
13. Fire up your braai (or turn your oven on grill) and grill the kebabs. Brush them with caramel sauce halfway through, and another couple of times just before serving. The cooking should take about 4 minutes on each side.
14. Serve with the salad (on a big platter or as individual portions) and a chunk of crusty bread (chapter 5) to mop up the juices.

The caramel sauce can be made in a bigger quantity and stored in a jar – it's simply delightful on pork, fish and chicken.