

Spicy Black Pepper Chicken

Spicy Black Pepper Chicken is a stir-fry that delivers bold flavor with every bite. Juicy chicken pieces are paired with crisp vegetables and tossed in a sauce that is both savory and fiery, thanks to freshly ground black pepper and a touch of sweetness. This dish captures the essence of Chinese takeout while being healthier and fresher when made at home. Best of all, it comes together quickly, making it perfect for weeknights. In this article, we'll explore ingredients, cooking steps, flavor variations, and tips to master this irresistible stir-fry.

Why Spicy Black Pepper Chicken Is a Must-Try

Flavor that Pops

Black pepper is the star of this recipe, adding warmth and spice that complements tender chicken and sweet vegetables. Unlike dishes that rely solely on chili heat, black pepper delivers a more complex flavor, blending with soy sauce, garlic, and ginger to create a sauce that's both rich and layered. The result is a dish that excites the palate without overwhelming it.

Takeout Taste at Home

This recipe is also loved for its ability to rival restaurant takeout. Quick marinades keep the chicken tender, while high-heat stir-frying ensures vegetables remain crisp. With pantry staples like soy sauce, broth, and cornstarch, you can create a glossy, savory sauce that coats every bite. The homemade version is fresher, lighter, and customizable, saving money while delivering restaurant-quality flavor.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [30 minutes](#)
- Yield: [4 servings 1x](#)

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Description

Spicy Black Pepper Chicken is a quick stir-fry featuring juicy chicken, crisp vegetables, and a bold, peppery sauce that rivals your favorite takeout.

Ingredients

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Scale

- ☐ 1 lb chicken breasts or thighs, sliced thin
- ☐ 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- ☐ 1 tbsp Shaoxing wine (or dry sherry)
- ☐ 1 tbsp cornstarch
- ☐ 1/2 cup chicken broth
- ☐ 2 tbsp light soy sauce
- ☐ 2 tbsp Shaoxing wine (or dry sherry)
- ☐ 2 tsp dark soy sauce
- ☐ 1 tbsp cornstarch
- ☐ 1 1/2 tbsp sugar
- ☐ 2 tsp coarsely ground black pepper
- ☐ 1/8 tsp salt
- ☐ 2 tbsp peanut oil (or vegetable oil)
- ☐ 1 tbsp minced ginger
- ☐ 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ☐ 1/2 white onion, chopped
- ☐ 2 bell peppers, chopped

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Instructions

1. Marinate chicken with soy sauce, wine, and cornstarch for 10–15 minutes.
2. Mix sauce ingredients in a bowl and set aside.
3. Heat 1 tbsp oil in skillet. Cook chicken until browned but not fully done. Remove.
4. Add remaining oil, ginger, and garlic. Stir until fragrant.
5. Add onion and peppers, stir-fry 20 seconds.
6. Pour sauce into skillet. Stir until thickened.
7. Return chicken, toss to coat in sauce.
8. Serve hot over rice or noodles.

Notes

For a gluten-free version, use tamari instead of soy sauce and dry sherry instead of Shaoxing wine.

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Cook Time: 15 minutes
- Category: Dinner
- Method: Stir-Fry
- Cuisine: Chinese

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 portion
- **Calories:** 269
- **Sugar:** 9.4g
- **Sodium:** 674mg
- **Fat:** 10g
- **Saturated Fat:** 1.2g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 8g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 17.8g
- **Fiber:** 1.3g
- **Protein:** 26.1g
- **Cholesterol:** 73mg

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Ingredients that Build the Dish

Core Staples

The essential ingredients include chicken breasts or thighs, soy sauce, Shaoxing wine (or dry sherry), cornstarch, chicken broth, sugar, black pepper, onions, garlic, and bell peppers. Each ingredient contributes to the dish's balance: soy sauce provides umami, sugar offsets the spice, and cornstarch thickens the sauce while tenderizing the chicken. The bell peppers and onions add freshness and crunch to contrast the savory richness.

Substitutions and Adjustments

This recipe is flexible and adapts easily to what you have in your kitchen. For a gluten-free version, replace soy sauce with tamari. If Shaoxing wine is unavailable, dry sherry or even apple cider vinegar works. Use peanut oil for authentic flavor or substitute vegetable oil. Swap bell peppers with broccoli, snap peas, or zucchini for a different texture. These swaps let you customize the dish without losing its signature taste.

Step-by-Step Cooking Method

Preparing the Chicken

Start by slicing chicken into thin strips and marinating it with soy sauce, Shaoxing wine, and cornstarch. This short marinade keeps the chicken juicy and flavorful. Cook it quickly in a hot skillet with oil, spreading the pieces out for even browning. The goal is to sear the outside while keeping the inside tender, ensuring the chicken stays succulent once combined with the sauce.

Making the Sauce and Vegetables

Next, stir-fry ginger and garlic until fragrant, then add onions and bell peppers for crunch and sweetness. Mix the sauce ingredients in a bowl—soy sauce, broth, wine, sugar, and lots of black pepper—and pour into the skillet. The cornstarch thickens the sauce into a glossy coating that clings to the chicken and vegetables. Toss everything together until evenly coated, then serve hot.

Serving Suggestions

Traditional Pairings

Spicy Black Pepper Chicken pairs perfectly with jasmine rice, which absorbs the bold sauce and balances the spice. Steamed broccoli, bok choy, or green beans are excellent sides, adding color and freshness. For a takeout-inspired dinner, serve it with fried rice or chow mein. These simple pairings create a satisfying, restaurant-style meal at home.

Creative Ideas

This recipe also lends itself to creative serving. Wrap the stir-fry in lettuce cups for a light, low-carb option. Spoon it over noodles for a hearty, comforting bowl. For meal prep, pack it with rice and steamed vegetables into lunch boxes—it reheats beautifully. If you're interested in trying another flavorful chicken recipe, check out [Chicken Christopher at Home](#), which offers a rich, buttery twist on chicken dinners.

Flavor Variations

Turning Up the Heat

If you love spice, enhance the dish with crushed red pepper flakes or fresh chili slices. You can also use smoked black pepper for a deeper, bolder flavor. Adding a splash of hot sauce or chili oil to the sauce introduces extra heat, making the dish fiery while maintaining its savory core.

Milder Alternatives

For those who prefer a gentler version, reduce the amount of black pepper and balance it with an extra teaspoon of sugar or a splash of honey. This creates a sweeter, more family-friendly flavor while still keeping the essence of the dish intact. Adjusting the heat makes it versatile for households with different spice preferences.

Storage and Meal Prep Tips

Refrigerating Leftovers

Spicy Black Pepper Chicken stores well for busy weeks. Place leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to four days. To reheat, use a skillet with a splash of water or broth to loosen the sauce. This method ensures the chicken stays tender and the vegetables remain crisp, unlike microwaving which can soften them too much.

Freezer-Friendly Option

To freeze, cook the chicken and vegetables separately and store them with the sauce in containers. Reheat on the stove and combine fresh for the best texture. Frozen portions keep for up to two months, making it an excellent option for quick weeknight dinners without sacrificing flavor.

Why Families Love It

A Balanced Dish

This recipe is appealing because it balances spicy, savory, and slightly sweet flavors. The vibrant vegetables add freshness, while the chicken provides protein, making it a well-rounded dish. It satisfies cravings for takeout but with cleaner, fresher ingredients that you can control.

Perfect for Sharing

Spicy Black Pepper Chicken is also ideal for family dinners or entertaining. It scales up easily for larger portions and serves beautifully family-style from a single skillet. Its colorful presentation and bold flavors make it a dish that draws people in, ensuring there's rarely a bite left at the end of the meal.

FAQ

Can I make this dish without cornstarch?

Yes, you can skip cornstarch, but the sauce won't thicken as much. Use arrowroot powder as an alternative for similar results.

Do I have to use peanut oil?

No, vegetable or avocado oil works fine. Peanut oil adds authenticity, but any neutral oil will do for stir-frying.

How spicy is it?

The black pepper adds warmth rather than intense chili heat. You can adjust the spice by adding or reducing pepper, sugar, or additional chili.

Is this dish kid-friendly?

Yes, if you reduce the amount of black pepper slightly. The sweet and savory sauce makes it approachable even for younger palates.

Conclusion

Spicy Black Pepper Chicken is a flavorful, quick stir-fry that delivers restaurant-quality taste in under 30 minutes. With tender chicken, crisp vegetables, and a peppery sauce, it's a dish that satisfies cravings while staying simple to make. Whether served over rice, noodles, or lettuce wraps, it's versatile enough for family dinners, meal prep, or entertaining. Once you try it, this bold and comforting dish will become a staple in your kitchen, proving that homemade takeout can be even better than the original.

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