

## “Copycat” Chicken Lettuce Wraps – Comfort du Jour

After a single visit to P.F. Chang’s, I set out to find my own way to make these healthful, tasty wraps at home. My “copycat” version is decidedly lower in sodium, swaps out boring iceberg in favor of crunchy romaine, with addition of red bell pepper (did you know they are higher in vitamin C than oranges?), and brown rice rather than bland, deep-fried rice noodles.

These wraps are delicious, the heat is adjustable (either way) to taste, and my husband and I enjoy them so much, that lettuce wraps are now in our regular menu rotation. All because of lunch at a chain restaurant. If you’ve been nervous to try an Asian recipe at home, skip to the end and be introduced to the key ingredients of this easy-to-make flavorful dish.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. lean ground chicken\* (see notes below)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 small red bell pepper, chopped
- 3 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely minced
- 1/2 can sliced water chestnuts, drained and diced small\*

### SAUCE

- 4 Tbsp. hoisin sauce (low sodium)
- 2 Tbsp. rice wine vinegar (not the “seasoned” variety, which has extra salt)
- 2 Tbsp. low sodium soy sauce (or tamari, which is even lower)
- 1 Tbsp. sriracha sauce
- 1 Tbsp. chili-garlic sauce

### FOR SERVING

- 2 tsp. toasted sesame oil\*
- Fresh romaine heart, trimmed and prepped\*
- Hot cooked brown jasmine rice
- 3 scallions (green onions), trimmed and thinly sliced
- Sesame seeds

### NOTES:

Want to make it vegan? Swap chicken for firm cubed tofu (patted very dry) and a handful of chopped cashews. Delicious!

Intentionally, salt is not listed as an ingredient. The components of the sauce provide enough for this dish.

Most supermarkets sell water chestnuts in their Asian section, and sometimes they are available in a diced form, but the pieces are almost as large as sugar cubes. I prefer the slices, because it’s easier to cut the slices into a smaller dice.

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A little toasted sesame oil goes a long way, so don't be tempted to use more of this. Additionally, you don't want to cook in this pungent oil because its low smoke point will cause it to scorch or catch fire.

To prep the romaine heart, trim the stem end and rinse the individual leaves under cold running water. Shake off excess water, then wrap them up in paper towels and place the bundle in the fridge until it's time to serve. The chilly air will keep them crisp, and the towels will absorb lingering moisture.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add canola oil, then brown the ground chicken together with the garlic and fresh ginger. Add the chopped yellow onions and red bell pepper and sauté until the vegetables are soft. Add the chopped water chestnuts and heat through.

In a measuring cup with a pour spout, combine the hoisin sauce, soy, sriracha, chili-garlic sauce and rice wine vinegar. Whisk to combine, adjust heat to taste.

Pour the sauce combination over the chicken and stir to coat evenly. Just before serving, drizzle in the toasted sesame oil and stir to combine.

You could probably pre-fill the lettuce leaves with the chicken mixture for serving, but we enjoy the DIY aspect of serving it at the table. Arrange the lettuce leaves on a plate, with the brown rice in one bowl and the meat mixture in another, sprinkled with sliced scallions and sesame seeds.

### OVERWHELMED WITH ALL THE DIFFERENT SAUCES? HERE'S A QUICK BREAKDOWN TO HELP YOU GET TO KNOW THESE INGREDIENTS.

#### **What is in hoisin sauce?**

Hoisin sauce is a sweet, sticky sauce, made from fermented soy beans and garlic, and flavored with aromatic spices such as fennel, cinnamon and star anise. It is very common in Chinese and Thai dishes, used as a cooking ingredient but also sometimes as a dipping sauce. Think of it as an Eastern-world barbecue sauce. It's delicious!

#### **What is tamari?**

Tamari is a wheat-free alternative to traditional soy sauce. The organic, low-sodium versions are often significantly lower than the low-sodium soy sauces, but the flavor is nearly identical. Because it's wheat-free, it's suitable for gluten-free diets—but for this recipe, be sure to check every other ingredient label for hidden sources of gluten if this is a concern for you or someone you're feeding.

#### **What is sriracha?**

Sriracha is an Asian-style condiment, made from hot peppers, vinegar, salt and a bit of sugar. It adds plenty of heat to this recipe but is balanced with the tang of the vinegar. Adjust this one to suit your taste but consider using at least 1 teaspoon to get the chili flavor that makes this dish special.

#### **What's different about chili-garlic sauce?**

Chili-garlic sauce is similar in flavor to sriracha, but it's a chunkier sauce that adds texture and a *lot* of savory heat, with underlying notes of garlic but no sugar and not a lot of extra salt. If you love spicy food, double it (as I often do); if you aren't into as much heat, use half or skip it altogether.