

The Rice Box | Houston, Texas

Kung Pao Chicken

Serves 4

For years Houstonians were used to ordering Chinese food and having it delivered, but Arthur Peterson and John Wentworth have taken that idea to a whole new level. With their rolling truck Rice Box, they bring the entire restaurant to you! There are a few examples of fusion-esque flair, but for the most part theirs is classic old-school Chinese food served up American style.

Kung Pao Chicken is a dish we've all had a thousand times before, but these guys do it up with a few slight differences. First, they use dark thigh meat, which westerners find more flavorful but is contrary to your average Chinese joint. Second, substituting jasmine rice for the traditional white rice stands true to the truck's motto: "Powered by rice!"

2 lb (900 g) boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) cubes

2 tbsp (30 mL) soy sauce

4 tbsp (60 mL) sesame oil

1 tbsp (15 mL) minced ginger

1 tbsp (15 mL) minced garlic

10 bird's eye chilies (or to taste)

2 cups (500 mL) bean sprouts

1 cup (250 mL) chopped celery

½ cup (125 mL) roasted peanuts

Steamed jasmine rice for serving

Kung Pao Sauce

¼ cup (60 mL) sugar

¼ cup (60 mL) water

¼ cup (60 mL) chicken stock

¼ cup (60 mL) soy sauce

2 tbsp (30 mL) rice vinegar

2 tbsp (30 mL) rice wine

1 tbsp (15 mL) hot pepper flakes

1 tbsp (15 mL) cornstarch dissolved in 1 tbsp (15 mL) water

In a bowl, combine chicken with soy sauce and 2 tbsp (30 mL) of the sesame oil; mix well to coat chicken thoroughly. Marinate, covered and refrigerated, for 2 hours.

Meanwhile, make the kung pao sauce. In a small saucepan, bring sugar and water to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Boil for 1 minute. Stir in chicken stock, soy sauce, rice vinegar, rice wine, and hot pepper flakes. Bring to a boil; whisk in cornstarch mixture to thicken sauce. Remove from heat.

In a wok or large, deep skillet, heat remaining 2 tbsp (30 mL) sesame oil over low heat. Add ginger, garlic, and chilies; cook, stirring, until chillies are sizzling. Increase heat to medium-high and add chicken. Cook, stirring, until chicken is light brown and almost cooked through, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in bean sprouts, celery, and peanuts. Stir in kung pao sauce, stirring until chicken is coated and cooked through. Serve on a bed of rice.