

Thai Chicken Salad “Laab Kai”

By Brian Copeland, RKC

Healthy and bursting with flavor

Called "Laab Kai" in Thai, this dish bursts with flavor. Heat from Thai chilies, sour from lime juice and salty from fish sauce. It is like a circus on your tongue and it is low in fat and carbs, high in protein and healthy as heck!



While this is one of my favorite dishes to get at a Thai restaurant, I warn you if you are not adventurous with food or have never eaten Thai food you may not be used to this flavor at first.

Also in my quest to find a recipe for this I encountered many different ways to make it; the one I am providing is a pretty easy method but you may have to go to an Asian market to get some of the ingredients.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb of ground chicken (beef or pork can be used as well)
- 1/2 cup of lime juice
- 3 tablespoons of fish sauce (nam pla)
- 1 teaspoon of galangal powder (kha pon)
- 4 - 5 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1 - 2 cloves of garlic, thinly sliced
- 3 - 4 green onions/scallions/spring onions, chopped
- Small handful of fresh torn cilantro, big pieces - use less if you are not a cilantro freak like me
- *Optional* - 2 tablespoons ground roasted sticky rice (separate instructions below)
- 1 - 5 teaspoons of ground red Thai chili peppers (you can substitute fresh Thai chilies chopped fine if desired)
- 15 mint leaves, torn - some very fine and some in larger pieces like halves
- 1/2 teaspoon of sugar

Making the Ground Roasted Sticky Rice:

Get glutinous sticky rice from an Asian store. Heat a skillet over medium to medium-high heat and when it's hot enough, add the raw uncooked rice grains. Stir from time to time. Some of the rice may pop like popcorn. Keep toasting till the grains turn golden brown. Remove from heat and set aside to cool. Place into a mortar and grind with a pestle. Use a twisting action instead of a pounding action unless you want to pick up lots of grains of rice off of your kitchen floor. You can also use a coffee grinder instead of the mortar and pestle. Don't grind it to dust, leave it kind of rough.

Directions:

- Slice the shallots, garlic and green onion and set aside
- Mix the lime juice, fish sauce, galangal powder, sugar and Thai chili pepper together in a bowl and set aside
- Brown the meat in a skillet at medium heat until 'almost' cooked through
- Dump the grease out and put the meat back on medium heat
- Add the shallots, garlic, green onion and liquid mix
- Once the meat is done remove from the skillet and add ground rice, torn cilantro leaves and mint leaves
- Mix it all together so the flavors blend

Tips:

- Adjust the heat with more or less Thai chili powder or peppers
- Thais usually serve this chilled or room temperature over some cooked warm sticky rice and garnished with string beans, tomato wedges, sliced cabbage or spinach and basil leaves
- If you like more liquid (it soaks into the rice and tastes great) then you may need to make a little more sauce than this recipe calls for
- Feel free to eat this without rice to keep starches low
- I use about a 1/2 tablespoon less fish sauce than most recipes call for and like to use more lime juice and cilantro than most. Adjust for your tastes.
- You can make this with ground beef or pork as well

Eating healthy doesn't have to mean no flavor!

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Brian Copeland is a Denver, Colorado based strength and conditioning coach, personal trainer and Certified Russian Kettlebell Instructor. Brian specializes in functional strength and athletic training, conditioning for martial artists, kettlebell lifting, and general fitness. Brian has also rehabilitated several severe lower back injuries, including his own, through the use of “proper” strength and flexibility training.

Brian is available for private and group lessons and personalized program design. If you are tired of not seeing results contact Brian, he will design a personalized program based on YOUR goals, YOUR time and YOUR lifestyle.

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