

Thai Holy Basil Wild Turkey Stir-Fry

By David Schmetterling | Preparation time: 20 minutes | Cooking time: 25 minutes | Serves: 3



CHICKEN STIR-FRY BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Thai Basil Chicken, known as *Pad Kra Pao Gai* (*pad*=fried, *kra pao*=holy basil, *gai*=chicken) is one of the most common dishes in Thailand. Like so many Thai recipes, the ingredients are few and the flavors are bold. I love cooking Thai food with wild game because the flavors are bright and distinct. Meals come together quickly, and it's easy to adjust the heat to your heart's content.

Personally, I love spicy-hot food, but if you don't, you can easily tone down the heat in this dish.

I like using the white breast meat from a wild Merriam's turkey or ringneck pheasant. The white meat does not compete with or overpower the flavors of the other ingredients. Also, since it is cooked on high heat and quickly, you want to avoid the tougher legs or thighs, which need longer cooking to break down the tissue.

Each ingredient is critical and none more so than the holy basil, the most pronounced flavor of this dish. Though you can definitely substitute Thai sweet basil or Italian basil, the dish is more authentic if you can find Thai holy basil, which adds a special bright, peppery flavor that only this variety provides. Look for it in Asian food sections of grocery stores, or at farmer's markets. I grow the plant in my backyard greenhouse in Missoula.

This dish is commonly served with a fried egg served atop a bed of rice. I learned to make this dish, including the technique for frying an egg, in northern Thailand. As in many Southeast Asian countries, rice is the main course in Thailand. There, the word "rice" is synonymous with "food" or "meal." Everything else, including this stir-fry, is just an accompaniment. ■

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While other basil will work, the bright, peppery flavor of holy basil makes this dish authentically Thai.

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INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. wild turkey or pheasant breast, cut into ½- by 2-inch pieces
- 6 cloves of garlic, minced, pressed, or ground
- 4-10 Thai or other hot chilies, minced or ground
- 6 T. vegetable oil, divided
- 1 T. oyster sauce
- 2 t. soy sauce
- 1 t. brown sugar
- 1 c. (heaping) Thai holy (or other) basil leaves
- 3 eggs, cracked into a small bowl
- Sriracha chili hot sauce

For the rice:

- 1 c. Thai jasmine rice (basmati or long grain will also work)
- 2 c. water
- 1 T. vegetable oil

DIRECTIONS

Step 1: The stir-fry happens quickly, so start by cooking the rice. Use a rice cooker or, as I do, a saucepan: Stir together the oil, water, and rice, cover, and cook over high heat until it boils. Stir, then simmer on low heat, covered, for 23 minutes.

Step 2: While rice is cooking, prepare garlic and Thai chilies: Heat a wok or a large pan over high heat and add 2 T. oil until it shimmers. Add garlic and chilies and stir until garlic is golden brown.

Step 3: Add meat and stir until coated with oil, then add oyster sauce, soy sauce, and brown sugar. Stir until the meat is cooked, but not overcooked. Test by slicing a chunk in half. If it is just a little faded pink in the middle, it is done. The meat will continue cooking for a few minutes off-heat.

Step 4: Remove from heat, stir in the basil leaves, and transfer the stir-fry to a serving plate.

Step 5: Without cleaning the pan, add 4 T. oil and heat over high heat.

Step 6: Slide the eggs into the oil. Spoon the hot oil on top of each egg so they fry on both sides, 2-3 minutes. Move the pan around to make sure the eggs don't stick. With a slotted spoon, transfer the eggs to a paper towel to soak up excess oil.

Step 7: Place one egg atop a mound of cooked rice on each serving dish. Drizzle the eggs with Sriracha as desired. Serve stir-fry next to the mounds of rice. ■