General Tso’s Pheasant

By Tom Dickson

Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 40-45 minutes
Serves 2-4

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb. pheasant or mountain grouse breasts (or skinless chicken breasts or thighs), sliced into 1-inch cubes
1 1/2 c. cornstarch
1/2 t. salt
1/2 t. freshly ground black pepper
3 c. vegetable oil for frying, plus 1 T. for stir-frying
1/4 t. dried chili flakes
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 t. white sesame seeds, for garnish
Scallions, thinly sliced, for garnish

MARINADE

1 T. soy sauce
1 T. white wine, vermouth, or dry sherry
2 egg whites

SAUCE

1/2 c. chicken stock or water
3 T. tomato paste
2 T. soy sauce
2 T. rice wine vinegar or white vinegar
2 t. hoisin sauce
2 t. chili paste
(3ambal Oelek is a common brand)
2 t. sesame oil
2 T. sugar
2 t. cornstarch

DIRECTIONS

Marinade: In a large bowl, combine soy sauce, white wine (or vermouth or sherry), and egg whites. Coat the meat cubes in the marinade mixture and let sit for 10 minutes.

Sauce: In a small bowl, combine chicken stock, tomato paste, soy sauce, vinegar, hoisin sauce, chili paste, sesame oil, sugar, and 2 t. cornstarch. Stir until sugar and cornstarch dissolve. Set aside.

Meat: In another large bowl, toss the 1 1/2 c. cornstarch with the salt and pepper. Coat the marinated meat in the cornstarch and shake off excess before frying.

Cooking: Heat 3 c. of oil in a deep pot until it reaches 350°F. Working in 2 or 3 batches, add the first batch of cubes and fry until golden brown on the outside and cooked through, about 4 to 5 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Heat a wok or skillet over medium-high heat and add 1 T. of oil. Add chili flakes and garlic and stir until just fragrant, about 20 seconds. Pour in sauce mixture and stir until thickened, about 1 to 2 minutes.

Add meat to wok or skillet, stir well to coat with sauce, and transfer to a serving dish. Garnish with sesame seeds and sliced scallions. Serve with cooked white rice and steamed broccoli or other vegetables.

—Tom Dickson is the editor of Montana Outdoors.