



When food means something special . . .

"Ohio Chicken" Revisited

You might be asking, Ohio Chicken? Well, stay here with me as you are about to find out! In the late '80s, with our eldest daughter in tow—high school age at that time—we made our annual August visit to see our friends in Minnesota. We always enjoyed that mid-western state's late summer.

On that particular long weekend there was plenty of grillin'-n-chillin' to go along with the endless hours hanging out at the pool, as well as a dip in one or more of the local Minnesota lakes. A relaxing time indeed!

We also met another couple who hailed from Ohio, friends of our friends as I understood it.

At one of our BBQ dinners I introduced a chicken dish featuring a marinade that, when grilled, imparted a sweet-savory glaze to the chicken. As I recall, that chicken was enjoyed by all of us, but most especially by the couple from Ohio.

They began asking a lot of questions about the marinade—what were the ingredients, how was it prepared, how long does the chicken need to marinate, does it have to be grilled, or can it be prepared on the stovetop or in the oven, and on and on—you get the picture.

Naturally I was curious about why they had so many probing questions until I learned that back in Ohio this couple owned a family-style restaurant and wanted to feature the chicken dish as a signature menu offering and naming it after the restaurant.

Not so fast!

I pushed back just a little, annoyed about Mr. and Mrs. Ohio thinking they could take credit for the recipe, profit off of it by featuring it at their restaurant without some form of credit for me, be it branding, monetary, or both.

To make this long story short, I did not share my recipe and recommended that since they had the means of a professional restaurant kitchen, they should try and figure it out for themselves. Needless to say, they were insulted and for all I know, sulked all the way back to Ohio.

My daughter thought the whole episode was amusing and came up with the name “Ohio Chicken” for the recipe and marinade.

For the last forty years or so, that recipe has been filed away in the archives of our family culinary history. Until now!

On a recent visit by my daughter and grandson, she asked me about the recipe after she tried to recreate it at home for a gathering she was hosting.

Apparently it was more than amusing for her, and she wondered why she couldn’t find it archived on this blog. Good question!

So for all you chicken lovers, here is how I recall putting together the Ohio Chicken marinade and how I cook that chicken on my wood-fired grill.

Ohio Chicken Marinade

Ingredients

3/4 cups brown sugar (light or dark)

Zest and juice of 4 limes

1/4 cup olive oil

1 generous tablespoon Dijon mustard (smooth or whole grain)

4-inch piece of fresh ginger, not peeled, finely grated

3 to 4 garlic cloves, finely minced

4 to 5 scallions, both white and green parts chopped

1/4 teaspoon chili flakes or to your taste

Salt and pepper to your taste



Mise en place

The Bird

Either skinned and boned chicken or turkey breast meat can be used in this dish. Cut the meat into nugget-size pieces so that they can be placed on skewers, or halve the breasts, gently pound them with the heel of your hand and then once grilled, cut them into bite-size pieces for serving.

Method

Prepare the ingredients as described above.

In a large stainless or glass bowl, add the first four ingredients and thoroughly combine with a whisk to allow the sugar to dissolve. Add the remaining ingredients, again whisking to thoroughly combine.

Place the prepared cut chicken, turkey, or both into the marinade, turning them with a spoon or with your hands until they are thoroughly coated. Make certain the meat is submerged in the marinade.

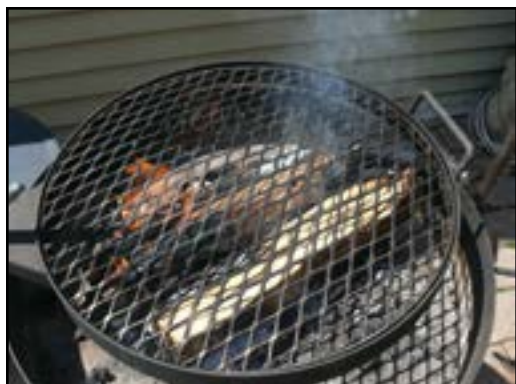


In the marinade

If you are going to grill straightaway, allow the meat to stand in the marinade at room temperature for 2 hours.

If you are planning to grill the following day, place the bowl in the refrigerator overnight and allow it to come back to room temperature before placing the pieces on the preheated grill grates.

The grilling is best done on a hot fire, not a roaring flame. Work rapidly, turning the cut pieces at least once as the marinade begins to caramelize. This marinade can also be used to baste the meat while grilling.



Heating the grill grate



Skewers on the grill

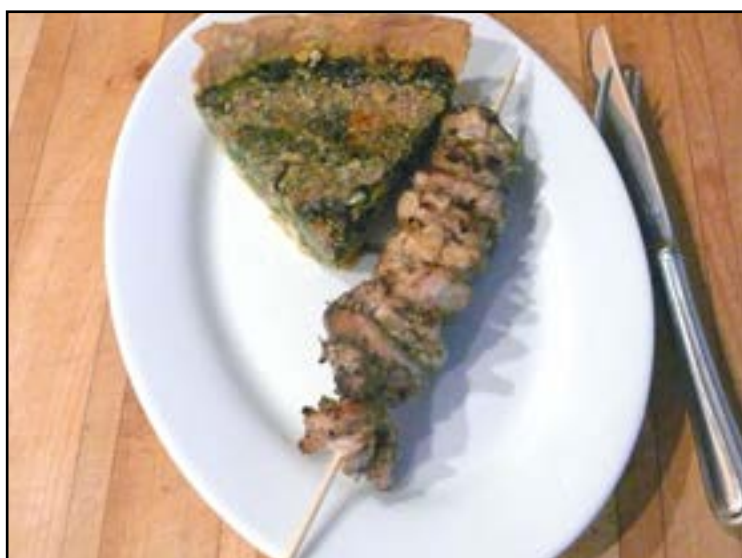


Skewers on the grill, side two



Mound-o-nuggets platter, ready to serve

Plate the grilled chicken and serve along with a couple of your favorite seasonal side dishes and a glass or two of your favorite dry white or rose wine.



Plated

As an alternate take, bone-in chicken thighs oven roasted with some of the marinade in the roasting pan makes for another tasty main dish.

If you should find there is some leftover chicken, add it to a salad, elevating that side dish up to the main event! Think chicken Caesar salad . . . but I'll leave that to you.

So that is my Ohio Chicken story and I'm sticking to it!

The recipe is now archived on this blog, with all the background and proper credits. So Mr. and Mrs. Ohio wherever you might be, if you haven't figured it out I recommend you simply enjoy it as well.



Eat well • Drink well • Be well

There are no new classic recipes . . . the one you prepare is the right one, and it will always be delicious!