

July 2, 2008

Recipe

Jerk Chicken

Time: About 1 1/2 hours, plus at least 12 hours' marinating

2 3 1/2- to 4-pound chickens, quartered, or 8 whole legs, or 5 to 6 pounds bone-in, skin-on thighs

1 large bunch scallions (about 8), white and green parts

2 shallots, peeled and halved

4 to 6 Scotch bonnet chili peppers, stems removed, or habaneros (4 seeded is the right heat)

1 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped

6 garlic cloves, peeled

1/4 cup fresh thyme leaves, or 1 tablespoon dried

2 tablespoons ground allspice, more for sprinkling (Make sure it's fresh)

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons dark brown sugar

1 tablespoon salt, more for sprinkling

1 tablespoon black pepper

1/2 cup vegetable oil (try 1/4 water and 1/4 oil; this is too oily)

1 tablespoon white or apple cider vinegar

Freshly squeezed juice of 2 limes.

1. At least 1 day before cooking, pat chicken dry with paper towels. Combine remaining ingredients in a blender or food processor and grind to a coarse paste. Slather all over chicken, including under skin. Refrigerate 12 to 36 hours. Bring to room temperature before cooking and lightly sprinkle with more salt and ground allspice.

2. Prepare a charcoal grill: Clean and oil grates, and preheat to medium heat using one chimney of charcoal. The temperature can start as high as 300 degrees and go as low as 250. For best results, coals should be at least 12 inches away from chicken. If necessary, push coals to one side of grill to create indirect heat. Add two large handfuls of soaked pimento (allspice) wood sticks and chips (see note) or other aromatic wood chips to coals, then close grill. When thick white smoke billows from grill, place chicken on grate, skin side up, and cover. Let cook undisturbed for 30 to 35 minutes.

3. Uncover grill. Chicken will be golden and mahogany in places. Chicken thighs may already be cooked through. For other cuts, turn chicken over and add more wood chips, and charcoal if needed. Cover and continue cooking, checking and turning every 10 minutes. Jerk chicken is done when skin is burnished brown and chicken juices are

completely clear, with no pink near the bone. For large pieces, this can take up to an hour. Serve hot or warm, with rice and beans.

Variations: If you have no grill, chicken can be baked in oven at 375 degrees for about 45 minutes; the smokiness will be lost but seasoning will be intact. Jerk rub can be used on a boneless leg of lamb or pork roast, to be cooked on a medium-hot grill or in oven.

Note: Pimento wood sticks and chips are available at www.pimentowood.com.

Yield: 8 servings.