Lightened Up Szechuan Chicken

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Ingredients

- 4 chicken breasts
- 2 cups diced onions
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/3 cup all purpose or gluten free flour
- 4 dried red chilis, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 dates
- 3 tbs rice vinegar
- 2 tbs dark soy sauce
- 2 tbs chives, chopped
- 1 1/2 tbs sesame oil
- 1 tbs olive oil

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- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ginger, minced
- 1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Heat up the sesame and olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat
2. In a bowl, combine the flour and salt thoroughly
3. Cut the chicken into small pieces and toss, by hand, in the flour mixture until all the pieces are fully coated
4. Using a pair of tongs, move the chicken into the skillet (it's important to use tongs for this; if you try just pouring the chicken into the skillet, you'll get some excess flour in there too)
5. Move and toss the chicken around with the tongs until they are about 60-70% cooked, the remove from the skillet and set aside
6. Place the onions, garlic, ginger, chopped chives, and sliced dry chilis (with seeds!) in the skillet, spread out and allow to cook, stirring frequently, until the onions turn translucent
7. In the meantime, blend the dates and water together in a food processor until smooth, and set aside
8. Once the onions turn translucent, add in the soy sauce, rice vinegar, and blended dates
9. Increase the heat to high, and allow the sauce to cook until it reduces, stirring every so often (not continuously). Be very patient!
10. Once the color has completely dark, and there's just a little liquid left, turn the heat back to medium, and add in the black pepper
11. Stir in the chicken and toss well for a few minutes until it's completely coated in the sauce, at which point it will also be cooked through
12. Remove from heat and enjoy! (P.s. Goes amazingly well with some (Cauli)fried Rice !)

When I set out to make this Lightened Up Szechuan Chicken, I wanted it to *actually* look, feel, and taste like the regular version. To be honest, I wasn't sure that would be possible without things like cornstarch, canola oil, sugar, and chili garlic. But, guess what- it absolutely is!!

In fact, this Lightened Up Szechuan Chicken passed the ultimate test when, instead of ordering Chinese takeout a couple weeks ago, my husband requested that I make this instead. This chicken with some (Cauli)fried Rice totally totally satisfy the Chinese food craving, but with none of the not so nice effects that often come along with all the oil, sodium, and additives of takeout Chinese!

It's of no surprise either, because this dish has the most wonderful blend of flavors, as well as a delicious rich glaze that's the perfect combination of sweet and spicy. In short, you really can't go wrong with this one and, according to me, any "lightened up" or "healthy" version of anything craving-worthy that truly comes close to a real thing, is an absolute win!

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