

Pineapple Chicken with Kale and Barley

This recipe has come such a long way from its back of the box origins. The coconut oil really adds depth to the flavors here. And how can you go wrong with kale and barley? If you find chilies comforting, do as I do and add one or two to the pan along with the red bell pepper. Cook the barley first, and both components should be ready at the same time.

If you want to transport this dish somewhere, or just store the leftovers, spread the barley out in an oiled casserole dish, and put the chicken on top of it. Cover the whole thing with foil and reheat in a 350° F oven for about 40 minutes. It tastes better the second day.

1 pineapple
2 cups water – and a healthy pinch or two of salt.
1 cup barley
3/4 cup flour
1 tablespoon each salt, red pepper flakes, black pepper and cinnamon
3 tablespoons coconut oil – plus one more tablespoon
2 ½ lbs. chicken pieces
2 onions chopped
1 red pepper, chopped
1 bunch kale, stems and leaves chopped
1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
2 tablespoons plum sauce
2 tablespoons sriracha
3 tablespoons organic soy sauce

Scale the pineapple, and cut in half. Cut the pineapple into chunks; puree half the chunks in the food processor.

Bring a medium pot containing the salt and water to a boil. Add the barley. When the water returns to a boil, cover the pot, and turn the heat down to low. Start checking the barley after a half hour or so – you want it al dente – chewy, but still on the soft side. Sometimes the barley absorbs all the water, just like rice should, and sometimes it doesn't and you have to drain it. Either way, it's always delicious.

Mix the flour with the salt, red pepper, black pepper and cinnamon, in a plastic bag. Wash and dry the chicken pieces. Coat each piece of chicken in the flour mixture, shaking off any excess flour. Heat the coconut oil over medium-high heat, and then add the chicken pieces to the pan, being careful not to crowd the pan. Fry on each side for about 5 minutes (you may need to reduce the flame as you fry), until light golden brown. Set the fried chicken aside, and add the last tablespoon of coconut oil to the pan, over medium heat.

Add the onions, red pepper and kale to the heated pan, and stir occasionally, until just browning, another 5 minutes.

Mix the rice wine vinegar, plum sauce, sriracha, soy sauce, and pureed pineapple together in small bowl. Taste, and adjust seasoning, adding more vinegar, plum sauce or soy, as necessary.

Return the chicken to the pan, and pour the pineapple dressing over the chicken. Bring to a gentle simmer, cover, and reduce the heat to low. Cook for approximately 40 min – you want the sauce to be thick, but not to have entirely evaporated. Serve immediately, over the barley.