

HULI HULI CHICKEN Serves 4 to 6

Split chicken halves are whole chickens that have been split in two through the breastbone. Buy them at the market or see page 31 for instructions on how to prepare them yourself. Lee Kum Kee Tabletop Soy Sauce is our favorite supermarket brand.

CHICKEN

- 2 quarts water
- 2 cups soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 4 split chicken halves (about 8 pounds total) (see note)

GLAZE

- 3 (6-ounce) cans pineapple juice
- ¼ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup ketchup
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons Asian chili-garlic sauce
- 2 cups wood chips (see box at right), soaked for 15 minutes

1. BRINE CHICKEN Combine water and soy sauce in large bowl. Heat oil in large saucepan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add garlic and ginger and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir into soy sauce mixture.

Add chicken and refrigerate, covered, for at least 1 hour or up to 8 hours.

2. MAKE GLAZE Combine pineapple juice, sugar, soy sauce, ketchup, vinegar, garlic, ginger, and chili-garlic sauce in empty saucepan and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer until thick and syrupy (you should have about 1 cup), 20 to 25 minutes.

3. PREP GRILL Seal wood chips in foil packet and cut vent holes in top. Open bottom vents on grill. Light about 75 coals. When coals are covered with fine gray ash, spread evenly over bottom of grill. Arrange foil packet directly on coals. Set cooking grate in place and heat, covered with lid vent open halfway, until wood chips begin to smoke heavily, about 5 minutes. (For gas grill, place foil packet directly on primary burner. Heat all burners on high, covered, until wood chips begin to smoke heavily, about 15 minutes. Turn all burners to medium-low.) Scrape and oil cooking grate.

4. GRILL CHICKEN Remove chicken from brine and pat dry with paper towels. Arrange chicken skin-side up on grill (do not place chicken directly above foil packet). Grill, covered, until chicken is well browned on bottom and meat registers 120 degrees, 25 to 30 minutes. Flip chicken skin-side down and continue to grill, covered, until skin is well browned and crisp and thigh meat registers 170 to 175 degrees, 20 to 25 minutes longer. Transfer chicken to platter, brush with half of glaze, and let rest 5 minutes. Serve, passing remaining glaze at table.

MAKE AHEAD: Both the brine and the glaze can be made ahead and refrigerated for up to 3 days. Do not brine the chicken for longer than 8 hours or it will become too salty.



WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN
Assertive mesquite doesn't always work, but we like it here.

KEY TO BOLD FLAVOR Mesquite

Authentic huli huli chicken is grilled over kiawe wood, from a hardwood tree that is a species of mesquite. The test kitchen finds mesquite wood chips too assertive for long-cooked chicken and pork dishes; after an hour or two, the smoke turns the meat bitter. But we liked them in this comparatively quick recipe. Our Huli Huli Chicken recipe will work with any variety of wood chips, but if you care about authenticity, mesquite is the chip of choice.

The American Table Huli History Lesson

In 1955, Hawaiian chicken farmer Ernie Morgado served some local farmers barbecued chickens he'd made with his mom's homemade teriyaki-style sauce. They liked it so much that Morgado soon found himself in demand. He hired crews and launched a catering business using specially designed barbecue troughs that held chicken halves between two grates. When the chickens were ready to turn, the workers would yell "Huli!" (turn, in Hawaiian), and all the chickens would be rotated in one go. Morgado named his sauce Huli Huli and in 1958 he registered it with the Territory of Hawaii.



A huli huli rig in Hawaii.