

# Grilled Chicken with Spicy Lime, Herbs, and Lettuces

Serves 4–6

Directly inspired from the many variations of nuoc cham I had while in Vietnam a few years back, any combination of fish sauce and lime juice has become my absolute favorite way to dress grilled meats. Eating that meat wrapped in crunchy lettuces and fresh herbs between bites of chunky scallion and fluffy steamed rice is my late summer dream. While this is a grilled chicken recipe using a whole chicken cut in half (because I find that to be one of the most beautiful and fool-proof ways to grill a chicken), any sort of chicken you want to grill (bone-in, skin-on thighs, wings, boneless, skinless breasts...) will work here because this sauce is great on grilled chicken. Honestly, it's great on roasted chicken, poached chicken...any chicken, really. I find most jalapeños to be not as spicy as they once were, but maybe that's just me. If you're looking for a very spicy sauce, you can always double the amount or use something like a serrano pepper or Thai chili as well.

## Ingredients

**1 4–5 pound whole chicken, or 4 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken parts**

**Kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper**

**Olive oil or other neutral oil, for rubbing**

**½ cup fresh lime juice (from about 4 limes)**

**2 tablespoons lime zest (from about 2 limes)**

**2 teaspoons fish sauce, plus more**

**1 teaspoon honey or light brown sugar, optional**

**2–4 garlic cloves, finely grated or finely chopped**

**1 jalapeño, finely grated (use a microplane or finely chop)**

**4 scallions, cut into 3" long pieces**

**2 small-medium cucumbers, thinly sliced**

**Sprigs of cilantro, mint, basil, for serving**

**Crunchy lettuce leaves like romaine, butterleaf, little gem, etc, for serving**

**Steamed white or brown rice, for serving**

## Instructions

1. If using a whole chicken, you'll want to cut it in half. Do this first by removing the backbone: With sharp kitchen shears (or a very sharp knife), start at the neck of the chicken and snip down both sides of the spine (or cut down both sides) all the way down through to the butt (save the backbone in the freezer for your next batch of broth).
2. Splay it out on a cutting board, skin side up, and firmly press chicken to flatten slightly to make it easier to cut through. Using your knife, cut down the middle of the chicken between the two breasts, giving you two identical halves of the chicken (if they are slightly less than identical... that's okay).
3. No matter what kind of chicken you're starting with, season it with salt and pepper (do this as far in advance as possible—up to 24 hours, but even if it's only 10 minutes, great).
4. Start your grill. This means turning on the gas (high on one side, low on the other), or building a charcoal grill (with coals banked to one side). Once your grill is properly hot (this will vary, and only you know your grill like you do), drizzle your chicken on both sides with some oil, just to grease things up a bit.
5. **[NOTE:** These instructions and cooking times are for two halves of a whole chicken, not parts. For parts, scroll down to the end of the recipe]. Place the chicken skin side UP on the cooler of the two sides of the grill. Cover your grill (be sure to open the vents if using charcoal to keep the air flowing) and don't look at, touch, or really even think about your chicken for at least 25 minutes.

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6. Meanwhile, make the sauce and prepare the other wonderful things you'll eat the chicken with. Combine lime juice, lime zest, fish sauce, honey (if using), garlic and jalapeño in a medium bowl. Season with salt, pepper and more fish sauce or honey/light brown sugar if you want. It should be very salty, very tart, very garlicky and just a little spicy (add crushed red pepper flake or a different type of chili if you want more heat). This is going to be a personal preference style sauce, so feel free to make it more or less of what you want given the ingredients involved.
7. Back to the chicken! Remove the cover of your grill— the chicken should be nicely browned on top and firm to the touch (raw chicken is squishy and flimsy, cooked chicken is firm and sturdy). If it still looks extremely pale and perhaps still totally raw, make sure your heat is working as well as it can, and let it go another 5-10 or so minutes (you'll probably go for 30-35 minutes total on this side—it's where most of the cooking happens).
8. Once the chicken is firm enough to handle with tongs (a sign it's nearly cooked through), flip it over, skin side down, inching a bit closer to the hotter part of the grill (you don't want total direct heat or you'll get too many flare-ups, but you do want to be closer than you were for the first part of low and slow cooking). Again, resist the urge to touch your chicken too much, unless there are flare-ups that need tending to. Instead, let it nicely brown and finish cooking, another 15-20 minutes.
9. Remove chicken from the grill and place skin-side up on a cutting board or serving platter of your choosing. Spoon the limey dressing over the chicken and scatter with a few herbs. Serve with sprigs of herbs, whole big leaves of lettuce, chunky pieces of scallion, sliced cucumber, and a nice pot of fluffy rice.