JAPAN / BEST OF JAPAN

YAKITORI

Yakitori is Japanese chicken grilled on bamboo skewers over charcoal, seasoned with salt or brushed with tare, a sweet soy glaze. Will ate it at a yakitori bar on his first night in Tokyo.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	40 min	30 min	1 h 10 min	Medium	Mild

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE TARE

120 ml Japanese soy sauce

120 ml mirin

60 ml sake

2 tbsp sugar

Chicken wing tips or 1 skewer of chicken trimmings, grilled (optional)

FOR THE SKEWERS

500 g boneless chicken thighs, skin on, cut into 3 cm pieces

4 spring onions (negi), white and pale green part cut into 3 cm lengths

200 g chicken livers, cleaned and halved

8 chicken wings, mid joint

Flaky sea salt

TO SERVE

Shichimi togarashi

1 lemon, cut into wedges

YOU WILL NEED

20 bamboo skewers, soaked in water for 30 minutes

METHOD

MAKE THE TARE

1 Put the soy sauce, mirin, sake and sugar in a small pan with the grilled wing tips if using. Simmer over low heat for 15 to 20 minutes, until reduced by a third and syrupy. Strain and cool.

SKEWER

2 Thread the thigh pieces onto skewers, alternating with spring onion, for negima. Pack them tightly.

3 Thread the livers onto separate skewers, 3 or 4 pieces each.

4 Push 2 skewers through each pair of wings so they stay flat.

GRILL

5 Heat a charcoal grill until the coals are covered in white ash, or heat a grill pan over high heat. Lay the skewers so the handles sit off the heat.

6 Grill the wings and thigh skewers for 8 to 10 minutes, turning often, until golden and cooked through. Season the wings with salt only.

7 For the last 3 minutes, brush the thigh skewers with tare 2 or 3 times, turning each time, until glossy and lightly charred.

8 Grill the livers for 4 to 5 minutes, brushing with tare, until browned outside and still pink inside.

SERVE

9 Serve straight from the grill with shichimi and lemon.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

Keep the tare in a jar in the fridge for weeks; Japanese yakitori bars top theirs up and keep it going for years.

Thigh with skin stays juicier than breast on the grill.

A small tabletop charcoal grill or a hibachi gives the closest result to a Tokyo bar.

After a first day skiing the powder of Niseko, Will lands in Tokyo for the first time and heads straight to a yakitori bar. The cooks grill skewers over the coals behind the counter."First up there's this wonderful dish here," Will says, picking up chicken liver and chicken breast, then a skewer of chicken wing. Tokyo, he says, is known...