



## SPEEDY CHICKEN KATSU DINNER

*Recipe serves 4.*

### INGREDIENTS

#### ***For the ground chicken cutlets:***

1 lb ground chicken (can substitute with ground pork)

½ tsp kosher salt (1 tsp if using Diamond crystal kosher salt), more or less to taste

2/3 C panko – see notes 1 and 2 for gluten-free subs

#### ***To serve:***

Steamed short-grain rice (from 2 cups of uncooked grains)

350g cabbage, very finely shredded by mandolin or knife (~4C or ¼ head of cabbage)

Japanese sesame dressing, store-bought or see dressing recipe below if making

Tonkatsu sauce for drizzling or dipping, store-bought (note 3)

#### ***Japanese sesame dressing (if not using store-bought; takes 5 minutes to make):***

1 tbsp toasted sesame seeds, grinded (note 4)

1 tbsp light brown sugar

1 tbsp mayonnaise, Japanese or regular

1 tbsp rice vinegar

1 tbsp soy sauce (or tamari for gluten-free)

1 tsp toasted sesame oil

### METHOD

***Prepare the rice:*** Wash and rinse 2 cups of uncooked rice grains in a fine-mesh colander, swirling under running water and gently rubbing grains against each other, about 20 seconds. Water should run clearer but does not need to be fully transparent. Drain well and place in pot. Add 2 cups of water. (*Note: I love*



*my rice on the firmer side so my golden rule is 1-to-1 water-to-rice ratio for both long grain and short grain rice. If you prefer softer rice, use up to 1-to-1.25 ratio by adding up to 2.5 cups of water for the 2 cups of rice in this recipe.)* Allow rice to soak in measured water before turning heat on to cook – anywhere between 10 to 60 minutes (OK so yes, this step technically makes this recipe more than 30 minutes but it is passive time. If you don't have time, skip soaking and use 2.5 cups of water). After soaking, set pot over high heat. Cover and cook until water is boiling and steam is escaping (5-7 minutes) at which point, without lifting lid, turn heat ALL THE WAY DOWN TO LOWEST HEAT and continue to cook 20 minutes. Fluff and use.

**Toast the panko:** While rice is coming to a boil in above step, place a skillet over medium heat. (Tip: I use an oval cast iron pan which can be used again for baking the four chicken cutlets later). Pour panko into dry skillet without any oil. I like to add a bit of salt here, too. Use spatula to move them around constantly until a golden colour develops, about 3 minutes. Be careful not to burn them. Transfer right away into a shallow dish to cool.

**Prepare chicken cutlets:** Preheat oven to 400f. Spray oven-safe dish or baking sheet lightly with oil. (I use the same dish used for toasting the panko. If you have an oven-safe wire rack, use that under the cutlets for crispier bottoms). In a mixing bowl, mix ground chicken with salt. Wet hands if sticky, and divide mixture into four. For each portion, form into a patty ¾"-1" thick and ~3.5" diameter. Drop patty directly on top of cooled panko. Use fingers to scoop panko onto the top, pressing gently with fingertips to adhere as much panko as you can. Flip once and repeat. Transfer to oven-safe dish or tray (with wire rack if you have). Bake 14-15 minutes or when cooked through / 165f in the center.

**Prepare cabbage:** While cutlets are baking, use a mandolin or knife to very, very finely shred cabbage. Place in large bowl. Toss with sesame dressing (refer to recipe if making from scratch).

**Prepare sesame dressing (skip if using store-bought):** Partially grind toasted sesame seeds using a mortar and pestle until seeds pop and are pulverized but still visible (i.e. not a paste), about 15-20 seconds. I use a Japanese mortar and pestle (*suribachi* and *surikogi*) which is a common Japanese kitchen tool but use a regular mortar and pestle if that's what you have. Alternatively, place seeds in a plastic bag and use a rolling pin to crush them. Either way, a quick crush of the sesame seeds releases their aroma and flavour and makes a big difference in the taste of the sesame-forward dressing. Pour crushed sesame seeds into a small mixing bowl. Add remaining dressing ingredients and whisk well.

**To serve:** Toss cabbage with dressing just before serving so it doesn't get soggy. Cut each chicken cutlet into 5-6 pieces each. Serve rice, cabbage salad and chicken cutlets with tonkatsu sauce drizzled on top or on the side. Garnish with toasted sesame seeds and scallions if you like. Enjoy right away while cutlets are hot or transfer to a wire rack to rest so the bottoms don't get soggy.



## RECIPE NOTES:

### 1. What is panko?

Panko is a type of bread crumb originating from Japan. It is flakier than regular breadcrumbs and results in lighter, crispier results when deep-fried or baked. Not all brands are created equal. Try to look for largest, flakiest crumbs. The crumbs pictured in my blog post is slightly smaller than I like – it was the Whole Foods 365 brand and it was also the bottom of the container (more crushed). Kikkoman Panko Japanese Style Toasted Bread Crumbs is a solid choice and is widely available. If you can't find panko, you can use regular breadcrumbs, but it will likely be less light and crunchy. See note 2 for gluten-free alternatives.

### 2. Is there a gluten-free alternative to panko I can use? YES!

**Chickpea crumbs:** I have frequently used chickpea crumbs as breading. They are amazingly crunchy as a cutlet coating! I've used the ones by [WatUSee Foods](#). If you can't find chickpea crumbs, you can buy their roasted chickpeas (the snacking kind, not ones you roast in the oven at home - those would be too wet) and pulverize them in the food processor until they're the size to chunky breadcrumbs. Substitute the same amount of chickpea crumbs for panko in this recipe. You do NOT need to dry-toast the chickpea crumbs first before using to coat the cutlets.

**Pork Panko:** (by Bacon's Heir) is another excellent option. They're light, crunchy and salty.

**Gluten-free panko:** I have seen gluten-free panko by Kikkoman but I haven't tried it myself.

### 3. If I am making the Sesame Dressing, do I have to grind the sesame seeds?

A quick crush of the sesame seeds releases their aroma and flavour and makes a big difference in the taste of the sesame-forward dressing. So I definitely recommend it. I use an inexpensive Japanese mortar and pestle (*suribachi* and *surikogi*) and just grind it for 15-20 seconds for the small amount used in the dressing. A regular mortar and pestle can work too, if you have. Alternatively, place seeds in a plastic bag and use a rolling pin to roll and crush them up a bit. They just need to be partially crushed. You should still see seeds, not a paste.

### 4. What is Tonkatsu sauce?

Tonkatsu sauce is a thick sauce served with tonkatsu, the Japanese pork cutlet. It is a thick Japanese Worcestershire-type sauce. As with most Japanese Worcestershire sauces, it is vegetarian and similar to a brown sauce, with tomatoes, prunes, dates, apples, lemon juice, carrots, onions, and celery among its



ingredients. The Bull-Dog brand of tonkatsu sauce, for example, is made from malt vinegar, yeast, and vegetable and fruit purees, pastes, and extracts. In the United States, Kikkoman brand sells a fruity tonkatsu sauce with applesauce as the main ingredient (source: Wikipedia)

Tonkatsu sauce is also sometimes called Japanese BBQ sauce for its sweet, tangy flavour. I usually buy it rather than make it, mostly because I don't feel confident about my ability to recreate the same depth of flavour in a simple homemade recipe that doesn't also involve other bottled sauces, which negates the point for me. But if you can't find tonkatsu sauce, you can recreate it - recipes abound on the internet.