

What's for dinner? Chicken shawarma with cucumber-yogurt sauce

Last week we were enjoying a family trip to the beach with a few dozen of our closest relatives. I spent more time scrubbing sand off of our beach boys than I did working in the kitchen.

This week we're home. So I'm back to my part-time job as a chef. But who wants to cook on a hot summer night?

The other day, though, a Facebook friend shared a recipe for chicken shawarma. I knew it wouldn't be exactly like a dish with the same name that John and I have enjoyed, but I decided to give it a try.

The ingredients were easy to find, and I added a few boneless breasts with the thighs to stretch the recipe. Our boys had a great time helping make the marinade, and we left the chicken marinating in the fridge all day.



Raw, marinated chicken

When we came home, I moved it to a pan in the oven with some chunks of red onion and cooked it for 40 minutes. It would be worth it to cook this just to inhale the scent of the chicken cooking.

While the chicken was in the oven, Daniel and I grated cucumbers to try to duplicate the white sauce we have had with chicken shawarma.

As it happens, friends of ours are away and they had offered to let us pick up their CSA of vegetables and farm-fresh eggs.



My boys are so excited about those eggs.

So instead of buying English cucumber, which is seedless and supposedly the preferred ingredient, I used ordinary, locally grown cucumbers. I didn't even notice the seeds.

This is what we mixed together:

1 cup grated cucumber (about 2 ½ cucumbers), leave some of the juice
1 5.3 oz. container nonfat Greek yogurt
3 tablespoons tahini
2 tablespoons lemon juice
¼ teaspoon salt

By the way, I had never bought tahini before and it took me a while to find it. Our store keeps it near the olives.

When the chicken came out of the oven, I cut it up in small pieces and sautéed it for a few minutes while I heated some store-bought pitas in the oven for 3-4 minutes at 425 degrees.



The chicken before I cut it up

I served everything with diced cucumber, tomato, and chopped romaine.



It looks so fancy, I know.

The verdict was yum, yum, yum. Our 7-year-old announced that it was “the best chicken ever!”



Then my family decided we could open a restaurant at the beach: Rita’s Pitas.

And that, my friends, is why you should never make a really great dinner.

Lesson learned.

The chicken shawarma recipe is here.