Main dishes / Thailand

Thai Larb Gai

Quick-cooked minced chicken tossed with toasted rice powder, lime, fish sauce, and an avalanche of fresh herbs — bright, sharp, and texturally alive.

Time 25 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 400 g Ground chicken (or hand-minced thigh meat)
- ☐ 45 ml Fresh lime juice
- ☐ 5 g Dried chili flakes (prik bon), or to taste
- ☐ 20 g Fresh mint leaves, torn
- ☐ 3 pcs Scallions, thinly sliced
- ☐ 3 g Sugar (optional balance)
- ☐ 30 g Raw glutinous (sticky) rice, uncooked
- ☐ 30 ml Fish sauce
- ☐ 60 g Shallots, thinly sliced into rings
- ☐ 15 g Fresh cilantro, roughly chopped
- ☐ 15 g Lemongrass, tender inner stalk only, minced

Let's make it.

01 Place the raw glutinous rice in a dry wok or heavy skillet over medium heat. Toast, stirring constantly, for 5–8 minutes until each grain turns golden-brown and the kitchen fills with a popcorn-like, nutty fragrance. Do not walk away — the transition from golden to burnt takes seconds. Transfer to a mortar or spice grinder and grind to a coarse powder (the texture of fine breadcrumbs). This powder is the secret texture of larb: it absorbs the dressing and gives the dish its characteristic sandy bite.

02 Heat a wok over high heat until smoking. Add the ground chicken with no oil — the natural fat in the meat is sufficient and oil would cause steaming. Break the meat apart rapidly with a spatula, spreading it thin across the hot wok surface. Cook until just no longer pink, about 3–4 minutes. Do not cook through completely — the residual heat and lime acid will finish it. The goal is barely cooked, still juicy chicken.

03 Working while the chicken is still very hot (the heat helps the dressing penetrate), add fish sauce, lime juice, dried chili flakes, and sugar. Toss vigorously. Taste immediately — the balance is the dish. It should hit sour first, then salty, then heat building at the back of the throat. Adjust: more lime for brightness, more fish sauce for depth, more chili for fire.

04 Fold in the shallots, mint, cilantro, scallion, and minced lemongrass. Scatter the toasted rice powder over the top and fold in gently — you want it distributed but not completely buried. Taste one final time. Serve immediately on a plate lined with cabbage leaves, with extra mint and raw vegetables on the side. Larb deteriorates quickly as the herbs wilt and the rice powder hydrates — this is a dish that lives in the moment.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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