

DISH

No need to calorie count this chicken



AMY ROSEN

I just ate like a pig, and I feel fabulous.

How did I do it? By eating at Four, the low-fat, high-flavour phenom in the heart of Toronto's financial district.

The place was packed and the lunch line at the restaurant's takeout window (called Petit Four) was 10-people deep. And there's a reason for that.

Firstly, chef Gord Mackie has put together a menu that's delicious (grilled calamari salad with blood orange dressing), delightful (smoked sablefish, lamb salad) and delovely (yogourt-marinated grilled chicken breast).

Secondly, it's January. ('Nuff said.)

Four is unique in that the menu is a commitment to healthy but classy eats. It's flavourful, but not simple. All of the dishes are packed with colour, texture and nutrients,

and all are less than 650 calories. A serving of the tiger shrimp skewers is just 130 calories, and the bison burger comes in at 489. "Everything has to be portioned and precise," explains Mackie. "You have to build it right." And then it's all nutritionally analyzed, down to the last gram.

"It's been educational," admits the chef, who is equally famous for his rich lobster pot pie and adult S'mores at Far Niente, located one floor up. "But I do like eating this way."

TIKKA MASALA CHICKEN BREAST WITH ROOT VEGETABLES AND JASMINE RICE

650 calories; serves four

Root vegetables

- 1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- salt and pepper
- ¼ cup (60 mL) parboiled* sweet potato
- ¼ cup (60 mL) parboiled parsnips
- ¼ cup (60 mL) parboiled celery root
- ¼ cup (60 mL) parboiled carrots
- Or substitute
- 1 cup (250 mL) of your favourite root vegetables, parboiled

*To parboil: partially cook the vegetables for a few minutes in boiling salted water.

1. Toss parboiled vegetables with olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper. Bake in a preheated 350F (180C) oven for 30 minutes until soft.

Jasmine rice

- 1 cup (250 mL) jasmine rice
- 1 cup (250 mL) water

1. Place both ingredients in a pot, cover with a lid and bring to boil. Once at a boil, turn down heat to low, cover and simmer for 10 minutes until done. Fluff rice and let sit for five minutes with the lid on.

Tikka Masala sauce and chicken marinade

- 2 cups (500 mL) yogourt
- 2 tbsp (20 mL) honey
- ¼ cup (60 mL) ginger, chopped
- ½ cup (125 mL) fresh cilantro (washed, stems and roots included; reserve some cilantro leaves for plating)
- ½ tsp (2 mL) ground cardamom
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp (2 mL) ground cumin
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) ground coriander
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) paprika

- ½ tsp (2 mL) cayenne
- 2 tsp (10 mL) garam masala
- salt, to taste
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
- 4 tbsp (60 mL) slivered almonds, toasted
- 4 tbsp (60 mL) sliced apricots

1. Combine all ingredients (except the chicken, almonds and apricots) and pulse in a food processor.

2. Reserving half the sauce for plating, marinate the chicken breasts in the other half of the sauce for at least 24 hours in the refrigerator.

3. Remove chicken from the refrigerator and wipe the excess yogourt sauce off the chicken. Sear in a non-stick pan and place on baking tray. Finish cooking in a preheated 350F (180C) oven for eight minutes.

4. Divide cooked rice and root vegetables on four plates. Place cooked chicken breasts on top of the rice and vegetables, sprinkle 1 tbsp (15 mL) toasted almonds and 1 tbsp (15 mL) sliced apricots on each plate. Sauce the chicken and garnish with a sprig of fresh coriander.

National Post