



Pulled Chicken Lettuce Wraps with Herbs and Fried Garlic

Serves 4

Time: 25 minutes

By Kristin Donnelly from missiondinner.substack.com

4 fat garlic cloves

1 head of lettuce, such as romaine, iceberg, or Bibb lettuce

2 limes

1 bunch mint, cilantro, or Thai basil (or 1 cup herb leaves from the garden)

One two-pound rotisserie chicken or 3 1/2 to 4 cups pulled cooked chicken meat (see below)

1/4 cup neutral-flavored oil

Salt

Freshly ground pepper

Prep the ingredients

If your **garlic cloves** are not already peeled, gently smash them with the flat side of a large knife to loosen the skins and peel the **garlic**. Thinly slice the **garlic** into rounds.

Pull apart the **lettuce leaves**, leaving them whole, then wash well and dry. Arrange the **lettuce leaves** on a platter.

Cut one of the **limes** into wedges and arrange them on the platter. Reserve the other lime.

Pick your **herb leaves** until you have about 1 loosely packed cup.

Pull the **chicken** off the bones and tear it into large bite-sized shreds. Transfer to a large bowl.

Fry the garlic on the stovetop or in the microwave

On the stovetop:

Have a small bowl near the stove.

In a medium skillet, heat the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil over medium heat for about 10 seconds, then add the sliced garlic. Spread the slices into a single layer and cook. When it starts to sizzle, after about 1 minute, reduce the heat to medium low and stir the garlic constantly. Continue cooking and stirring until the garlic turns evenly golden, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn off the heat and allow the garlic to cook until slightly darker golden, 30 seconds longer, then immediately pour the garlic with the oil into the small bowl.

Stir in a couple of pinches of salt.

In the microwave:

In a small microwave-safe bowl, combine the sliced garlic and oil and stir to make sure the garlic is fully coated in oil.

Microwave on HIGH for 1 minute. Continue cooking the garlic on HIGH for 30 seconds at a time. As soon as you see a tiny bit of color on the garlic slices, cook the garlic in 10 second-bursts. When it's evenly golden, carefully remove from the microwave and let cool to warm.

Stir in a couple of pinches of salt.

Assemble the chicken salad for the lettuce wraps

Finely grate the zest of the remaining lime over the chicken in the bowl. Halve the lime, then squeeze the juice over the chicken.

Stir in the garlic with the oil and several grinds of pepper. Taste your chicken and season with more salt, if desired.

Add most of the herb leaves to the chicken and toss.

Transfer the chicken salad to the platter and garnish with the remaining herb leaves.

Serve the platter family style, allowing people to build their own lettuce wraps with the chicken salad and squeeze lime juice over top with the lime wedges. Alternatively, allow everyone to build a salad with the lettuce leaves as a bed.

The short version

- Fry the thinly sliced garlic cloves until golden.
- In a bowl, toss together the cooked pulled chicken, zest and juice of 1 lime, garlic and garlic oil, and herb leaves. Season with salt and pepper.
- Serve the chicken salad with lettuce leaves and lime wedges.

Cooking your own chicken

This is my favorite method for cooking chicken breasts when I want pulled meat to use in salads.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Rub 2 or 3 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts (10 to 12 ounces each) lightly with oil. Sprinkle all over with salt. Cook until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the largest chicken breast reads 162°F, 30 to 35 minutes. Let rest for 10 minutes before pulling apart into shreds.

Fun for kids

- Pick the herb leaves.
- Pull apart the lettuce.
- Pull apart the chicken.
- Stir together the chicken salad.

Swaps

- Instead of frying garlic, you can fry thinly sliced shallots.
- Or skip frying all together and replace the garlic with sliced scallions.
- Or skip the alliums (garlic/onion family vegetables) all together.
- Instead of limes, use lemons or dress the salad with 2 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar.
- Instead of lettuce, use green cabbage leaves.
- Instead of cilantro, mint, or Thai basil, use other basil, dill, or parsley. It will change the flavor but it will still be good.

Bulk it out

- You can add diced cucumber, halved cherry tomatoes, slice chiles, and/or sliced radishes to the chicken salad.
- You can serve the lettuce wraps with cooked rice or rice noodles. If you decide to toss the chicken salad with the rice or noodles, you'll want to taste and season with more salt, pepper, and lime juice.