



Stir-Fry Cookery

Certainly the most popular of all Oriental cooking methods is stir-frying. The Chinese word *chow* literally means toss-cooking. Stir-frying is the brisk cooking of small cuts of ingredients in oil over intense heat.

The key is to keep the food moving constantly, so all parts of the food come in contact with the hottest part of the pan, cooking quickly and evenly.

You can stir-fry in a few tablespoons or in a cup of oil. Stir-frying refers to the action, not to the amount of oil. Many recipes call for sesame or peanut oil, but use a less saturated oil, such as canola or corn oil. Olive oil, butter, and margarine are not suitable for stir-fry cookery because of their low smoke point. The smoke point of an oil is the temperature when a fat breaks down, giving off smoke and producing a greasy taste and aroma.

It is important to heat the oil to a high temperature before adding the food ingredients, but the oil should not be smoking. The high heat allows the vegetables to remain tender and crisp and retain their color.

Ingredients should also be stir-fried in the appropriate order. Vegetables that take a while to cook, such as carrots or celery should be added before quick cooking vegetables, such as bean sprouts or tomatoes. In this manner all vegetables will be done at the same time.

Have all ingredients prepared and within reach before you heat the oil as you will not have time to cut and chop after you begin stir-frying. Vegetables and other ingredients should be as uniform as possible in shape and size for even cooking.

A cornstarch paste should be made with cold ingredients. When the paste is added to a hot mixture, it will thicken almost immediately. After one to two minutes of stirring over heat, do not expect the mixture to thicken further.

The wok is the traditional utensil for stir-frying. The most efficient wok is made of steel. It is about 14 inches in diameter and has a slightly flat bottom so it can be used on either an

electric or gas stove. Electric woks are available with temperature controls that fit into a moveable base.

A new wok must be seasoned before use. Fill the wok 2/3 full of water and bring the water to a boil. Boil for 7 to 8 minutes. Let the wok cool. Remove the water and wash thoroughly with hot water and a mild detergent. Rinse and dry. Rub the inside of the wok with 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil. Place on high heat and tilt the wok from side to side to distribute the oil all over the pan. After 5 to 6 minutes, turn off the heat and allow the wok to cool. Wipe the excess oil from the cooled wok with a paper towel. Your wok is now seasoned and ready for use.

You can enjoy the fun of preparing Oriental foods even if you do not own a wok. Any recipe that can be cooked in a wok can also be prepared in a large heavy skillet with deep sides or in an electric skillet. Simply make sure to keep the food moving constantly so all ingredients are cooked quickly and evenly. A wok spatula which has a long handle comes in handy for tossing, mixing and stirring food in a wok. It is shaped to scoop and lift food from the sides and bottom of the wok.

Stir-fry cookery has several advantages over other cooking methods.

- ❖ When small amounts of oil are used to stir-fry, less fat and fewer calories are added than when deep-fat frying.
- ❖ Canned low sodium chicken broth can be used as the basis for the stir-fry sauce offering more calorie and sodium savings.

- ❖ Vegetables retain more vitamins and minerals during stir-frying than during boiling, where water-soluble vitamins can be lost.
- ❖ Reduce waste by using small amounts of fresh vegetables from the refrigerator.
- ❖ Because stir-frying is a quick method, it can save time.
- ❖ Clean-up time is shortened since the entire meal is prepared in one pan.
- ❖ The use of a wide variety of vegetables allows for smaller amounts of meat, poultry or seafood, offering grocery savings.

Many supermarkets carry fresh Chinese ingredients, such as Chinese cabbage, ginger root, bean sprouts and cilantro; canned ingredients such as water chestnuts and sliced bamboo; and in the gourmet section you may discover soy sauce, noodles, rice wine or rice wine vinegar and various spices and flavorings.

Soy sauce is a common seasoning in many stir-fry recipes. Soy sauce is a combination of soybeans, flour, salt and water. Because of its saltiness you do not have to add extra salt to the recipe. Low sodium soy sauce is available. Keep opened bottles of soy sauce tightly closed and refrigerated to help retain flavor.

Ginger root is a gnarled root which adds a distinctive spicy flavor to many Chinese dishes. It can be purchased fresh in some groceries but powdered ginger, though not as flavorful, can be substituted ½ teaspoon powdered for 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger or for 2 slices fresh ginger.

Tofu or bean curd is another popular Chinese staple. Tofu is a high-protein, low-calorie food made from pureed soybean milk. It has a smooth texture and bland flavor so it combines well with other foods.

So gather your food ingredients and cooking equipment and delve into the mystique of stir-frying. With a little practice, all the advantages of stir-fry cookery can be yours.

Recipes

Note: Calories and fat can be reduced by using a non-stick vegetable spray; fiber can be increased by utilizing brown rice instead of white rice; and sodium can be reduced by using low-sodium soy sauce.

Fried Rice

1 teaspoon oil
 1 egg, beaten
 ½ cup green peas
 ¼ cup diced green onion
 4 cups cooked white rice
 2 tablespoons soy sauce

Heat oil. Add egg; scramble loosely. Add remaining ingredients and stir-fry until all ingredients are heated. Makes 6 servings.

Per Serving: 211 Calories; 2 g Fat; 35 mg Cholesterol; 2 g Fiber; 369 mg Sodium

Zucchini and Tomato Parmesan

1 teaspoon cooking oil
 1 clove garlic, minced
 2 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise and sliced ¼-inch thick (2½ cups)
 4 green onions, bias-sliced into 1-inch lengths (¾ cup)
 2 medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped (1 cup)
 ¼ cup snipped parsley
 ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat wok or large skillet; add cooking oil. Stir-fry garlic in hot oil for 15 seconds. Add zucchini; stir-fry for 1½ minutes. Add green onions; stir-fry about 1½ minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender.

Stir in tomatoes and parsley. Cover and cook about 1 minute or until heated through. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese; toss gently. Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings.

Per Serving: 46 Calories; 2 g Fat; 3 mg Cholesterol; 1.4 g Fiber; 85 mg Sodium

Sesame Broccoli Stir-Fry

Vegetable cooking spray
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
8 cups chopped fresh broccoli
1 large sweet pepper, seeded and cut into thin strips
1 medium onion, cut into wedges
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon brown sugar
3 tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons beef broth
1½ tablespoons red wine vinegar
1½ teaspoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon peeled, minced gingerroot
4 drops hot sauce
¼ cup sliced water chestnuts
1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted

Coat a wok or large nonstick skillet with cooking spray; add oil. Place over medium-high heat (375°F) until hot. Add broccoli, sweet red pepper, onion and garlic; stir-fry 4 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender.

Combine brown sugar and next 6 ingredients in a small bowl, stirring well; add to vegetable mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture is thickened. Add water chestnuts and sesame seeds. Cook, stirring constantly, until thoroughly heated. Serve immediately. Makes 12 servings.
Per Serving: 45 Calories; 2 g Fat; 2 g Fiber; 296 mg Sodium

South of the Border Stir-Fry

1 pound beef top round steak
1 cup salsa
¼ cup water
2 tablespoons snipped parsley
2 teaspoons vinegar
¾ teaspoon cornstarch
½ teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon ground cumin
¼ teaspoon pepper
⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1 small onion, chopped
1 can (7 ounces) whole kernel corn with sweet peppers
Shredded lettuce
½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
chili peppers (optional)
Tortilla chips (optional)
Tomatoes (optional)

Partially freeze beef; cut on the bias into thin bite-size strips. For sauce, in a small bowl stir together ½ cup salsa, water, parsley, vinegar, cornstarch, sugar, cumin, pepper, and cinnamon. Set aside.

Preheat wok or large skillet over high heat; add cooking oil. Stir-fry garlic in hot oil for 15 seconds. Add onion; stir-fry about 2 minutes or until tender. Remove onion.

Add half the beef. Stir-fry 2 to 3 minutes or until done. Remove. Stir-fry remaining beef for 2 to 3 minutes or until done. Return all beef to wok or skillet. Push beef from center of wok. Stir sauce; add to center of the wok or skillet. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir for 2 minutes more. Return onion to the wok or skillet; add corn. Stir ingredients together to coat with sauce. Cover and cook for 1 minute.

Place lettuce on individual dinner plates. Top with meat mixture. Top with remaining salsa and cheese. Garnish, if desired, with hot peppers, tortilla chips, and tomatoes. Makes 4 servings.
Per Serving: 349 Calories; 12 g Fat; 108 mg Cholesterol; 3 g Fiber; 548 mg Sodium

Chinese Pepper Steak

- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 pound round steak, thinly sliced into strips
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and minced
- 2 small onions, peeled and each cut into 6 wedges
- 2 green peppers, cored, seeded and cut into thin 1½ inch long strips
- 2 tomatoes, each cut into 8 wedges
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon peeled and minced fresh gingerroot

Mix first 3 ingredients. Set aside. Heat oil in wok or skillet. Add meat and garlic; stir-fry 2 minutes or until done. Add onion, peppers and tomatoes; stir-fry one to two minutes. Add pepper and ginger. Stir cornstarch mixture; add to wok or skillet; stir-fry until sauce thickens slightly. Serve immediately. Make 4 servings.

Per Serving: 289 Calories; 10 g Fat; 95 mg Cholesterol; 2 g Fiber; 673 mg Sodium

Stir-Fried Chicken and Vegetables

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1 egg white
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 6 ounces Chinese pea pods or 1 package (6 ounces) frozen Chinese pea pods, partially thawed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped gingerroot
- 3 cups celery, sliced diagonally
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 1 can (8 ounces) sliced water chestnuts, drained
- 1 can (8 ounces) sliced bamboo shoots, drained
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ¾ cup chicken broth
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- ¼ cup cold water

Mix chicken, egg white, 1 teaspoon cornstarch and 1 teaspoon soy sauce in glass or plastic bowl. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, remove strings from fresh pea pods or rinse frozen pea pods with cold water to separate; drain. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in wok or 12-inch nonstick skillet until hot. Add garlic and gingerroot; stir-fry over medium heat until light brown. Add pea pods and celery; stir-fry 1 minute. Add mushrooms, water chestnuts and bamboo shoots; stir-fry 1 minute. Remove vegetables with slotted spoon.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in wok until hot. Add chicken; stir-fry over high heat about 2 minutes or until white. Stir in broth and sugar. Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Mix cold water, 2 tablespoons cornstarch and 1 teaspoon soy sauce; stir into chicken mixture. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute. Add vegetables; cook and stir 1 to 2 minutes or until hot. Makes 4 servings.

Per Serving: 298 Calories; 10 g Fat; 66 mg Cholesterol; 6 g Fiber; 641 mg Sodium

Quick Chicken Stir-Fry

- ⅓ cup cold water
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 cups loose pack frozen mixed oriental vegetables, thawed
- 2 cups cooked chicken, cut in bite-size pieces

For sauce, stir together water, soy sauce, sherry, cornstarch and ginger. Set aside.

Preheat oil in a wok or large skillet. Stir-fry vegetables in hot oil about 3 minutes or until crisp-tender. Push from center of wok.

Stir sauce; add to center of wok. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly. Add cooked chicken. Stir all ingredients together. Cook 2 to 3 minutes, or until heated through. Serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.

Per Serving: 249 Calories; 7 g Fat; 60 mg Cholesterol; 8 g Fiber; 874 mg Sodium*

Sweet & Sour Pork

2 pounds boneless pork loin, cut in cubes
¼ cup soy sauce
1 egg, lightly beaten
About 1 cup cornstarch
1½ cups vegetables oil
1 large onion, peeled and cut in 8 wedges
1 green pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 cup pineapple chunks, drained and juice reserved
2 small tomatoes, cored and cut in wedges
Sweet and Sour Sauce below

Toss pork with soy sauce; roll in egg; roll in cornstarch, shaking off excess cornstarch. Heat oil in uncovered wok at 400°F. Add pork in 4 batches, stir-frying until golden brown. Drain on paper towels; keep warm in oven. Leave 1 tablespoon oil in wok; heat at 350°F. Add onion; stir-fry 2 minutes. Add green pepper; stir-fry 2 minutes. Add pineapple and tomatoes; stir-fry 1 minute. Return pork to wok; add Sweet and Sour Sauce; stir-fry to coat. Makes 6 servings.
Per Serving: 870 Calories; 67 g Fat; 111 mg Cholesterol; 2 g Fiber; 936 mg Sodium

Sweet & Sour Sauce

½ cup reserved pineapple juice
½ cup white wine vinegar
1 tablespoons oil
2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
1 tablespoon soy sauce
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 teaspoons cornstarch mixed with
4 teaspoons cold water

Mix first 6 ingredients in wok; bring to boil at 225°F. Stir cornstarch mixture; add to wok, stirring until sauce is clear and slightly thickened.

Vegetable-Pasta Stir-Fry

6 ounces linguine, broken
1 tablespoon cooking oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 medium carrots, thinly bias sliced (1 cup)
1 medium zucchini, thinly sliced
1 medium onion, chopped
1 stalk celery, thinly sliced
1 can (15 ounces) garbanzo beans, drained
3 medium tomatoes, chopped
½ cup sliced pitted ripe olives
¼ cup snipped parsley
1 teaspoon dried basil
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
3 tablespoons margarine
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Cook linguine in boiling unsalted water according to package directions, drain. Keep warm.

Meanwhile, preheat wok or large skillet over high heat; add cooking oil. Stir-fry garlic in hot oil for 15 seconds. Add carrots; stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add zucchini, onion, and celery; stir-fry about 3 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender.

Gently stir in garbanzo beans, tomatoes, olives, parsley, and basil. Cover and cook for 1 to 2 minutes or until mixture is heated through.

Remove the wok or skillet from heat. Add linguine, Parmesan cheese, and margarine. Toss gently until mixture is coated. Transfer to 4 dinner plates; sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.
Per Serving: 574 Calories; 24 g Fat; 20 mg Cholesterol; 10 g Fiber; 928 mg Sodium

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