

## Recipe Packet: Basic Chinese Cuisine – Week One

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### 1. General Chinese Cooking Principles:

- Try to vary the meat and vegetables in a dish, so that there is an interesting variety of flavors, textures, and colors. The Chinese believe it is important to find balance and harmony in every aspect of life, including food.
- Fresh is best: always use fresh ingredients when possible.
- Be sure to have everything prepared before you start cooking: the vegetables washed, drained and cut; the meat cut and marinated; the sauces prepared.

### 2. Chinese Cooking Equipment:

- While you don't absolutely need one, a wok is the one piece of cooking equipment you may want to purchase before you start cooking Chinese food.
- While it's nice to own one, you don't need a cleaver to cook Chinese food.

### 3. Preparing Vegetables:

- Wash green, leafy vegetables ahead of time. This gives them more time to drain so they will not be too wet when you stir-fry.
- Place all the cut vegetables on a tray or cooking sheet. That way, you won't forget anything. Just be careful not to mix them up, as cooking times will vary among vegetables.

### 4. Stir-frying Vegetables:

- When stir-frying vegetables, cook the toughest and thickest vegetables for a longer period than the softer, leafy vegetables. Vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, and cabbage need to be cooked longer than bok choy, which in turn is cooked longer than snow peas or bean sprouts.
- If you are uncertain in which order to cook vegetables, simply stir-fry them separately. Never overcook.

### 5. Tofu (Bean Curd):

- For stir-frying or deep-frying, use firm or extra-firm tofu. Firm tofu will keep its shape and not fall apart in the wok.
- Drain the tofu before using, as this allows it to absorb the other flavors in the dish.

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### 6. Meat and Fish:

- Always marinate fresh meat.
- If a marinade calls for cornstarch, add it last. It will act as a binder.
- Always cut beef across the grain. This helps make it more tender.
- Cut the meat into uniform pieces so that it will cook more evenly.
- When cooking meat or poultry, make sure that the wok is very hot before adding the food.
- If preparing stir-fried meat and vegetables, stir-fry the meat first and set it aside. Usually you will return it to the wok with a sauce during the final stages of cooking.

### 7. Cooking With Oil:

- When adding oil for stir-frying, drizzle the oil down the sides of the wok.
- When deep-frying, to tell if the oil is hot enough, simply stick a chopstick in the wok. When the oil sizzles all around it, you can begin adding the food.

### 8. Sauce and Seasoning Tips:

- Always use fresh ginger, not powdered.
- The formula for mixing cornstarch and water is 1 to 2 or 1 to 4: for example, 1 tablespoon of cornstarch with 2 tablespoons of water.
- Don't use more cornstarch than called for in the recipe

### 9. Rice:

- For best results when cooking rice, use long grain rice.
- When making fried rice, use cold cooked rice, preferably at least one day old.

Finally, remember that, in the immortal words of one of my favorite cooking teachers: ***"the two most important things about Chinese cooking are a hot stove and a sharp knife."***

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**Black Bean Sauce:**

Makes approximately 2 cups

¼ cup fermented black beans  
½ cup canola oil  
¼ cup minced garlic  
¼ cup peeled and minced fresh ginger  
3 stalks scallions, white and green parts, sliced 1/8 inch thick  
2 teaspoons sambal oelek, or any garlic chili paste  
¼ cup Shaoxing rice wine  
pinch kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Soak the black beans in 2 tablespoons of hot water to soften. Heat a wok or large sauté pan over high heat. Add the oil and swirl to coat the pan. Add garlic, ginger, and scallions, and stir-fry until the mixture has softened, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the beans, sambal oelek and wine, decrease the heat to medium, and cook until the mixture is reduced by three quarters, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the salt and pepper.

Remove the mixture from the heat and allow it to cool. Transfer half of the mixture to a blender and purée it at high speed. Stir the purée back into the remaining mixture and cool completely. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator until ready to use.

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**Stir-fried Bamboo Shoots w Long Beans and Mushrooms**

Serves 4 to 6

- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 1 quarter-sized slice of peeled fresh ginger
- 1 generous pinch kosher salt
- 1 generous pinch red pepper flakes
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced
- 2 medium carrots, bias-sliced
- ½ pound shiitake mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 2 cups long beans, cut into 1-inch lengths
- 2 cups cooked bamboo shoots, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick wedges
- 2 – 3 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced
- 2 - 3 tablespoons Black Bean Sauce (recipe follows)

In a large wok over medium high flame, add the oil and heat until it ripples. Season the oil with a piece of peeled ginger and a pinch of salt.

Cook the hardier vegetables first – the ones that take longer to cook should be stir fried first, then the more tender, softer vegetables last. Everything should be cooked evenly.

Toss the carrot into the wok and sauté, moving around in the wok quickly using a spatula. When the carrots begin to look tender, about 4 minutes, add the mushrooms and continue tossing in the hot wok. When the mushrooms look soft, add the long beans and continue to toss. Lastly, when the long beans begin to soften, add the bamboo shoots and toss until they are heated through, about 2 more minutes. Add the garlic and toss until fragrant.

Season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Turn the heat off and toss in 2-3 tablespoons of black bean sauce. Serve hot over steamed rice.

**Note:**

- If adding any protein to this dish, cook the protein first after the oil has been seasoned. Remove the meat from the wok, continue to cook the vegetables and then toss the meat back in after the garlic has been added.
- Remember: slice your meat thinly across the grain and marinate briefly with salt, pepper, 1 teaspoon of cornstarch and a splash of rice wine. Cook your meat thoroughly before removing it from the wok.

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**Mongolian Beef in Lettuce Cups**

Serves 4 to 6

2 tablespoons coconut oil  
1 pound ground beef  
pinch each kosher salt and black pepper  
2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced  
1 tablespoon minced shallot  
1 tablespoon garlic, peeled and minced  
1 cup chopped celery (2 ribs)  
1 cup chopped bamboo shoots (2 large shoots)  
2 tablespoons Shaoxing rice wine  
2 tablespoons light soy sauce  
pinch red pepper flakes (optional)  
1 teaspoon brown sugar  
1 teaspoon cornstarch, dissolved in 3 teaspoons cold water  
2 scallions, white and green parts thinly sliced on the bias  
drizzle sesame oil  
2 cups deep fried mung bean threads (optional)  
8-12 broad lettuce leaves (such as iceberg), rinsed and pat dry

In a wok or large skillet, heat the coconut oil over medium-high flame. Add the ground beef and season with salt and pepper. Break up the beef and toss around until it crumbles and is no longer pink. Transfer the beef to a bowl and pour off the oil and fat that's left in the wok.

Wipe the wok carefully and return to the burner on medium-high flame. Add 1 tablespoon of the poured-off fat. Add the ginger, shallot and garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the celery and bamboo shoots and stir-fry until the vegetables are tender, about 2 -3 minutes. Return the beef to the wok and toss to combine.

Lower the heat to medium-low and add the wine, soy sauce, red pepper flakes and brown sugar. Stir to combine with the beef and vegetable mixture.

In a small bowl, stir together the cornstarch and water to create a slurry. Pour the slurry into the wok and stir to combine everything together. The sauce should thicken as it heats up. Remove from the heat.

Spoon the beef mixture into the lettuce leaves and garnish with scallions, a drizzle of sesame oil and top with fried mung bean threads for crunch.

**To Deep-fry Mung Bean Threads:**

In a wok or very wide skillet, heat 2 cups of vegetable oil until it's almost smoking. Turn off the heat and carefully add the dried mung bean threads, one handful at a time. They will puff to 3x their size. Gently lift out of the oil and place on a plate lined with a paper towel. Repeat until all the threads are fried. If the oil cools off too much, re-heat the oil.