



November 2001 – Stir Fry

Stir-fry's came into common use during the 2nd half of the 20th Century, when there was an interest in Oriental cooking techniques. They are very similar to the French sauté, except they are done in a Wok. Much lighter oil is used like a peanut oil, rather than Olive oil or butter.

The advantages of stir-frying is in the speed, this helps to minimize loss in vitamins, colour etc. Woks, now a days come in many forms, some are flat bottomed for electric stoves, some have a Teflon coating, if you have a rounded bottomed wok designed for gas, you can get a small stand for it so that it will sit above the electric heat on your stove.

Below is a list of different Ingredients that can help to vary your stir-fries.

Sesame Oil

In China the name for sesame oil mean 'fragrant oil'. It gives a unique nutty flavour to a dish and should be added in small amounts just before serving, to preserve its intense flavour. Sesame Oil can be made from toasted sesame seeds forming a thick brown oil used for seasoning dishes.

Tofu

It is a bean curd, and in oriental cooking replaces the dairy that we consume in the western world. Tofu is a bland food that takes well to marinating and when fried at a high temp to a crisp on the outside, it is delicious.

Ginger

This is a Rhizome or gnarled root, which is usually eaten in its fresh state. It can be found in a dry form, preserved in sugar, rendered into oil or pickled in vinegar. The Asian kitchen uses primarily the fresh form in their stir-fries. It is optional if you want to peel the ginger, then it can be chopped fine, finely grated or used in thin slivers. Ginger can be stored in the fridge or it can be wrapped a frozen.

Lemon grass

This you can buy fresh from most grocery stores. I peel of the out side leaves, chop off the bottom, then slice up the stalk until the knife has a hard time cutting the stalk. It has a wonderful lemony flavour that goes well with ginger.

Shitake mushrooms

In Asia, they are preferred dried and are best when they have a thick brown cap with a network of white cracks. Shitakes have a rich smoky flavour and are one of the most popular Chinese mushrooms.

Kecap manis

This is an Indonesian sweet soy sauce.

Sweet Thai Chilli Sauce

This is an unusual sauce that I cannot do with out in my kitchen. It only has a light spiciness to it and is a glowing red in colour. You can marinade your chicken in it...simple! To using it in stir fries, salad dressings and sauces.

Hoisin Sauce

A delicious thick reddish brown sauce made from soybeans and spices. It is spicy and mildly sweet.

Five spice powder

This is a blend of star anise, fennel, cinnamon, cloves and Szechuan peppercorns.

Sesame seeds

Small flat, oval seeds are creamed coloured. Sometimes you can find them black, these ones are not hulled. Toasting the seeds brings out their nutty flavour.

There are many other ingredients used in Stir-fries and I do not have room to write about them all. But I recommend you experiment, Man Lee's in Terminal Park is a great place to acquire many of the ingredients listed above.

Vegetable Stir-fry

1T Sesame seeds-toasted til golden

2 Green Onions-cleaned and cut into 1" lengths

1/2lb Broccoli-cut into small florets

1 Red pepper-seeds discarded and cut into thin strips.

1 Yellow pepper- seeds discarded and cut into thin strips.

1/3lb Mushrooms-cut in half.

1T Oil

1t Sesame Oil

-Heat the oils in a Wok.

1 Clove garlic-crushed

2t Ginger-grated

-Add garlic, ginger and spring onions to the wok, fry for 1 min.

-Add remaining veg and stir-fry 2mins til bright and tender.

1/4c Green stuffed olives- add to wok with the rest of the ingredients.

1T Soy sauce

1T Honey

1T Sweet Thai Chilli sauce

1t Orange zest

1T Cilantro-(Optional)

-mix these five ingreds in a bowl, pour over veg and toss lightly. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve.

Coconut-curry vegetables

1T Oil

2 Onions-peeled and cut into small wedges.

1T madras curry

1T Fresh Ginger-grated

2 Lemon grass stalks- prepared and chopped small.

-Stir fry over medium heat till golden.

1/2lb Cauliflower-cut into florets

1 red pepper- seeds removed and chopped.

2 Celery sticks-sliced diagonally

1 1/2c Pumpkin-grated

-add to the onions and toss for 2 mins.

1c Coconut milk

1c Chicken stock

2T Sweet Thai chilli sauce

-add and bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook uncovered for 8 mins, until the veg are tender.

1/3lb Green beans-Remove the tops from the beans and cut in half.

1T Cilantro-chopped

1T Fresh Basil-chopped

-add to the stir fry and toss for 2 mins. Serve with steamed rice.

Sauces for stir-fry's

#1

2T Oyster sauce

2 Cloves Garlic

2T sesame Oil

1T Fish sauce

2T Limejuice

-this is a great sauce to toss beans in with some green onions. Or perhaps some asparagus garnished with some sesame seeds.

#2

1T Oil

2T Ginger-grated

1t pepper

2cloves garlic

3T Lime juice

2T Dark brown sugar

3T Sweet Thai Chilli sauce

-this is great tossed with some stir fried Chinese greens.

#3

1c Hoisin sauce

5T Soy sauce

3T Sugar

5 Green onions-thinly sliced.

I hope you enjoy all these recipes, they are very versatile, and you can add chicken or beef to any of them. If you were going to add beef, I would get a tender steak, if time allows marinade it. Fry it or grill it til medium-rare. Remove from heat and set aside until the stir-fry is complete, then slice the steak on an angle into thin strips, add to the stir-fry and toss. This way the meat won't toughen. If I am using chicken, I prepare it in a similar way, by baking off the breast first then slicing it and adding it to the stir fry at the end.

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