



yan-kit's classic
chinese
COOKBOOK

Yan-kit So

Foreword by Claudia Roden

yan-kit's classic
chinese
COOKBOOK





yan-kit's classic
chinese
COOKBOOK



Yan-Kit So





LONDON, NEW YORK, MUNICH,
MELBOURNE, DELHI

To my son, Hugo E. Martin

Editor Elizabeth Watson
Senior Art Editor Nicola Rodway
Executive Managing Editor Adèle Hayward
Managing Art Editor Nick Harris
DTP Designer Traci Salter

New photography art directed for DK by Carole Ash
New photography by Martin Brigdale

DK DELHI

Editorial team Dipali Singh, Shinjini Chatterjee,
Glenda Fernandes

Design team Kavita Dutta, Romi Chakraborty,
Mini Dhawan

DTP team Balwant Singh, Pankaj Sharma,
Harish Aggarwal

First published in the United States in 1984

This edition published in 2006

by Dorling Kindersley Publishing Inc.,
375 Hudson St, New York,
New York 10014

A Penguin Company

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Copyright © 1984, 1998, 2006 Dorling Kindersley
Limited, London

Text copyright © 1984, 1998, 2006 Yan-kit So

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American
copyright conventions. No part of this publication may
be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior
written permission of the copyright owner.

A Cataloging-in-Publication record is available from
the Library of Congress

ISBN-10: 0-7566-2351-0

ISBN-13: 978-0-7566-2351-7

Reproduced by Colourscan, Singapore

Printed by Leo Paper Group, China

See our complete catalogue at www.dk.com





Contents

Foreword by Claudia Roden	6
Introduction	8
Ingredients	12
Equipment	28
Techniques	32

Recipes

Hors d'oeuvres	44
Soups and fire pots	64
Fish and seafood	80
Poultry and eggs	102
Meat	124
Vegetables	148
Rice, noodles and dumplings	170
Desserts	188

Regional menus

Regional Chinese cooking	194
Northern or Peking menu recipes	196
Eastern or Shanghai menu recipes	206
Western or Szechwan menu recipes	214
Southern or Cantonese menu recipes	224
Mixed regional menu recipes	232

Special recipes	240
Glossary	243
Index	251
Acknowledgments	256



Foreword

I first met Yan-kit in the early 1980s when we were both demonstrating cooking at Prue Leith's school. She was elegantly dressed under her starched apron, and tiny behind the demonstrating table. She was nervous and talked very fast with a strong Chinese accent. We went out for coffee together when we were finished. She seemed a very unlikely cook or even cookery writer. She was scholarly, with the aristocratic air of the educated Chinese who, although refined gourmets, looked down on cooking as a menial occupation. But she showed an amazing determination to transmit the gastronomic traditions and practical culinary techniques of her homeland. At that time, although Chinese cuisine was generally considered the second-greatest in the world after French cuisine, the Chinese food familiar to Europeans and Americans was on the level of the debased cheap carry-out. Recipe books in Chinese were hopeless, giving little indication of quantities, timings and techniques; and in China, the Cultural Revolution had reviled the grand style as bourgeois and persecuted the great cooks.

It was after the loss of her American husband, Briton Martin Jr., when she was left alone with a tiny baby, that Yan-kit took up cooking with great passion as a salvation from her enormous grief. She wrote several Chinese cookbooks, two of which are among the best on the subject in any language. Yan-kit had very high standards for everything in life; she loved music, opera, poetry, art, and fashion, and she put the great force of her intellect and knowledge, her incredible good taste, and her love of good food into her projects.



Yan-kit's Classic Chinese Cookbook was her first book. It was an early bridge between the East and the West and remains one of the best introductions to Chinese cooking. It features recipes from all the regions of China, though it represents more of the delicate cuisines of the east coast, Shanghai, and the area south of her Hong Kong childhood, than the stronger-flavored, cruder cooking of the northern and western regions. The recipes are more refined *haute cuisine* than basic rural food, but many of the dishes are very easy to prepare. Yan-kit was a purist, eager to keep the recipes authentic, but she made them accessible. She tested them so scrupulously, and described every step so clearly and meticulously, that even the complex recipes are easy to follow. Like many of her friends, I was privileged to eat at her house when she was testing dishes. They were all stunning and utterly delicious. I am so happy that the book has been reprinted in such a glorious production.

Now that China has become the biggest economy in the world, a superpower that we will have increasing contact with, we will need to understand Chinese culture. Food is an important part of that culture. The Chinese are mad about their food. The old grand dishes are being revived for banquets and in the new best restaurants. With Yan-kit's book we can make them our own.

Claudia Roden



Introduction

My interest in food is inherited from my father. Although he did not cook himself, he always asked Mother to see to it that what was on the table was correct, right down to the last detail: for him, stir-fried dishes had to have “wok fragrance,” sugar was to be used very sparingly in marinades; chicken was not to be overcooked lest the flesh became tough; fish for steaming was to be bought live from the market and abalone was to be well seasoned with oyster sauce. Like children in other Chinese families, my brothers, sisters and I joined the grown-ups for dinner from the age of four or five, picking with chopsticks from the dishes served in the center of the table. So it isn't surprising that what has stayed in my mind is delicious well-prepared dishes, seasoned to Father's liking, rather than the bland food given to young children in the West.

From those early childhood days in Hong Kong I also remember Father taking us to restaurants where we had delicate hot tidbits, *dim sum*, or to the boat restaurants in Aberdeen for special seafood. Every year, during the month following Chinese New Year, his *Hong* or import-export trading company would give a banquet to which our whole family as well as those who worked for him would go. At these banquets the menu would follow a prescribed procedure: two small, hot seasonal dishes followed by shark's fin, either as a soup or braised in a sauce, next a chicken with crispy red skin to augur another prosperous year, then a duck or perhaps succulent pigeons, followed by another soup—turtle or something else equally exotic—then one or two more stir-fried dishes and lastly a whole steamed fish, the pronunciation of which is the same as the word “surplus,” which can signify abundant wealth.

Having taken good food for granted, like so many other Chinese, I did not think seriously about it until I became a frugal postgraduate student at the University of London. Short of cash but nonetheless hungry, haunted by the tastes of both home-cooked and restaurant dishes, I began to try my own hand at cooking Chinese food. To my delight, I found I was adept at it. One dish led to another, and soon I found that I had become an enthusiast, cooking with zest and satisfying not only my own palate but many others'.

This amateurish approach took a marked turn in the early 1970s when I spent a long summer with my young son in Waterford, Connecticut. There I used to entertain my American family and friends with Chinese dishes, and I remember their surprise that the tiny Niantic scallops could be so succulently tender when simply stir-fried; that the Cherrystone clams, delicious served on the half-shell New England style, could make one's mouth water equally, if not more, when cooked in black bean sauce with garlic; and that sea bass and bluefish could be so refreshing steamed with slices of ginger and seasoned with a little soy sauce. They were equally enthusiastic about the strips of pork I roasted, then brushed over with a little honey, and with ox tongue braised slowly in soy sauce and sherry. For my part, I found cooking remedial, relaxing and rewarding. The seed of this book was sown then.

Since that time, I have worked with different Chinese chefs in Hong Kong and London, been to China and Taiwan to sample different regional cuisines, entertained at home, and taught and demonstrated Chinese cookery both privately and publicly. The invaluable reactions of friends and students led to much pondering over food and cookery in general, and Chinese food and cookery in particular. I discovered that many people who are very enthusiastic about Chinese food are, unfortunately, in awe of Chinese cookery. They claim it is time-consuming, fiddly and generally incomprehensible. But since every form of cooking takes a certain amount of time and involves some technique, however trivial, the first two points are irrelevant. On the third point, I strongly believe that Chinese cookery can be as comprehensible as any other, and this book is an expression of that belief. How? First, by taking each recipe and breaking down the method into clear steps, and by giving precise explanation (and in many cases an illustration) of how and why certain methods or techniques are used. Second, by illustrating every recipe to show what the dish should look like, and third, by describing and illustrating any special Chinese ingredients, so that they can be properly selected. Above all, by presenting a fair sample of classic dishes, my aim has been to enable every cook to achieve the desired authentic effect.

What makes food Chinese

Whatever the arguments about the greatness of Chinese cuisine, it is undeniable that certain features make the food look Chinese, smell Chinese and taste Chinese.

One feature, unique to Chinese cooking, is the technique of stir-frying. A small amount of oil is poured into a heated wok and a few condiments are added to “arouse the wok” and lend fragrance to the main ingredients, which are rapidly stirred and cooked in a short time.

This technique requires specially prepared ingredients. In Chinese cooking these are cut up into uniformly small pieces so that they will both absorb the taste of the seasonings they are marinated in and retain their freshness, juiciness and crispness.

Another speciality of Chinese cuisine is its use of dried products. Before the invention of canning and deep-freezing, drying was the Chinese way of preserving food. But even though canning has become a Chinese industry and frozen food products are now exported abroad, dried products are still widely used and are very often more expensive than corresponding fresh ones. This is because the dried products, when reconstituted, add an extra

dimension to the taste and richness of the finished dish.

For instance, the flavor and fragrance that dried Chinese mushrooms so miraculously lend to other ingredients are beyond the capabilities of fresh mushrooms. The same can also be said of dried scallops, dried oysters, dried shrimp and dried abalone, one of the most exotic ingredients in Chinese cuisine.

Nowhere in other cuisines is there such a pronounced emphasis on texture. Exotic ingredients like shark’s fin, bird’s nest, edible jellyfish or duck’s feet, and everyday ones such as cloud ears, bamboo shoots or cellophane noodles, often have little taste, yet the Chinese go to any amount of trouble preparing them, combining them with other ingredients to lend them taste. Why? Nutrition apart, it is the texture, whether crisp, elastic or slippery, that they provide that makes them invaluable. Emphasis on texture is also apparent at a more basic level: leaf vegetables, whether boiled or stir-fried, must retain their crispness; noodles must be served *al dente*.

Monosodium glutamate (MSG) is a white crystalline substance which adds a meaty sweetness to food. It is used widely in Chinese restaurants, but as some people react badly to it I do not use it in home cooking, nor have I used it in this book.



The basic table setting is a rice bowl, saucer and chopsticks. On occasion you may also need a soup spoon and small dish for sauces.

What is a typical Chinese meal?

To the Chinese, a meal comprises rice or another grain, with a few dishes. The number of dishes accompanying the rice depends on the number of people sharing the meal, but a family of six may have three or four dishes at dinner, and perhaps one less at lunch. Obviously the more dishes, the more festive and special the occasion. Whatever the number of dishes, they should be well balanced, so that in one meal a variety of ingredients, including meat, seafood and vegetables, is eaten, and different cooking methods appreciated.

Laying the table

Because a Chinese meal is a communal affair, a round table is usually used, being more conducive to sharing of the dishes. For each place setting you need one rice bowl, a matching saucer and a pair of chopsticks. As the name so aptly suggests, the rice bowl is for the rice, the saucer underneath is for food taken from the communal dishes before you eat it, or for the bones you gently spit out. The chopsticks are placed vertically to the right side of the bowl and saucer—the Chinese do not seem to have made concession to left-handers!



In China it is considered good manners to hold the bowl on your lower lip and to shovel in the rice.

How to serve a meal

On a day-to-day basis, all the dishes are served together in the center of the table (with extra rice kept warm for second or third helpings). There is no specific order for eating the dishes, so one may have a mouthful of chicken followed by another of bean curd, followed by yet another of fish. However, for more formal occasions, the dishes are served individually. The sequence of order varies from place to place, but generally one or two seasonal “delicacies” are served at the beginning, followed by substantial dishes of meat and poultry, with special soups in the middle and a fish to end the dishes. (“To have fish” is pronounced exactly the same as “surplus,” in Mandarin and Cantonese, so the Chinese frequently use this pun and choose fish symbolically to end the main dishes.) Then, one fried rice and often one noodle dish will be served. This is the host saying, with traditional polite modesty, “Excuse my humble fare which may not have been sufficient, so please fill up with some grain food!”

How to eat rice

The proper way is to raise the bowl with one hand and perch it on your lower lip and then, holding the chopsticks with the other hand, to shovel the rice into your mouth without dropping the grains on the table or floor. Rice symbolizes blessings in life for the Chinese and it is therefore vital for you to grab your blessings in rather than pick away at them.

Eating other dishes

When you pick up a piece of food from one of the central dishes, it is quite all right to do so at the same time as another person so long as your chopsticks do not end up fighting in the dish. Having picked up a piece, remember to make a gesture of touching the rice in the bowl, however momentarily, before putting the food into your mouth.

When a piece is large in size, whether with or without bone, it is polite to eat it in bites, rather than in one gulp. The bones can be sucked, quietly, before being gently spat out onto the side plate.

The main aim should be to enter into the spirit of the meal and to *enjoy* yourself. Don’t forget, however, if you are host, always to put some choice pieces in the bowl or saucer of your guests.

What to drink with Chinese food

Like table manners, the Chinese are casual about what they drink with their meals. Traditionally, they drank warm rice wine with their food and tea after the meal, but some Chinese have now adopted a habit of drinking beer or cognac or whisky, sometimes straight and sometimes diluted, with the meal. In Chinese restaurants abroad a custom has developed of serving tea throughout the meal. Many Westernized Chinese have also found that some Western table wines, especially white or rosé, go well with Chinese food. Many Chinese never drink anything with their food; they are, on the other hand, more particular about the tea they drink after the meal. There is a wide choice of tea to serve after the meal—jasmine, keemun, Oolong, iron goddess of mercy or Tit-koon-yum, Pu-erh from Yunnan and chrysanthemum, to name but a few. Jasmine is a green tea scented with jasmine petals, originally beloved of the Shanghaiese but now popular throughout China and abroad. Tit-koon-yum from Fukien, gleaming with a dark luster, releases its subtle fragrance slowly after it has been infused in the pot for some minutes. Pu-erh tea is believed to have a slight medicinal property, and is excellent after a meal of rice dishes.



USING CHOPSTICKS Perch the chopsticks on the first knuckles of the third and middle fingers so that they lie parallel to each other, resting in the crook of the thumb. Lay the thumb on top of the chopsticks to secure them—the lower chopstick should remain more or less stationary while the upper one is maneuvered by the first and middle fingers in a pincer movement.



INGREDIENTS

Vegetables

The Chinese love to eat vegetables, and the leafy green vegetables of the *Brassica* family are their special favorites. They boil or stir-fry them, but only for a short time, so that the vegetables retain both their crispness and their vitamins. They frequently use a little meat to enhance the taste of vegetable dishes, and, conversely, use some vegetables in meat dishes to provide an interesting texture.



Chinese flowering cabbage This vegetable is usually served stir-fried or simply blanched.



Mustard green This variety of mustard green is less bitter than many others, and it is usually served blanched or stir-fried, or in soup.



Bean sprouts Tender sprouts of mung beans, used to provide a crunchy texture.



Sugar peas Tender, flat green pea pods with barely formed peas. Usually served lightly blanched or stir-fried.



Chinese celery cabbage Sweet, mild-flavored cabbage, usually stir-fried or braised.



Mustard green This more pungent variety of mustard green is served pickled or in soup.



Chinese chives Used to provide flavor, they are stronger than chives, although more fibrous in texture.



Chinese white cabbage Although similar in taste to Swiss chard, it is sweeter and juicier.

Vegetables

As with many Chinese ingredients, texture is important in a vegetable: the spongy hair seaweed is both an absorber of sauce and a provider of texture; water chestnuts and bamboo shoots are pure texture foods. The flesh of winter melon is succulent and subtle, and the slippery taro goes especially well with duck. Ginkgo nuts and baby corn on the cob, often used in vegetarian dishes, add color and variety to a dish. The three preserved vegetables are popular seasonings for meat, soups and other vegetables.



Chinese water chestnuts Crisp, sweet-tasting sedge bulbs, used to provide a crunchy texture. They are also ground into flour.



Winter melon Green gourd, the flesh of which becomes almost transparent when cooked. It is often used in soup with pork, chicken or duck.



Taro Root vegetable, frequently cooked with duck or fatty pork.



Hair seaweed Product of Hopeh and Shensi provinces, this rather tasteless ingredient is used to absorb flavor and provide a slippery texture.



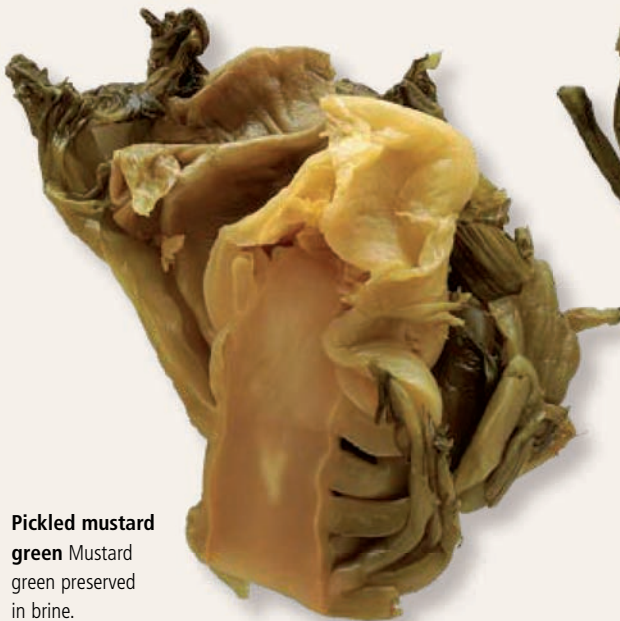
Bamboo shoots Young shoots of bamboo plants, used for their texture in many Chinese dishes.



Young corn Miniature corn on the cob, used in both vegetable and meat dishes.



Ginkgo nuts Tender, mild-tasting nuts from the ginkgo tree.



Pickled mustard green Mustard green preserved in brine.



Red-in-snow Red-rooted variety of mustard plant that sprouts up through the spring snows.



Szechwan preserved vegetable Mustard plant preserved in salt, then pickled with chili powder.

Herbs and Spices

Relatively few herbs and spices are used to produce the sophisticated simplicity of Chinese cuisine. The three indispensable ones are ginger, scallions and garlic, especially for stir-fried dishes. Next in line are star anise, Szechwan peppercorns and cinnamon, all of which enrich the taste of soy sauce-based, slow-cooked dishes. Chilies, especially the dried red ones, are part and parcel of Western

Chinese regional cuisine whereas coriander is the beloved of people in the North.



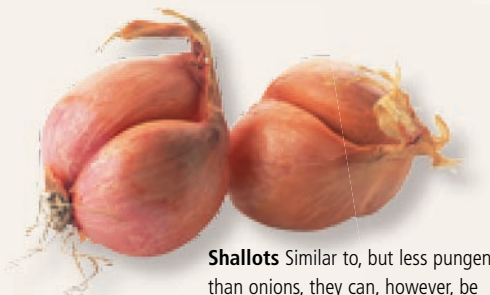
Coriander Also known as Chinese parsley, it is used as both a garnish and a seasoning.



Garlic One of the three indispensable ingredients of Chinese cooking, along with ginger and scallions.



Scallions or spring onions An essential ingredient in Chinese cuisine. Both green and white parts are used.



Shallots Similar to, but less pungent than onions, they can, however, be used in the same way.



Mixed spices Used in flavor-potting. The ready-mixed packages usually contain star anise, Szechwan peppercorns, cinnamon, ginger, fennel, cloves, liquorice and cardamom.



Five-spice powder Liquorice-tasting powder used, sparingly, in marinades.



Ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns Dry-roasted, then ground, and used to add aroma to other ingredients.



Szechwan peppercorns Not spicy hot like peppercorns, the roasted variety produces a slightly numbing effect.



Chili Indispensable hot ingredient of Szechwan cooking.



Sesame seeds, white White seeds from the sesame plant.



Star anise Pungent liquorice-tasting spice used to add flavor to meat and poultry.

Fresh ginger



Ginger The third essential ingredient in Chinese cooking, used to provide flavor and to counteract any rank odor of other ingredients.

Dried ginger



Ground ginger



Cinnamon stick

Cassia bark Dried bark of an evergreen tree, often confused with cinnamon (above), which can be used as an alternative.

Cereals, Grains and Noodles

The most important staple for the Chinese, long-grain white rice, is usually eaten with every meal. Noodles are generally of secondary importance, except in the North, where wheat is the main crop and they are eaten just as much as rice. Symbolically rice is blessing in life and noodles are longevity. Not surprisingly, therefore, noodles are always served for a birthday celebration.



White glutinous rice Sticky when cooked, this rice is used for both savory and sweet dishes.



Long-grain rice The hulled, polished grains of this variety remain the ideal staple for the Chinese.



Spring roll wrapper Paper-thin wrapper made from wheat flour and water.



Wonton wrappers Made from wheat flour, egg and water and used specifically for wontons.



River rice noodles Made from rice ground with water, which is then steamed into thin sheets before being cut.



Dried rice noodles White, wiry noodles made from rice flour.



Dried egg noodles, flat



Yi noodles



Dried egg noodles, round

Egg noodles Made from wheat flour, egg and water, these are the most commonly used and versatile of Chinese noodles, whether used in their fresh or dried form.



Fresh egg noodles, flat



Dried shrimp noodles



Fresh egg noodles, round

Buckwheat noodles Thin noodles made from buckwheat flour mixed with water.



Tientsin fen pi Made from mung beans, these are eaten as an alternative between rice noodles and cellophane noodles.



U-dong noodles

Common to Japan and Korea, these noodles are made from wheat flour and water.

Cellophane noodles Eaten more as a vegetable than a pasta, these noodles are made from ground mung beans.



Dried Products

One cannot get very far with Chinese cooking without dried fungi. They are used, according to variety, to provide texture or taste, and very often make a simple dish outstanding. Black mushrooms, used whole or sliced into small pieces, provide their own taste but also absorb that of others. Both cloud ears and golden needles absorb tastes and are often used to give texture to stir-fried pork or beef dishes; wood ears, which need to be cooked longer, are best in soups.



Chinese mushrooms, dried and reconstituted These edible tree fungi vary in both quality and price, the most expensive being the floral mushroom. Medium-sized mushrooms are most frequently used in this book.



Floral mushrooms



Straw mushrooms, canned

Straw mushrooms, dried



Straw mushrooms, dried Cultivated on rice straw in paddy fields, they are used more for their texture than their taste.



Wood ears Large, edible mushrooms cultivated in large quantities in Western China.



Cloud ears Like wood ears, these mushrooms are grown in Western China, but they are more delicate in taste.

Golden needles The dried buds of the tiger-lily flower, generally used for their texture.



Tangerine peel Dried peel, often used with star anise and Szechwan peppercorns.



Dried red dates Sweet, prunelike fruit of the jujube tree.



Creamed coconut Concentrated coconut milk in solid form.



Cornstarch Fine, white starch extracted from corn, used as a thickener.



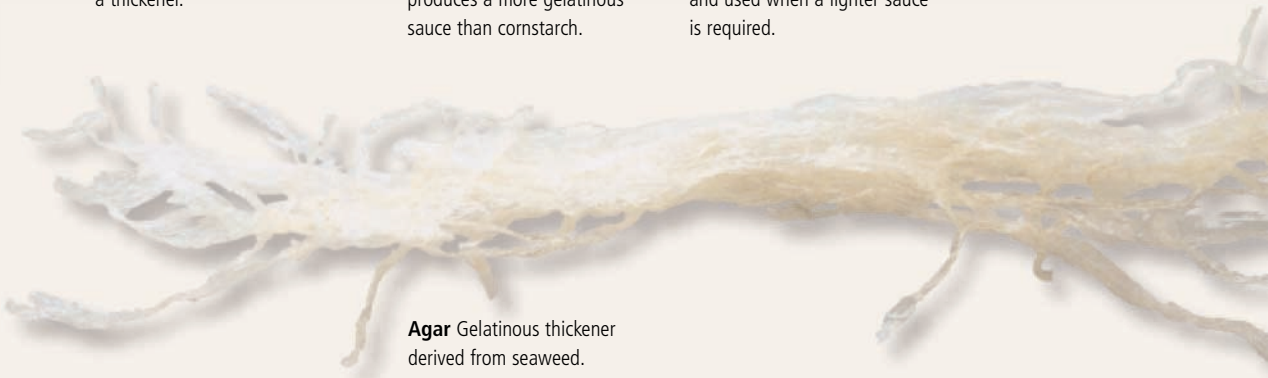
Potato flour Made from cooked potatoes, this flour produces a more gelatinous sauce than cornstarch.



Water chestnut flour Made from ground water chestnuts, and used when a lighter sauce is required.



Rock sugar Crystallized cane sugar.



Agar Gelatinous thickener derived from seaweed.

Dried Products

Chinese dried products, used as either the main ingredient or as a seasoning for more bland ingredients, are regarded as second to none. Abalone, scallops, oysters and shrimp, although delicious fresh, are much richer in taste and more interesting in texture when dried. Bird's nest, shark's fin and edible jellyfish actually have no fresh counterpart in Chinese cooking and always have to be reconstituted before cooking.



Bird's nest Nests of the swallows of the genus *Collocalia*, who line their nests with a thick mixture of predigested seaweed, which then dries to a hard, transparent layer.



Pork liver

Pork and duck liver

Chinese sausages Wind-dried sausages made of pork or pork and duck liver. Both should be cooked before use.



Edible jellyfish Preserved and dried in salt, the layers must be soaked in frequent changes of water before use.



Shark's fin The cured fin of one of several species of shark. Processed fins (right) are more economical to use.



Abalone Firm-fleshed mollusk that is often only available canned. The juice is useful for soups and sauces.



Dried scallops Deriving their name from the shell's shape, these mollusks have a deliciously sweet taste.



Dried oyster Dried and salted, these mollusks add a "smoky" taste to other ingredients.



Dried shrimp Dried shelled shrimp of various sizes, frequently used as a seasoning and in stuffing.

Beans and Bean Products

Beans and bean products play a prominent role in Chinese cooking, where they are used in much the same way as dairy products are in the West. The soybean, one of the most ancient staples grown in China, is richer in protein than an equivalent weight of any other food. However, because soybeans are hard to digest as beans, they are usually processed into sauces or, more important, into bean curd. Many imitation meat dishes, the backbone of Buddhist vegetarian food, are based on the numerous forms of bean curd. Fermented bean products are very important seasonings in savory cooking, while the red azuki bean, whole or in paste form, is used in many sweet dishes.

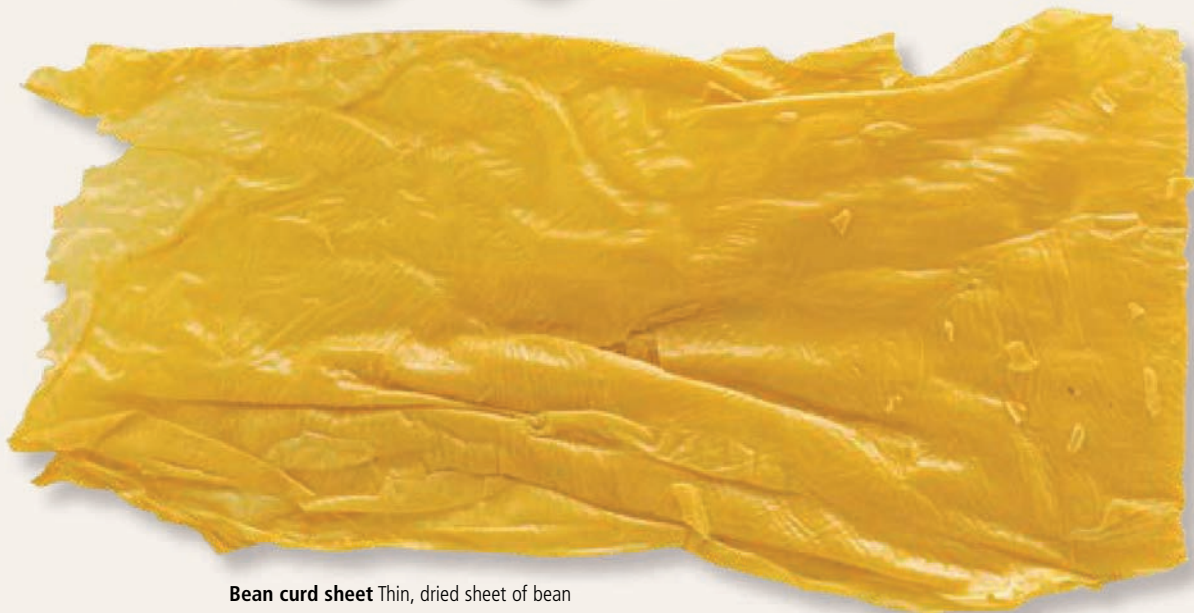


Bean curd, fresh Made from a mixture of finely ground soybeans and water, bean curd is used extensively in Chinese cookery.



Bean curd, puffed

Deep-fried pieces of fresh bean curd, used to absorb tastes and juices.



Bean curd sheet Thin, dried sheet of bean curd; has to be moistened before use.



Black beans, fermented Whole soybeans preserved in salt and ginger.



Red beans Highly proteinaceous azuki beans, most commonly used for puddings in Chinese cookery.



Red bean paste Thick paste made from puréed, sweetened red beans, frequently used as a sweet filling.



Bean curd "cheese," red fermented Fresh bean curd, fermented with salt, and rice wine.



Bean curd "cheese," white fermented Fresh bean curd, fermented with or without chili.



Crushed yellow bean sauce Purée of fermented yellow soybeans, wheat flour, salt and water.



Szechwan chili paste Spicy hot paste of dried chili and crushed yellow bean sauce.



Soybean paste Paste of crushed soybeans combined with chili, sugar and salt.



Yellow beans in salted sauce Whole yellow soy beans fermented with salt, wheat flour and sugar.

Sauces, Oils, Fats, Wines and Vinegars

Sauces of various types are used in marinades and to add flavor to cooked ingredients. Soy sauce is the most basic but also the most important seasoning. Used with salt, it helps to turn simple ingredients into Chinese cuisine. Because so many Chinese dishes are stir-fried or deep-fried, oil is obviously an important ingredient, but it is also important for the flavor it gives to marinades.

SAUCES



Thin soy sauce



Thick soy sauce



Soy sauce Made from fermented soybeans with wheat or barley, salt, sugar and yeast.

Oyster sauce Made from oyster juice, wheat flour, cornstarch and glutinous rice, salt and sugar.



Chili sauce Made from crushed chilies, vinegar, salt and plums.



Hoisin sauce Soybeans, wheat flour, salt, sugar, vinegar, garlic, chili and sesame oil combined.



Sweet bean sauce Made from crushed yellow bean sauce combined with sugar.



Shrimp paste Ground shrimp fermented in brine; available in two strengths.



Fish sauce A combination of fish, salt and water.



Sesame paste Pulverized sesame seeds. Tahini should not be used instead.

OILS



Corn oil A polyunsaturated oil from corn.



Sesame oil Dark, aromatic oil from roasted sesame seeds.



Peanut oil Rich, monounsaturated oil with a nutty flavor.

FATS



Hot chili oil Oil in which red chili flakes have been steeped.



Chicken fat Chicken fat rendered by slow frying.



Lard Rendered pork fat.

WINES AND VINEGARS



Kao-liang liqueur Very strong spirit made from sorghum.



Moutai wine Distinctive spirit made from wheat and sorghum.



Shaohsing wine Popular wine made from fermented glutinous rice and yeast.



Mei-kuei-lu wine Made from Kao-liang spirit and rose petals.



Chinkiang vinegar Thick fragrant liquid with low vinegar content.



Red vinegar Low vinegar content; frequently used as a dip.



Rice vinegar Used for cooking and pickling vegetables.



EQUIPMENT

The Wok

A wok fitted with a lid is an essential cooking utensil, because it is suitable for all methods of Chinese cooking, especially stir-frying. Woks come in different sizes, for family use, a 14-inch (36-centimeter) one made of carbon steel is ideal.



Wok brush Stiff wooden brush used for cleaning the wok after use.

The wok Generally made of steel, these round-bottomed pans allow the heat to spread rapidly and evenly, which is essential in Chinese cooking. They are available with both wooden and steel handles—both styles should be used with a glove. Woks can be used for stir-frying, deep-frying, boiling and steaming.



Bamboo steamer Small steamer placed on wooden trivet; used with wok lid or its own bamboo lid.

Chopsticks The Chinese use long wooden chopsticks in cooking because they don't conduct heat.



Bamboo strainer Bamboo-handled strainers are the best for lifting ingredients from steam or hot oil.



Wok scoop Used to toss and turn ingredients when stir-frying.



Seasoning the wok Before using your wok for the first time, heat it over high heat, then brush it lightly with oil. Wipe clean with paper towels before repeating the procedure two more times. Rinse well and dry thoroughly. The wok will rust if not in constant use. If it does, scour the rust off, rinse and brush again with oil to return it to good condition.



Wok stand Used to provide a secure base for the wok when it's used for steaming or deep-frying. It can be dispensed with when stir-frying as frying with a wok stand takes longer. Note: Although wok cookery is more suited to gas, it is possible to use electricity successfully. However, the food in the wok will take longer to reach the desired temperature. Unless you use a wok with a small, flattened bottom it is usually necessary to use a wok stand on an electric stove, especially for steaming and deep-frying.

Steamers and Cleavers

There are two basic types of steamer: specially designed metal ones that act as both water boilers and food containers, and traditional-style bamboo steamers which fit on top of a wok, in which the water is boiled. These come in various sizes, from small (see page 28) for *dim sum* to those large enough to hold a whole fish (see below). The other method of steaming doesn't require a steamer but is just as effective, especially for everyday use (see page 43). Instead, the food (on a heatproof plate) is held above the water in the wok by a metal or bamboo trivet, and the steam is retained by a tightly fitting wok lid. For any cutting, fine or rough, all you need is a medium-weight cleaver and a solid wooden board.



Assembled metal steamer Slotting snugly together so that all the steam is directed up through the holes to the food, this steamer can sit directly on the heat.

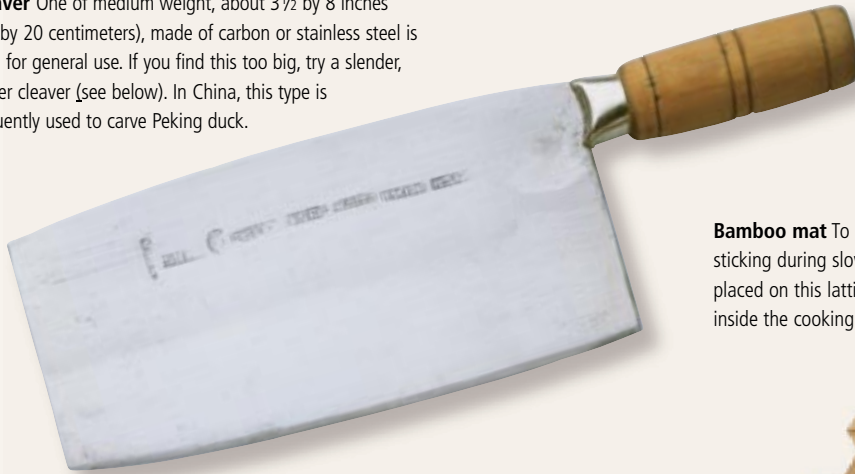


Bamboo steamer in wok This traditional-style steamer can be used with one or more baskets to hold the food. The wok must rest on a wok rim for stability.

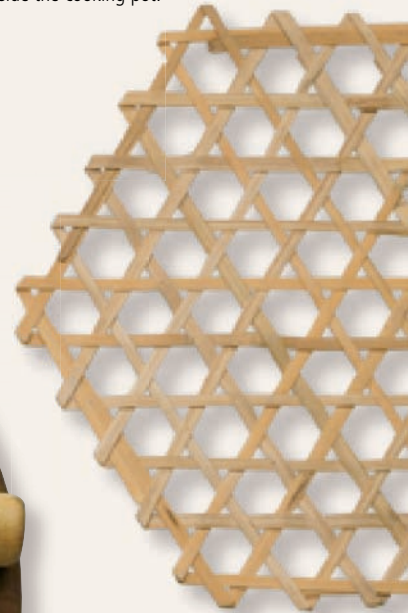


Steamer Made of stainless steel or aluminum, this specially designed steamer has a lower container for the water, on which sit one or two perforated containers for the food. The food is placed on a heatproof dish or muslin, and then covered with a tightly fitting lid.

Cleaver One of medium weight, about 3½ by 8 inches (8.5 by 20 centimeters), made of carbon or stainless steel is ideal for general use. If you find this too big, try a slender, lighter cleaver (see below). In China, this type is frequently used to carve Peking duck.



Bamboo mat To prevent meat from sticking during slow cooking, it should be placed on this latticed mat, which is placed inside the cooking pot.



Chinese chopping board A solid, wooden base is essential for chopping, and one 2 inches (5 centimeters) thick and 11 to 12 inches (28 to 30 centimeters) in diameter is ideal. When new, it should be soaked in water and oiled frequently to prevent splitting.



TECHNIQUES

Cutting vegetables

In Chinese cooking, all vegetables are cut up into uniformly small pieces, because this allows them to cook quickly without losing their crunchiness; it also means that they can absorb the taste of the oil and seasonings, despite the short cooking time. Some vegetables are cut according to their natural shape (for example, broccoli and cauliflower are cut into florets); others are sliced, shredded, diced or roll cut depending on the dish. For stir-frying, Chinese

celery cabbage is shredded, but for braising, it is cut into larger pieces. Bamboo shoots, if braised, are cut into wedges, but if put into a stir-fried dish they are sliced thin. Chinese mushrooms can be sliced thin or thick, quartered or cut into small cubes. Root vegetables such as carrots and white radishes are roll cut to expose as many surfaces to the heat as possible; celery is traditionally cut on the diagonal to make it look more attractive.



HOLDING THE CLEAVER Method 1 Curl your fingers tightly around the handle, which should rest in the palm of your hand. This way, the cleaver will cut downward with its own weight.



Method 2 Hold the handle in your palm as before, but slide your index finger down the side of the blade. Your thumb and forefinger then give you more control.



GUARDING Hold the food with your fingertips turned under, knuckles forward so that they act as a guide for the cutting blade. Never lift the cleaver higher than your knuckles.



SLICING Put the blade about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 millimeters) from one edge and slice downward. Regulate thickness by moving your fingers farther away from, or nearer to, the edge being cut.



SHREDDING Cut the food into uniform slices about $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (3 to 5 millimeters) wide, depending on preference. Cut across these slices to form shreds. With vegetables other than cabbage, stack the slices before slicing into strips.



DIAGONAL CUTTING Hold the top of the food firmly, with your fingers at a slant of 60° . Cut down at this angle and continue down to the end of the vegetable.



ROLL CUTTING 1 Hold one end of the vegetable firmly and make a diagonal cut.



2 Roll the vegetable a quarter turn toward you and make another diagonal cut. Continue rolling and cutting.



RECONSTITUTING MUSHROOMS 1 Rinse the mushrooms. Put them in a bowl and pour on enough warm water to cover by about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (3.5 centimeters).



2 Set aside for about 20 to 30 minutes or until the mushrooms have become swollen and soft.



CHOPPING CUCUMBER 1 Cut the cucumber diagonally into slices about 1/8 inch (3 millimeters) wide.



2 Stack a few pieces together at a time and cut into sticks about 1/8 inch (5 millimeters) wide.

CUTTING SCALLIONS



BRUSHES 1 Trim the white ends of the scallions into 2 1/2-inch (6-centimeter) lengths. Make repeated cuts through both ends, leaving the central section intact.



2 Place the scallions in iced water and refrigerate for several hours. This will make the ends curl up, forming the brushes.



SILKEN THREADS Cut off the roots and any withered tops. Chop into 2- to 3-inch (5- to 7.5-centimeter) lengths. Slice along the length of the scallions and then cut the two halves into strands.



FIVE-WAY SCALLIONS Top: trimmed; middle left: sliced; middle center: silken threads; middle right: brushes; bottom left: small rounds; bottom right: diagonal cut.

CUTTING GARLIC AND GINGER



SILKEN THREADS 1 Slice thinly. Arrange the slices on top of each other.



2 Placing the cleaver carefully, cut the slices into narrow strips.



CRUSHING GARLIC 1 Lay the unpeeled cloves on a wooden board. Using the side of the cleaver, bang down on the garlic firmly.



2 Separate the flesh from the skin by peeling one from the other.



FINELY CHOPPED Place the garlic on a wooden board. Crush with the cleaver, remove the skin, then chop repeatedly until finely minced.



THREE-WAY GARLIC AND GINGER **Top:** ginger root: sliced; silken threads; chopped fine. **Bottom:** garlic cloves: sliced; silken threads; chopped fine.

Cutting meat

Because Chinese cooking methods rely on the rapid cooking of ingredients, any meat used has to be cut up into small, uniform pieces. Invariably for stir-frying, and sometimes for steaming, the meat should be cut up into thin slices, matchstick strips or cubes. This way it can be quickly stir-fried or steamed without losing any of its

tenderness. Beef should always be cut across the grain or it will be tough; pork and chicken can be cut either along or across the grain. Although the cutting up of meat into small pieces is time-consuming, it is an integral part of Chinese cooking and is essential if you want the meat to taste good.



MATCHSTICK CUT 1 Cut the meat into thin slices about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 millimeters) thick.



2 Lay the slices on top of each other and cut them into narrow slivers like matchsticks.



RECTANGULAR CUT 1 Cut the meat into manageable pieces about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (3.5 centimeters) wide.



2 Turn the chunks on their sides and then cut across the grain into rectangular slices about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (5 millimeters) thick.



SLIVERED CUT Cut $\frac{1}{5}$ -inch (5-millimeter) slices of beef. Lay them flat and cut into long slivers. Use especially for Dry-fried beef.



PAPER-THIN CUT Slice the meat as thinly as possible. Freezing the meat for a couple of hours beforehand makes this easier.



MATCHSTICK HEADS 1 Slice the ham into uniform strips. Gather the strips together so that they're lying parallel to one another.



2 Hold the strips firmly with your free hand and cut across them to form small dice.



CUBED CHICKEN 1 Cut the breast lengthwise into three long strips.



2 Gather the strips together and cut across them to form uniform cubes.



MARCH-CHOPPING 1 Cut the meat into small pieces. Using one or two cleavers, rhythmically chop the meat, moving from side to side.



2 As the meat spreads, slip a cleaver under one side and use it to flip the meat into the center. Then continue chopping.

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES



DEVEINING PRAWNS 1 Shell the prawns. Hold the tail end firmly and make a small cut along the center of the back.



2 Remove the black vein and discard it.



MINCING PRAWNS 1 Shell and devein the prawns and cut up roughly. Using the broad side of the cleaver, press down on the prawns to flatten them.



2 Repeatedly chop the prawns until they're minced.

CHOPPING POULTRY CHINESE-STYLE



1 Slice off the leg on each side, cutting down through the joint close to the body.



2 On each leg cut the drumstick and thigh apart. Cut both the thigh and the drumstick in two.



3 Split the carcass in half lengthwise so that the back and breast form two separate pieces.



4 Remove the breastbone with a knife, sliding it between the bone and the meat.



5 Using a pair of kitchen scissors cut the backbone out of the back piece, and discard.



6 Cut the back pieces crosswise into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) pieces.



7 Halve the breast meat lengthwise then cut crosswise into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) pieces.



8 Reassemble the bird with the breast meat on top of the back pieces.

Stir-frying

Stir-frying is the unique contribution of the Chinese to world cooking. When cooked by this method, meat is tender, vegetables are crisp, and they both have a special fragrance. Because speed and instant control are essential, gas is preferable to electricity.

In Chinese cooking there are two types of deep-frying. In one, the ingredients are deep-fried until

crisp and cooked through; in the other they are deep-fried just long enough to seal in their juices. This is known as “going through the oil,” and is a preparatory step to the sophisticated stir-frying invariably used in Chinese restaurants. Although it produces a more refined result in certain dishes, it is not essential for everyday cooking.

STIR-FRYING



1 Stir-frying is a very quick cooking technique, so prepare all the ingredients before you start. Add the marinade to the main ingredient and stir well. If oil is to be added, blend it in last.



2 Heat the empty wok over high heat until smoke rises (you may also notice a slight blue/rainbow effect at the bottom). Heating the wok before adding the oil prevents the meat or fish from sticking.



3 Gently add the oil (usually about 3 to 4 tablespoons), and swirl it around to coat halfway up the side of the wok.



4 If you're using garlic, add this to the oil. Steady the wok with a gloved hand as you do so.



5 As soon as the garlic has started to sizzle and take on color, add the ginger. Stir.



6 As soon as the ginger starts to sizzle, add the white part only of the scallions (the green part needs less cooking and is added later). Stir well.



7 Add the main ingredient (meat, fish or shellfish). Slide the scoop under the food to the bottom of the wok; turn and toss until the food is partially cooked.



8 Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok and continue to stir until the sizzling subsides.



9 Add any other ingredients that need heating or reheating and stir and toss.



10 Make a well in the center of the wok and pour in the well-mixed sauce. Stir until the sauce has thickened and turned glossy.



11 Add the green parts of the scallions, which need the least cooking. Stir and toss briefly.



12 Scoop out the stir-fried ingredients onto a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

DEEP-FRYING



1 Put the wok on a wok rim. Pour in enough oil to half fill it. Turn the heat on high.



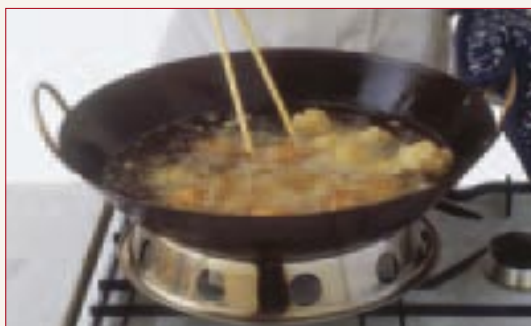
2 If you're using a thermometer, put it in after you've poured in the oil. Heat until the thermometer registers the required temperature.



3 When you notice the oil moving put in a piece of stale bread. The oil will be at 350°F (180°C) when the bread browns in about 60 seconds.



4 Using long wooden chopsticks, or tongs, carefully add the food to the oil.



5 With the wooden chopsticks, move the food around. This prevents pieces from sticking together.



6 Using a large hand strainer (or a perforated spoon), carefully remove the food from the oil. Drain on paper towels before serving.

Steaming

Steaming is a technique that evolved when a moist dish was required as an alternative to a roasted one. Compared with dishes cooked by other methods, steamed dishes are more subtle in taste and seem to bring out the freshness of the ingredients more. Thus, the fresher the ingredients, the better they are for steaming. In fact, steamed dishes cover the

whole spectrum of ingredients: meat, poultry, vegetables (not leaf vegetables), breads, buns, hot hors d'oeuvre (*dim sum*), seafood and, especially, fish. Preparation for steaming often entails cutting up ingredients, marinating them and then putting them on a heatproof plate so that the juices from the food and the seasonings can be served with the dish itself.



USING AN ALUMINUM STEAMER 1 Pour boiling water into the lower container until it reaches halfway up the sides of the container.



2 Place the heatproof plate, with the item on it, in the steamer and secure the lid. Put the steamer over the lower container.



USING A WOK 1 Put the base of a small bamboo steamer or metal trivet in the wok. Fill with boiling water to within 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) of the container holding the food to be steamed.



2 Place whatever is to be steamed on a heatproof plate, and put it carefully on the stand. Place the wok lid on securely.



ADDING THE CONDIMENTS TO STEAMED FISH 1 When the fish is cooked, turn off the heat. Put in the scallions and ginger, then pour the prepared, heated oil over them.



2 If you're going to add ham, sprinkle it on top. Pour soy sauce over the fish and serve immediately.



HORS D'OEUVRES

Shredded Chicken with Tientsin Fen Pi

INGREDIENTS

2 cups clear stock or water
2 small chicken breasts, skinned and boned, or chicken breast fillet
4 pieces Tientsin fen pi, each about 9 inches (23 centimeters) in diameter
½ long cucumber, about 8 ounces (225 grams)

For the sauce

1 tablespoon rice or white wine vinegar
2 teaspoons hot prepared mustard
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
4 tablespoons thin soy sauce
8 turns white pepper mill
1 tablespoon sesame oil
3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

SERVES 6

This pleasant Northern dish is served cold with a slightly tangy sauce, and because it can be prepared completely in advance it is very handy for entertaining. The *fen pi*, literally meaning the skin of flour, must not be soggy if the dish is to be successful.

1 Put the stock or water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the chicken and simmer, covered, for about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let steep in the liquid for 15 minutes without disturbing. Remove and let cool.

2 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the vinegar, mustard, salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper and oils.

3 Bring a large pan of water, about 6 cups, to a fast boil. Put in the fen pi, one by one, so that they will not stick to each other. Cover and remove from the heat for 5 minutes. Drain. Then, handling with care, put the fen pi into a pan of cold water.

4 Fold each fen pi into 3, then cut crosswise at ½-inch (1-centimeter) intervals. Transfer to a serving plate.

5 Cut the cucumber diagonally into thin slices, leaving them in an ordered pile. Cut the pile into thin strips. Place on top of the fen pi.

6 Going with the grain, tear the chicken by hand into thin strips and put on top of the cucumber.

7 Just before serving, pour the sauce over it, mix well and serve.

Note: If the dish is not to be served right away, the ingredients can be individually refrigerated, covered, and assembled just prior to serving.





Spiced-salt Spareribs

You can also use boneless shoulder or chops to make this dish. You will find the result just as deliciously satisfying.

INGREDIENTS

1½ to 2½ pounds (675 grams to 1.15 kilograms) meaty spareribs
1½ to 2½ tablespoons cornstarch
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
1 to 1½ teaspoons spice salt

For the spiced salt

2 tablespoons salt
¾ teaspoon ground roasted
Szechwan peppercorns
½ teaspoon five-spice powder

For the marinade

¾ to 1¼ teaspoons spiced salt
1½ to 2½ tablespoons thin soy sauce
1 to 1½ teaspoons sugar
8 to 10 turns black pepper mill
2 to 3 teaspoons Shaohsing wine
or medium-dry sherry

SERVES 6 TO 8

1 Ask the butcher to separate the spareribs, and then chop them into pieces about 2 inches (5 centimeters) long. This can also be done at home if you possess a heavy kitchen cleaver, a thick chopping board and a strong arm. Put the meat into a dish.

2 Prepare the spiced salt: Add the salt to a dry wok and stir-fry over moderate heat for about 4 minutes, or until it takes on color slightly. Remove from the heat and add the Szechwan peppercorns and five-spice powder. Mix well and let cool. (Spiced salt can be kept in a covered jar for a long time.)

3 Prepare the marinade: Add the spiced salt, soy sauce, sugar, pepper and wine or sherry to the spareribs. Blend well. Let marinate for about 2 hours, turning the pieces over 2 or 3 times for better absorption.

4 Pour off any liquid marinade that has not been absorbed. Sprinkle with the cornstarch and mix well to coat.

5 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C) or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Place the spareribs on a large hand strainer or in a deep-frying basket. Dip into the oil 2 or 3 times while you separate the pieces with a pair of long chopsticks. Slide the pieces into the oil if you are using a perforated spoon and a wok, or leave the deep-frying basket in the deep fryer. Deep-fry for about 3 minutes, or until the pieces begin to surface. Remove and set aside.

6 Reheat the oil to the same temperature. Return the spareribs to the oil and deep-fry a second time for about 1 minute, or until crisp and thoroughly cooked. Remove and drain on paper towels before placing on a warm serving plate.

7 Sprinkle with the spiced salt. Mix thoroughly, then serve.

Note: Left over spareribs can be reheated. Wrap in foil and place in a preheated oven at 375°F (190°C) for 20 minutes.



Crisp Stir-fried Shrimp

Texture is the essence of this dish. The quickly cooked shrimp should be crisp yet tender, and the longer they are marinated in the refrigerator—up to 3 days—the better their texture becomes. The delicate color of the shrimp needs no garnish.

- 1** If frozen shrimp are used, defrost thoroughly. Wash the shrimp under cold running water. Pat dry with paper towels but leave damp. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Sprinkle the salt over the shrimp and mix well. Stir in the cornstarch, then add the egg white and stir again to coat the shrimp evenly and thoroughly. Cover and let marinate for at least 5 hours.
- 3 For the sauce:** Mix the cornstarch, stock and sugar together in a small bowl. Set aside.
- 4** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat until just hot, 300°F (100°C). Carefully add all the shrimp and fry for 30 to 45 seconds, separating them with a pair of long chopsticks or a long-handled wooden spoon. Remove the shrimp before they are quite cooked with a perforated spoon or strainer and drain on paper towels.
- 5** Pour most of the oil into a container, leaving only about 2 tablespoons in the wok. Reheat until smoke rises. Quickly add the shrimp to the wok and stir a few times with a wok scoop or metal spatula. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. When the sizzling dies down, pour in the well-stirred sauce. Continue to toss for a few seconds more. Add salt to taste, if necessary. Transfer the mixture to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound 2 ounces (500 grams) fresh or frozen raw peeled shrimp or prawns, cut into ¾-inch (2-centimeter) pieces
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 egg white

For the sauce

1 teaspoon cornstarch
4 tablespoons clear stock
¼ teaspoon sugar
salt to taste

SERVES 6



Edible Jellyfish with Cucumber

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) preserved
edible jellyfish
½ long cucumber

For the dressing

1 teaspoon rice or cider vinegar
2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
½ teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
½ teaspoon prepared mustard

SERVES 4

Do not be put off by the initial rubbery appearance of the jellyfish, which is sold in sheets, folded and packed into plastic bags with large grains of salt in between the folds. When properly prepared, edible jellyfish gives great pleasure to those who enjoy food as much for texture as for taste. This is certainly why the Chinese like it.

- 1** Shake all the sandy salt from the jellyfish. Wash in 3 changes of water, squeezing to get rid of some of the excess saltiness.
- 2** Put into a large, deep bowl and fill with cold water. Soak for 3 to 4 days, changing the water twice a day and squeezing the jellyfish each time. At the end of the soaking, it should be totally free of salt.
- 3 Prepare the dressing:** Mix together the vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, oil and mustard.
- 4** Squeeze excess water from the jellyfish. Put on a board and cut into thin strips about ⅛ inch (3 millimeters) wide. Drain well.
- 5** Cut the cucumber diagonally into slices about ⅛ inch (3 millimeters) thick. Stack a few pieces together at a time and cut into sticks about ½ inch (5 millimeters) wide.
- 6** Arrange the cucumber sticks in a circle on the serving plate and place the jellyfish in the center.
- 7** Just before serving, add the well-stirred dressing to the jellyfish.





Steamed Scallops in the Shell

INGREDIENTS

20 large scallops
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
6 or 8 cloves garlic, peeled and diced
4 or 6 large scallions, green parts only,
cut into rounds

For the sauce

4 or 6 large scallions, white parts only,
cut into silken threads (see page 34)
3 to 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
¾ inch (2 centimeters) fresh ginger root,
peeled and cut into silken threads
(see page 35)
3 or 4 fresh green chilies, seeded and
cut into rounds
2 tablespoons thick soy sauce
2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
2 tablespoons water

SERVES 6 TO 8

A Cantonese dish at its simplest and best. The fresh scallops are steamed with just a touch of garlic, then served with a sauce to add zest to their natural sweetness. The details of preparation, seemingly elaborate, are nevertheless worth observing if you wish to make this simple yet sophisticated dish.

1 Ask the fishdealer to open the scallops on the cup side of the shells rather than on the flat side. If they have already been opened on the flat side, ask for the cup shells, so that you can transfer the scallop meat to them. Remove the frills or rims, sandy and black impurities and the muscles, leaving only the white meat and the corals or roes. Separate the corals from the meat and save them for another recipe or freeze them. Rinse the scallop meat and pat dry, leaving them on the shells.

2 Prepare the sauce: Divide the scallions into 2 portions and put into 2 serving bowls. Heat a wok until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Lower the heat and add the ginger and chilies. Remove from the heat. After a few seconds, add the soy sauces and water and bring to simmering point. Pour this mixture over the scallions in the bowls.

3 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C) or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Put the garlic into a small wire sieve. Dip the sieve into the oil quickly 3 or 4 times, or until the garlic has taken on color. Save the oil for the other deep-frying purposes.

4 Place 4 or 5 pieces of garlic and the same amount of green scallions on each scallop. Place the scallops in a wok or steamer; some shells can perch on top of other shells as long as they are not pressing down on the meat.

5 Steam over high heat for about 7 to 10 minutes. The scallops will be opaque and be just cooked. There will be juice in the shell.

6 Remove each shell, taking care not to spill the juice, and put on a large serving platter or on individual plates. Serve hot.

7 To eat, put a small amount of sauce on the meat, then break it up to absorb the sauce. As host or hostess, do encourage your guests to pick up the shell and drink the tasty juice as well.





Deep-fried Wontons

A popular cold starter or a snack that is part and parcel of Cantonese *dim sum*.

INGREDIENTS

6 medium raw prawns in the shell,
without heads
egg white, lightly beaten
72 wonton wrappers, each 3 inches
(7.5 centimeters) square
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the sweet and sour sauce

1 cup water
4 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons rice or wine vinegar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons tomato ketchup
2½ teaspoons potato flour, dissolved
in 2 tablespoons water
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red food coloring (optional)

SERVES 8

1 Prepare the sweet and sour sauce: Put the water, sugar, vinegar, salt and ketchup in a saucepan and bring to simmering point. Gradually add the dissolved potato flour, stirring as the sauce thickens. Stir in the food coloring. Pour into one or two serving bowls and let cool.

2 If frozen prawns are used, defrost thoroughly. Shell the prawns, devein (see page 38) and pat dry. Cut each one into 6 cubes.

3 Prepare the wontons:

The classic way: Put about 1 teaspoon of filling in the center of 1 wrapper placed at an angle, like a diamond, on the palm of the hand or on a surface (a). Fold the bottom half upward (b) to make a triangle (c), then turn the triangle to point toward you (d). Fold the 2 side corners backward (e) and, using one finger, smear a little egg white on one corner and put the other corner on top, pressing to secure them. Turn up the front flaps to make the wonton look like a hat (f).





The quick way: Put about 1 teaspoon of filling in the center of 1 wrapper placed on the palm of the hand. Gather together the corners of the wrapper with the other hand and give it a twist in the middle to secure the wrapping (see below). Repeat until all the filling is used up.

4 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Tip in 8 to 10 wontons, or however many will float freely, and deep-fry for about 40 to 60 seconds, or until golden in color and crisp in the center. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Repeat until all are fried.

5 The wontons will stay crisp for several hours and can be served either warm or cold.

6 To eat, spoon sweet and sour sauce on each wonton, then pick up with either chopsticks or fingers.

Note: If left overnight, deep-fried wontons will, of course, lose their crispness. They can, however, be turned into Wonton wrapper crisps soup, which is delicious, if they are put into clear broth and simmered for 1 or 2 minutes, until tender (see page 68).





Special Spring Rolls

Spring rolls, also known as egg rolls, are a tasty filling wrapped in a thin dough and deep-fried until crispy. Here, for the filling and pork marinade, use medium-dry sherry if Shaohsing wine is not available.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) carrots
 6 ounces (175 grams) cellophane noodles
 10 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 8 ounces (225 grams) lean pork
 8 ounces (225 grams) raw shrimp or 10 ounces (280 grams) medium prawns in the shell but without heads
 8 ounces (225 grams) sugar peas or French beans, trimmed
 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 ½ to 1¼ inch (1 to 4.5 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
 6 or 8 scallions, cut into small rounds
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 6 ounces (175 grams) canned bamboo shoots, cut into matchstick-sized strips
 2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
 30 to 35 pieces large spring roll wrappers, about 8½ to 9½ inches (21 to 24 centimeters) square
 lightly beaten egg white
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon sugar
 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
 6 turns pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine
 1 teaspoon sesame oil
 1 teaspoon potato flour
 1½ tablespoons water

For the shrimp marinade

¼ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon sugar
 2 teaspoon thin soy sauce
 4 turns pepper mill
 1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 10 TO 15

- 1** Peel and cut the carrots into strips. Place them in a bowl and add 1 teaspoon of salt to draw out the water. Drain after 30 minutes. Pat dry, if necessary.
- 2** Put the cellophane noodles into a large bowl and pour 4 cups of boiling water over them. Cover and let soak and expand for at least 30 minutes. Drain well. Cut up roughly.
- 3** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Shred into thin slivers. (Do not use a food processor.)
- 4** Cut the pork into matchstick-sized pieces. Put into a bowl.
- 5 Prepare the pork marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, oil, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir well to coat. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes.
- 6** Shell and devein the prawns, if necessary (see page 38); slice into pieces similar in size to the pork. If shrimp are used, they can be left whole or halved. Put into a bowl.
- 7 Prepare the shrimp marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, and oil to the shrimp or prawns. Let marinate for 15 minutes.
- 8** Cut the peas or beans diagonally into strips similar to the bamboo shoots.
- 9** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 3 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, half the ginger and half the scallions. When the garlic sizzles and takes on color, add the pork and turn and toss with the wok scoop for about 30 seconds. Add the shrimp and continue to flip and turn for another minute. Splash in the wine (or use medium-dry sherry) along the edge of the wok and continue to flip and toss. When the sizzling dies down, put in the mushrooms and bamboo shoots. Stir until hot. Remove and cool.
- 10** Pour the remaining oil into the wok and swirl it around. Add the remaining ginger and scallions. Add the peas and stir-fry for 1 minute. Stir in the carrots and then the cellophane noodles. Continue to stir, over less fierce heat, until hot, letting any excess water evaporate. Season with ¾ teaspoon of salt and the thin soy sauce. Transfer to a large dish and leave to cool.



11 Place a spring roll wrapper on a flat dish or a clear surface, arranging it in a diamond shape. Put about 2 tablespoons of the vegetable filling just off the center and top with about 1 tablespoon of the other filling. Spread it out about 5 inches (12.5 centimeters) wide. Tucking in the filling, fold up the bottom flap (a) and start rolling. Midway, fold the 2 side flaps toward the center (b), brush the remaining flap with the egg white (c) and fold it up (d) to seal the spring roll tightly. Repeat until all are done.

12 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Carefully add about 6 to 8 spring rolls at a time or however many will float freely and deep-fry for about 4 minutes, or until pale golden, turning over periodically. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. To crisp, reheat the oil to 350°F (180°C) and deep-fry a second time for 1 or 2 minutes, or until golden. Remove and drain. Serve hot.

Note: Spring rolls can be frozen after the first deep-frying. The second deep-frying can be done just before they are served.





Deep-fried Five-spice Rolls

INGREDIENTS

1 package dried bean curd sheet
(usually 8 ounces [225 grams], containing
8 sheets, each 13 by 6 inches
[33 by 15 centimeters])
6 ounces (175 grams) water chestnuts,
fresh peeled or canned drained
1½ pounds (675 grams) pork with some fat
12 scallions, white parts only,
cut into small rounds
3 tablespoons potato flour
2 egg yolks
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the marinade

1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
2½ teaspoons sugar
5 teaspoons Shaohsing wine
or medium-dry sherry
2 teaspoons sesame oil
2 teaspoons five-spice powder
1½ egg whites

For the dips

tomato ketchup
chili sauce
1 tablespoon thick soy sauce mixed with
1 teaspoon hot prepared mustard

SERVES 12

Five-spice powder lends this dish its name as well as its characteristic aroma.

In Fukien, where this dish originates, ducks' eggs, both the white and the yolk, are used because of their stronger taste.

- 1 Soak the bean curd sheets in cold water for about 4 minutes, or until the sheets are soft and pliable. Lift each sheet carefully with both hands to drain, blot excess water dry and place flat on a large tea towel, one on top of another. Put another tea towel on top to keep them moist. This step can be done 2 or 3 hours ahead.
- 2 Chop the water chestnuts by hand or mince coarsely.
- 3 Chop the pork by hand or mince coarsely. Put into a large bowl.
- 4 **Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, soy sauce, sugar, wine or sherry, oil, five-spice powder and egg whites to the pork. Stir to coat well. Let marinate for 5 minutes. Add the scallions and water chestnuts. Stir in the potato flour, 1 tablespoon at a time, to ensure smooth mixing.
- 5 Divide the pork filling into 16 portions.
- 6 Take one bean curd sheet out of the covered pile and put it on a flat surface with the 13-inch (33-centimeter) wide side in front of you (a). Halve it.
- 7 Scoop up one portion of the filling and roll it between your palms into the shape of a sausage. Place the filling near the bottom edge (b) of 1 piece of bean curd sheet and roll as tightly as possible away from you. Using either your fingers or a brush, smear some egg yolk on the opposite edge and seal the roll.



a



b



Leave the 2 ends open and place the roll in a pan, seam side down. Cover the pan with a damp cloth. Repeat steps 6 and 7 until all are made.

8 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Put in 8 rolls or however many will float freely in the oil and deep-fry for about 8 minutes or until chocolate brown in color. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Repeat until all the rolls are done.

9 To serve, cut each roll into 5 pieces and put them on a large warm platter. The ketchup, chili sauce and soy sauce with mustard dips can be put either on the table or in the middle of the platter.

Pickled Vegetables Cantonese Style

True to form, Cantonese pickled vegetables are sweet and sour rather than spicy, and their unique taste is achieved by a harmonious and subtle blending of salt, sugar and vinegar.

- 1** Remove and discard the seeds in the cucumber. Slice it diagonally into thickish pieces at about 1/3-inch (8-millimeter) intervals.
- 2** Roll cut the carrots (see page 33).
- 3** Trim the celery and slice it diagonally into pieces about the same size as the cucumber.
- 4** Put the vegetables into a large clean bowl. Sprinkle the salt over them, mix together and let stand at room temperature for 2½ to 3 hours, during which time excess water will be drawn out. Drain the excess water out but leave slightly damp.
- 5** Return to a clean bowl. Add the sugar and vinegar, mix thoroughly and let stand for about 3 hours at room temperature, or overnight in the refrigerator. Serve chilled.

INGREDIENTS

1 long cucumber, 1 pound (450 grams), halved
12 ounces (350 grams) young carrots, peeled
4 or 5 sticks celery, 8 ounces (225 grams),
2 level teaspoons salt
4 level tablespoons sugar
4 tablespoons rice or white wine vinegar

SERVES 10



Deep-fried Phoenix-tail Prawns

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) fresh or frozen medium raw prawns in the shell, without heads

½ teaspoon salt

few turns white pepper mill

1 large green pepper, seeded

peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the batter

5 ounces (140 grams) all-purpose flour

5 tablespoons cornstarch

1½ teaspoons baking powder

1 cup water

½ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

SERVES 6

This dish derives its name from the Chinese emblem of beauty, the phoenix. Prawns are likened to its long and graceful tail.

1 Prepare the batter: Sift the flour and cornstarch into a large bowl, add the baking powder. Gradually whisk in the water and blend to a smooth consistency. Let stand for a minimum of 30 minutes. Just before using, add the salt and blend in the oil until the batter is smooth and shiny.

2 If frozen prawns are used, defrost thoroughly. Remove the shells but leave the tail intact. Devein (see page 38) and pat dry with paper towels.

3 Turn the prawns upside down, one by one, and make 3 slashes across the abdomen without cutting through completely. This prevents them from curling up when deep-fried. Add the salt and pepper.

4 Cut the green pepper into rectangular pieces.

5 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds.

6 Hold the prawn by its tail and coat the rest of its body in the batter. Lift by the tail and let some of the runny batter drip off. Put into the oil. Add about half of the prawns at a time or as many as will float freely. Deep-fry for about 3 minutes, or until the batter is pale golden in color. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Snip off any “bearded” excess batter with a pair of scissors.

7 While the prawns are in the oil, put half of the green pepper in the batter and add to the oil to fry with the prawns. Remove them when they look pale golden in color and drain on paper towels.

8 Deep-fry the remaining prawns and green pepper.

9 To serve, pile the green pepper in the middle of a platter and arrange the prawns around it with their tails facing outward.

Note: To reheat, either deep-fry the prawns and green pepper for about 30 seconds, until the batter is crisp again, or put under a preheated grill.





Deep-fried Milk

This is a very popular dish in Hong Kong: it satisfies the ever-present Chinese craving for a contrast between a crunchy and a tender texture in food. In the same mouthful, one can experience a smooth and creamy filling wrapped in a crispy batter coating. The recipe works equally well without the crabmeat.

INGREDIENTS

4 ounces (115 grams) solid creamed coconut
4 ounces (115 grams) cooked crabmeat (optional)
1¼ teaspoons salt
6 turns white pepper mill
5 tablespoons cornstarch
2 cups milk
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the batter

5 ounces (140 grams) all-purpose flour
5 tablespoons cornstarch
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 cup water
2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

SERVES 8

1 Grate the creamed coconut and put the shavings into a saucepan.

2 Add the crabmeat, salt and pepper to the creamed coconut.

3 Stir in the cornstarch and some of the milk and blend to a smooth paste. Over gentle heat, gradually add the remaining milk, stirring continuously until the mixture has become well amalgamated and thickened.

4 Pour into a well-oiled shallow container 8 inches (50 centimeters) square or 7 to 9 inches (18 to 23 centimeters) rectangular and let set in the refrigerator for 2 hours. It can be left overnight covered with plastic wrap.

5 Prepare the batter: Sift the flour and cornstarch into a large bowl; add the baking powder. Gradually stir in the water and blend to a smooth, runny consistency. Let stand at room temperature for a minimum of 30 minutes. Blend in the oil.

6 Loosen the well-set milk mixture with an oiled spatula. Use an oiled knife to cut the mixture into about 32 diamond-shaped pieces.

7 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Dip several pieces into the batter and, using either a pair of chopsticks or tongs, put the pieces one by one into the oil. Deep-fry about 12 at a time, or however many will float freely, for about 3 minutes, or until pale golden. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Repeat until all are done. Remove the “bearded” excess batter with a pair of scissors.

8 To crisp, reheat the oil to 375°F (190°C) and deep-fry the pieces again briefly in 2 batches, each for about 1 minute. Remove and drain on paper towels. (This step can be postponed until ready to serve.) Serve immediately.



Prawns Wrapped in Rice Paper

This classic dish is one of the Cantonese *dim sum* delicacies.

- 1** If frozen prawns are used, defrost thoroughly. Shell and devein the prawns (see page 38). Pat dry with paper towels.
- 2** Chop the prawns roughly. Put in a bowl.
- 3** Add the egg white, salt, sugar and cornstarch to the prawns. Stir until well coated.
- 4** Add the fatback, ham and bamboo shoots to the prawns and stir well. Mix in the scallions.
- 5** Cut the rice paper sheets into 30 squares, each 4 inches (10 centimeters).
- 6** Have some cold water in a dish nearby. Put 1 rice paper square on a plate or work surface. Spread on about 1 tablespoon of the filling, almost to the edges. Fold over and roll into a small cigar, leaving both ends open. Seal with a little water smeared on the edge.
- 7** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F, (190°C) or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Using a pair of chopsticks or tongs, lower half of the prawn rolls into the oil. Deep-fry for about 3 minutes, until the filling is cooked and the rice paper crisp. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Deep-fry the remainder.
- 8** Reheat the oil to about 350°F (180°C). Put in all the prawn rolls and deep-fry a second time for a few seconds. Remove and drain on paper towels. This makes them extra crisp and fragrant.
- 9** Serve hot with chili sauce.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound (450 grams) fresh or frozen medium raw prawns in the shell, without heads
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 3 ounces (85 grams) fatback, chopped into size of matchstick heads
- 3 ounces (85 grams) lean ham, chopped into size of matchstick heads
- 4 ounces (115 grams) canned bamboo shoots, chopped into size of matchstick heads
- 4 to 6 scallions, cut into tiny rounds
- 15 sheets rice paper
- peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
- chili sauce to serve

MAKES ABOUT 28 ROLLS



Stuffed Crab Claws

INGREDIENTS

1¼ pounds (560 grams) fresh or frozen medium raw prawns in the shell, without heads
 3 ounces (85 grams) of fatback
 4 tablespoons cornstarch
 12 medium fresh or frozen cooked and shelled crab claws
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the marinade

1 teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon cornstarch
 1 egg white, lightly beaten
 1 teaspoon sesame oil

For the dips

chili sauce
 Worcestershire sauce

SERVES 6

Biting into crabmeat and prawn at the same time produces a rich and luxurious feeling. These crisp and juicy crab claws are as good to look at as they are to eat, so they are bound to be a successful starter for a dinner party. You can prepare in advance up to the end of step 6, and then simply re crisp the claws just before serving.

1 If frozen prawns and crab claws are used, defrost thoroughly. Shell and devein the prawns (see page 38). Pat dry with paper towels.

2 Chop the prawns and fatback by hand or mince coarsely. Put in a bowl.

3 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar and cornstarch to the prawns and fatback. Stir vigorously for about 1 minute, or until the mixture becomes sticky. Add the egg white and stir again for about 1 minute, or until the paste is firm and elastic. Cover and let marinate in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.

4 Put the 4 tablespoons of cornstarch in a bowl. Holding the pincers of one crab claw, dip the meaty part in the cornstarch: shake off any excess. Repeat with the rest of the claws.

5 Stuff the claws: Divide the paste into 12 portions. Lightly oil a plate. Holding the claw by the pincers, press a portion of the paste on the meat, covering a small area of the shell to seal it. Place on the lightly oiled plate. Repeat with the rest of the claws. To prevent your fingers from getting too sticky, wet them with cold water.

6 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Carefully lower 6 claws into the oil, 1 at a time. Deep-fry for about 4 minutes, or until golden, turning each one occasionally. Remove each claw with a perforated spoon or tongs and drain on paper towels. Repeat with the remaining 6 claws.

7 Deep-fry all 12 claws together for a few seconds to crisp. Remove and drain. Serve the claws immediately. Pass the dips in separate saucers.





SOUPS AND FIRE POTS

Ginger Soup with Pork and Wood Ears

INGREDIENTS

- ½ ounce (15 grams) wood ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 6 ounces (175 grams) lean pork
- 2 to 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 to 2 ounces (25 to 55 grams) fresh ginger root, peeled and sliced into slivers
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 4 cups clear stock
- 3 scallions, cut into ½-inch (1-centimeter) pieces

SERVES 6

This is a favorite summer soup of the Hunanese, who appreciate the cooling effect that the ginger brings on a humid day.

- 1** Drain excess water from the wood ears but leave damp. Break up the larger pieces.
- 2** Slice the pork into strips, about 1½ by ½ inch (3.5 by 1 centimeters) and ¼ inch (2 millimeters) thick.
- 3** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger and stir a few times. Put in the pork and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 30 seconds. Add the wood ears, lowering the heat so they do not make explosive sounds or fly out of the wok. Stir and turn for another 30 seconds.
- 4** Add the wine or sherry, salt, soy sauce and stock. Bring to a boil. Spoon off the foam that surfaces. Lower the heat, cover and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Taste for seasoning, then add the scallions and immediately remove from the heat.
- 5** Transfer to a large warm soup tureen or individual soup bowls and serve hot.





Eggdrop Soup

This is the most basic Chinese soup and can be made in an instant with some clear stock and an egg. The soup's success depends on the technique of adding the egg to the soup.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 egg
- 3 cups clear stock
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
- 2 large scallions, green parts only, cut into tiny rounds

SERVES 4

- 1** Beat the egg lightly.
- 2** Put the stock in a saucepan or wok and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to a minimum. Slowly pour in the beaten egg, either through the gap of 2 chopsticks or along the back of a fork held about 8 to 10 inches (20 to 25 centimeters) above the saucepan, moving the chopsticks or fork in a circular motion so that the egg covers the whole surface of the stock.
- 3** Remove from the heat and cover for 45 seconds, to allow the egg to set into tender flakes. Add the salt, sugar and soy sauce, and sprinkle on the scallions. Give the soup 2 or 3 generous stirs.
- 4** Transfer to a large warm soup tureen or individual soup bowls and serve.

Bean Curd Soup

A simple but refreshing soup that is also very healthy—a vegetarian's delight.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cakes bean curd
- 4 ounces (115 grams) frozen small green peas
- salt
- 3 cups clear stock
- thin soy sauce to taste
- 1 to 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

SERVES 4

- 1** Cut each cake of bean curd into 32 cubes: cut lengthwise into 4 pieces, then crosswise into another 4 pieces and then halve each piece. Steep in hot water for 10 to 15 minutes. Drain, handling with care, so as not to break them.
- 2** Place the peas in a saucepan of boiling salted water and simmer for about 3 minutes. Drain.
- 3** Put the stock, bean curd and peas in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Season with salt and a little soy sauce. Add the oil. Transfer to a large warm soup tureen or individual soup bowls and serve.



Dried Scallop Soup

Dried scallops used to be relatively cheap in China and Dried scallop soup was the poor man's Shark's fin soup. However, times have changed, and this soup, with its contrast in texture between the tender scallops and the crisp bamboo shoots, is now one of the most sought-after first courses, second only to Shark's fin and Bird's nest soups.

- 1** Rinse the dried scallops, rubbing with your fingers to get rid of the white filmy substance sometimes found on their surface.
- 2** Put into a large saucepan and add about 5 cups of water. Bring to a boil and skim off the white foam that surfaces. Reduce the heat and simmer for 1¾ to 2 hours, until the scallops are tender and the liquid has reduced to about 3½ cups. Check the water level from time to time and add more if necessary.
- 3** Using a perforated spoon, transfer the scallop pieces to a dish. Shred, using a knife and fork or the fingers. Be sure to pick out and discard the hard muscles, which are whole and easily recognizable. Return the shredded scallops to the saucepan.
- 4** Stack the bamboo slices, a few at a time, and cut into very thin strips similar to the length of the scallops. Add to the saucepan. (The procedure up to this point can be done several hours in advance.)
- 5** Just before serving, bring the soup to a gentle simmer. Add the salt and well-stirred dissolved potato flour, stirring as it thickens.
- 6** Slowly pour in the beaten egg, either between the gap of 2 chopsticks or along the back of a fork, moving the chopsticks or fork in a circular motion at the same time. Remove from the heat and cover for 45 seconds, to allow the egg to set in tender flakes.
- 7** Transfer to a warm soup tureen or individual soup bowls and serve.

Note: The soup can be reheated over moderate heat.

INGREDIENTS

- 10 dried scallops, about 4 ounces (115 grams)
- 4 ounces (115 grams) canned bamboo shoots, thinly sliced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons potato flour, dissolved in 4 tablespoons water
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten with ¼ teaspoon salt

SERVES 4 TO 6



Wonton Wrapper Crisps Soup

INGREDIENTS

peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
60 wonton wrappers, halved and folded in 2
8 ounces (225 grams) Cantonese roast duck with some skin, diced (see pages 198–9)
10 ounces (280 grams) cooked crabmeat, broken into chunks
4 ounces (115 grams) canned bamboo shoots, sliced or diced thin
8 ounces (225 grams) canned straw mushroom, drained and halved or quartered
9 cups prime or clear stock (see page 242)
1 to 2 teaspoons salt
pepper to taste
1 to 2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
12 scallions, cut diagonally into ½-inch (1-centimeter) pieces, white and green parts separated

SERVES 10 TO 12

The tender wonton wrappers, deep-fried to a crisp before being dunked in the soup, lend special character to this dish. The color of the ingredients, suspended in the clear soup, is especially attractive.

1 Half fill a wok or a deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of about 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Add a batch of wonton wrappers, about 20 at a time; they will sizzle and expand at once. Transfer to paper towels before they turn brown, using a hand strainer or perforated spoon. Repeat until all are done.

2 Put the duck, crabmeat, bamboo shoots and straw mushrooms into the stock and bring to a boil. Add the salt, pepper and soy sauce. Add the white scallions and, finally, the wonton wrappers. (It is always better to add the wonton wrappers at the last moment so that they retain their crispness.) Dunk them with a wooden spoon. Remove from the heat and add the green scallions.

3 Serve immediately, either from a communal bowl or in individual bowls.

Note: Wonton wrappers can be deep-fried ahead of time and, if kept in an airtight container, will remain crisp for more than a week. With some salt sprinkled on them, they are quite a novelty to serve with drinks. Cantonese roast duck (pages 198–9) is available in some Cantonese restaurants, whole or in portions.



萬



Cantonese Wonton Soup

Wontons, or small dumplings, served in broth, are a national Chinese snack. The main ingredient for wonton filling is pork, but in Kwangtung shrimp and prawns are also used, because they are so readily available. This addition gives the wontons a much more interesting taste and texture.

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces (350 grams) pork, with about
2 ounces (55 grams) fat
4 ounces (115 grams) raw shelled shrimp
6 scallions, cut into tiny rounds
2 to 3 ounces (55 to 85 grams) canned
bamboo shoots, chopped fine
1 egg yolk
90 wonton wrappers, each about
3 inches (7.5 centimeters) square
1 egg white, lightly beaten
salt
6 to 8 leaves romaine lettuce or Chinese
celery cabbage, shredded crosswise
into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) pieces
1½ quarts prime and clear stocks,
mixed together (see page 242)
16 teaspoons peanut or corn oil

For the marinade

1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
10 turns freshly milled black pepper
1½ teaspoons Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon potato flour
3 to 4 tablespoons water
2 teaspoons sesame oil

To serve

freshly ground pepper
sesame oil
thin soy sauce

MAKES 80 TO 90 WONTONS;

serves 8 as lunch

- 1** Chop the pork by hand or mince it. Put into a large bowl.
- 2** Pat dry the shrimp. Cut into the size of small peas and add to the pork.
- 3 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, pepper, wine or sherry and potato flour to the pork. Stir in the water, 1 tablespoon at a time.
- 4** Pick up the pork mixture with one or both hands and throw it back into the bowl or onto a flat surface. Repeat this action about 100 times to achieve the desired light and yet firm texture.
- 5** Add half the scallions and all the bamboo shoots to the pork mixture, mix well and let marinate for 20 to 30 minutes. Then blend in the sesame oil.
- 6** Just before you are ready to wrap the wontons, stir in the egg yolk, which will bind the filling to the wrappers.
- 7** Wrap the wontons. There are 2 ways to do this (see page 52).
- 8** Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a boil. Blanch the lettuce or cabbage for about 1 minute, remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and transfer to a bowl.
- 9** Put the stock in another saucepan and bring to simmering point.
- 10** Bring the water in the large saucepan to a boil again. Plunge in the wontons, no more than 20 at a time, and return to a boil, stirring gently to separate them. Continue to boil, uncovered, for about 3 minutes, or until the wontons are cooked and float to the surface.
- 11** Transfer with a hand strainer to individual serving bowls, allowing about 10 wontons per bowl. To each bowl, add a pinch of the remaining scallions, a few pieces of lettuce or cabbage and 2 teaspoons of oil, and then pour a ladleful of stock (about 6 ounces [$\frac{3}{4}$ cup]) over it. Everyone can help themselves to ground pepper, sesame oil and soy sauce placed on the table.



Note: Wontons freeze well and can therefore be made in advance up to step 8 and frozen. Make sure, however, to cook the defrosted wontons a little longer in the boiling water.

Variation: Wonton soup can also be served with cooked egg noodles in the stock. Allow fewer wontons per bowl when served in this way.

Bird's Nest Soup

Like shark's fin soup, bird's nest soup reaches the heights of Chinese cuisine, though Westerners are often put off by the name and the fact that it is produced by swallows' saliva. Alone, bird's nest is bland, and its function is to provide texture, rather than taste, to the soup. A very rich prime stock is therefore essential as a base, as is the chicken velvet. And yet, without the bird's nest, no amount of prime stock or chicken velvet could produce the unique quality of this soup.

- 1** Soak the bird's nest in about 5 cups of tepid water for several hours or overnight. Drain through a fine sieve. It will have increased about 4 times in weight.
- 2** With a pair of tweezers, remove any feathers or other impurities. Depending on the quality of the bird's nest, this can be a time-consuming task. Rinse in cold water 2 or 3 times and drain.
- 3** Put into a saucepan, add the ginger, scallions and about 6 cups of boiling water. Return to a boil, then simmer for 10 minutes. Remove and discard the ginger and scallions. Drain but leave damp. (The bird's nest can now be left in the refrigerator, covered, for 2 or 3 days before making the soup.)
- 4** Put the bird's nest and prime stock into a large saucepan and bring to a gentle simmer. Stir in the dissolved cornstarch and let the soup thicken. Add salt to taste.
- 5** Stir about 2 ladles of hot soup into the chicken velvet to make the purée thinner. Slowly pour into the simmering soup, stirring to make a smooth consistency. Continue to simmer until the chicken is cooked.
- 6** Transfer to a warm soup tureen. Sprinkle the chopped ham on top in the center. Serve hot.

Note: Any leftover soup can be frozen.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 ounces (115 grams) loose bird's nest
- 4 thickish slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- 2 large scallions
- 4 to 5 cups prime stock (see page 242)
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch, dissolved in 2 tablespoons water
- salt to taste
- ½ to 1 quantity chicken velvet (see page 73)
- 1 ounce (25 grams) best ham, ideally Chinhua or Virginia, chopped fine

SERVES 10



Shark's Fin Soup

The Chinese are unanimous in their appreciation of shark's fin soup, and this very nutritious soup is rightly considered to be one of the most exotic examples of Chinese cuisine. A fin of the best quality is, however, extremely expensive and takes four days to prepare. The fin used in this recipe is sold in a package consisting of the cartilage with some fin needles and is already processed and then dried again. By itself, shark's fin has little taste, but when combined with other ingredients in a prime stock, it makes the perfect soup.

INGREDIENTS

11 to 12 ounces (315 to 350 grams)
loose shark's fin
5 ounces (140 grams) chicken breast meat
4 slices fresh ginger root, each
about ¼ inch (5 millimeters) thick
3 large scallions, halved crosswise
1 ounce (25 grams) lard
3 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil
4½ to 5 cups prime stock (see page 242)
salt to taste
thin soy sauce to taste

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon sugar
3 to 4 turns white pepper mill
1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1½ tablespoons egg white,
lightly-beaten
1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

For the sauce

3 to 4 tablespoons water chestnut
flour or potato flour
3 tablespoons water
2 teaspoons thick soy sauce

To serve

2 ounces (55 grams) lean ham,
Virginia or Chinhua
8 ounces (225 grams) bean sprouts
Chinese red vinegar
hot prepared mustard

SERVES 6

- 1** Put the shark's fin in a large container and pour over it about 5 cups of hot water. Soak overnight or for a minimum of 6 hours.
- 2** Rub with fingers. Drain through a fine sieve, so as not to lose any of the precious shark's fin needles while getting rid of fine sand. Repeat as many times as necessary. Put into a large saucepan.
- 3** Add about 6 cups of water. Bring to a boil and simmer gently for about 2 hours, replenishing the water if it evaporates too quickly.
- 4** Test to see if the fin needles are ready: they should be tender yet still firm. A way to test is to press one between thumb and index finger: if it breaks easily, it is ready. Drain. If the fin is still hard, let the water cool, then drain. Return to the saucepan, add the same amount of water and boil gently for another hour, or longer. Drain, taking care not to lose the needles.
- 5** Meanwhile, cut the chicken into matchstick-sized pieces. Put into a small bowl.
- 6 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, pepper, wine or sherry and cornstarch to the chicken. Stir in the egg white in the same direction and let marinate for 20 to 30 minutes. Blend in the oil.
- 7** Place about 3½ cups of water in a saucepan with the ginger, scallions, half the lard and 2 tablespoons of the wine or sherry. Bring to a boil. Add the shark's fin and boil gently for about 15 minutes. This curing process rids the fin of any remaining rank odor. Drain, discarding the ginger and scallion.
- 8** Cut the ham into matchstick-sized pieces.
- 9** Pluck the bean heads off the bean sprouts and discard them. Blanch in boiling water until the water returns to a boil. Drain, then refresh under cold running water. Drain thoroughly.



10 Arrange the ham and bean sprouts in bunches on 1 or 2 small serving dishes. Put the vinegar and mustard into separate saucers on the table.

11 Prepare the sauce: Mix the flour, water and soy sauce thoroughly.

12 Heat a wok or saucepan over high heat until hot. Splash in the remaining wine or sherry. As it sizzles, add the remaining lard and the oil. Pour in the prime stock, add the shark's fin and stir to mix. Slowly bring to a boil, then add the chicken, stirring to separate the pieces. Reduce the heat. Gradually add the well-stirred sauce to the soup, stirring as the soup thickens. Remove from the heat. Taste for seasoning; add salt and thin soy sauce, if necessary.

13 Transfer to a warm soup tureen and serve. To eat, each person puts some bean sprouts and ham into his bowl before adding the shark's fin soup. Some may also like to add a little vinegar or mustard to the soup.

Chicken Velvet

A preparation of finely minced chicken breast, which is made light and fluffy by the addition of egg white. It is used to add taste, texture and substance to soups, such as Winter melon soup (see page 79) and Bird's nest soup (see page 71).

- 1** Turn the chicken breasts inside out and pull off the 2 fillets.
- 2** Hold the end of the white tendon of each fillet with the fingers of one hand and scrape the flesh away from it with a Chinese cleaver or knife. Discard the tendons.
- 3** Holding the large end of one chicken breast, scrape the flesh, going with the grain, from the small end all the way to the large end, discarding membranes and fat as you go. Repeat with the other breast and then with the 2 fillets.
- 4** Gather the chicken pieces, sprinkle with the salt and start chopping, adding drops of ice water and folding the pieces back to the center from time to time. Chop for about 3 minutes, or until the chicken is very finely minced.
- 5** Transfer the meat to a bowl. Blend in the cornstarch and egg white, and stir until a light purée—the velvet—is achieved. This can be refrigerated, covered, for a few hours before it is used.

Note: Steps 3 and 4 can be done in a food processor or blender, adding all the ice water and salt to the roughly cut-up chicken breast before mincing.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 chicken breasts, about 1 pound (450 grams) skinned and boned
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons ice water
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten



Cantonese Fire Pot

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces to 1 pound (350 to 450 grams) fresh or frozen medium raw prawns in the shell, without heads
 1 Dover sole, or sea bass, about 1 pound (450 grams), skinned and boned
 10 large scallops, white meat only
 2 chicken breasts, skinned and boned
 12 ounces to 1 pound (350 to 450 grams) beef, rump, skirt steak or fillet
 1 pound (450 grams) Chinese celery cabbage
 1 large romaine lettuce
 1 pound (450 grams) spinach, washed and trimmed
 1 bunch watercress, washed and trimmed
 4 cakes bean curd
 1 pound (450 grams) dried egg noodles or 1½ pounds (675 grams) fresh noodles
 about 8 to 9 cups clear stock
 peanut or corn oil

For the dips

8 eggs
 thick or thin soy sauce
 peanut, corn or sesame oil
 salt
 freshly ground black pepper
 hot prepared mustard
 chili sauce

SERVES 8 as dinner

A Cantonese fire pot reflects what's easily available in the region, and it therefore consists of seafood as well as meat and vegetables. If you don't have a traditional charcoal-burning fire pot for cooking at the table, use a fondue set or heatproof bowl and burner or an electric pot.

- 1** Shell and devein the prawns (see page 38). Halve lengthwise.
 - 2** Cut the fish fillets across into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) pieces.
 - 3** Wash and pat dry the scallops. Remove and discard the hard muscles. Place each one on its side and cut into 3 or 4 pieces.
 - 4** Cut the chicken into thin slices, about ⅛ inch (3 millimeters) thick.
 - 5** Cut the beef across the grain into slices about 2 by 1½ inches and ¼ inch (5 by 3.5 centimeters and 5 millimeters) thick.
 - 6** Cut each Chinese celery cabbage stalk across at about 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) intervals.
 - 7** Break up the lettuce leaves into large pieces.
 - 8** Steep the bean curd in hot water for 15 minutes. Drain and cut each into 8 pieces.
 - 9** Bring a large pan of water to a boil. Add the noodles, return to a boil and continue to cook for a few minutes, or until *al dente*. Pour into a colander and refresh under cold running water. Drain thoroughly.
 - 10** Arrange all the ingredients on individual plates or together on several plates. The meat and seafood slices can be laid overlapping each other. Put on the table.
 - 11** Arrange dips in small dishes. Put on the table, with the fire pot in the center.
 - 12** To serve, provide each person with one bowl and a side plate, one pair of bamboo chopsticks and one small wire strainer.
 - 13** Crack 1 egg into each bowl and beat lightly. Pour 2 teaspoons of soy sauce on each saucer and add ½ teaspoon of oil. This can be replenished by individuals later.
 - 14** Have the stock simmering in a saucepan.
- 15** If a traditional fire pot is used, heat the charcoal and put into the chimney in the middle of the pot. Put on the table on top of a thick heatproof mat. An electric pot may be used. In either case, pour sufficient stock into the heated pot to come about halfway up the sides, and bring back to a boil. Add about 3 tablespoons of oil.





16 To eat, everyone picks up one or two morsels of either meat or seafood, places them in the strainer and then lowers it into the fire pot to cook. If you have no strainers, chopsticks can be used to hold and dip the food into the boiling stock to cook. The food is removed after a few seconds, or as soon as it is cooked, dipped into the egg and seasoned with the other condiments before eating. (If you dislike the raw egg idea, dispense with it.)

17 When a fair amount of meat and seafood has been eaten, put the vegetables and the bean curd, in stages, into the pot. Let everyone help themselves from the pot.

18 Whenever necessary, replenish the stock level with more stock or water. Add more oil and bring to a boil again before cooking more food in the pot.

19 When most of the dishes, vegetables and bean curd have been eaten and the broth is getting richer and richer, add the noodles. The broth and noodles can then be enjoyed by everyone.

Mongolian Lamb Fire Pot

This Mongolian dish, which has long since become part and parcel of Peking food, ranks second in fame only to Peking duck (see pages 198–9).

INGREDIENTS

½ leg of lamb, ideally, spring lamb,
about 2½ pounds (1.12 kilograms)
4 ounces (115 grams) cellophane noodles
1 Chinese celery cabbage, about
1¾ pounds (800 grams), trimmed
8 ounces (225 grams) dried egg or
buckwheat noodles

For the dip

8 tablespoons sesame paste
2 cakes fermented red bean curd or about 4
tablespoons, with 2 tablespoons own juice
6 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
3 tablespoons sugar
8 tablespoons thin soy sauce
3 to 4 tablespoons hot chili oil (see page 240)
3 to 4 tablespoons sesame oil
4 tablespoons fish sauce
4 ounces (115 grams) coriander leaves,
chopped into small pieces
10 or 12 large scallions, cut into small rounds

SERVES 6 as dinner

1 Ask the butcher to bone the lamb for you. If possible, freeze for 3 or 4 hours, so that the meat becomes firm and easier to cut into paper-thin slices.

2 Meanwhile, soak the cellophane noodles in plenty of boiling water in a bowl, for a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes, so they expand. Drain. Make 2 or 3 cuts with scissors to shorten them. Transfer to a serving bowl.

3 Slice the celery cabbage at 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) intervals. Put on a plate.

4 Plunge the noodles into plenty of boiling water, return to a boil, then continue to cook for several minutes, until they are soft yet *al dente*. Drain and rinse under cold running water. Put on a plate or into a bowl.

5 Prepare the dip: Put the sesame paste into a fairly large serving bowl and gradually add about 4 ounces (½ cup) of water to dilute, stirring until smoothly blended. Add 3 or 4 tablespoons of water to the red bean curd and blend to a creamy consistency. Pour into the serving bowl, then add the wine or sherry, sugar, soy sauce, the oils and fish sauce and stir until well mixed.

6 Take the lamb out of the freezer. Trim excess fat and cut into slices, as paper-thin as you can possibly manage. Ideally, each slice should be about



4 by 1½ inches (10 by 3.5 centimeters). Arrange them on several serving plates in single layers but overlapping each other. Refrigerate, covered, until ready to eat.

7 Put all the ingredients on the dining table.

8 If a traditional fire pot is used, heat the charcoal and put into the chimney in the middle of the pot. Put on the table on top of a thick heatproof mat. An electric pot may be used. In either case, pour boiling water into the heated pot to come about halfway up the sides, and bring back to a boil. The feast is now ready.

9 To serve, provide each person with a pair of bamboo chopsticks (not plastic or lacquered ones), a small wire strainer made especially for fire-pot feasts (optional), a bowl and a small plate.

10 To eat, each person spoons some sauce into his bowl and adds some coriander leaves and scallions. Everyone then picks up 1 or 2 slices of lamb at a time, puts them into the strainer (or uses chopsticks) and immerses them in the water in the pot. The meat is removed after a few seconds (or longer if very well-done meat is preferred) and dipped into the sauce before eating.

11 After about half of the lamb has been consumed and the water in the pot has become a tasty broth, put in some of the cabbage and cellophane noodles for everyone to share. They are dipped into the sauce before eating. Whenever necessary, replenish the water level in the pot.

12 After about three-quarters of the lamb has been consumed, put in half or all of the remaining noodles.

13 At the end of the feast, the broth in the pot is shared. Each person spoons some into his bowl, mixes it with the remaining sauce and drinks it.



Sweet-corn Soup

This Cantonese soup, like sweet and sour pork, is tremendously popular with non-Chinese, especially Westerners. Canned products are used here for labor-saving purposes. The soup will still be delicious if you want to make it very simple and omit the chicken.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 chicken breast, 6 ounces (175 grams) skinned and boned, or 4 ounces (115 grams) chicken fillet
- 8- to 10-ounce (225- to 280-gram) can sweet-corn kernels, drained
- 1 or 2 eggs
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons peanut or corn oil
- 10¼-ounce (310-gram) can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 3 soup cans cold water
- 8- to 10-ounce (225- to 280-gram) can cream-style sweet-corn

For the marinade

- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 6 turns white pepper mill
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 4 tablespoons water
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon peanut or corn oil

SERVES 6 TO 8

1 Mince the chicken finely in a food processor or mincer. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, soy sauce, pepper and wine (or you can use medium-dry sherry) to the chicken. Sprinkle with the cornstarch and stir in the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the chicken becomes a smooth paste. Let stand for 15 minutes. Blend in the oils.

3 Roughly chop the sweet-corn kernels in a food processor or blender, or by hand. (They can be left whole).

4 In a small bowl, beat the eggs lightly with the salt and oil. Set aside.

5 Pour the marinade into a large saucepan and add the cold water gradually, stirring with a wooden spoon until smooth.

6 Stir in the sweet-corn kernels and cream-style sweet corn.

7 Bring the soup mixture to just below boiling point over moderate heat, stirring occasionally.

8 Combine about 6 tablespoons of the hot soup liquid with the chicken paste, breaking up any lumps. Add to the rest of the soup, stirring in well, and gradually bring to a boil. Simmer for 1 minute, to make sure that the chicken is cooked.

9 Slowly pour in the beaten egg through the gap of a pair of chopsticks or along the back of a fork, moving the chopsticks or fork in a circular motion at the same time. Remove from the heat and cover for 45 seconds, to allow the egg to set in tender flakes. Give the soup a final stir and then serve hot.

Note: Leftover soup can be reheated; it can also be frozen. Instead of condensed soup, 3½ cups clear stock (see page 242) can be used, with 2 cans of cream-style sweet-corn and only 2 cans of water.



Winter Melon and Chicken Velvet Soup

In Hong Kong and China, some restaurants specialize in a very sophisticated dish, Winter Melon Pond. A whole winter melon of the perfect size is partially hollowed, filled with such delicacies as crabmeat, diced duck, pork, Chinese mushrooms and bamboo shoots and then steamed for hours to produce the most delectable soup. But it is not a practical dish to make at home. This recipe, however, is, and the melon is succulent in the soup.

- 1** Cut the winter melon into pieces that are easy to work with. Seed only, leaving the pulpy flesh alone. Cut off the hard skin and discard. Dice all the pieces, including the pulpy parts.
- 2** Put the winter melon and stock in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer, covered, for about 25 to 30 minutes, or until the melon is tender and looks transparent.
- 3** Put the chicken velvet into a bowl and add several spoonfuls of boiling broth. Stir to blend, then pour into the boiling soup. Stir the soup to break up any lumps of the chicken velvet as it cooks and turns opaque. Taste, and add salt if necessary.
- 4** Pour the soup into a large warm soup tureen, sprinkle with the ham and serve.

Note: If desired, about 8 ounces (225 grams) cooked white crabmeat can be added to the soup at the end of step 3. Fuzzy melon, though not the traditional ingredient for this soup, is a satisfactory substitute.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small winter melon or part of a large one, about 2¾ to 3 pounds (1.25 to 1.35 kilograms)
- 4 cups prime stock (see page 242)
- 1 quantity chicken velvet (see page 73)
- salt to taste
- 2 ounces (55 grams) best ham, ideally Chinhua or Virginia, chopped fine

SERVES 8



FISH AND SEAFOOD

Steamed Prawns in Mixed Bean Sauce

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces (350 grams) medium or large prawns in the shell, without heads
a few coriander leaves, torn into pieces

For the sauce

1 tablespoon fermented black beans
1 tablespoon salted yellow beans
½ teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon sesame oil
4 to 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
4 to 6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
½ to ¾ inch (1 to 2 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
½ to 1 fresh green or red chili, seeded and sliced into tiny rounds
1 to 1½ tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

I first tasted this dish in 1980 in one of the famous restaurants of my hometown, Hong Kong, and thought it tasted heavenly. There was no question of their letting me into their cookery secret, so I experimented and came up with this concoction. I think you will enjoy it, too.

1 Prepare the sauce: Mash the black beans and salted yellow beans together with the sugar and sesame oil into a paste.

2 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and as soon as it takes on color, put in the ginger. Stir. Quickly add the mashed bean paste, stir well, and then add the chili. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. As soon as the sizzling dies down, lower the heat, stir well and then pour the sauce into a container and allow to cool.

3 Remove and discard the prawn legs. Pat dry. Split lengthwise into 2, except for the tails. Discard the veins. Arrange around a heatproof serving dish with a slightly raised edge.

4 Spoon the sauce on the prawns, scraping up every bit of oil as well.

5 Steam in a wok or steamer, over moderately high heat for 3 or 4 minutes (see page 43). Check to see if the prawns are cooked. Scatter the coriander leaves over the prawns. Replace the lid and steam for a brief moment, to cook the coriander leaves partially.

6 Remove from the heat and again spoon the sauce on the prawns and coriander leaves. Serve immediately from the dish in which they were cooked.





INGREDIENTS

1 pound 2 ounce to 1¼ pound (500 to 560 gram) fillet from 1 small halibut weighing 2¾ to 3 pounds (1.25 to 1.35 kilograms)
 salt
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 8 ounces (225 grams) sugar peas, trimmed
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and cut diagonally into slivers
 6 thin slivers fresh ginger root, peeled
 1 or 2 shallots, skinned and chopped
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

1 inch (2.5 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon sugar
 6 turns white pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1½ teaspoon cornstarch
 1 tablespoon egg white, lightly beaten

For the sauce

½ teaspoon potato flour
 3 tablespoons clear stock
 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce

SERVES 4 TO 5 with the soup and 2 other dishes

One Fish for Two Dishes

Stir-fried Fish Fillet

When a fish of firm texture is large enough, the Chinese often make two dishes out of it: stir-frying the fillet and making a soup with the head and carcass. This practice is especially common in the South of China, where the yield from the sea enriches the table with such delicious fish as grouper and perch. Small turbot and other flat fish are also suitable for this purpose.

- 1 Ask the fishdealer to fillet the halibut for you, removing the skin as well. Take the head and carcass home to make soup (see following recipe).
- 2 Pat the fillet dry. Cut into pieces of similar size, about 1 by 1½ inches (2.5 by 3.5 centimeters). Put into a dish.
- 3 **Prepare the marinade:** Put the chopped ginger in a garlic press in 2 batches with 2 drops of water each time and squeeze the juice over the fish. Discard the pulp. Add the salt, sugar, pepper, wine or sherry, cornstarch and egg white to the fish. Mix well to coat. Let marinate for 15 minutes.
- 4 **Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the potato flour, stock, oyster sauce and soy sauce.
- 5 Bring a large pan of water to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 tablespoon of oil. Plunge in the sugar peas and, once the water returns to a boil, pour into a colander and refresh under cold running water. Drain thoroughly.
- 6 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C) or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Let the fish “go through the oil” carefully for about 10 seconds, using a pair of long chopsticks to separate the pieces. With a large hand strainer, quickly transfer to a dish. The fillet is now half cooked.
- 7 Pour the oil into a container to be used again, leaving only about 3 tablespoons in the wok.
- 8 Reheat the oil over high heat. Add the garlic and, as it sizzles, add the ginger slices and shallots and stir for a few seconds, to release their aroma. Return the fish to the wok and toss and turn for about 30 seconds, or until very hot. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to turn and stir as it sizzles. Pour in the well-mixed sauce, stirring as it thickens. Return the sugar peas



to the wok; turn and toss to mix. Transfer the fish mixture to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

Note: Other vegetables, like broccoli, Chinese broccoli or fresh mushrooms, can also be used as complementary ingredients to the fish.

Bean Curd Soup with Fish Stock

- 1** Wash the fish head and carcass thoroughly. Put into a large saucepan.
- 2** Add the water, ginger and scallions, and bring to a boil. Skim off the scum that surfaces. Reduce the heat to maintain a fast simmer for 30 minutes. Drain and discard all the solids. Season with salt.
- 3** Meanwhile, slice the pork into thin slivers. Put into a bowl.
- 4 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir to coat. Let marinate for 15 minutes. Blend in the oil.
- 5** Slice the bean curd into thin strips or pieces of the same size.
- 6** Return the fish stock to a boil. Add the oil. Add the bean curd and sugar peas and bring to a boil again. Add the pork, using a pair of chopsticks or a fork to separate the pieces. Reduce the heat and simmer for 1 or 2 minutes, depending on the thickness of the pork.
- 7** Remove from the heat. Add the scallions.
- 8** Transfer to a warm soup tureen or individual bowls and serve piping hot.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound 10 ounce to 1¾ pound (750 to 800 gram) head and carcass of 1 small halibut
- 4 cups water
- 1 inch (2.5 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and bruised
- 2 large scallions, quartered
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 ounces (115 grams) lean pork
- 2 cakes bean curd, drained
- 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 ounce (25 grams) sugar peas, trimmed (or blanched small green peas)
- 2 or 3 scallions, green parts only, cut into small rounds

For the marinade

- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 3 or 4 turns white pepper mill
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- ½ teaspoon potato flour
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

SERVES 4 TO 5 with the stir-fried fillet and 2 other dishes



Abalone with Chinese Mushrooms

INGREDIENTS

16 dried Chinese mushrooms (the thick and floral ones are best), washed
1 medium iceberg lettuce, washed and trimmed
1 can best abalone, 15 to 16 ounces (425 to 450 grams)
drained can juice from abalone
5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
3 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
3 tablespoons oyster sauce
1½ teaspoons thick soy sauce
½ teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon potato flour, dissolved in 2 tablespoons water

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

Dried abalone, which ranks with shark's fin and bird's nest in gastronomic prestige, is sadly out of the question for most people's pockets; these days canned abalone graces even the best tables. Although it lacks the depth of taste found in dried abalone, its subtle taste and slightly chewy texture satisfy the palate of many a gourmet.

1 Put the mushrooms in a saucepan and pour over them 3 cups of boiling water. Return to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 1 hour, until tender. When cool, clip off the stems and discard. Squeeze out excess water but leave damp. (They can be prepared hours ahead of time.)

2 Tear the lettuce leaves into large pieces.

3 Drain the abalone, reserving the juice. Slice it into pieces about ⅛ inch (3 millimeters) thick.

4 Pour the can juice into a saucepan, add 1 tablespoon of the oil and bring to a boil. Immerse the lettuce in it, return to a boil and cook for 1 minute; the lettuce will be cooked yet still crisp. Transfer with a perforated spoon to a sieve placed over a bowl, so that it will continue to drain. Pour the drained stock back into the saucepan.

5 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the white scallions and stir a couple of times. Splash in the Shaohsing wine or sherry around the side of the wok, then add the stock saved from the lettuce, the oyster sauce, thick soy sauce, to enhance the coloring, and sugar. Bring to a boil.

6 Add the mushrooms and abalone and slowly return to a boil. Cover, lower the heat and simmer for about 2 minutes, to let the abalone and mushrooms absorb the flavor.

7 Spread the lettuce on a warm serving plate.

8 Trickle the well-stirred dissolved potato flour into the sauce, stirring as it thickens. Tip in the green scallions.

9 Transfer the ingredients to the serving plate, arranging the mushrooms on the lettuce, cap side up, then the abalone. Pour the sauce over them. Serve hot.





Braised Fish Hunan–Szechwan Style

INGREDIENTS

- 1 sea bass, gray mullet or trout,
about 1 pound 6 ounces to
1 pound 8 ounces (625 to 675 grams),
cleaned, with head left on
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces (225 grams) peanut or corn oil
- 3 or 4 cloves garlic, peeled
and chopped fine
- 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) fresh ginger root,
peeled and chopped fine
- 2 to 4 tablespoons Szechwan chili paste
(see page 240) or hot soybean paste
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 4 ounces (115 grams) clear stock or water
- 1 tablespoon hot chili oil (see page 240)
- 6 to 8 scallions, green parts only,
cut into small rounds

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

The essence of this dish is the gradual absorption of the Szechwan chili paste, a favorite seasoning in Hunan-Szechwan cuisine. The dish is made all the more aromatic by the addition of garlic and ginger.

- 1** Blot the fish dry. Rub salt all over it, including the cavity. Let stand for about 15 minutes.
- 2** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Pour in the oil. Tip the wok carefully to swirl it all around the sloping edges. Pour all but 2 tablespoons into a container.
- 3** Lower the heat. Add the fish at once and brown for about 2 minutes. Slip 2 metal spatulas underneath the fish and turn over carefully. Brown the other side for about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate.
- 4** Turn up the heat. Add another 2 tablespoons of oil to the wok and heat until smoke rises. Now add the garlic and ginger and, as they sizzle, add the Szechwan chili or hot soybean paste, wine or sherry and sugar. Pour in the stock or water and bring to a boil, stirring to mix. Return the fish to the wok, lower the heat, cover and simmer in the sauce for 12 to 15 minutes. Turn the fish over carefully and simmer, covered, for another 12 to 15 minutes, until the fish is cooked and some of the sauce has been absorbed.
- 5** Remove the cover. Turn up the heat to reduce the sauce, spooning it over the fish continually. Transfer only the fish to a warm serving plate.
- 6** Add the hot chili oil to the sauce, then the scallions. Stir and cook for a few seconds, then scoop the sauce over the fish. Serve immediately.



Sautéed Mackerel

To sauté or shallow-fry is one of the basic Chinese methods of cooking fish; the technique is explained in this recipe for mackerel. Another fish that lends itself to sautéing is pomfret, which abounds off South China, India and Southeast Asia. Red snapper, red mullet and whiting, among others, are also delicious sautéed.

- 1** Halve the mackerel, which at this weight is probably long, crosswise. Rub the salt all over the skin, crevices and cavity. Let stand for about 15 minutes.
- 2 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the soy sauces, sugar and wine or sherry.
- 3** Heat a wok or a heavy flat frying pan over high heat until smoke rises. Pour in the oil, tip the wok carefully to swirl it around the sloping edges, then pour all but about 3 tablespoons into a container. Reheat the oil, add the ginger slices and fry until brown, then discard. Lower the heat, wait until the oil is less hot and then add both pieces of mackerel. Fry for about 5 minutes, to brown the skin. Turn over and brown the other side for about 5 minutes. Turn over again and continue to shallow-fry for about another 3 minutes, adding about 1 tablespoon of oil around the edges of the fish. Repeat with the other side.
- 4** Pour the sauce over the fish and sprinkle on the silken threads of ginger. Cover and continue to cook for about 3 minutes. Sprinkle on some of the scallions and cook, covered, for a few more seconds. Transfer to a warm serving plate and pour the sauce from the wok or frying pan over the fish.
- 5** Put the 2 pieces of mackerel side by side or join to form a “whole” mackerel. Sprinkle the remaining scallions on top and serve.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large mackerel, about 1½ to 1¾ pounds, (675 to 790 grams) cleaned, with head left on
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces (225 grams) peanut or corn oil
- 6 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- ½ inch (1 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
- 4 to 6 scallions cut into small rounds

For the sauce

- 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

SERVES 2 as main course;
4 with 2 other dishes



Deep-fried Fish with Sweet and Sour Sauce

INGREDIENTS

1 red snapper or gray mullet, about 2¼ to 2½ pounds (1 to 1.15 kilograms), cleaned with head left on
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 1 egg yolk
 about 3 tablespoons cornstarch

For the marinade

1 inch (2.5 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1 teaspoon salt

For the sweet and sour sauce

3 dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 2 ounces (55 grams) small peas
 2 teaspoons potato flour, dissolved in 2 tablespoons water
 4 tablespoons rice or wine vinegar
 4 tablespoons sugar
 4 tablespoons tomato ketchup
 1 teaspoon salt
 1½ teaspoons thick soy sauce
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1 cup water
 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 1 small onion or 3 shallots, skinned and diced
 2 ounces (55 grams) canned bamboo shoots, diced

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

A sweet and sour sauce goes especially well with deep-fried food, not just because it whets one's appetite but, more important, because it counteracts any trace of grease. Such is, indeed, the case with fish. There are regional variations and personal preferences, but mainly a sweet and sour sauce is a mixture of vinegar and sugar, balanced by salt, and made more interesting by the addition of other condiments. Try this one, and then concoct your own.

1 If the wok in which the fish will be deep-fried is large enough (14 inches [35 centimeters] or more) leave the fish whole; otherwise, cut it in half. Make 2 or 3 diagonal slashes across the thickest part of both sides of the fish, taking care not to go right to the edges.

2 Prepare the marinade: Squeeze the ginger in a garlic press with 2 drops of water and mix the juice with the wine or sherry and salt. Rub both sides of the fish, including the crevices and the cavity, with the mixture. Let marinate for about 15 to 30 minutes. Discard any excess liquid.

3 Prepare the sweet and sour sauce: Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Cut into small cubes. Cook the peas in boiling water for 2 minutes, drain. Mix together the dissolved potato flour, vinegar, sugar, ketchup, salt, soy sauce, wine or sherry and water. Heat a wok (if you have a second small one), or a saucepan, over high heat until smoke rises. Add 3 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, then the onion or shallots and fry for about 1 minute, stirring. Add the mushrooms, peas and bamboo shoots. Stir the sauce mixture once more to blend, then pour into the wok or saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring continuously as it thickens. Set aside.

4 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds.

5 While the oil is heating, brush the egg yolk over both sides of the fish, then sift the cornstarch over it, smoothing it for evenness.

6 Lower the fish into the oil and deep-fry for about 7 or 8 minutes, or until the skin is crisp. Turn over carefully and deep-fry the other side for about the same time.





7 Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Transfer to a warm serving dish. If the fish has been cut into halves, put together to look whole again.

8 Reheat the sauce until simmering, stir in the remaining 1 teaspoon of oil and pour over the fish. Serve immediately.

Sizzling Rice with Shrimp and Tomato Sauce

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces (225 grams) raw peeled shrimp
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 12 to 14 ounces (350 to 400 grams)
 canned tomatoes, chopped
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ to 1 teaspoon sugar
 2 to 3 teaspoons thin soy sauce
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or
 medium-dry sherry
 2 cups clear stock
 1½ to 2 tablespoons cornstarch, dissolved
 in 4 tablespoons clear stock or water
 12 pieces guoba

For the guoba

13 to 14 ounces (375 to 400 grams)
 cooked rice
 1 to 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 2 teaspoons cornstarch
 ½ egg white or 1 tablespoon

SERVES 4 with 3 other dishes

In many Chinese households, rice, the staple food, used to be cooked in a large, round copper pot. When there was a layer of cooked rice stuck to the bottom of the pot, it would be carefully removed, roasted over a slow fire and then used again. These roasted rice pieces, called *guoba*, led to the invention of sizzling rice dishes in Eastern regional cuisine. This dish is also called “Thunder bolt out of the blue,” because of the sizzle caused by the boiling sauce when poured on the crispy guoba.

1 Prepare the guoba: Loosen the rice and let dry for 4–5 hours.

2 Lightly brush 2 baking pans with the oil. Form the rice into 14 to 16 thin cakes, squares or circles, about 2½ inches (6 centimeters) across, and place in the baking pans.

3 Put them, one pan at a time, if necessary, on the top shelf of a preheated oven, at 425°F (220°C), and roast for about 20 minutes, or until the bottom side of the cakes is brown. If the surface still looks pale, loosen the cakes with a spatula, turn them over and roast for another 5 minutes.

4 Take the pans out of the oven and let the guoba cool. Store in an airtight container. (They can also be eaten alone if sprinkled with a little salt.)

5 If frozen shrimp are used, defrost thoroughly. Wash twice in cold water to make them as white as possible. Drain well or pat semi-dry with paper towels. Put into a bowl.

6 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, cornstarch and egg white to the shrimp. Stir to coat evenly. Let marinate in the refrigerator for a minimum of 3 hours or overnight.



- 7** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat until just hot, about 300°F (150°C). Add the shrimp and let them “go through the oil” for about 30 seconds, separating them with a pair of long chopsticks or a wooden spoon. The shrimp, having turned pinkish, will be almost cooked. Remove with a large hand strainer and set aside.
- 8** Heat 2 casseroles or ovenproof soufflé dishes in a preheated oven at about 275°F (130°C). One is for serving the sizzling rice at the table, the other is for the boiling sauce.
- 9** Put the chopped tomato, salt, sugar, soy sauce, wine or sherry and stock in a saucepan and slowly bring it almost to a boil. Reduce the heat and stir in the dissolved cornstarch. Leave over a low flame or on a hot plate.
- 10** Reheat the oil until it reaches 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Carefully add the pieces of guoba and deep-fry for about 2 minutes, or until they are golden. Remove and transfer to the serving dish. Keep warm in the oven.
- 11** Add the shrimp to the tomato sauce and bring to a fast boil.
- 12** Take the serving dish containing the guoba to the table. Take the other dish out of the oven and pour the boiling sauce into it. Pour the sauce over the guoba at the table—there will be a great deal of sizzling. Serve as soon as the sizzling subsides.



Stir-fried Squid in Shrimp Paste

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large squid, about 1½ pounds (675 grams) or body pouch pieces only
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon potato flour
- 4 tablespoons water
- peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
- 1½ tablespoons shrimp paste
- 3 to 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 1 ounce (25 grams) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
- 6 scallions, cut into ½-inch (1-centimeter) diagonal slices, white and green parts separated
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

SERVES 4 TO 5 with 3 other dishes

Shrimp paste has a strong, almost unpleasant, odor, and squid is very bland. However, when stir-fried together, with garlic, this peasant dish, although an acquired taste, can delight even the most sophisticated palate.

- 1** Cut off the head of the squid from the body pouch and discard. Cut off the eyes and discard. Rinse in cold water, then cut the tentacles into 1½-inch (3.5-centimeter) sections.
- 2** Slit the body pouch open lengthwise as far as the innards. Pull these out and discard. Remove the transparent bone and peel off the reddish skin; discard. Rinse in cold water.
- 3** Turn the body pouch inside out. Lay it flat on a board and, using a sharp knife, score in a crisscross pattern. Cut into pieces about 2 by 1 inches (5 by 2.5 centimeters).
- 4** Immerse the squid briefly in plenty of boiling water. As soon as the pieces curl up, pour into a colander and rinse under cold running water. This makes the squid crisp and tender. Drain thoroughly and dry.
- 5** Mix together the soy sauce, potato flour and water. Set aside.
- 6** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat until just hot, about 300°F (150°C). Add the squid and let it “go through the oil” for about 10 seconds. Remove with a hand strainer and set aside. Pour all but about 3 tablespoons of the oil into a container and save for other uses.
- 7** Dilute the shrimp paste with 1 tablespoon of water, stirring to blend.
- 8** Reheat the oil until it smokes. Add the garlic, and when it sizzles, add the ginger. Stir a couple of times and add the white scallions. Stir a few more times, then pour in the shrimp sauce. Cook for a few seconds, stirring. Return the squid to the wok. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 10 to 20 seconds, or until thoroughly hot. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. When the sizzling dies down, add the well-stirred dissolved potato-flour mixture. Continue to stir while this thickens. Tip in the green scallions.
- 9** Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

Note: Steps 1 to 6 can be prepared several hours in advance. Instead of 1 large squid, small squid can be used.



Stir-fried Clams in Black Bean Sauce

Black bean sauce and clams go together for the Chinese the way horseradish and roast beef do in the West.

- 1** Leave the clams in water with a little salt until ready to use. Scrub the shells very thoroughly.
- 2** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, ginger and white scallions. Stir and let them sizzle for a few moments to release their aroma. Add the mashed black beans and stir to mix. Tip in the clams. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for 30 to 45 seconds. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to turn and stir. When the sizzling dies down, add the soy sauce and stock or water. Bring to a boil, cover, lower the heat to medium and cook for about 8 minutes.
- 3** Transfer the opened clams with a pair of chopsticks or tongs to a warm serving platter and keep warm. Stir and turn the remainder a few times and cook, covered, for another 4 to 5 minutes, so that they will open. Transfer the rest to the serving platter, leaving the sauce in the wok. Discard any clams that do not open.
- 4** Lower the heat, add the well-stirred potato flour to the sauce, stirring as it thickens. Tip in the green scallions.
- 5** Scoop the sauce over the clams and serve immediately. Sesame oil may be sprinkled on if desired.

INGREDIENTS

24 clams, about 3 pounds (1.3 kilograms)
3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
4 or 5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
½ inch (1 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
4 or 5 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
1½ tablespoons fermented black beans, rinsed, mashed with
1½ teaspoons sugar
2 tablespoons Shaohsing; wine or medium-dry sherry
1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
3 tablespoons clear stock or water
1 teaspoon potato flour, dissolved in
1 tablespoon water
sesame oil to taste (optional)

SERVES 4 TO 6 as a first course



Stir-fried Chinese Celery Cabbage with Dried Shrimp

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ounce (25 grams) dried shrimp, rinsed
- 1 Chinese celery cabbage, about 2 pounds (900 grams)
- 3 or 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- 4 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon salt

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

This economical and healthy everyday dish is easy to make. It is as popular in Canton as in Shanghai, but the Cantonese use scallions, ginger and shrimp to heighten the flavor; in Shanghai they prefer just dried shrimp.

- 1** Soak the shrimp in just enough boiling water to cover them, for 30 minutes or longer. Drain reserving the soaking liquid.
- 2** Discard any wilted or hard outer leaves of the cabbage. Then put together similar-sized leaves. Chop crosswise into thin strips. Remove and discard the hard core.
- 3** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the white scallions, stir a couple of times, then add the ginger. As they sizzle, add the shrimp, which will “explode” when they touch the oil, releasing a mouth-watering fragrance. Stir the shrimp for a few seconds.
- 4** Add the cabbage and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 1 minute so that the cabbage will absorb the fragrance of the other ingredients. Adjust the heat if the cabbage begins to burn. Pour in the shrimp water, season with the salt, cover and continue cooking for 1 or 2 minutes, or until the cabbage is tender yet still crunchy. Add the green scallions. Transfer to a warm serving plate and serve immediately.





Lobster with Ginger and Scallions

INGREDIENTS

2 lobsters, each about 1½ pounds (675 grams)
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 3 ounces (85 grams) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into thin slices
 10 to 12 large scallions, cut diagonally, white and green parts separated
 1½ tablespoons Shaohsing wine or brandy
 ½ cup prime stock (see page 242)

For the sauce

1 teaspoon potato flour
 4 tablespoons water
 ½ tablespoon thin soy sauce
 1½ tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 6 as a first course

The species of lobster found along the Chinese coast is the spiny lobster or crayfish and, significantly, the Chinese name for it is dragon prawn. The meat, compared to that of the true lobster, is slightly coarser, but cooking methods and recipes are the same for both. Only fresh lobsters are fit for consumption; they can be kept alive up to 3 days in the vegetable compartment of the refrigerator.

- 1 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the flour, water, soy sauce and oyster sauce. Set aside.
- 2 Kill and chop up the lobsters.** Before starting, make sure that strong rubber bands are around the pincers. Lay the lobsters flat, one at a time, on a chopping board, and steady them with one hand. Pierce the center of the head, where there is a cross, with the pointed end of a strong knife, pressing firmly all the way down in order to paralyze the nerve and hence kill the lobster instantly. Split it in half along the back, all the way to the tail, cutting through both the shell and the flesh. Remove and discard the pouch of grit from the head, as well as the dark gut running along the body. Remove the tiny eggs, if any, and the greenish creamy substance (tomalley), which can be cooked separately if you like it. Twist the joints to dislodge the 2 claws from the body. Lay each half of the body flat and, using a kitchen cleaver, chop each into 3 pieces. Remove the gill from the head, close to the shell. Lay the claws on the board and bang them, one by one, with either the broad side of the cleaver or a hammer until the shell is cracked at various points so that it will not be necessary to use crackers when eating them. Cut each claw in two at its obvious joint.
- 3 Put all the head and claw pieces into one large bowl and the body pieces into another.** Pat dry with paper towels.
- 4 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil.** Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Carefully lower all the head and claw pieces into the oil and let them “go through the oil” for 20 to 30 seconds, so that their juices are sealed in. Remove immediately with a large hand strainer and put on a large platter.
- 5 Reheat the oil and let the body pieces “go through the oil” for about 10 seconds.**
- 6 Empty the oil into a container and save it for other purposes.** Wash and dry the wok.





- 7** Heat the wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 3 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger, stir, and let it sizzle for about 1 minute, to release its aroma fully. Add the white scallions and stir a few times. Now return *all* the lobster and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss the pieces until thoroughly hot. Splash in the wine or brandy around the side of the wok, continuing to stir as it sizzles.
- 8** Pour in the stock, cover and cook for about 2 minutes, at the end of which most of the liquid will have been absorbed. Add the well-stirred sauce, tip in the green scallions and stir and toss until the sauce thickens.
- 9** Transfer to a large warm serving platter. Serve immediately.

Steamed Trout with Black Beans and Garlic

INGREDIENTS

2 trout, about 12 ounces (350 grams) each, cleaned with heads left on
 4 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
 2 tablespoons fermented black beans, rinsed and partially mashed with ½ teaspoon sugar and 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine; leave some beans whole
 4 to 6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 2 or 3 scallions, cut into small rounds
 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 2 tablespoons thick soy sauce

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

When condiments are needed to enhance the flavor of a fish, it is often steamed with fermented black beans and garlic and then garnished with scallions. Rainbow trout and gray mullet, among others, are delicious steamed this way.

- 1** Pat the fish dry. Lay them on a heatproof serving dish with slightly raised sides. Place 2 slices of ginger in the cavity of each fish.
- 2** Mix together the black beans and garlic, and spread on the fish.
- 3** Steam in a wok or steamer over high heat for 6 to 8 minutes, until the fish is cooked and the flesh flakes easily (see page 43).
- 4** Remove from the heat and sprinkle with the scallions.
- 5** Heat the oil in a small saucepan over high heat until smoke rises. Pour it over the scallions. The sizzling oil partially cooks them, enhancing the flavor.
- 6** Remove the fish from the wok or steamer. Add the soy sauce.
- 7** To serve, scrape the condiments on the fish to the side. Peel and discard the uppermost skin. Spoon some of the condiments and sauce back on the fish and serve.



Spiced-salt Prawns

This dish, with its subtly spicy flavor, is very popular in Hong Kong, one of the leading capitals of Chinese food. The prawns are left with their shells on because this protects the meat from the intense heat of deep-frying, thereby making it succulent when cooked.

1 If frozen prawns are used, defrost thoroughly. Wash the shells well; remove and discard the legs.

2 Devein: Using a bamboo stick or a strong needle, pierce the flesh at the joints of the shell sections and remove the black veins.

3 To make the spiced salt, heat a wok over medium heat until hot but not smoking. Add the salt and stir continuously for about 4 minutes, or until very hot and slightly grayish in color. Transfer to a small bowl. Add the five-spice powder, ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns and pepper. Mix well.

4 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Add the prawns and deep-fry for 30 to 45 seconds, or until they have curled up and turned red, indicating that they are cooked. Remove with a large hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain.

5 Empty the oil into a container and save it for other cooking purposes. Wash and dry the wok.

6 Reheat the wok until hot. Add 1 tablespoon of the spiced salt and return the prawns to the wok. Over medium heat flip and turn the prawns in the salt for about 30 seconds, so that the salt permeates them. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Put the remaining salt on a small saucer for additional dipping, with chopsticks, at the table.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) fresh or frozen medium raw prawns in the shell, without heads
2 tablespoons salt
1 teaspoon five-spice powder
1 teaspoon ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes



Stir-fried Scallops in Oyster Sauce

INGREDIENTS

4 large dried Chinese mushrooms,
reconstituted (see page 33)
10 to 12 large scallops, fresh or frozen
5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
6 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
4 scallions, cut into 1-inch
(2.5-centimeter) sections,
white and green parts separated
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-
dry sherry
4 to 6 sticks celery, cut diagonally
into thin slices
sesame oil to taste

For the marinade

white pepper to taste
1 teaspoon cornstarch
½ egg white, lightly beaten

For the sauce

½ teaspoon potato flour
1 teaspoon water
½ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
3 tablespoons juice from cooked scallops

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

Another classic Cantonese dish. You may think it gilding the lily to add the sweet-tasting oyster sauce to the inherently sweet scallops, but your palate will be delighted with the result.

- 1** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Quarter them.
- 2** Wash the scallops, remove and discard the hard muscle. Pat dry and separate the corals from the scallops. Place each scallop on its side and slice into 2 or 3 pieces. Pat dry again and put into a dish. Halve the corals horizontally and put into another dish.
- 3 Prepare the marinade:** Add the white pepper, half the cornstarch and a little over half of the egg white to the scallops and stir to coat. Add the remaining cornstarch and egg white to the corals. Let marinate for 10 minutes.
- 4 Prepare the sauce:** Dissolve the potato flour in the water. Stir in the salt and oyster sauce and set aside.
- 5** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 2½ tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add half the garlic and, as soon as it sizzles and takes on color, add half the ginger, then half the white scallions. Stir and tip in the scallops immediately. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for 30 to 60 seconds, or until the scallops are barely cooked, and have become whitish. Splash half the wine or sherry around the side of the wok and continue to stir. As soon as the sizzling dies down, drain in a sieve placed over a bowl, to catch the juice that will continue to drip from the scallops.
- 6** Add 1½ tablespoons of oil to the wok and swirl it around. Stir in the rest of the garlic, ginger and white scallions. Add the coral and stir and toss as before for about 1 minute. Splash the remaining wine or sherry around the side of the wok, stir, cover, lower the heat and cook for about 2 more minutes, or until the corals become firm to the touch. Transfer to the sieve over the bowl. While the corals are being cooked, add 3 tablespoons of scallop juice to the sauce. Blend thoroughly and set aside.



7 Turn up the heat again, add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil to the wok and swirl it around. Tip in the celery, stir, and then add the mushrooms. Stir and toss for 30 to 60 seconds; the celery should remain crisp. Make a well; pour in the well-stirred sauce and when it bubbles add the scallops and corals. Add the green scallions and then transfer to a warm serving plate. Sprinkle on some sesame oil to enhance the flavor. Serve immediately.

Stir-fried Prawns in Tomato Sauce

The Cantonese like to bite into prawns that are “crisply firm,” and to achieve this texture Cantonese chefs leave out ginger and wine when preparing them, as we have here.

- 1** If frozen prawns are used, defrost thoroughly. Shell and devein the prawns (see page 38). Pat dry with paper towels and put into a bowl.
- 2** Sprinkle with half the salt, which will firm up the prawns. Let sit for about 15 minutes.
- 3** Plunge the tomatoes into a bowl of very hot water and leave for 5 to 10 minutes. Peel off the skins. Cut the flesh into slices.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil, swirl it around and heat until very hot. Add the garlic and half the white scallions. Stir a few times to release their aroma and add the prawns. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and turn in rapid succession for about 1 minute, or until the prawns have curled up and turned pink in color. Scoop to a warm plate, leaving behind as much oil as possible.
- 5** Add the remaining white spring onion to the wok. Tip in the tomatoes and stir well. Season with the remaining salt, the soy sauce and sugar. Cover and cook over a medium heat for 2 or 3 minutes.
- 6** Add the well-stirred dissolved potato flour.
- 7** Return the prawns to the wok and tip in the green scallions. Turn up the heat, stir and turn until the prawns are very hot. Transfer to a warm serving plate.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces (225 grams) fresh or frozen raw prawns, in the shell, without heads
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces (225 grams) tomatoes
- 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 to 5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon potato flour, dissolved in 1 tablespoon water

SERVES 2 with 1 other dish



POULTRY AND EGGS

Kung Pao Chicken

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces (350 grams) chicken breast meat
4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
2 or 3 long (about 3 inches [7.5 centimeters] or more each) dried red chilies, or 4 or 5 smaller, seeded and cut into pieces
2 cloves garlic, peeled and diagonally sliced
4 to 6 thin slices fresh ginger root
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
3 scallions, cut into small rounds
2 ounces (55 grams) roasted peanuts

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon egg white, lightly beaten

For the sauce

1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
1 or 2 tablespoons chili sauce
2 teaspoons rice or white wine vinegar
2 teaspoons sugar
1½ teaspoons cornstarch
6 tablespoons clear stock or water

SERVES 4 with 3 other dishes

A famous Szechwan dish that tempts the palate with a full range of tastes and aftertastes: peppery hot and spicy, savory and slightly sweet and sour.

It is said that this was a favorite dish of a Szechwan governor during the Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911), after whose official title, “Kung Pao,” the dish was named. The governor must have been fond of peanuts, for it is unthinkable not to add them.

1 Cut the chicken into thin strips. Cut into cubes about ½ inch (1 centimeter) square. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, soy sauce, wine or sherry, cornstarch and egg white to the chicken. Mix well and let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes.

3 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the soy sauce, chili sauce, vinegar, sugar, cornstarch, and stock or water.

4 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the dried chili, stir, then add the garlic and ginger and stir to release their aroma. Add the chicken. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 60 seconds. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, stirring and tossing continuously. Add the scallions and continue to stir for another 30 to 45 seconds. The chicken should be almost cooked by now.

5 Add the well-stirred sauce to the wok. Continue to stir while it thickens.

6 Add the peanuts, stir to mix for a few times, then transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.





Stir-fried Chicken with Sugar Peas

INGREDIENTS

2 chicken breasts, about 1 pound (450 grams), when skinned and boned
 8 ounces (225 grams) sugar peas, trimmed salt
 peanut or corn oil for deep frying
 3 or 4 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
 3 or 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

¼ teaspoon salt
 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
 4 turns white pepper mill
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1 teaspoon cornstarch
 1½ tablespoons egg white, lightly beaten
 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

For the sauce

1 teaspoon potato flour
 6 tablespoons clear stock or water
 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
 ½ tablespoon thick soy sauce

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

This is a pleasant Southern stir-fried dish of tender and tasty chicken with crunchy sugar peas. The oyster sauce, a special condiment of the South, adds a pleasing taste to the dish.

1 Cut the chicken into large cubes. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, cornstarch and egg white to the chicken and stir to coat. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes. Blend in the oil so that the cubes of chicken will not stick to each other.

3 Bring a pan of water (about 6 cups) to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 tablespoon of oil. Plunge in the sugar peas and as soon as the water returns to a boil, pour into a colander and refresh under cold running water. Drain. They will remain crisp and retain their color for 2 or 3 hours.

4 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the potato flour, stock or water, oyster sauce and soy sauce.

5 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Let the chicken “go through the oil” for about 30 seconds, separating the pieces with a pair of long chopsticks (see page 42). Remove with a large hand strainer and set aside.

6 Transfer all but about 1 tablespoon of oil to a container and save for later use. Reheat the oil and add the ginger. When it sizzles, add the peas. Reduce the heat to medium and stir and turn until the peas are very hot. Season with salt to taste, then transfer to a warm serving plate and keep warm.

7 Wipe the wok clean. Turn the heat to high, add 2 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, let it sizzle, then add the white scallions and stir to release the aroma. Return the chicken to the wok and turn and toss with the wok scoop or metal spatula for 30 to 45 seconds. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, stirring continuously as it sizzles. Pour the well-stirred sauce over the chicken. Lower the heat and continue to stir while the sauce thickens. Add the green scallions, stir, then scoop the chicken mixture on top of the peas. Serve immediately.



A Chicken for Two Dishes

Dragon Flying and Phoenix Dancing

The dragon and phoenix of the title are metaphors for the two main ingredients: chicken and prawns. Because it is a very elegant dish, it is worth the trouble to use the “going through the oil” technique to seal in the juices of the ingredients before stir-frying them.

- 1** Cut the chicken into large even-sized pieces. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, pepper, wine or sherry, cornstarch and egg white to the chicken. Stir to mix well. Let marinate for 20 to 30 minutes.
- 3** Add ¼ teaspoon of the salt to the prawns.
- 4** Blanch the sugar peas in plenty of boiling water with 1 teaspoon of the salt and 1 tablespoon of oil until the water returns to a boil. Pour into a colander and refresh under cold running water.
- 5 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the potato flour, stock and oyster sauce.
- 6** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Add the chicken and, using a long pair of chopsticks, separate the pieces and let them “go through the oil” for about 20 seconds (see page 40). Remove with a hand strainer and put on a plate. Do not turn off the heat.
- 7** Add the prawns to the oil for about 20 seconds, separating the pieces with chopsticks. Transfer to another plate. Turn off the heat.
- 8** Pour the oil into a container for future use, leaving about 5 tablespoons in the wok.
- 9** Reheat the wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the garlic, and as it sizzles, add the white scallions and stir. Add the red-in-snow and stir until hot. Return the chicken to the wok and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss until almost cooked. Return the prawns to the wok, continuing to turn and stir. Splash in the wine around the side of the wok, stirring as it sizzles: both chicken and prawns will be cooked by now. Add the sugar peas. Sprinkle in the well-stirred sauce, stirring as it thickens. Add the green scallions. Transfer to a warm serving dish. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 chicken breasts from a 3 to 3½-pound (1.3 to 1.6-kilogram) chicken, skinned and boned
- 8 ounces (225 grams) medium raw prawns, without heads, shelled, halved and deveined
- 1¼ teaspoons salt
- 4 ounces (115 grams) sugar peas, trimmed
- peanut or corn oil for deep frying
- 2 or 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 3 or 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- 2 ounces (55 grams) red-in-snow, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 6 turns white pepper mill
- 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon egg white, lightly beaten

For the sauce

- ¾ teaspoon potato flour
- 5 tablespoons clear stock
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes



Paper-wrapped Chicken

The wind-dried sausage in this dish makes the chicken, already highly seasoned in the marinade, even spicier and richer in taste.

INGREDIENTS

the rest of the chicken (or 6 drumsticks or thigh pieces), over 2 pounds (900 grams)
 12 small or 6 large dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 4 to 6 ounces (115 to 175 grams) canned bamboo shoots
 6 wind-dried Chinese sausages, liver or pork or both
 24 pieces greaseproof paper, each 8 inches (20 centimeters) square
 24 large pieces coriander leaves (optional)
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the marinade

3 tablespoons thin soy sauce
 2 teaspoons sugar
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1 teaspoon ginger powder
 ¼ teaspoon five-spice powder
 1 tablespoon sesame oil

SERVES 8 as a first course;
 4 as a main course with a salad

- 1** Skin and bone the drumsticks and thighs. Discard the pinions of the wings and chop each wing into 3 pieces. Scrape out the 2 oysters. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the soy sauce, sugar, wine or sherry, ginger, five-spice powder and oil to the chicken. Mix well. Let marinate for a minimum of 1 hour, turning the pieces occasionally.
- 3** Squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Halve if small ones are used, quarter if large ones are used.
- 4** Slice the bamboo shoots into 24 pieces, each ½ inch (5 millimeters) thick.
- 5** Rinse the Chinese sausages and pat dry. Slice each diagonally into 8 pieces, making a total of 48.
- 6** About 10 minutes before the wrapping, add the mushrooms and bamboo shoots to the chicken, so that they can absorb some of the marinade.
- 7** Using a brush, thoroughly oil one side of 1 square of greaseproof paper. Put on a plate or work surface at an angle, like a diamond, and layer on it 1 piece of chicken between 2 slices of Chinese sausage, then 1 piece of bamboo shoot, and, finally, 1 piece of mushroom with a coriander leaf on top.
- 8** To wrap in the classic Chinese way, fold the bottom flap up toward the center, then fold the 2 side flaps inward on top of each other and finally fold the top flap down and tuck it squarely inside the opening. Repeat this process until all have been wrapped.
- 9** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350° to 375°F (180° to 190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 to 60 seconds. Slip 12 parcels into the oil, unsealed side down, and deep-fry for about 5 minutes if you like the chicken just done, or for about 8 minutes if you like it much more cooked and slightly charred. Turn them over for the last minute of cooking.
- 10** Remove with a large hand strainer and, holding it carefully above the oil, let excess oil from the parcels drain back into the wok or deep fryer. Put the parcels on a warm serving plate. Reheat the oil and deep-fry the remainder as before.





11 Serve hot. As soon as the fingers can stand the heat, open a parcel and savor its contents.

Note: Any leftover parcels can be deep-fried again momentarily or put into a preheated oven of 350°F (180°C) for 10 minutes.

Scrambled Egg with Chinese Chives

INGREDIENTS

3 or 4 ounces (85 to 115 grams)
Chinese chives
6 large eggs
8 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
½ to ¾ teaspoon salt
several turns pepper mill

SERVES 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

1 Pick over the Chinese chives, snip off and discard both the hard top ends and the wilted tail ends. Wash and dry them well. Cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) lengths.

2 Beat the eggs lightly in a large bowl with 1 tablespoon of the oil until well blended and frothy. Add the salt and pepper and beat a few more times.

3 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil, swirl it around and heat until very hot. Add the Chinese chives, stir for about 20 seconds, then pour in the egg. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, keep turning and letting the egg go under to blend with the oil and chives. Continue in this way until all the egg is just set.

4 Remove from the heat and scoop the eggs-and-chives mixture to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

Note: A small bunch of chives can be used as a substitute for Chinese chives.



Red-braised Chicken with Chestnuts

A popular national dish during autumn and winter, when chestnuts are in season.

- 1** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp.
- 2** Make a cross in the shell of each chestnut and put into a saucepan of cold water. Bring to a boil and boil for 3 to 5 minutes, depending on the size of the chestnuts. Remove from the heat but leave the chestnuts in the water. Shell and peel the chestnuts as best you can.
- 3** Cube the bamboo shoots in the size of a small chestnut.
- 4** Chop the chicken through the bones into serving pieces, using a kitchen cleaver, a mallet and kitchen scissors, if necessary. Cut the wings, thighs and drumsticks at the joints and slit the whole breast off from the back. Cut and discard the pinions, then halve each wing at the joint and chop each piece crosswise into 2. Chop each thigh and drumstick crosswise into 2 or 3. Halve the breast lengthwise, then chop each half into 3 or 4 pieces. Do likewise with the back.
- 5** Heat a large, deep and heavy saucepan over high heat until very hot. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the dark meat of the chicken, turn and toss to brown for about 3 minutes. Add the white meat, mushrooms and bamboo shoots and toss and turn for another 2 or 3 minutes.
- 6** Add the wine or sherry, ginger, star anise and cinnamon, continuing to stir until the sizzling dies down.
- 7** Add the salt, brown sugar and soy sauce. Adjust the heat, turning and stirring so that the chicken will be dyed by the soy sauce.
- 8** Pour in the stock and add the chestnuts. Bring to a boil and simmer fast for about 30 minutes, until the ingredients are tender. (The cooking up to this point can be done up to a day in advance.)
- 9** Just before serving, bring slowly to a boil. Turn up the heat to maximum, and as the sauce bubbles, spoon it over the ingredients. Repeat until the sauce has reduced and thickened, and the flavor has become richer. Transfer to a warm serving dish and serve piping hot.

INGREDIENTS

20 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
1 pound (450 grams) chestnuts
8 ounces (225 grams) canned bamboo shoots
1 oven-ready chicken, 4 to 4½ pounds (1.8 to 2 kilograms)
3 to 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
3 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
4 thickish slices fresh ginger root, peeled
2 whole star anise (16 segments)
1-inch (2.5-centimeter) cinnamon stick
1½ teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon brown sugar
4 to 5 tablespoons thick soy sauce
1 cup clear stock

SERVES 6 TO 8 as main course



Lettuce-wrapped Chicken

Although this chicken recipe is delicious, an arguably more elegant (although more expensive) version of this Southern dish uses quail's meat and dried oysters.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large iceberg lettuce heads
- 8 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 2 to 3 ounces (55 to 85 grams) Szechwan preserved vegetable, rinsed and dried
- 6 to 8 water chestnuts, fresh peeled or canned, drained
- 4 to 6 chicken breasts, about 2 to 2½ pounds (900 grams to 1.15 kilograms), skinned and boned
- 2 ounces (55 grams) walnuts or blanched almonds
- 10 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 or 5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 6 scallions, cut into tiny rounds, white and green parts separated
- 1½ tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

- ¾ to 1 teaspoon salt
- ¾ to 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
- 8 to 10 turns white pepper mill
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1½ teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten
- 2 to 3 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil

For the sauce

- 1½ teaspoons potato flour
- 9 tablespoons clear stock
- 1 to 2 teaspoons thick soy sauce (for coloring)
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 6 with 2 other dishes

1 Wash and dry the lettuce. Refrigerate to maintain crispness until almost ready to cook the chicken. Then arrange the leaves on 1 or 2 plates.

2 Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Dice into the size of small peas.

3 Finely chop the Szechwan preserved vegetable, removing stringy fibers at the same time.

4 Mince the water chestnuts in a food processor or blender.

5 Chop the chicken by hand or mince coarsely. Put into a large bowl.

6 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, cornstarch and egg white to the chicken. Stir to coat until well blended. Add the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and stir vigorously to make the chicken lighter in texture.

7 Stir in the mushrooms, preserved vegetable and water chestnuts. Let marinate for 30 minutes. Blend in the oil and sesame oil.

8 Prepare the sauce: Dissolve the potato flour in a small bowl with 2 tablespoons of the stock. Stir in the remaining stock and add the soy sauce and oyster sauce.

9 Heat a wok until hot. Add the walnuts or almonds and stir continuously over low to medium heat for about 3 minutes, until crisp and fragrant. Remove and chop. Wash and dry the wok. (This step can be done several hours ahead.)

10 Reheat the wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around until very hot. Add the garlic, which will sizzle and take on color almost instantly. Add the white scallions, stir a couple of times and add the chicken. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and toss for 2 or 3 minutes, or until the chicken turns white, breaking up lumps at the same time. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, stirring as it sizzles.

11 As soon as the sizzling dies down, lower the heat, push the ingredients to the side of the wok and pour the well-stirred sauce into the middle. When it bubbles, stir in the surrounding chicken, add the green scallions and walnuts



or almonds, still stirring to blend well. Transfer to a warm serving plate and put in the center of the table with the prepared lettuce.

12 To eat, each person takes 1 piece of lettuce at a time, spoons some chicken onto the lettuce, folds it to encase the chicken and then eats it with the fingers.

Chicken Glazed in Hoisin Sauce

The hoisin sauce adds color and flavor to the chicken in this Northern dish, and the cashew nuts provide a pleasing contrast of texture.

- 1** Dice the chicken into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (2-centimeter) cubes. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, pepper and wine or sherry to the chicken. Sprinkle with the cornstarch and stir in the egg white to coat. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.
- 3** Heat a wok over a high heat until smoke rises. Pour in 5 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add two-thirds of the garlic and the white scallions. Stir with the wok scoop or metal spatula a few times, then add the chicken. Sliding the scoop or spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 2 minutes, lowering the heat so that the chicken does not become tough. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. As soon as the sizzling dies down, transfer the chicken, still a little undercooked, to a warm plate.
- 4** Increase the heat, add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil and swirl it around. Add the remaining garlic, and as it sizzles, add the hoisin sauce and stir well. Return the chicken to the wok and toss in the sauce to glaze until just cooked. Mix in the cashew nuts and green scallions. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 or 3 chicken breasts, about 1 pound (450 grams), skinned and boned
- 6 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 5 or 6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 4 or 5 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- 1 to 1½ tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 3 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 2 ounces (55 grams) roasted cashew nuts

For the marinade

- ½ teaspoon salt
- 8 turns white pepper mill
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- ½ egg white, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes



Willow Chicken in Black Bean Sauce

INGREDIENTS

about 1¾ pounds (790 grams), pieces
chicken thigh, skinned and boned
2 small green peppers, seeded
1 to 2 fresh green chilies, seeded (optional)
6 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
5 or 6 cloves garlic, peeled and cut into
silken threads (see page 35)
4 scallions, cut into 1-inch
(2.5-centimeter) sections, white
and green parts separated
3 tablespoons fermented black beans,
rinsed and mashed
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
little sesame oil (optional)
chili sauce (optional)

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
8 turns black pepper mill
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons egg white, lightly beaten
1½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil

For the sauce

1 teaspoon cornstarch
4 tablespoons clear stock or water
2 teaspoons oyster sauce or
1 teaspoon thick soy sauce

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

This dish takes its name from the willowy strips of the chicken and pepper.

1 Cut the chicken into strips, about ½ inch (5 millimeters) thick. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper and wine or sherry to the chicken. Sprinkle with the cornstarch, add the egg white and stir to coat. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes. Blend in the oil.

3 Slice the peppers into long and narrow strips.

4 Slice the chilies into strips.

5 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the cornstarch, stock or water, oyster or soy sauce.

6 Heat a wok until hot. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and swirl it around. Add the pepper and stir and toss with the wok scoop or metal spatula constantly for about 2 minutes. When tender yet crunchy, transfer to a warm plate and keep warm.

7 Wash and dry the wok.

8 Heat the wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic and when it sizzles and takes on color, add the chilies, white scallions and then the black bean paste. Stir to blend with the garlic. Put in the chicken and stir and toss the strips for 2 minutes, or until they turn whitish, scraping the paste from the bottom of the pan to coat.

9 Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok and let it sizzle, stirring continuously. When the sizzling dies down, lower the heat and add the well-stirred sauce to the chicken. Continue to stir as the sauce thickens. Add the pepper and green scallions and mix well. Remove to a warm plate and serve immediately. A little sesame oil can be sprinkled on top. For those who like an extra-hot flavor, chili sauce can be served at the table.

Note: In pursuit of gastronomic excellence, you can let the chicken “go through the oil” (see page 40) before stir-frying it in step 8. In that case, simply stir-fry for a shorter time.



同致意
AN

是地土



Duck Stuffed with Glutinous Rice

INGREDIENTS

- 1 oven-ready duck, 4½ to 5 pounds (2 to 2.25 kilograms)
- 1½ tablespoons thick soy sauce
- 5 or 6 tablespoons peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 whole star anise or 8 segments
- 1 teaspoon Szechwan peppercorns
- ¼ preserved tangerine peel, soaked in cold water for 20 minutes, drained
- 2 or 3 teaspoons potato flour, dissolved in 3 tablespoons water
- 1 to 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 12 ounces (350 grams) broccoli spears, trimmed

For the stuffing

- ½ ounce (15 grams) dried shrimp, rinsed
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 3 scallions, cut into small rounds
- 2 ounces (55 grams) pork, diced into size of matchstick heads
- 8 small dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33) and chopped into size of matchstick heads
- 2 ounces (55 grams) canned bamboo shoots, chopped into size of matchstick heads
- 3 ounces (85 grams) glutinous rice, soaked in cold water for 2 hours, drained
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ tablespoons thin soy sauce
- 8 turns pepper mill

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

Duck stuffed with glutinous rice is popular with most Chinese, irrespective of the region they come from. The stuffing can be made a day in advance and refrigerated, but if it is, bring it out so that it will be at room temperature before being stuffed into the duck.

- 1** Soak the shrimp in just enough boiling water to cover them, for 20 minutes. Drain, but save the liquid.
- 2 Prepare the stuffing:** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl around. Add the garlic and scallions and stir for a few seconds. Add the shrimp, stir, the pork, stir, and then the mushrooms, bamboo shoots, glutinous rice and the shrimp liquid. Mix and stir for about 1 minute, partially cooking the mixture. Season with the salt, thin soy sauce and pepper. Transfer to a bowl. Wash and dry the wok.
- 3** Boil a kettle of water. Pour over the duck, turning it over several times to ensure even scalding. Wipe off excess water.
- 4** While the skin is still warm, brush all over with the thick soy sauce, not missing the wings and legs. Put on a wire rack.
- 5** Heat a wok over high heat, add the oil, swirl it around and heat until smoke rises. Carefully lower the duck into the oil, breast side down, and fry for 1 or 2 minutes, or until brownish in color. With a wooden spoon or spatula held in one hand and another put inside the cavity, turn the duck over and fry the other side for another 1 or 2 minutes, or until brownish. Turn off the heat. Transfer to a larger plate. Discard the oil.
- 6** As soon as the duck has cooled a little, rub all over with the salt and wine or sherry. Pack the cavity loosely with the stuffing; there is no need to sew up either end.
- 7** Put into a large dish with about 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) raised edges. Add the star anise, peppercorns and tangerine peel. Steam in a wok or steamer for 1¾ to 2 hours (see page 43). Transfer carefully to a large heatproof serving platter. Keep warm in a low oven.



- 8** Spoon off most of the fat in the steaming dish. Strain the juices into a saucepan, discarding the spices: there should be about 1 cup. Slowly bring to a simmer. Trickle in the well-stirred dissolved potato flour, stirring as it thickens. Taste for flavor. Add the oyster sauce. Remove from the heat and keep hot.
- 9** Put the broccoli into a pan of boiling water with about 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 tablespoon of oil. Return to a boil and cook for 2 or 3 minutes, until tender but still crisp. Drain thoroughly. Take the duck out of the oven and arrange the broccoli around it. Pour the hot sauce over the duck and broccoli.
- 10** To eat it the Chinese way, everyone helps himself and picks from the duck. It is so tender that the meat will come away from the bones when pressure from the chopsticks is applied. The stuffing can be spooned out of the cavity and served with the meat.
- Note:** After the duck is steamed (step 7), if it is left in a preheated oven of 300° to 350°F (150° to 180°C) for 45 to 60 or 30 to 45 minutes, the skin will be crisp again. This time gap allows for drinks or other dishes to be served.



Smoked Duck, Szechwan Style

INGREDIENTS

- 1 scant teaspoon saltpeter
- 1 oven-ready duck, about 5 pounds (2.25 kilograms)
- 1¾ tablespoons salt
- 6 ounces (175 grams) all-purpose flour
- 4 ounces (115 grams) brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons black tea leaves
- 2 pieces fresh ginger root, each ½ inch (1 centimeter), peeled and bruised
- 2 large scallions
- 1 whole star anise (8 segments)
- 1½ teaspoons Szechwan peppercorns
- 2 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

The various cooking processes used in this dish may seem too time-consuming, but the duck is at once made crispy and moist, smoky and aromatic.

- 1** Rub the salt thoroughly over the skin of the duck and inside the cavity, then rub the cavity only with saltpeter. Leave the duck in a cool place for about 10 hours or overnight.
- 2** Rinse the duck, especially the cavity, in plenty of hot water. Wipe dry. The duck is now ready for smoking.
- 3** Line a large wok with heavy-duty foil and place the flour, sugar and tea in the bottom. Place a metal trivet or bamboo stand on top. Place the duck on that, breast side up, and make sure that there is a gap between it and the smoking ingredients, to allow free circulation of smoke. Put the wok cover on tightly.
- 4** Turn the heat on high until you see smoke coming out, then adjust it, making sure that plenty of smoke continues to come out. Smoke for 15 minutes, turn the duck over and smoke, breast side down, for another 15 minutes. Remove from the heat.
- 5** When cool enough to handle, transfer to a large heatproof dish, breast side up. Put half of the ginger, scallions, star anise, peppercorns and wine or sherry into the cavity; put the other half on the breast.
- 6** Steam in a steamer or another wok for 1 to 1¼ hours (see page 43).
- 7** When cool enough to handle, transfer the duck to a rack and let cool. Remove and discard all the condiments. Dry with paper towels.
- 8** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Carefully lower the duck into the oil, breast side down, and deep-fry for 3 or 4 minutes, or until brown. With a wooden spoon or spatula in one hand and another inside the cavity, turn the duck over and deep-fry the other side until brown. Hot oil can also be spooned over the skin. Remove to a chopping board. Brush the sesame oil over the breast. The duck can be carved either in the Chinese way (see page 39) or by your usual method. Serve warm.

Note: If the duck is prepared in advance, it can be reheated in a preheated oven at 300°F (150°C) for 30 to 45 minutes, or until it's hot and the skin is crisp.



Sautéed Chicken Livers

In this simple dish, with its slightly piquant taste, the livers are partially browned, so that they're crispy on the outside, but pink inside. As one of the dishes in a Chinese meal, rice would be served with it as usual, but as a main course, noodles or spaghetti would do equally well. A green salad could be served afterward.

1 Slice each liver into 2 or 3 pieces. Place in a colander to wash and drain well. Put into a large bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, Worcestershire sauce and wine or sherry to the livers. Stir to mix well and let marinate for 1 to 2 hours, stirring occasionally.

3 Prepare the sauce: Put the cornstarch in a small bowl, stir in 2 tablespoons of the stock or water and blend until smooth. Add the soy and Worcestershire sauces, and stir in the remaining stock or water.

4 Just before ready to cook, sprinkle the livers with the cornstarch and stir to coat well.

5 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger and white scallions and let them sizzle. As soon as the scallions take on color, add the livers and brown for about 2 minutes, turning once or twice with a wok scoop or metal spatula to prevent sticking. Sprinkle with the wine or sherry, and when the sizzling has died down, lower the heat, cover and cook for about 2 minutes. Turn the livers over, add the green scallions, cover and continue to cook for about 2 more minutes.

6 Pour the well-stirred sauce over the livers and stir until it thickens. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately

Note: If pressed for time, instead of marinating the livers, pierce them with a fork to let the marinade permeate.

INGREDIENTS

1½ pounds (675 grams) chicken livers, trimmed
1½ teaspoons cornstarch
6 or 7 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
2 to 2½ inches (5 to 6 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into slices
9 or 10 large scallions, sliced diagonally into ½-inch (1-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
1½ tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

¾ teaspoon salt
¾ teaspoon brown sugar
1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
10 turns black pepper mill
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the sauce

1½ teaspoons cornstarch
6 tablespoons clear stock or water
2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

SERVES 4 as a main course;
8 with 3 or 4 other dishes



Duck Stuffed with Myriad Condiments

INGREDIENTS

12 to 15 scallions, white parts only, made into brushes (see page 34)
 1 pound (450 grams) taro, peeled
 1 oven-ready duck, 4 to 4½ pounds (1.8 to 2 kilograms)
 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce

For the sauce stuffing

¼ of whole dried tangerine peel, soaked in cold water, then cut into small pieces
 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 2 inches (5 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
 3 shallots, skinned and chopped fine
 2 whole star anise (16 segments)
 6 tablespoons crushed yellow bean sauce
 5 tablespoons hoisin sauce
 1 tablespoon sesame paste
 1 teaspoon five-spice powder
 2 teaspoons ginger powder
 2 teaspoons salt
 2 tablespoons sugar
 1 tablespoon Mei-kuei-lu wine or gin

SERVES 6 with 3 or 4 other dishes

The best time to serve this famous Cantonese dish is in the autumn and winter. The sauce resulting from this subtly balanced blend of seasonings is delicious.

1 Prepare the sauce stuffing: Mix together the tangerine peel, garlic, ginger, shallots, star anise, sauces, sesame paste, five-spice powder, ginger powder, salt, sugar and wine or gin. (This can be done hours in advance.)

2 Make the scallion brushes and put them in a bowl of water and refrigerate. (This can also be done hours in advance.)

3 Slice the taro into pieces about ½ inch (1 centimeter) thick. Lay them on a large heatproof dish with raised edges.

4 The duck must be at room temperature, otherwise the steaming will take much longer. Dry both skin and cavity with paper towels. Chop off the pinions of the wings; save them for the stockpot.

5 Spoon the sauce stuffing into the cavity. To seal the tail end, fold the parson's nose inward. If necessary, use a thin poultry skewer or bamboo stick to thread through the skin. To seal the neck end, fold the flap of neck skin over the neck cavity.

6 Lay the duck on top of the taro on the heatproof dish, breast side up. Put the dish into a wok or steamer and steam (see page 43), tightly covered, for 1¼ to 1½ hours, or until the duck is tender yet still firm.

7 Drain the scallion brushes and pat dry.

8 Remove the dish from the steamer and transfer the duck to another dish. Brush the thick soy sauce over the skin to give it color.

9 Turn the parson's nose outward or remove the skewer. Spoon the sauce stuffing into a saucepan.

10 Transfer the taro to a warm serving platter and keep warm. Degrease the liquid remaining in the heatproof dish and pour it into the saucepan.

11 Stir to blend the liquid and the sauce stuffing in the saucepan and simmer over low heat for 5 to 10 minutes. Strain through a sieve and discard the solids. Return this sauce to the saucepan and bring to a simmer again.





- 12** Chop the duck either in the Chinese way (see page 39) or by your usual method. Arrange the pieces on top of the taro.
- 13** Pour some of the sauce over the meat. Garnish with scallion brushes. Pour the remaining sauce into a bowl and serve.

Whampoa Stir-fried Egg

Even if someone arrives unannounced, the Chinese will extend an immediate invitation to stay for dinner with the stock phrase: “We’ll just add another pair of chopsticks to the table.” However, in the kitchen there will be a stir to whip up a quick and easy dish to add to those ready to be served. This egg dish fits the bill. It takes its name from Whampoa, a port near Canton, where the technique for stir-frying eggs was originally invented. The tenderness of the egg has earned much fame for this Cantonese dish.

INGREDIENTS

- 6 eggs
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup peanut or corn oil (only about 7 tablespoons actually used)

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

- 1** Beat the eggs lightly with the salt and 2 tablespoons of the oil until well amalgamated.
- 2** Heat a wok over medium heat until hot but not smoking. Add all the oil and swirl around 2 or 3 times to reach over halfway up the sloping edges. Pour the oil back into a container and then return the wok to the burner. There will be some oil left in the wok.
- 3** Add 2 tablespoons of oil and heat until hot but not smoking. Pour in the egg slowly, stirring and folding with the wok scoop or metal spatula. As soon as all the egg has been poured in, start slowly pouring in another 2 or 3 tablespoons of oil, little by little, around the side of the wok, while continuing to stir and fold. When the egg has set into tender flakes, remove from the heat and scoop at once to a warm serving dish.



Soy Sauce Chicken

This is a whole chicken dish, beloved of the Southern Chinese. If the chicken is hand-plucked in the old-fashioned way, it will be colored an even russet brown by the soy sauce and sugar mixture. When a chicken is machine-plucked, as it usually is in the West, the coloring will not be as successful. Fortunately, the aromatic soy sauce taste is not affected in any way.

- 1** To make the spiced liquid, put the star anise and peppercorns in a saucepan with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer for about 15 minutes, reducing the liquid to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. Drain and discard the spices.
- 2** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the scallions and ginger, stir for about 10 seconds, or until they have released their aroma. Remove from the heat. Transfer the scallions and ginger to the chicken cavity.
- 3** Wash the wok, then add the spiced liquid, soy sauce, wine or sherry and sugar. Bring to a boil, stirring to make sure that the sugar has dissolved.
- 4** Put the chicken in on its side. Using a large spoon, pour the simmering sauce repeatedly over the chicken for 10 minutes.
- 5** With a spatula held in one hand and a wooden spoon put inside the cavity, turn the chicken over to lie on the other side. Spoon the simmering sauce over for another 10 minutes.
- 6** If too much sauce has evaporated, replenish with about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water. Bring to simmering point again.
- 7** Cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Turn the chicken over again, cover and continue to simmer for another 20 minutes, until the chicken is cooked. To test, pierce the thickest part of the thigh with a chopstick. If no pink juices run out, the chicken is cooked.
- 8** Remove the chicken from the wok, tipping out the soy sauce from the cavity. Put some of this sauce on the table to use as a dip. The rest can be stored in the refrigerator and used to season other ingredients.
- 9** To serve the chicken, carve either Chinese style (see page 39) or in your usual way.

Variation: Soy sauce drumsticks or chicken wings. 12 drumsticks or chicken wings or 6 of each. Pour the sauce repeatedly over the drumsticks or wings for 10 minutes, then simmer, covered, for 20 to 30 minutes, until cooked.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 whole star anise (16 segments)
- 1 teaspoon Szechwan peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil
- 6 scallions, halved crosswise
- 2 or 3 slices fresh ginger root, about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 millimeters) thick, peeled
- 1 oven-ready chicken, 3 pounds (1.3 kilograms), at room temperature
- 1 cup thick soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 4 or 5 tablespoons brown sugar

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes;
or 4 as a main course



Chicken in Yunnan Steam Pot

INGREDIENTS

12 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
8 ounces (225 grams) best ham, trimmed of fat
1 oven-ready chicken, 3 to 3¼ pounds (1.3 to 1.5 kilograms)
1 to 1¼ teaspoons salt
4 to 6 turns white pepper mill
2 thickish slices fresh ginger root, peeled
2 scallions, quartered
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
thin soy sauce (optional)

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

A Yunnan steam pot is basically a pottery casserole dish about 8 inches (20 centimeters) in diameter and 4 inches (10 centimeters) high with a cone-shaped chimney in the center of the bowl. The pot, with its tightly fitting lid, is placed in boiling water so that steam rises through the chimney to circulate inside and cook the ingredients. Chicken cooked in this way is tender and succulent, and the accompanying soup is pure and flavorful. The pot is available in some Chinese shops, but, in a pinch, a double boiler can be used.

- 1** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Reserve the soaking liquid.
- 2** Slice the ham into large pieces.
- 3** Chop the chicken through the bones into serving pieces, using a kitchen cleaver, a mallet and kitchen scissors, if necessary. Cut the wings, thighs and drumsticks at the joints and slit the whole breast off from the back. Cut and discard the pinions, then halve each wing at the joint. Halve each thigh and drumstick crosswise. Halve the breast lengthwise, then cut each half crosswise into 3 or 4 pieces. Do not use the back; save it for the stockpot.
- 4** Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil and add the chicken pieces. Return to a boil and continue to boil for about 2 minutes, so that the scum rises. Pour into a colander and rinse the chicken to get rid of any remaining scum.
- 5** Line the steam pot with the mushrooms, ham and chicken. Add the salt, pepper, ginger, scallions and wine or sherry. Add sufficient water (including the mushroom water) to come within 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) of the top of the chimney of the pot. Put the lid on.
- 6** Over moderate heat, place the steam pot on the rim of a small saucepan with boiling water inside, leaving a gap between the water level and the bottom of the steam pot. Cook for 1 to 1¼ hours without disturbing. Replenish the water in the saucepan from time to time, removing the steam pot to do so if necessary.
- 7** Remove from the heat. Spoon off excess fat, if any, on the surface.
- 8** Take the steam pot to the dining table and serve from it. Use the soy sauce as a dip if you like.





MEAT

Stir-fried Bean Sprouts with Shredded Pork

INGREDIENTS

- 6 ounces (175 grams) lean pork
- 1 small green pepper, halved lengthwise and seeded
- 6 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 3 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
- 1 pound (450 grams) bean sprouts
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 or 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 3 scallions, halved lengthwise, cut into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 4 turns white pepper mill
- 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- ½ teaspoon potato flour
- 1 tablespoon water

For the sauce

- ½ teaspoon potato flour
- 3 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

The combination of meat and vegetables is a regular occurrence in Chinese cooking. Even though a small amount of meat is used, it nevertheless adds so much taste and interest to the vegetables that it is worth the effort.

- 1** Cut the pork into matchstick-sized pieces. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir in the same direction to coat. Let marinate for about 20 minutes.
- 3** Slice the green pepper lengthwise into thin strips.
- 4 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the potato flour, water and oyster sauce.
- 5** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 3 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger, and as it sizzles, add the bean sprouts and green pepper. Season with the salt. Sliding the wok scoop or spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss continuously over high heat for about 2½ to 3 minutes. The bean sprouts and green pepper will be cooked but still crunchy. Transfer to a warm serving plate and keep warm.
- 6** Wash and dry the wok. Reheat over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and as it sizzles and takes on color, add the white scallions. Stir a few times, then put in the pork. Turn and toss for about 30 seconds, or until the pork begins to turn opaque. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. As it sizzles, continue to stir and turn for another 30 to 60 seconds, or until the pork is cooked. Lower the heat. Pour the well-stirred sauce on the pork, stirring as it thickens. Add the green scallions and stir a few more times. Scoop the pork mixture over the bean sprouts. Serve immediately.





Rustic Steamed Beef

A delicious family dish that is equally good to serve when entertaining.

INGREDIENTS

- 12 ounces (350 grams) steak, beef, fillet, rump or skirt, trimmed
- 2 tablespoons cloud ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 1 small handful golden needles, about ½ ounce (6 grams), reconstituted (see page 33)
- 4 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 1½ teaspoons thick soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 ounce (25 grams) Szechwan preserved vegetable, rinsed
- 3 or 4 scallions, cut into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections, shredded lengthwise
- 2 or 3 coriander leaves, torn into pieces (optional)

For the marinade

- ½ inch (1 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and grated fine
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
- 6 turns black pepper mill
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 teaspoons potato flour
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

1 Slice the beef into pieces about 1 by 1½ inches (2.5 by 3.5 centimeters) and ¼ inch (5 millimeters) thick. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the ginger, salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry and potato flour to the beef. Add the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and stir in to coat the meat. Let marinate in the refrigerator for 20 to 30 minutes. Blend in the oil just before ready to steam.

3 Drain the cloud ears and golden needles and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Break up or cut the cloud ears into similarly-sized pieces. Split the golden needles in half lengthwise or crosswise. Slice the mushrooms into thin strips.

4 Put the cloud ears, golden needles and mushrooms together. Mix in the soy sauce and 1 tablespoon of the oil.

5 Slice the preserved vegetable into very thin pieces.

6 Mix the cloud ears, golden needles, mushrooms and preserved vegetable. Spread out on a heatproof dish with sloping edges.

7 Steam the beef in a wok or steamer over high heat for 10 minutes for medium-done beef or 13 to 15 minutes for well-done (see page 43). Remove from the heat. Put the scallions and coriander leaves, if used, on top of the dish.

8 Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil in a small saucepan until just smoking. Pour over the scallions to cook partially.

9 Remove the dish from the wok or steamer and serve immediately.



Twice-cooked Pork

One of the most popular Szechwan pork dishes, it is cleverly produced by combining two very different cooking methods: boiling and stir-frying.

- 1 Neatly remove the spareribs, if any, from the pork. Put the whole piece, rind and all, in a saucepan, cover with boiling water and simmer over moderate heat for about 20 to 25 minutes. The pork is not expected to be thoroughly cooked. Remove and leave to cool. Store in the refrigerator for about 2 hours to firm up the meat. It can be left overnight, covered.
- 2 When ready to cook, remove the rind and slice crosswise into very thin pieces, not more than $\frac{1}{10}$ inch (3 millimeters) thick, if possible.
- 3 Cut the leek lengthwise into 2 and wash thoroughly to remove any grit caught between the leaves. Cut diagonally into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1-centimeter) sections.
- 4 **Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the paste, soy sauce, salt, sugar and wine or sherry in a small bowl and set aside. (Those who like it really hot and spicy can use more hot soybean paste.)
- 5 Heat a wok over moderate heat until hot. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and swirl it around. Add the leek and stir-fry with the wok scoop or metal spatula for about 2 minutes. Season with salt to taste and transfer to a warm plate. The leek should be moist but not swimming in liquid. Drain if there is any excess water.
- 6 Dry the wok and reheat over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and as soon as it sizzles and takes on color, add the pork. Stir and spread the pieces into more or less a single layer, so that the fat fries in the oil. Turn over, pressing gently, to fry until the fat is transparent. Lower the heat if necessary; if excess fat oozes out, spoon from the wok and discard.
- 7 Pour in the sauce and stir to let it permeate the pork. Add the leek and stir until the sauce is almost absorbed. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) pork in one piece,
2½ to 3 inches (6 to 7.5 centimeters)
wide (middle section of belly with
alternating lean and fat layers is ideal)
1 leek, trimmed
2 or 3 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced thin
3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
salt to taste

For the sauce

1½ tablespoons hot soybean paste
1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes



Braised Beef with Garlic

Do not be put off by the large amount of garlic used in this recipe: the Chinese way of sizzling the garlic in hot oil burns off the garlic odor, and instead produces a heavenly aroma, which is absorbed by the beef.

INGREDIENTS

2½ pounds (1.15 kilograms) beef, shin and chuck steak, trimmed
4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
8 ounces (225 grams) garlic cloves, peeled
3 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
2 tablespoons thick soy sauce
1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
2 cups clear stock
½ to 1 teaspoon potato flour, dissolved in 1 tablespoon water
8 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections

SERVES 6 as a main course

- 1** Cut the beef into cubes of about 1½ inches (3.5 centimeters).
- 2** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, turn and toss until it takes on color. Add the beef, turn and flip with a wok scoop or metal spatula to brown it with the garlic for 2 or 3 minutes. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, stirring continuously as it sizzles and reduces to about half. Remove from the heat.
- 3** Transfer the wok contents to a large, heavy saucepan or flameproof casserole, scraping all the juices from the wok as well. Season with the salt, sugar and soy sauces, and pour in the stock. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to maintain a moderate simmer and continue to cook, covered, for 1½ to 1¾ hours, or until the beef is tender and most of the garlic has been assimilated into the sauce. Check the water level from time to time and replenish whenever necessary; also stir thoroughly a few times to make sure that the beef has not stuck to the bottom. When ready, there should be more than 1 cup of sauce. (This dish can be prepared and cooked to this stage several hours or even a day in advance. The taste actually improves overnight.)
- 4** Just before serving, bring to a boil, then add the well-stirred dissolved potato flour, to thicken the sauce slightly. Add the scallions, replace the lid and cook for a few seconds more. Transfer to a warm serving dish and serve.



Green Pepper Beef in Black Bean Sauce

This is one of the most celebrated Cantonese dishes using the versatile black bean as an essential ingredient. It is served as much at home as in restaurants.

1 Cut the beef across the grain into rectangular slices about 1 by 1½ inches (2.5 by 3.5 centimeters) and ¼ inch (5 millimeters) thick. Put into a fairly large mixing bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper and wine or sherry to the meat. Sprinkle with the potato flour and add the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, stirring, until it is difficult to continue before adding another spoonful. This process will make the beef velvety and tender. Refrigerate, covered, for 30 minutes. Blend in the oils.

3 Mix the 1 teaspoon of potato flour and 6 tablespoons of water together in a small bowl and set aside.

4 Heat a wok until hot. Add 1 tablespoon oil and swirl it around. Add the green pepper and stir-fry for about 2 minutes, lowering the heat if the pieces begin to burn. Season with salt to taste and remove to a warm plate.

5 Reheat the wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and as soon as it takes on color, add the white scallions and stir. Add the black bean paste and chili, and stir. Tip in the beef. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss vigorously for 1 or 2 minutes, or until the beef is partially done. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to turn and toss until the sizzling dies down. Still stirring, pour in the well-stirred dissolved potato flour, add the green pepper and green scallions and mix until this thickening has cooked. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) beef, rump, skirt steak or fillet trimmed
1 teaspoon potato flour
6 tablespoons water
5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
8 ounces (225 grams) green pepper, seeded and roughly chopped
salt to taste
5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
2½ tablespoons fermented black beans, rinsed and mashed with ¼ teaspoon sugar and 1 teaspoon oil
½ to 1 fresh red chili, seeded and sliced (optional)
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon sugar
2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
8 turns black pepper mill
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
1½ teaspoons potato flour
3 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon peanut or corn oil
1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



Sweet and Sour Pork

To many people, sweet and sour pork is synonymous with bad Chinese takeout food: lumps of chewy pork wrapped in thick batter, covered with a gluey and sickening sweet and sour sauce. However, when well made—crisp outside yet tender inside, topped with a well-balanced sweet and sour sauce—this is one of the most appetizing Cantonese dishes.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) lean pork belly, skinned and trimmed of excess fat
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
 ½ egg, lightly beaten
 3 tablespoons cornstarch
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 2½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 1 clove garlic, peeled and minced
 1 onion, skinned and roughly chopped
 1 green pepper, halved, seeded and diced
 4 ounces (115 grams) canned pineapple chunks, drained, juice reserved

For the sauce

2 teaspoons potato flour
 4 tablespoons water
 4 tablespoons pineapple juice
 3 tablespoons rice or wine vinegar
 4 to 4½ tablespoons sugar
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
 2 tablespoons tomato ketchup
 1½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

1 Cut the pork into pieces about 1 by 1¼ by ¾ inches (2.5 by 3 by 2 centimeters). Put into a bowl.

2 Add the salt and soy sauce and let marinate for 30 to 60 minutes. Stir in the egg to coat thoroughly.

3 Dredge the pork, piece by piece, with the cornstarch, making sure it is evenly coated. It is not necessary to use up all the cornstarch.

4 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Add the pork and deep-fry for about 1 minute in 1 or 2 batches; separate the pieces with a pair of chopsticks or a wooden spoon if they stick together. Drain on paper towels. This step can be done ahead of time.

5 Prepare the sauce: In a bowl, dissolve the potato flour in the water and pineapple juice. Add the vinegar, sugar, salt, soy sauce, ketchup and Worcestershire sauce and stir to blend. (This can be made in advance.)

6 Heat a frying pan or saucepan (unless you have another wok) until hot. Add 1½ tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic and onion, stir a few times and then add the green pepper. Stir-fry for about 2 minutes over medium heat and season with salt, if desired. Add the pineapple chunks. Pour in the well-stirred sauce and bring to a boil slowly, stirring constantly.

7 Reheat the oil for deep-frying to a higher temperature, 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Add the pork and again deep-fry in one batch for about 2 or 3 minutes, to ensure that the outside is crisp and golden without the pork inside getting dry. Drain on paper towels and transfer to a warm serving plate. Reheat the sweet and sour sauce and stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil. This prevents the sauce from being gluey. Pour the sweet and sour sauce over the pork. Serve immediately.

Note: When reheated, sweet and sour pork will be soggy but it will still taste good.





Beef in Oyster Sauce

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) beef, rump, fillet or skirt steak
 8 ounces (225 grams) asparagus
 5 to 6 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 3 or 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 ¼ inch (5 millimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
 3 or 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 sesame oil to taste (optional)

For the marinade

¼ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon sugar
 2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
 6 turns pepper mill
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1 teaspoon potato flour
 1 to 2 tablespoons water
 2 teaspoons peanut or corn oil

For the sauce

1 teaspoon potato flour
 6 tablespoons clear stock or water
 2½ to 3 tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

Although the Cantonese enjoy pork as much as all the other Chinese, they tend to eat more beef than many of their compatriots. Beef in oyster sauce is perhaps the most basic of all the Cantonese beef dishes. It is delicious also with other vegetables, such as mushrooms, celery, bamboo shoots or bean sprouts. In stir-frying beef, the Cantonese believe that it is most important to make it tender and “velvety,” and to achieve this they add bicarbonate of soda to the marinade. This tenderizing process is unnecessary in the West.

1 Pat the beef dry. Cut across the grain into rectangular slices about 1 by 1½ inches and ¼ inch (2.5 by 3.5 centimeters and 5 millimeters) thick. Put into a fairly large, deep bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry to the beef. Stir to blend. Sprinkle with the potato flour. Add 1 tablespoon of the water and stir, to coat the beef, until it is too difficult to continue. Add the remaining water and stir again. This process will make the beef velvety and tender when cooked. Let marinate in the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Blend in the oil.

3 Prepare the sauce: Put the potato flour in a small bowl, stir in the stock or water to blend thoroughly. Add the oyster sauce.

4 Wash and trim the asparagus. Cut diagonally into thin slices, so that they can be cooked quickly and can absorb the sauce easily.

5 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, ginger and white scallions in rapid succession. Stir several times to release their aroma and then add the beef. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and toss for up to 1 minute. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, just above the beef and, while it sizzles, continue to stir. Transfer to a warm plate as soon as the sizzling is over, but leave some oil behind.

6 Without washing the wok, add 1 tablespoon of oil. Add the asparagus and stir-fry for 1 minute. Season with salt, sprinkle with drops of water, lower the heat, cover and steam for about 1 more minute.

7 Push the asparagus around the sides of the wok and pour the well-stirred sauce into the center. As soon as it bubbles, return the beef, add the green scallions and stir together with the asparagus until hot. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately. Sprinkle with sesame oil at the table, if desired.



White-cut Pork

This dish, popular in both Szechwan and Peking cuisines, either as family fare or for entertaining, can be made one day ahead. It is so named because the pork is simply boiled in a pot of clear tap water, or “white water,” as the Chinese call it. True to form, the Szechwan-style sauce evokes a wide range of tastes and aftertastes; the Peking counterpart is laden with garlic.

- 1 Put the piece of pork in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil.
- 2 Lower the heat and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the pork is thoroughly cooked. To test, insert a chopstick or fork into the thickest part; if no pink juices run out, the pork is cooked.
- 3 Transfer the pork to a colander, saving the water for the stockpot. Rinse under cold water for 10 minutes, to firm up the texture.
- 4 Refrigerate, covered, for several hours or overnight.
- 5 **Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the chosen sauce ingredients and set aside.
- 6 Put the chilled pork on the chopping board. Slide a sharp knife between the rind and the fat and slice off the rind. Discard.
- 7 Slice the pork along the grain into paper-thin pieces, about 2½ inches (6 centimeters) wide. Arrange the slices on a round serving plate, overlapping each other. Pour the sauce over them and serve.

INGREDIENTS

1 to 1¼ pounds (450 to 560 grams)
lean pork belly

Szechwan-style sauce

2½ teaspoons garlic chopped very fine
2 tablespoons fresh coriander
leaves, chopped
2 large scallions, cut into small rounds
1 fresh green or red chili, about 3 inches
(7.5 centimeters) long, seeded and
chopped
3 tablespoons thick soy sauce
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1½ teaspoons rice or wine vinegar
¾ teaspoon sugar
1½ teaspoons hot chili oil

Peking-style sauce

4 teaspoons very finely chopped garlic
2½ tablespoons thick soy sauce
2 teaspoons sesame oil

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes



Dry-fried Beef

The traditional preparation of this Szechwan dish calls for great patience, because the beef is stir-fried over low heat for about an hour, until it becomes shriveled and quite crisp. However, the same effect can be achieved in less than half that time by using the combined techniques of deep-frying and stir-frying. The beef should taste spicy hot, sweet and savory at the same time. Besides rice, it goes equally well with silver thread buns.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) beef, round, trimmed
 3 to 4 ounces (85 to 115 grams) carrots,
 peeled and cut into thin strips
 ½ teaspoon salt
 3 or 4 sticks celery, cut into thin strips
 2 or 3 dried red chilies
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 ¾ teaspoon cornstarch
 1½ to 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 ½ teaspoon ground roasted Szechwan
 peppercorns (see page 17)
 1 teaspoon sesame oil

For the marinade

2¼ tablespoons thin soy sauce
 2¼ teaspoons sugar
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or
 medium-dry sherry
 1 teaspoon sesame oil
 ½ teaspoon ground roasted Szechwan
 peppercorns (see page 17)

For the sauce

1 teaspoon cornstarch
 ¾ to 1 teaspoon sugar
 4 tablespoons water

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

1 Shred the beef into long threadlike strips about 2½ to 3 inches (6 to 7.5 centimeters) long, ½ inch (5 millimeters) thick and wide. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the soy sauce, sugar, wine or sherry, oil and peppercorns to the beef. Mix well. Let marinate at room temperature for 45 to 60 minutes.

3 Put the carrots into a small bowl and add ¼ teaspoon of salt to draw out the water. Drain after 20 to 30 minutes. Pat dry, if necessary.

4 Put the celery into another bowl and add ¼ teaspoon of salt to draw out the water. Drain after 20 to 30 minutes. Pat dry, if necessary.

5 Seed the red chilies but leave whole, if possible.

6 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the cornstarch, sugar and water in a small bowl and set aside.

7 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of about 400°F (200°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 40 seconds. While the oil is being heated, stir the cornstarch into the beef to coat evenly. Add the beef gently to the oil and deep-fry for 4 or 5 minutes, or until crisp. Turn off the heat and remove with a large hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Pour the oil into a container for future use. Wash and dry the wok.

8 Reheat the wok over moderate heat until hot. Add 1¾ to 2 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the red chilies and fry until they are dark in color. Remove and discard. Add the carrots, stir and toss, and then add the celery. Stir for a few minutes, until dry, before adding the beef. Continue to stir over gentle heat for another 3 or 4 minutes, or until everything is quite dry and crisp.

9 Gradually add the well-stirred sauce, stirring continuously to coat the beef. Transfer to a warm serving plate.



10 Sprinkle with the ground Szechwan peppercorns and sesame oil.

Note: This dish can be prepared several hours in advance up to step 8. When ready to serve, simply reheat thoroughly over gentle heat and proceed with steps 9 and 10.

Stir-fried Pork with Red-in-snow

The preserved vegetable, red-in-snow, lends a special fragrance to the pork in this dish. As in many other Shanghai or Eastern stir-fried dishes, neither garlic nor scallions are used.

- 1** Slice the pork into matchstick-sized strips. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, cornstarch and egg white to the pork. Stir in the same direction until absorbed. Let marinate for about 15 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.
- 3** Roughly chop the red-in-snow. Mix in the sugar.
- 4** Slice the bamboo shoots into matchstick-sized strips.
- 5** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the red-in-snow and stir a few times to enhance its fragrance. Add the bamboo shoots and stir a few more times. Add the pork and turn and toss for about 1 minute, separating the strips as you do so. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir as it sizzles. When the pork, having turned opaque, is cooked, transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces (350 grams) lean pork
4 ounces (115 grams) canned
red-in-snow, drained
½ teaspoon sugar
4 ounces (115 grams) canned bamboo
shoots, drained
4 or 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon sesame oil

For the marinade

2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
6 turns white pepper mill
1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon egg white
1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



Pearly Pork Balls

It is a misconception to think that every Hunan dish is spicy hot. On the contrary, many are not, and this dish, that derives its name from the glutinous rice that shines like little pearls on the pork balls, is one of them.

INGREDIENTS

5 ounces (140 grams) white glutinous rice
 4 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 2 tablespoons dried shrimp, rinsed
 4 water chestnuts, fresh peeled or canned, drained
 12 ounces (350 grams) pork, about 3 ounces (85 grams) fat and 9 ounces (250 grams) lean
 ½ teaspoon salt
 8 turns white pepper mill
 1 tablespoon potato flour
 2 ounces (55 grams) lean ham

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

- 1** Rinse the rice, rubbing gently with your fingers in 3 or 4 changes of water, or until it is no longer milky. Drain.
- 2** Soak in plenty of cold water for about 4 hours. Drain well and spread out in a shallow pan.
- 3** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Chop into the size of matchstick heads.
- 4** Soak the shrimp, in just enough boiling water to cover them, for 10 to 15 minutes. Drain them, reserving the soaking liquid.
- 5** Chop fine or mince the shrimp and the water chestnuts.
- 6** Chop the fat and lean pork by hand or mince coarsely.
- 7** Combine the mushrooms, dried shrimp, water chestnuts and pork in a large bowl. Add the salt, pepper and potato flour. Stir in, a spoonful at a time, 3 tablespoons of water and the soaking liquid from the shrimp.
- 8** Cut the ham into pieces the size of matchstick heads and mix with the rice in the pan.
- 9** Pick up about 1 tablespoon of the pork mixture, roll it between your palms into a ball about the size of a Ping-Pong ball. Roll this ball over the rice and ham, making sure it is completely covered, and put it on a heatproof plate. Repeat until all the pork mixture is used. The pork balls will fill more than one plate.
- 10** Steam the pork balls in a wok or steamer for 15 minutes (see page 43).
- 11** Serve the pearly balls hot, either piled up neatly in a bowl or arranged on a warm serving plate.





Char-siu: Cantonese Roast Pork

INGREDIENTS

2½ pounds (1.15 kilograms) pork without bone or rind, shoulder or leg cuts
about 2 tablespoons runny honey

For the marinade

2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
2 tablespoons ground yellow bean sauce
4 tablespoons thin soy sauce
6 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon salt

SERVES 4 as a main course;

8 with 4 other dishes

As a contribution to Chinese gastronomy, this dish is arguably as notable as Peking Duck, and it's certainly easier to make. When roasted, this fragrant and succulent pork looks reddish brown with slightly burned edges, especially around the fat. Delicious hot or cold, it's a versatile ingredient and can be stir-fried with vegetables, or mixed with fried rice and used as a topping on noodles.

- 1** Divide the pork into 4 strips. Leave any fat on, because it is delicately succulent when roasted.
- 2** Make 3 or 4 diagonal cuts from opposite directions, cutting three-quarters through the width of a strip without cutting it into pieces. This allows for better absorption of the marinade and gives the pork the traditional char-siu look.
- 3 Prepare the marinade:** In a large bowl mix together the sauces, sugar, wine or sherry and salt. Put the pork in and let marinate for 4 hours, turning it over every 30 minutes.
- 4** Place the strips of pork side by side on a wire rack in the top third of the oven with a tray of water ½ inch (1 centimeter) deep underneath to catch the drippings. (The water prevents the juices that drip from the pork from burning; steam from it also keeps the pork from drying.) Roast in a preheated oven at 375°F (190°C), for 25 to 30 minutes, at the end of which time the top side will be reddish brown. Remove from the oven, dip each piece into the marinade and return to the rack with the bottom side up. Lower the oven temperature to 350°F (180°C), and continue to roast for another 25 to 30 minutes. Insert a chopstick or fork into the thickest part of one piece: if no pink juices run out, the pork is cooked.
- 5** Transfer to a wire rack. Immediately brush all over with honey, making sure not to neglect the crevices.
- 6** Carve into slices and serve immediately.

Note: This dish can be frozen. To reheat, place on a rack in a preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) for about 12 minutes. The leftover marinade can be cooked to make a dipping sauce for the pork. If it is too sweet, add more salt to it.

Variation: Roast spareribs. Use one whole side of spareribs (about 3 pounds [1.3 kilograms]). Divide it in half and roast in the same manner as char-siu.



Stir-fried Pork with Szechwan Preserved Vegetable

Since preserved Szechwan vegetable is a regional product and pork is the national Chinese meat, it is hardly surprising that a standard Szechwan dish combines the two. In fact, this simple stir-fried dish is popular family fare all over China, eaten as much in the South as in the North.

- 1** Slice the pork into matchstick-sized strips. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir until absorbed. Let marinate for about 15 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.
- 3** Slice the preserved vegetable into very thin pieces, stack them up and slice them into very thin strips.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and as it sizzles, add the preserved vegetable and stir a few times. Before it begins to “bounce,” add the pork. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss in rapid succession for about 1 minute, separating the strips at the same time. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok and continue to stir as it sizzles. Add the scallions and stir together for another minute, or until the pork has become opaque and is cooked. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces (225 grams) pork tenderloin
2 ounces (55 grams) Szechwan preserved vegetable, rinsed
4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
1 large clove garlic, peeled and cut into silken shreds (see page 35)
5 or 6 scallions, halved lengthwise, then cut into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections

For the marinade

large pinch salt
½ teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon thin soy sauce
1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
½ teaspoon potato flour
1 tablespoon water
1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 2 with 1 other dish



Mu-shu Pork

Some Chinese dishes have a time-honored formula for the ingredients, and this Northern dish, consisting of golden needles, cloud ears, pork and egg, is one of them. Mu-shu is the Chinese name for golden needles, which, in this dish, rank in equal importance with the pork. Mu-shu is also said to refer to the egg pieces, because their yellow color reminds one of the tinge of the golden needles.

1 Drain the cloud ears (for extra slipperiness, soak in boiling water for another 20 to 30 minutes). Squeeze out excess water but leave damp.

2 Drain the golden needles; soak in boiling water for another 20 to 30 minutes for extra tenderness. Drain and squeeze out excess water but leave damp. Split each one lengthwise with the fingers.

3 Slice the pork into thin, even-sized rectangular pieces. Put into a bowl.

4 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, pepper, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir to coat. Let marinate for about 20 minutes. Stir in the oil.

5 Beat the eggs lightly with 1 tablespoon of the oil and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of the salt.

6 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the cloud ears and stir for about 30 seconds, lowering the heat if they jump in the air and make popping noises. Add the golden needles and continue to stir and turn until very hot. Season with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, the soy sauce and the sugar. Transfer to a warm dish and set aside.

7 Wipe the wok and reheat until hot. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Pour in the egg and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, fold and turn until the egg forms into lumps. Transfer to a warm plate and set aside. Wash and dry the wok.

8 Reheat the wok until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the white scallions, stir and let them sizzle for a few seconds. Add the pork and turn and toss in rapid succession for about 1 minute or until partially cooked and turning opaque. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir and turn as it sizzles. Return all the other ingredients to the wok. Stir and mix for another minute, so that the pork is thoroughly cooked, the egg firmer and all the ingredients piping hot. Add the green scallions. Transfer to a warm serving dish. Sprinkle with the sesame oil and serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce (15 grams) cloud ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 1 ounce (25 grams) golden needles, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 10 to 12 ounces (280 to 350 grams) lean pork
- 4 eggs
- 8 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sugar
- 3 or 4 large scallions, sliced diagonally, white and green parts separated
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil or to taste

For the marinade

- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
- 6 turns white pepper mill
- 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 teaspoon potato flour
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes



Stir-fried Beef with Pickled Mustard Green

This Cantonese dish, with its mouth-watering combination of pungent, savory, sweet and sour tastes, comes from the area along the Eastern River in Kwangtung province.

- 1** Shred the pickled mustard green into narrow pieces. Put into a bowl, add the sugar and mix well. Let stand at room temperature for up to 1 hour.
- 2** Cut the beef across the grain into slices about 1 by 1½ inches and ¼ inch (2.5 by 3.5 centimeters and 3 centimeters) thick. Put into a bowl.
- 3 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, soy sauce, pepper and wine or sherry to the beef. Sprinkle with the potato flour and add the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, stirring until it is difficult to continue before adding another spoonful. This process will make the beef velvety and tender. Put in the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.
- 4** Mix the 1 teaspoon of potato flour and the water in a small bowl and put aside.
- 5** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 4 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and as soon as it takes on color, add the white scallions and stir. Add the beef. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss vigorously for 30 to 60 seconds, or until partially cooked. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to turn and toss until the sizzling dies down. Transfer to a warm plate.
- 6** Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil to the wok and swirl it around. Tip in the ginger, stir, and then add the pickled mustard green. Stir and turn until piping hot and then push to the edge, leaving a well in the middle.
- 7** Return the beef to the middle and immediately pour in the well-stirred dissolved potato flour. Continue to toss the beef until this thickening has cooked. Stir in the green scallions. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces (225 grams) canned pickled mustard green, rinsed
2¼ tablespoons sugar
12 ounces (350 grams) beef, skirt, steak, rump or fillet
1 teaspoon potato flour
6 tablespoons water
5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
4 or 5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
¼ to ½ inch (5 millimeters to 1 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine or sliced

For the marinade

¼ teaspoon salt
scant 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
8 turns black pepper mill
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon potato flour
2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



Beef with Preserved Tangerine Peel

INGREDIENTS

- 5 or 6 pieces preserved tangerine peel
- 1 sweet orange
- 1½ pounds (675 grams) beef, rump, fillet or skirt steak, trimmed
- 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
- 6 scallions cut into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 to 3 tablespoons chili sauce

For the marinade

- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1½ teaspoons potato flour
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 dried red chili, seeded and chopped
- 1 tablespoon hot chili oil (see page 240)

For the sauce

- ½ teaspoon potato flour
- 2 tablespoons water or clear stock
- 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

True to form, this Hunan dish is spicy hot, savory and slightly sweet. As if the flavors are not complex enough, tangy tangerine peel is added to provide a further dimension in taste. The orange rind is not a traditional ingredient for this dish, but it is used here because it complements rather than detracts from the tangerine peel.

- 1** Soak the tangerine peel in cold water for about 2 hours, or until soft. Drain and slice into strips about ½ inch (5 millimeters) wide.
- 2** Peel the orange rind lengthwise and blanch in boiling water for 5 minutes to remove its bitterness. Drain and rinse in cold water. Slice into strips similar to the tangerine strips.

- 3** Cut the beef into thickish slices, about 1 by 1½ inches (2.5 by 3.5 centimeters) and put into a bowl.

- 4 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, wine or sherry and potato flour to the meat. Add the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and stir in the same direction until all is absorbed. Mix in the chopped chili and let marinate for 30 to 60 minutes. Blend in the hot chili oil.

- 5** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger, stir, then add the white scallions and let sizzle. Add the tangerine and orange peel and fry for a few seconds. Put in the beef and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and turn for 1 or 2 minutes or until very hot. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir. When the sizzling dies down, add the chili sauce. Cover, lower the heat and cook for about 2 minutes, so that the flavor of the tangerine peel can permeate the beef.

- 6 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the potato flour, water or stock and soy sauce.

- 7** Dribble into the wok and stir as the sauce thickens. Add the green scallions and stir to mix. Transfer to a warm serving dish. Serve immediately.





Ants Climbing a Tree

Don't be put off by the name of this dish: it is characteristic of the Szechwanese sense of humor to visualize minced pork over cellophane noodles as ants climbing up a tree, even though you may not wish to conjure the same image. Whatever the mental picture, the marinated pork cooked in a spicy sauce lends color and flavor to the otherwise bland cellophane noodles, which do, however, contribute an interesting texture to the overall effect.

INGREDIENTS

3 ounces (85 grams) cellophane noodles
 6 ounces (175 grams) pork loin
 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 3 or 4 scallions, cut diagonally into long slices, white and green parts separated
 1 to 1½ tablespoons hot soybean paste or chili sauce
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1 cup clear stock
 salt to taste
 thin or thick soy sauce to taste

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
 4 turns black pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ½ teaspoon potato flour
 1 tablespoon water
 2 teaspoons sesame oil

SERVES 6 with 3 or 4 other dishes
 or 4 as a first course

1 Put the cellophane noodles in a large bowl and pour over them about 3½ cups of boiling water. Let soak, preferably covered, for a minimum of 20 minutes.

2 Chop fine or mince the pork. Put into a bowl.

3 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir vigorously for 1 or 2 minutes, in order to give the pork the right consistency. Let marinate for about 15 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.

4 Drain the cellophane noodles and make a few cuts with a pair of scissors to make them shorter and easier to handle.

5 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, then the white scallions. As they sizzle, add the soybean paste or chili sauce and stir a couple of times. Add the pork and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 1 minute, breaking up any lumps at the same time. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir and break up any lumps.

6 When the sizzling dies down, add the noodles, stir and fold to blend. Add the stock, bring to a boil, add the salt and soy sauce to taste, then lower the heat and continue to cook, covered, for about 5 minutes.

7 Remove the wok cover. Most of the stock should have been absorbed. Add the green scallions, then scoop to a warm serving dish.

8 Arrange the pork all over the top of the noodles. Serve hot.

Note: If you cannot tolerate hot soybean paste or chili sauce, use thick soy sauce instead. This dish reheats well over low heat.



Red-braised Ox Tongue

A very down-to-earth dish, especially good during the autumn and winter.

Ox tongue may be more readily available and cheaper but calf tongue has a more delicate flavor and texture, so by all means use 3 or 4 calves' tongues if you prefer them.

- 1 Place the ox tongue in a large saucepan of water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a fast simmer for 1 hour. Drain and rinse in cold water. Peel and discard the hard skin that covers the tongue (this should not be difficult after boiling).
- 2 Heat a large heavy saucepan (an enameled casserole with a cast-iron bottom is ideal) until hot. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, scallions and tongue, and brown for about 1 minute on each side. Add the star anise, peppercorns, tangerine peel, stock, soy sauce, sugar, salt and wine or sherry. Cover and gradually bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer fast for about 2 hours. Check the water level from time to time and add more stock or water, if necessary. There should be about 1¾ cups of sauce when ready, and the ox tongue should be very tender. (This can be done several hours in advance or overnight).
- 3 Remove the tongue and slice into thin pieces of uniform thickness.
- 4 Strain the sauce through a sieve. Discard the solids.
- 5 Blanch the peas in boiling salted water with 1 tablespoon of oil for about 2 minutes. Drain and refresh under cold running water.
- 6 Just before ready to serve, return the tongue, sauce and peas to the saucepan and gradually bring to a simmer. Add the well-stirred dissolved potato flour. Continue to stir as it thickens.
- 7 Transfer to a large warm serving plate and serve.

Note: The cooked ox tongue freezes well, either whole or in sections. Step 2 can be cooked in a preheated oven at 400°F (200°C) for 20 minutes, then at 325°F (160°C) for 1¾ hours.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ox tongue, about 3 pounds (1.3 kilograms), unsalted
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
- 3 large scallions, white parts only
- 2 whole star anise or 16 segments
- 1 teaspoon Szechwan peppercorns
- 1 piece (¼ of whole) dried tangerine peel
- 2 cups clear stock
- 5 tablespoons thick soy sauce
- 1½ teaspoons brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 8 ounces (225 grams) small or regular-size peas
- 1 tablespoon potato flour, dissolved in 2 tablespoons water

SERVES 6 as a main course



Roast Pork Belly

In special Cantonese establishments, a whole pig is roasted to a rich red color in a specially built oven. A similar effect can be achieved at home by using a piece of pork from the middle section of the belly, with the skin or rind left on. Never score the skin and never use pork that has been frozen, because the skin will not get crisp enough to form the distinctive crackling of the dish.

INGREDIENTS

3 pounds (1.3 kilograms) pork belly
in one piece, without spareribs
about ½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons red food coloring (optional)

For the marinade

1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon ground yellow bean sauce
1 tablespoon hoisin sauce
½ teaspoon thin soy sauce
1 teaspoon five-spice powder

For the dips

thick soy sauce
hoisin sauce

SERVES 4 TO 6 as a main course

1 Wipe the pork skin or rind dry. Using a fork with 10 close-set, sharp tines, or a similar metal piercing instrument, pierce the skin rind vigorously and repeatedly, for about 15 to 20 minutes, or until it is entirely covered with fine holes. Rub the salt all over the skin.

2 Lightly brush some of the food coloring over the skin, if used.

3 Make horizontal cuts on the flesh side, about 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) apart and ½ inch (1 centimeter) deep.

4 Prepare the marinade: Mix together the salt, sugar, yellow bean sauce, hoisin sauce, soy sauce and five-spice powder in a small bowl.

5 Using a clean brush, smear as much marinade as possible on the flesh side, particularly in the grooves. Do not smear any marinade along the sides of the pork or they will be burned when roasted.

6 Using 2 butcher's meat hooks, hang the pork up in a windy place for about 8 hours, or overnight, until the skin is very dry. The drier the skin, the better the crackling when roasted.

7 Place the pork, skin side up, on a rack in the top half of the oven over a pan of hot water to catch the drippings. Roast in a preheated oven at 400°F (200°C) for 15 minutes and then reduce the oven temperature to 375°F (190°C) for about 1 hour. Do not open the oven door at all until it is time to test whether the pork is done. Test by piercing the meat with a skewer or chopstick; if it goes in easily and the juices that run out are clear and not pink, the pork is done. The skin will have turned into excellent crackling.

8 Transfer the pork to a carving board to rest for a few minutes. Carve into ½- to 1-inch (1- to 2.5-centimeter) pieces with a cleaver or a sharp, serrated meat knife. Transfer to a warm serving dish and serve.



Stir-fried Chinese Broccoli with Beef

As is so often the case in Chinese cooking, meat is used here to complement the vegetables. The Chinese broccoli in this dish, with its distinctive flavor, similar to asparagus, goes especially well with the velvety beef slices. If it is not available, use broccoli as a substitute.

1 Cut the beef across the grain into slices about 1 by 1½ inches and ½ inch (2.5 by 3.5 centimeters and 5 millimeters) thick. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the beef. Stir until well coated. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes. Blend in the oil.

3 Cut the Chinese broccoli into pieces measuring about 3 or 4 inches (7.5 or 10 centimeters) long.

4 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the potato flour, water, oyster sauce and soy sauce.

5 Heat a wok until hot. Add 1½ to 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger, stir. Add the Chinese broccoli. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss in rapid succession for about 1 minute, adjusting the heat if the broccoli begins to burn. Add the salt and sugar. Now add 4 or 5 tablespoons of water, bring to a boil, continue to cook, covered, over moderate heat for about 4 or 5 minutes. The broccoli should be tender yet crunchy. Transfer with a perforated spoon to a warm serving plate and keep warm.

6 Wash and dry the wok. Reheat over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, then stir in the white scallions. Add the beef and turn and toss for about 30 seconds to brown. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir as it sizzles. Add the well-stirred sauce to the wok. Toss and stir as the sauce thickens. Add the green scallions and remove from the heat.

7 Scoop the beef mixture over the Chinese broccoli. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

4 to 6 ounces (115 to 175 grams) beef, fillet, rump or skirt, steak, trimmed
 1 to 1½ pounds (450 to 675 grams) Chinese broccoli, trimmed
 4 to 4½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 4 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
 ¼ to ½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ to ½ teaspoon sugar
 1 or 2 cloves garlic, peeled and cut diagonally into slivers
 2 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
 ½ tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

¼ to ½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ to ½ teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
 3 or 4 turns black pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ½ teaspoon potato flour
 1 tablespoon water
 1 teaspoon peanut or corn oil

For the sauce

½ to ¾ teaspoon potato flour
 3 to 5 tablespoons water
 1 to 1½ tablespoons oyster sauce
 ½ tablespoon thick soy sauce

SERVES 4 with 3 other dishes



VEGETABLES

Eight-treasure Vegetarian Assemblage

INGREDIENTS

2 heaped tablespoons cloud ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
½ ounce (15 grams) golden needles, reconstituted (see page 33)
2 ounces (55 grams) cellophane noodles
1 teaspoon salt
4½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
4 ounces (115 grams) sugar peas, trimmed
6 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
6 scallions, sliced diagonally
1 tablespoon fermented red bean curd cheese, mashed with 1 teaspoon own juice or water
8 bean curd puffs, halved (see page 24)
8 canned baby corn on the cob, halved lengthwise
4 ounces (115 grams) canned straw mushrooms
3 to 4 ounces (85 to 115 grams) canned ginkgo nuts
½ teaspoon sugar
2 to 2½ tablespoons thin soy sauce
6 ounces (175 grams) vegetable or clear stock mixed with ½ teaspoon potato flour
sesame oil to taste

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

Eight is a significant number for the Chinese, for in Buddhism, which for many centuries exerted great influence in China, there are eight treasures in life: pearl, lozenge, stone chime, rhinoceros horn, coin, mirror, books and leaf. The symbolism of these eight treasures is not lost in Chinese food: any dish comprising eight or more main ingredients can term itself an “eight-treasure” dish.

- 1** Drain the cloud ears and golden needles but leave damp. Break up the large pieces of cloud ears.
- 2** Soak the cellophane noodles in plenty of boiling water for 30 minutes. They will expand and become pliable. Drain. Cut with scissors to shorten.
- 3** Bring a saucepan of water to a boil and add ½ teaspoon of the salt and ½ tablespoon of the oil. Add the peas and, as soon as the water returns to a boil, drain in a colander. Refresh under cold running water and drain again.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger, then the scallions and stir for a few seconds. Add the red bean curd cheese and stir to blend. Add the cloud ears, toss and stir, then adjust the heat to moderate. Add the cellophane noodles, golden needles, bean curd puffs, baby corn, straw mushrooms and ginkgo nuts and mix together. Season with the remaining salt, sugar and soy sauce. Pour in the stock and cook, covered or uncovered, until much of the stock has been absorbed. Add the peas, mix well and heat through. Sprinkle with sesame oil to taste. Transfer to a warm serving dish. Serve hot.





Fish Fragrant Eggplant

In Szechwan, many dishes emulate the fragrance of fish because the condiments used to flavor them are the same as those traditionally used to flavor fish. This flavor is achieved by blending Szechwan chili paste with garlic, ginger and scallions in oil and then allowing this sauce to impregnate the main ingredients cooked in it. The finishing touch is the addition of wine, sugar and vinegar, which enhance the tastes and aftertastes, the hallmark of Szechwanese cooking. This dish is delicious served hot or cold.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ ounce (15 grams) cloud ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 2 eggplants, about 1½ pounds (675 grams)
- peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
- 1½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 or 5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- ¼ inch (5 millimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
- 3 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- 1 to 1½ tablespoons Szechwan chili paste (see page 240)
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon potato flour, dissolved in 3 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon rice or white wine vinegar

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

- 1** Drain the cloud ears and cut into narrow strips.
- 2** Peel alternate strips of the eggplant skin, lengthwise. (If all the skin is peeled, eggplants shrink too much when cooked.) Slice each eggplant lengthwise into 4 or 5 pieces according to diameter, then lengthwise again into strips and then cut crosswise into several pieces.
- 3** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Put in all the eggplant and deep-fry for 2 minutes. Remove and drain well on paper towels. (This step can be done a few hours ahead.)
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 1½ tablespoons oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, which will sizzle and take on color almost instantly, then add the ginger and white scallions, stirring a few times. Stir in the chili paste and add the eggplant and cloud ears. If the cloud ears make a cracking sound, reduce the heat. Sprinkle with the wine or sherry and stir in the salt, sugar and soy sauce to mix. Add the well-stirred dissolved potato flour and the green scallions, stirring as the sauce thickens. Remove from the heat. Sprinkle with the vinegar and quickly stir thoroughly before transferring to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.



Dry-braised Bamboo Shoots and Chinese Mushrooms

This is a classic Eastern vegetarian dish with a play-on-words Chinese title, which, literally translated, is *Dry-braised two tung*. The two tungs of the pun are *tung-sun* (winter bamboo shoots) and *tung-ku* (dried Chinese mushrooms).

- 1** Squeeze out excess water from the Chinese mushrooms but leave damp. Save the soaking liquid.
- 2** Either roll-cut the bamboo shoots into fairly large pieces or cut into wedges. Pat dry with paper towels.
- 3** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Carefully add the bamboo shoots to the oil and deep-fry for about 1½ minutes, or until the edges have turned brownish. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and put on paper towels. Empty all but about 3 tablespoons of the oil into a container and save for later use.
- 4** Reheat the oil over high heat. When hot, add the Chinese mushrooms and, going to the bottom of the wok with a wok scoop or metal spatula, flip and toss for about 1 minute to enhance the fragrance of the mushrooms. Return the bamboo shoots to the wok and continue to stir-fry together for another minute.
- 5** Season with the salt, sugar, soy sauces and mushroom water. Lower the heat to medium and cook until all the liquid is absorbed, leaving only oil around the mushrooms and bamboo shoots. Transfer to a warm serving plate and serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- 12 to 16 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 1½ pounds (675 grams) canned bamboo shoots (winter bamboo shoots are ideal), drained
- peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1½ tablespoons thick soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons mushroom water

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



Sautéed Stuffed Peppers

Tender yet still crisp pepper stuffed with pork that has a suggestion of the taste of shrimp. The black bean sauce, especially with chili, adds another dimension in taste.

INGREDIENTS

5 medium peppers, green and red, seeded and quartered
 4 or 5 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 12 ounces (350 grams) pork with a little fat
 2 tablespoons dried shrimp, rinsed
 4 or 5 scallions, cut into tiny rounds
 2 ounces (55 grams) canned bamboo shoots, chopped fine
 1 small egg white, lightly beaten
 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1½ teaspoons potato flour
 6 tablespoons water

For the sauce

1½ teaspoons potato flour
 9 tablespoons stock and mushroom water
 1½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 2½ tablespoons fermented black beans, rinsed and mashed with ½ teaspoon sugar and 1 teaspoon oil
 2 or 3 small fresh chilies, seeded and cut into small rounds (optional)

SERVES 5 OR 6 as a main course

1 Plunge the peppers into boiling water to blanch for 1 or 2 minutes. Drain and immediately rinse under cold running water to retain their crispness. Drain and pat dry.

2 Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Shred into the thinnest possible strips and then dice. Reserve soaking water.

3 Chop or mince the pork together with the shrimp. Put into a large bowl.

4 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, wine or sherry, potato flour and half of the water to the pork. Stir vigorously to coat the meat. Add the remaining water, a little at a time, stirring vigorously between each addition. This lightens the texture of the pork.

5 Stir in the mushrooms, scallions and bamboo shoots. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil and egg white.

6 Fill the hollow of each piece of pepper with the stuffing until level with the edges.

7 Heat a flat frying pan or wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Put in half the pepper, stuffing side down, and brown for 1 minute. Reduce the heat to moderate or low, cover and continue to sauté for 2 more minutes. Turn and sauté for 1 or 2 more minutes.

8 Turn up the heat to high and splash in 1 tablespoon of the wine or sherry, which will sizzle. As soon as the sizzling dies down, remove to a warm serving plate and keep warm.

9 Wash and dry the frying pan or wok and repeat the process of sautéing for the remaining pepper. Wash and dry the pan or wok.

10 Prepare the sauce: In a small bowl, dissolve the potato flour by gradually stirring in the stock and mushroom water. Heat the wok or pan until smoke rises, add the 1½ tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, which will sizzle. Add the black bean paste and chili and stir to blend. Pour in the well-stirred dissolved potato flour and stir to blend over low heat. As soon as the sauce bubbles, pour it over the pepper on the serving plate, scraping every drop from the frying pan or wok. Serve immediately.



Braised Bamboo Shoots

In Fukien, this dish is made from fresh winter bamboo shoots, but in the West we have to be content with the canned product, which, fortunately, retains much of its characteristic crispness.

- 1** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Slice into thin strips.
- 2** Soak the shrimp for about 15 minutes in just enough boiling water to cover them. Drain them, reserving the soaking liquid.
- 3** Slice the bamboo shoots into strips about 2 inches (5 centimeters) long, ½ inch (1 centimeter) wide and ¼ inch (5 millimeters) thick. Put into a bowl, mix in the soy sauce and sugar and let stand for 3 to 5 minutes.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Lift the bamboo shoots with a perforated spoon, leaving in the bowl as much soy sauce as possible, and add to the oil. Immediately put the pork into the bowl to soak up the soy sauce. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss the bamboo shoots so that each piece is coated with the oil. Remove with a perforated spoon.
- 5** Add the shrimp to the wok, stir a few times and add the mushrooms. Stir, then add the pork. Continue to turn and toss for about 1 minute, or until the pork is almost cooked.
- 6** Return the bamboo shoots to the wok, stir to mix and add the stock. As soon as the stock comes to a boil, cover, reduce the heat and simmer for about 10 minutes, or until all but 5 or 6 tablespoons of stock has been absorbed.
- 7** Add the well-stirred dissolved potato flour to the wok and stir to thicken the sauce.
- 8** Transfer to a warm plate. Sprinkle the sesame oil on top and serve.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 1 ounce (25 grams) dried shrimp, rinsed
- 1 pound (450 grams) canned bamboo shoots
- 2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 ounces (115 grams) lean pork, cut into matchstick-sized pieces
- ½ cup clear stock, including shrimp water
- 1 teaspoon potato flour, dissolved in 1 tablespoon water
- 2 or 3 teaspoons sesame oil

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes



Stuffed Chinese Mushrooms

INGREDIENTS

4 ounces (115 grams) pork shoulder or fresh ham
 2 ounces (55 grams) canned bamboo shoots, or 3 or 4 fresh or canned water chestnuts, chopped fine
 5 scallions, cut into tiny rounds
 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil
 28 thick medium dried Chinese mushrooms, with slightly curled edges, reconstituted (see page 33)

For the marinade

2 to 4 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled and finely minced
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
 6 turns white pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ½ teaspoon potato flour
 1 tablespoon water
 1 tablespoon egg white

For the sauce

1½ teaspoons potato flour, dissolved in 1 tablespoon water
 6 ounces (175 grams) mushroom water
 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
 1½ to 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

SERVES 6 with 3 or 4 other dishes

A delicately flavored steamed dish much enjoyed by the Cantonese and Fukienese. The egg white lightens the pork, and the bamboo shoots or water chestnuts add just a bite to the otherwise smooth texture. The sauce glistens on the stuffing, giving a transparent effect.

- 1** Chop the pork by hand or mince coarsely. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the ginger, salt, sugar, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir vigorously for about 30 seconds, or until well coated. Add the egg white and stir again for another 30 seconds or until smooth and light. Let marinate for about 15 minutes.
- 3** Mix the bamboo shoots or water chestnuts with the pork. Mix in the scallions. Stir in the 1 tablespoon of oil. The stuffing is now ready.
- 4** Drain and squeeze out the excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Reserve the soaking liquid.
- 5** Hold a mushroom cap in one hand with the hollow side up. Using a small knife, fill the hollow generously with stuffing, shaping it into a slightly sloping mound to give an attractive appearance. Repeat until all are done. Put on a heatproof dish, stuffing side up, preferably in one layer.
- 6** Put the dish in a wok or steamer and steam, tightly covered, for 10 minutes over high heat (see page 43).
- 7 Prepare the sauce:** A few minutes before the end of the steaming time, mix together the flour, mushroom water, oyster sauce and soy sauce. Pour into a wok or a saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring continuously as it thickens. Blend in the oil, which will give a sheen.
- 8** Remove the mushrooms from the steamer. Arrange them in 2 layers, either in the same heatproof dish or on a warm serving dish. Pour the sauce over them. Serve piping hot.





Wheat Gluten

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds (900 grams) wheat flour
 1 tablespoon salt
 2½ cups cold or tepid water
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

**YIELDS ABOUT 10 TO 12 OUNCES
 (280 TO 350 GRAMS) OF GLUTEN**

In Chinese, wheat gluten literally means the “sinewy essence” of wheat-flour dough. For Buddhist vegetarians in China, it is the substitute for meat and is thus an indispensable ingredient of their vegetarian dishes. Wheat gluten is sold in its cooked state in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, but as yet it is not available elsewhere; neither is it a satisfactory canned product. Fortunately, it is not difficult to make, so do try it.

- 1** Sift the flour into a large deep bowl. Add the salt. Gradually add the water and work into a dough, which should be firm but not hard.
- 2** Knead the dough. If you use your hands, knead, punch, throw and pull it as much as possible. If you use a dough hook fitted to a food mixer, knead for 4 to 6 minutes, or the maximum amount of time directed in the instructions. In either case, knead until the dough is very, very smooth and elastic, so that the maximum amount of gluten can be produced.
- 3** Cover the dough and let rest for about 1 hour.
- 4** Put the dough in a colander and stand it in the sink with the plug in. Turn on the cold water faucet and start pressing and squeezing the dough with both hands. The idea is literally to wash off all the floury substance. When the water becomes too milky, change it and continue washing. After about 12 minutes, the water will become almost clear, being slightly cloudy rather than milky. The dough will have become a soft and spongy mass in the colander—this is the wheat gluten (a). Wash for 1 or 2 more minutes, then squeeze out excess water.





5 Pull with your fingers to break the gluten lump into 4 portions. Pull each portion into 10 pieces (b). Put the 40 pieces on a plate with a little space between each one so that they will not stick together.

6 To cook the gluten pieces, either boil or deep-fry them. To boil: bring plenty of water in a large saucepan to a boil. Add 20 gluten pieces, continue to boil for 4 or 5 minutes, until they float to the surface, indicating that they are cooked (c). To deep-fry: half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F, (190°C) or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Put in the gluten, 1 piece at a time (10 can be deep-fried together). They will sink to the bottom, then come up to the surface, puffing bubbles all over. Turn them over repeatedly for about 2 minutes until light brown in color (d). Remove and drain on paper towels.

Note: Boiled gluten keeps well in the refrigerator for about 2 days; deep-fried gluten, for 7 days. Both freeze well.

Red-braised Gluten

During the slow braising of this dish, the dark soy sauce, enriched by sugar, permeates the boiled gluten and dyes it red. The bamboo shoots give a contrasting texture to the spongy gluten and tender mushrooms. In keeping with the Buddhist tradition of vegetarian food, neither ginger, garlic, scallions, nor wine is used.

1 Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Reserve the soaking liquid.

2 Squeeze excess water from the boiled gluten.

3 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the mushrooms, flip and turn with a wok scoop or metal spatula until very hot. Add another 1 tablespoon of oil and put in the bamboo shoots, continuing to fold and turn until very hot and fragrant. Add the remaining oil and the gluten. Stir to mix.

4 Pour in the mushroom water. Add the salt, soy sauce and sugar. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

5 Turn up the heat and flip and turn the ingredients continuously to absorb the remaining liquid. This adds richness to the dish.

6 Transfer to a warm serving dish. Sprinkle the sesame oil on top and serve hot.

INGREDIENTS

- 20 small dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted in 2 cups boiling water (see page 33)
- 20 pieces boiled gluten (see page 156)
- 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 6 ounces (175 grams) canned bamboo shoots, thinly sliced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2½ tablespoons thick soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 or 3 teaspoons sesame oil

SERVES 4 with 3 other dishes



Pi Pa Bean Curd

Here, the mashed bean curd is shaped into halved pear-shape pieces resembling the celebrated Chinese musical instrument the *pi pa*.

INGREDIENTS

6 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 4 cakes bean curd, drained
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 egg yolk
 2 tablespoons self-rising flour
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 2 to 2½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 ¼ inch (5 millimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
 4 scallions, cut diagonally into long slivers, white and green parts separated
 2 ounces (55 grams) char-siu (Cantonese roast pork) (see page 138) or ham, cut into matchstick-sized pieces

For the sauce

1½ teaspoons potato flour
 9 tablespoons mushroom water
 1½ tablespoons oyster sauce
 ½ tablespoon thick soy sauce

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

1 Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Slice into the thinnest possible slivers. Reserve the soaking liquid.

2 Using a wooden spoon, mash the bean curd, forcing it through a sieve into a dry, clean bowl. Discard the coarse dregs in the sieve.

3 Add the salt, egg yolk and self-rising flour, and blend to a smooth paste. Let stand for about 10 minutes.

4 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the potato flour, reserved mushroom water, oyster and soy sauce.

5 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds.

6 Before the oil is ready, dip 5 or 6 Chinese soup spoons into the oil, then pack them with the bean curd paste (a), leveling it off with the back of a knife. When the oil is ready, hold the handles of the spoons, lower them one by one into the oil (b) and let the paste slip out, forming a halved pear shape. Use a knife to loosen the paste around the edges of the spoon. Repeat until the paste is used up.

7 Deep-fry the pieces for 3 or 4 minutes, turning them over periodically (c), until they are golden in color and floating in the oil. As they are cooked, remove with a perforated spoon or strainer (d). Drain on paper towels. Put on a warm serving dish and set aside.





- 8** Pour the oil into a container for later use. Wash and dry the wok.
- 9** Reheat the wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add about 2 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, ginger and white scallions. As they sizzle, add the mushrooms, stir a few times; add the char-siu or ham and stir a few more times.
- 10** Pour the well-stirred sauce into the wok and continue to stir over moderate heat as it thickens. Add the green scallions, then scoop the mixture over the bean curd. Serve immediately.

Pock-ma Bean Curd

This internationally famous Szechwan dish was the creation of the wife of chef Ch'en Shen-fu, who worked in the capital, Ch'eng-tu, during the second half of the 19th century. If pockmarks on her face earned her this rather derogatory nickname, "Pock-ma" or "Pock-woman," they also immortalized her bean curd dish.

- 1** Mince the pork and put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, wine or sherry and oil to the pork. Stir to coat well. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes.
- 3** Chop the Szechwan vegetable into pieces the size of matchstick heads. Dice the bean curd into ½-inch (1-centimeter) cubes. Transfer to a strainer, handling gently.
- 4** Mix together the potato flour and water for the thickening and put aside.
- 5** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic and pork and, using a wok scoop or metal spatula, flip and toss until partially cooked. Add the Szechwan vegetable, bean paste, soy sauce and sugar, continuing to turn and toss to let the sauce permeate the meat. Pour in the stock and slowly bring to a boil over moderate heat.
- 6** Add the bean curd and stir gently, in order not to break it up. Cook for about 2 minutes, so the flavors of both the pork and the sauce can be absorbed. Pour in the well-stirred potato flour mixture and blend well. Transfer to a warm serving dish.
- 7** Add the hot chili oil and sesame oil; sprinkle with the ground Szechwan peppercorns and scallions. This garnish adds a pretty red and green contrast as well as subtle flavoring. Serve piping hot.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 ounces (115 grams) lean pork
- ½ to ¾ ounces (15 to 20 grams) preserved Szechwan vegetable, well rinsed and dried
- 4 cakes bean curd, drained
- 1 teaspoon potato flour
- 1 tablespoon water
- 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- 1 tablespoon hot soybean paste or broad bean paste (for moderately-hot flavor)
- 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 5 ounces (140 grams) prime or clear stock (see page 242)
- 1 teaspoon hot chili oil (see page 240)
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- ½ teaspoon ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns (see page 17)
- 2 scallions, green parts only, cut into tiny rounds

For the marinade

- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
- ½ teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes



Rainbow Salad

INGREDIENTS

6 large dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 12 ounces (350 grams) cucumber, halved lengthwise and seeded
 1½ teaspoons salt
 8 ounces (225 grams) carrots, peeled
 1 medium red pepper, halved lengthwise and seeded
 5 tablespoons groundnut or corn oil
 7 scallions, halved lengthwise, cut into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
 8 ounces (225 grams) bean sprouts
 1 large egg, lightly beaten

For the dressing

2 tablespoons sesame paste
 2 teaspoons water
 4 or 5 teaspoons rice or white wine vinegar
 ½ teaspoon salt
 10 turns pepper mill

SERVES 4 TO 6 with
 2 or 3 other dishes

This multicolored plate of lightly stir-fried vegetables is made all the more delectable by the subtle dressing of sesame paste and vinegar. This dish can be prepared ahead of time and, if refrigerated, will keep overnight without losing much of its crunchiness.

- 1** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Slice into the thinnest possible slivers.
- 2** Cut the cucumber into very thin slices. Put into a bowl, sprinkle with ½ teaspoon of the salt to draw out excess water. Let stand for 15 to 30 minutes, then drain thoroughly.
- 3** Cut the carrots into very thin slices. Put into a bowl, sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of salt to draw out excess water. Let stand for 15 to 30 minutes, then drain thoroughly.
- 4** Slice the red pepper into thin strips.
- 5 Prepare the dressing:** Mix the sesame paste with half of the water first and stir in the same direction; the paste will thicken. Add the rest of the water and continue to stir; the paste will become thinner. Now add the vinegar, little by little, stirring to blend. Stir in the salt and pepper.
- 6** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 4 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the white scallions and stir a couple of times. Stir in the mushrooms, then the red pepper and stir some more. Now add the carrots and bean sprouts. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and turn vigorously over high heat for about 2 minutes, or until the vegetables are barely cooked and still very crunchy. Add the green scallions, stir a few more times and remove to a serving plate to cool. If water starts to ooze, drain.
- 7** Heat a large frying pan over moderate heat. Add 1 tablespoon of oil, tipping the pan to ensure even spreading. When the oil is moderately hot, pour in the lightly beaten egg and quickly tip the pan to let the egg reach evenly to the edges. When cooked on one side, loosen the edges with a spatula and flip the crêpe over to cook the other side quickly, until firm but not hard. Transfer to a plate and cut into strips about 1½ inches (3.5 centimeters) long and ½ inch (5 millimeters) wide.
- 8** When the stir-fried vegetables are cool, mix in the cucumber. Stir in the dressing and toss well. Arrange the egg strips on top.
- 9** Chill, covered, in the refrigerator before serving. It can, however, be served at room temperature.





Deep-fried Bean Curd in Earthen Pot

INGREDIENTS

4 large or 6 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 4 cakes bean curd, drained
 4 large leaves Chinese celery cabbage
 2½ to 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 2 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
 salt to taste
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the sauce

1 teaspoon potato flour
 5 tablespoons mushroom water or clear stock
 2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
 1 or 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 2 or 3 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

Serving certain dishes in a flameproof earthen pot is very popular in South China and Hong Kong, especially in the winter. These dishes, which can include meat, offal, fish, seafood, vegetables and bean curd, are known as earthen-pot dishes. The main ingredient is often deep-fried and then assembled with the other ingredients in the pot, which can be heated up just before being brought to the table. Instead of an earthen pot, an enamel casserole or a copper pot can be used.

- 1** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Slice into thin strips.
- 2** Cut each cake of bean curd into 3 rectangular pieces, taking care to keep them whole. Lay on several changes of paper towel to drain excess water.
- 3** Cut the cabbage crosswise into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) lengths.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger, and as it sizzles, add the cabbage. Sliding the wok scoop or spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 30 seconds. Season with a little salt, lower the heat and continue to cook, covered, for 2 or 3 minutes, or until tender yet still crisp. Remove and drain, if necessary. Put into the warm earthen pot.
- 5 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the potato flour, mushroom water or stock, soy sauce and oyster sauce. Heat a saucepan (or another wok, if you have one) until hot. Add the remaining 1½ to 2 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, let it sizzle and take on color, then add the white scallions and the Chinese mushrooms. Stir and turn for about 30 seconds. Pour the well-stirred potato flour mixture into the saucepan or wok. Lower the heat, continuing to stir as it thickens. Remove from the heat.
- 6** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 400°F (200°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 40 seconds. Lower the bean curd into the oil, piece by piece, and deep-fry for about 4 minutes, or until



golden, turning over with a pair of long bamboo chopsticks or tongs halfway through cooking. Remove with a large hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels.

7 Lay the bean curd on the cabbage in the pot. Add the green scallions. Reheat the sauce and pour over the bean curd.

8 Heat the pot for 1 or 2 minutes, then bring to the table and serve immediately.

Bean Curd Puffs

Once deep-fried, the puffs, unlike fresh bean curd, which will perish within 2 to 3 days even when refrigerated, can be kept for up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator. They are a good ingredient to use with meat, fish and vegetables, because they soak up sauces and add an interesting dimension to a dish.

1 Quarter each bean curd cake. Put the 16 cubes on changes of paper towels or cloths to drain excess water.

2 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 400°F (200°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 40 seconds. Gently immerse the bean curd in the oil and deep-fry for about 15 minutes, or until golden and crisp. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels.

INGREDIENTS

4 cakes bean curd
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

MAKES 16



Stir-fried Bean Sprouts

Rich in protein, these ubiquitous sprouts, which come from mung beans, can be eaten cooked or in a salad. The Chinese always cook them, but only slightly to preserve their crunchiness.

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces to 1 pound (225 to 450 grams) bean sprouts
2 or 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
2 to 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
2 or 3 very thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
salt to taste or about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon
2 to 3 teaspoons thin soy sauce or optional 1 to 2 heaped tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 2 OR 3 with 2 other dishes

1 Do not wash the bean sprouts. Instead, refrigerate them until they are to be cooked. If they have to be washed, make sure to drain them well and shake off any remaining water before refrigerating them.

2 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the white scallions, and as soon as they sizzle, add the ginger. Tip in the bean sprouts and, leaving the heat on high all the time, slide the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok and then turn and vigorously toss the bean sprouts right and left and all over for about 2 or 3 minutes. Sprinkle with the salt and green scallions toward the end. The bean sprouts will be cooked but still firm and crisp, having exuded only the minimum of water.

3 Transfer to a warm serving plate and pour over them the soy or oyster sauce. Serve immediately.

Note: Take care not to overcook this dish. Since frozen bean sprouts are inevitably soggy, never freeze them. When reheated, they will have lost much of their crunchiness.

Variation: Stir-fried lettuce. Use $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds (560 to 675 grams) of iceberg lettuce, tearing large leaves into smaller pieces. Cook as above. Serves 4 with 2 other dishes.



Stir-fried Broccoli and Chinese Mushroom

For nonvegetarians, this dish is excellent if 2 heaping tablespoons of oyster sauce are used instead of the soy sauce.

- 1** Wash the mushrooms and simmer in about 1½ cups of water for about 30 minutes. When cool, clip off the stems and discard. Squeeze out excess water but leave damp. Reserve the soaking liquid.
- 2** Peel off the hard outer layer of the broccoli stalks. Leave whole or cut into large bite-sized pieces.
- 3 Prepare the sauce:** Dissolve the potato flour in the mushroom water. Stir in the soy or oyster sauce.
- 4** Heat a wok until hot. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger and white scallions. Stir a few times and then tip in the mushrooms. Stir a few more times and add the broccoli. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and toss for about 30 seconds. Add about 7 tablespoons of mushroom water and sprinkle with the salt and sugar. Cover and cook over moderate heat for about 6 minutes.
- 5** Remove the cover. Taste to see if the broccoli is ready, it should be tender yet still firm and crisp.
- 6** Pour the well-stirred sauce over the broccoli and mushrooms, stirring continuously as it thickens. Add the green scallions, stir to mix, then transfer to a warm serving plate.
- 7** Attractively arrange the mushrooms, cap side up, on top of the broccoli. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- 12 dried Chinese mushrooms (the thick floral ones are best), reconstituted (see page 33)
- 12 ounces (350 grams) broccoli, preferably spears
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 very thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon sugar

For the sauce

- 1 teaspoon potato flour
- 6 tablespoons mushroom water
- 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce or 2 tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



Lohan's Delight: Buddhist Vegetarian Dish

INGREDIENTS

- ½ ounce (8 grams) cloud ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
- ½ ounce (15 grams) golden needles, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 12 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted in 1½ cups boiling water (see page 33)
- ½ ounce (15 grams) hair seaweed
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 ounces (115 grams) canned bamboo shoots, thinly sliced
- 3 to 4 ounces (85 to 115 grams) canned ginkgo nuts
- 20 pieces deep-fried gluten (see page 156)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 to 1½ teaspoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons thin soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil

For curing hair seaweed

- 2 cups water
- 2 thickish slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 teaspoons peanut or corn oil

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

Lohan (monks or saints), following general Buddhist principles, were also known as “destroyers of the passions.” Fittingly, this dish does not use any of the usual condiments—ginger, garlic and scallions—for in Buddhist belief they arouse human passions which, in turn, impede one’s hopes of achieving Nirvana, the state of absolute peace and blessedness.

- 1** Drain the cloud ears and golden needles and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms, but leave damp. Reserve the mushroom soaking liquid.
- 2** Soak the hair seaweed in plenty of cold or tepid water for about 10 minutes so that it will become pliable. Then rinse in many changes of water, picking it over, removing impurities and discarding the fine sand that settles at the bottom of the bowl.
- 3 To cure:** Put the water, ginger, wine or sherry and oil in a wok or saucepan and bring to a boil. Submerge the seaweed and boil for about 5 minutes. Drain through a fine sieve and discard the ginger.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and swirl it around. Add the cloud ears and golden needles and toss and turn for about 30 seconds, adjusting the heat if the cloud ears make a loud explosive noise. Transfer to a warm dish nearby.
- 5** Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the mushrooms and bamboo shoots and turn and stir for about 30 seconds, or until very hot.
- 6** Return the cloud ears and golden needles to the wok, and add the hair seaweed, ginkgo nuts and gluten pieces. Pour in the mushroom water, add the salt, sugar and soy sauce and bring to a boil. Cover, lower the heat and simmer fast for 10 to 15 minutes, or until most of the water has been absorbed.
- 7** Transfer to a warm serving plate. Sprinkle on the sesame oil and serve.





Bean Curd in a Simple Sauce

INGREDIENTS

4 cakes bean curd
2 or 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
5 or 6 scallions, cut into small rounds,
white and green parts separated

For the sauce

¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
or optional oyster sauce
1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

Reddish bean curd cubes dotted with white and green. The first step of this dish is essential for a perfect result.

- 1** Cover the bean curd cakes in hot water and steep for 15 minutes, in order to firm them, making handling easier.
- 2** Lift them from the water and slice each cake into 32 cubes: divide one cake lengthwise into 4, then crosswise into 4, and then halve the thickness of each piece, making 32 in all. Handling gently, put them in a sieve to drain excess water.
- 3 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the salt, sugar, soy sauces and wine or sherry.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the white scallions, stir and let sizzle. Then add the bean curd. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, gently turn and fold the cubes to blend with the oil and scallions for about 1 minute.
- 5** Add the sauce to the wok, continuing to fold and turn gently a few more times, to let the cubes take on color. Lower the heat, cover and cook for another minute.
- 6** Add the green scallions. Carefully remove the bean curd mixture to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.



Stir-fried Spinach in Bean Curd “Cheese” Sauce

If you do not use white bean curd “cheese,” which gives the dish an exotic taste, you will still find that the spinach is delicious simply stir-fried in garlic and seasoned with salt.

- 1** Remove any stringy roots and hard stalks from the spinach.
- 2** Place the water in a saucepan, bring to a boil and add the salt and 1 tablespoon of the oil. Blanch the spinach for 1 minute. Drain and rinse with cold water immediately. Drain well and put aside. This can be done a few hours beforehand without the spinach losing its vivid color and texture.
- 3** Mash the bean curd “cheese” in a small bowl with a small amount of the juice from the jar. Stir in the sugar.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 4 tablespoons oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, bean curd “cheese” and chili and stir. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. Add the spinach and stir and turn continuously with the wok scoop or metal spatula for 1 or 2 minutes, to incorporate the sauce. Lower the heat if the sauce is being absorbed too quickly. Transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound (450 grams) fresh spinach, washed
- 5 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 2½ to 3 cakes white bean curd “cheese” with chili
- 4 or 5 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ fresh green or red chili, seeded and sliced (optional)
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

SERVES 3 OR 4 with 2 other dishes



RICE, NOODLES AND DUMPLINGS

Boiled Rice

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup or 6½ ounces long-grain white rice
- 2 teaspoons peanut or corn oil
- 1½ cups or 12 ounces water

SERVES 4 OR 5 with other dishes

Cooked rice, served with other dishes, is the Chinese staple. The general Chinese yardstick for measuring the water required to cook the rice is to put the rice in a pan, then stand an index finger on the surface of the rice and let the water come up to the first joint. However, for those who are less experienced, or who are cooking a smaller amount of rice, the chart below is recommended as a guideline. The rice should be cooked thoroughly, and be tender but not mushy.

- 1 Wash the rice in 3 or 4 changes of cold or tepid water, rubbing the grains gently with the fingers to get rid of excess starch. Drain.
- 2 Put the rice into a saucepan, preferably with a copper bottom. Add the oil and water. (The oil prevents the rice from boiling over and from sticking to the bottom of the saucepan; it also enhances the natural flavor of the rice.)
- 3 Cover and bring to a boil. Stir thoroughly with a wooden spoon and continue to boil, either covered or uncovered, until most of the water is absorbed, leaving only tiny droplets around the rice. Reduce the heat to a minimum.
- 4 Place a flame tamer under the saucepan. Let the rice simmer with the lid on for 12 to 15 minutes.
- 5 Before serving, fluff up the rice with a spoon. Either scoop all the rice into a large communal bowl, from which everyone takes a portion, or scoop some rice into individual rice bowls.

Note: To reheat boiled rice in a saucepan, add a little water, about 1 tablespoon per cup of rice; loosen the grains with a spoon and let it simmer over low heat for 10 to 15 minutes.

RICE	WATER	OIL	COOKED RICE
1 cup or 6½ ounces	1½ cups or 12 ounces	2 teaspoons	3 cups
2 cups or 13 ounces	2½ cups or 20 ounces	4 teaspoons	6 cups
3 cups or 19½ ounces	3¾ cups or 26 ounces	6 teaspoons	9 cups



Stir-fried Glutinous Rice

Glutinous rice is usually steamed or boiled, but because it is very starchy, these methods of cooking can make it into a rather stodgy food. Stir-frying glutinous rice from its raw state until cooked through, however, makes the rice much lighter and more fragrant in taste.

- 1** Wash the glutinous rice 3 or 4 times, rubbing with the fingers. Drain, then soak in plenty of cold water for 5 or 6 hours. Drain just before ready to use.
- 2** Soak the shrimp, in just enough boiling water to cover them, for about 20 minutes. Drain them, reserving the soaking liquid.
- 3** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Reserve the soaking liquid. Dice the mushrooms.
- 4** Rinse the wind-dried sausages and dice.
- 5** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the wind-dried sausages and shrimp, and turn and toss for about 1 minute. Then add the mushrooms, continuing to stir-fry for a few seconds.
- 6** Add the glutinous rice and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss about 12 times, adjusting the heat if the rice begins to burn. Sprinkle on 2 or 3 ounces (55 or 85 grams) of shrimp/mushroom water, cover and continue to cook over medium to low heat for 2 minutes. Sprinkle on the same amount of liquid again, fold and turn the rice 5 or 6 times, then cover once more. Repeat this procedure 4 times, using ordinary water when the shrimp/mushroom water is used up.
- 7** Add the salt, while scallions and roast pork belly. Flip and turn to mix and repeat the sprinkling of water and simmering another 3 or 4 times, each time for about 4 or 5 minutes. The rice should be cooked through by this time but, if not, continue to simmer and add more water if necessary.
- 8** Remove from the heat. Add the soy sauce, green scallions and coriander leaves. Fold and turn to mix, then transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve hot.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound (450 grams) white glutinous rice
- 1 ounce (25 grams) dried shrimp, rinsed
- 10 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted in 1 cup water (see page 33)
- 1 large wind-dried Chinese pork sausage
- 1 large wind-dried Chinese duck-liver sausage
- 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 to 6 scallions, cut into small rounds, white and green parts separated
- 6 ounces (175 grams) fatty roast pork belly, diced (see page 146)
- 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
- small bunch coriander leaves, torn up

SERVES 4 OR 5 as a main course



Plain Fried Rice

INGREDIENTS

3 cups or 14 ounces boiled rice, cooked at least 3 or 4 hours in advance (see page 170)
2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
2 scallions, cut into small rounds, white and green parts separated
1 large egg, lightly beaten with 2 teaspoons oil and ¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon salt or to taste
2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
2 tablespoons clear stock (optional)

SERVES 2 with 1 other dish

When cooked rice is stir-fried with egg but without meat or seafood, it is called “plain fried rice,” and it often has greater appeal than boiled rice to those who are not used to eating rice as a staple. The stir-frying process adds much taste and fragrance. The Chinese sometimes serve it in place of boiled rice as a measure of economy when there are few dishes to go with it. Since the best result is obtained from cooked rice that has been left for a few hours or overnight, it is also a way to turn any leftover rice into an appetizing dish.

- 1** Loosen the rice grains as much as possible.
- 2** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the white scallions, stir a few times, then pour in the egg. Let stand for 5 to 10 seconds, so that the egg sets at the bottom but remains runny on the surface.
- 3** Add the rice. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss continuously for 3 or 4 minutes or until thoroughly hot. Season with the salt and soy sauce. If the rice is very hard, add the stock and stir for a few more seconds. Add the green scallions. Put in a warm serving bowl and serve immediately.





Beef Fried Rice

Much of the attraction of this dish lies in the fact that the flavor of the beef and spices permeates the rice while it is being stir-fried.

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces (225 grams) beef, rump or skirt steak
 14 ounces or 3 cups boiled rice, cooked at least 3 or 4 hours in advance (see page 170)
 4 or 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 ¼ inch (5 millimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
 4 scallions, cut into small rounds, white and green parts separated
 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 1 egg, lightly beaten
 2 to 4 leaves iceberg lettuce, thinly shredded

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
 2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
 6 turns black pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ½ teaspoon potato flour
 3 or 4 tablespoons water
 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

SERVES 2 as main course

1 Chop or mince the beef. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, pepper, wine or sherry and potato flour to the beef. Add the water, one spoonful at a time, stirring vigorously in the same direction between additions until too difficult to continue. This makes the beef fluffy and velvety. Let marinate for 15 minutes. Blend in the oil.

3 Loosen the rice grains as much as possible.

4 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 3 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and when it sizzles, add the ginger and the white scallions. Stir a few times. Add the beef and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and toss, breaking up any lumps at the same time. When partially cooked, splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir as it sizzles. Pour in the beaten egg, tip in the rice, turn and toss for about 2 minutes or until all the ingredients are very hot and well mixed. Slowly pour in the remaining oil around the side of the wok, turning the rice to incorporate it. Remove from the heat.

5 Add half of the lettuce and the green scallions. Scoop to a warm serving dish. Top with the remaining lettuce and serve hot.



Yin-Yang Rice

Yin and Yang are the all-pervading opposing principles of Chinese philosophy, symbolizing the sun and the moon, man and woman, good and evil, light and darkness. In this dish, the egg white and the red tomato are used decoratively to form the Yin-Yang symbol.

- 1** Cut the pork into matchstick-sized strips. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, soy sauce, wine or sherry, pepper and potato flour to the pork. Stir to coat, adding the water to make the pork lighter. Let marinate for 20 to 30 minutes. Stir in the oil.
- 3** Submerge the tomatoes in boiling water for a few minutes, then peel. Seed and cut into chunks. Put into a wire sieve over a bowl to drain, saving the juice for the sauce.
- 4** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the chopped garlic, and when it sizzles, add the tomato and stir a few times. Season with the salt and sugar. Cook over medium heat, covered, for about 5 minutes. Remove to the sieve and drain, saving the juice for the sauce. Transfer to a bowl and keep warm in the oven.
- 5 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the tomato juice, potato flour, soy sauce and oyster sauce.
- 6** Spread the rice on a round serving dish. Keep warm.
- 7** Wash and dry the wok. Reheat over high heat until smoke rises. Add 4 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the cut garlic, and when it sizzles and takes on color, add the pork. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 1 minute, or until the pork turns whitish and is partially cooked. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to turn and fold until the sizzling dies down. Add the well-stirred sauce to the pork, stirring as it thickens. Scoop over the rice.
- 8** Wash and dry the wok. Reheat until hot, add the remaining 6 tablespoons oil and swirl it around. Pour in the egg white and fold continuously with the wok scoop or spatula so that the runny egg white goes to the bottom while the set layers are turned to the surface; lower the heat if necessary. Scoop up the tender flakes of egg white and spread on the right, or Yin, half of the rice, to make the curvy Yin-Yang motif.
- 9** Spread the tomato on the Yang, or left, side. Garnish with the 2 garden peas, if desired. Serve hot.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound (450 grams) lean pork
- 2 pounds (900 grams) tomatoes
- 12 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- about 1¼ pounds or 4½ cups boiled rice, freshly cooked (see page 170)
- 3 or 4 cloves garlic, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 6 large egg whites, beaten with ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cooked green peas (optional)

For the marinade

- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 10 turns white pepper mill
- 1 teaspoon potato flour
- 1 or 2 tablespoons water
- 1 or 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

For the sauce

- juice from the tomatoes
- 2 teaspoons potato flour
- 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce

SERVES 3 OR 4 as lunch or, as last course, 8 to 10



Boiled Northern Dumplings

Northern Chinese people adore these dumplings, *chiao-tzu*, especially during the Chinese New Year. They sometimes eat them as the only course of a meal, and a man may consume more than 50 at a sitting. To wrap them is an exciting family activity in which everyone lends a hand. The filling can be a variety of different vegetables, such as Chinese chives and winter melon, with either pork or beef or sometimes fish. The size can also vary, but *chiao-tzu*, when cooked, should always contain a small amount of liquid (soup) inside the wrapper.

INGREDIENTS

For the dough

1¼ pounds (560 grams) all-purpose flour
1½ cups cold water

For the filling

1 ounce (25 grams) dried shrimp, rinsed
1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
2 pounds (900 grams) Chinese celery cabbage, trimmed
2 teaspoons salt
1 pound (450 grams) pork with a little fat, chopped fine
12 scallions, cut into small rounds

For the marinade

1½ teaspoons salt
8 turns pepper mill
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
3 tablespoons sesame oil
3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil

For the dips

soy sauce, thin or thick, vinegar, Chinkiang wine or hot chili oil (see page 240)

SERVES 10 as first course

Yields about 100 dumplings

1 Prepare the dough: Sift the flour into a mixing bowl. Gradually stir in the water and start kneading. Knead for 1 or 2 minutes, or until smooth. The dough should be firm but pliable and not dry. Cover the bowl with a towel and leave for about 30 minutes at room temperature.

2 Prepare the filling: Soak the shrimp in enough boiling water to just cover them, for 15 to 20 minutes. Drain them, reserving the soaking liquid. Chop the shrimp into the size of matchstick heads (see page 37) and add the wine or sherry.

3 Shred the cabbage crosswise as thinly as possible and then chop roughly, cutting out the hard core. Put into a bowl. Mix in the salt and let stand about 30 minutes, so some of its water can ooze out.

4 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, pepper, wine or sherry and oils to the pork. Also add 3 tablespoons of the shrimp water (if insufficient, make up with cold water), and stir vigorously for about 1 minute. Mix in the shrimp and scallions and let marinate until the dough is ready.

5 Squeeze out the excess water from the cabbage but leave damp. Add to the pork mixture. Mix thoroughly.

6 Divide the dough into 4 pieces. On a lightly floured board, roll out one piece into a long cylinder about ¾ inch (2 centimeters) in diameter, and then cut into pieces about ⅝ inch (1.5 centimeters) long. Cover spare dough with a towel.

7 One by one, stand each piece upright on the heel of your hand; slightly round off the dough then flatten with the other hand. Flour them lightly. Using a narrow rolling pin, roll out each piece into a circular wrapper about 3 inches (7.5 centimeters) in diameter. Make the center slightly thicker than the edge by rotating the dough counterclockwise as you roll.



8 Place a wrapper in the palm of one hand or on a flat surface and put about $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of the filling in the middle (a). Pinch tightly to seal the 2 edges. Hold the dumpling between the thumbs and index fingers of both hands, seal the right edges by squeezing the thumbs and index fingers together (b), pinching and pleating to make one or two tucks simultaneously. Seal the left edges in the same way. Put the dumpling in a floured pan. Repeat until all are made.

9 To boil the dumplings in a wok, bring about 3 pints of water to a fast boil. Put in 5 or 6 dumplings and stir so that they do not stick to the bottom. Add another 14 or 15 and stir again. Cover the wok and return to a boil. Stir, then cover again, lower the heat and continue to simmer gently for another 8 to 10 minutes, or until the dumplings have floated to the surface. (If the cooking is done on an electric burner, where the temperature cannot be controlled instantly, about 8 ounces cold water should be added twice during cooking to prevent the dumplings from bursting.)

10 Serve hot. To eat, dip them in soy sauce, vinegar and hot chili oil, mixing them to individual taste.



Sautéed Northern Dumplings

A combination of cooking methods is used to produce these delicious dumplings, which are crisply sautéed on the bottom and lightly steamed on top. Steps 2 to 7 are the same as for Boiled Northern dumplings.

8 Turn the floured side of a wrapper toward you, make 6 straight pleats, each about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1 centimeter) deep, along the top edge of just under half the circle, forming a little pouch (a). Add about 2 teaspoons of the filling to the pouch. Fold up the unpleated edge (b) and pinch together the 2 edges of the dumpling, making it into a crescent. Repeat until all are made.



INGREDIENTS

same as for Boiled Northern dumplings

For the dough

follow step 1 of Scallion Cakes dough
(see page 178)

For sautéing each panful

2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup hot water mixed with
2 teaspoons oil and 1 teaspoon
rice or white wine vinegar
1 teaspoon all-purpose flour,
dissolved in 2 tablespoons water

SERVES 10 as first course

Yields about 100 dumplings



9 To cook the dumplings, heat a heavy 8- to 10-inch (20- to 25-centimeter) skillet, with a lid, for about 30 seconds, or until hot. Add the oil and swirl to cover the surface. Lower the heat and put in 12 dumplings, in 2 parallel rows, with the dumplings just touching each other. Cover and cook for 3 minutes. Pour in the hot-water mixture, cover and continue to cook over a higher heat for about 7 minutes, or until the water is almost absorbed and the bottoms of the dumplings are turning golden. Pour the dissolved flour along the sides of the dumplings. Cover and cook for 1 or 2 more minutes; the flour forms a crisp film linking the dumplings.

10 With a spatula, remove as many dumplings in a row as possible and turn them, brown side up, on a warm serving plate. Serve right away, while you continue to cook the other dumplings, or keep warm and serve all together.

Scallion Cakes

When the biting wind howls in Peking, people tuck into these hearty, oily cakes, made all the more appetizing by the scallions trapped within their layers. They are often served alone, with tea or Chinese wine, as a meal. Traditionally, lard or rendered duck's fat is used, but margarine is a very satisfactory and healthier substitute.

1 Sift the flour into a large bowl. Pour in the boiling water gradually and mix with a pair of chopsticks or a fork as you do so. Rub together with the fingers while the flour is still warm. Add the cold water and knead to form a dough that should be firm but not hard. Continue to knead for 2 or 3 more minutes and then let stand, covered, for at least 30 minutes.

2 Oil a flat surface with 1 teaspoon sesame oil. Also oil a rolling pin with a little sesame oil.

3 Place the dough on the surface. Knead a few times and shape into a roll. Divide into 6 pieces.

4 With the oiled rolling pin, roll out 1 piece into a circular shape about 6½ inches (16 centimeters) in diameter, with the edges slightly thinner than the center.

5 Sprinkle with a good ¼ teaspoon of salt, all over, and press it in with your fingers.

6 Generously spread about ½ ounce (15 grams) margarine all over, stopping just short of the edges.

7 Spread about 5 tablespoons of chopped scallions, adding slightly more at the center.

INGREDIENTS

1¼ pounds (560 grams) all-purpose flour
 1½ cups boiling water
 1 or 2 tablespoons cold water
 1 or 2 teaspoons sesame oil
 1½ teaspoons salt
 about 4 ounces (115 grams) margarine
 35 scallions, about 12 ounces
 (350 grams), chopped
 peanut or corn oil for frying

SERVES 6 for lunch; 10 to 12 as a first course; more as an hors d'oeuvre



- 8** With both hands, pick up the sides nearest you and roll the cake up away from you, taking care not to let the scallions fall out (a).
- 9** Pinch in both ends (b). Then, holding one end in each hand, roll in toward the middle until the ends meet (c). Lift one end and put on top of the other. Twist the two ends, in opposite directions (d), and press down to make into a ball (e).
- 10** Gently roll out the ball, turn over and roll out the other side. Repeat this process until it forms a circular shape about 6 inches (15 centimeters) in diameter. If the surface of the cake should burst during rolling, do not worry, it does not make much difference when cooked.
- 11** Heat a heavy flat frying pan until hot. Add 2 tablespoons of oil. Put in the cakes, lower the heat and fry, covered, for 4 or 5 minutes, or until spotted golden brown. Turn over and fry the other side, covered, for about the same length of time, checking to make sure it does not burn. Remove, drain on paper towels and keep warm on a warm serving plate.
- 12** Repeat steps 4 to 10 to prepare another cake while the first cake is being fried. Replenish the oil in the frying pan before frying the second cake. Repeat until all 6 cakes are cooked.
- 13** Cut each cake into 6 or 8 pieces and serve hot. If served as an hors d'oeuvre, cut into bite-sized pieces.

Note: Scallion cakes can be made ahead of time. They can be reheated either in a frying pan with a little oil or, with margarine spread over them, on a rack in a preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) for 15 minutes, or until hot and crisp again. They also freeze well.





Dry-braised Yi Noodles

Called in China “Noodles of the Yi mansion,” this dish is believed to have been invented by the scholar-official Yi Ping-shou, in the 18th century. Yi, who had a gourmet’s palate for noodles, wanted them kneaded only with egg, no water, then deep-fried before being braised in the best stock. The Yi noodle cakes sold in Chinese stores are already deep-fried.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Yi noodle cakes, 8 ounces (225 grams), each cake is usually 10 inches (25 centimeters) in diameter
- 1 ounce (25 grams) dried shrimp, rinsed
- 3½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- ¼ inch (5 millimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
- 8 ounces (225 grams) cooked white crabmeat
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1½ to 2 cups prime or clear stock (see page 242)
- 6 scallions, sliced into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections and cut into silken threads (see page 34)
- ½ tablespoon thin soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 8 as the last dish to end a dinner of 5 or 6 dishes

- 1** Put 7 to 8 cups of water in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Break each noodle cake into 3 or 4 pieces and submerge them in the water. Return to a boil and continue to boil for about 1 minute, or until the noodles are tender but not soggy. Drain in a colander and set aside. (If prepared several hours in advance, rinse under cold running water.)
 - 2** Soak the shrimp for about 15 minutes in just enough boiling water to cover them. Drain them, reserving the soaking liquid. Chop the shrimp into pieces the size of matchstick heads.
 - 3** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add ½ tablespoon of the oil and swirl it around. Add the shrimp, toss and stir for 1 or 2 minutes, or until dry. Transfer to a small dish.
 - 4** Rinse and dry the wok and reheat over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, and when it takes on color, add the ginger and stir a few times. Add the crabmeat and stir with the wok scoop or metal spatula. Season with the salt.
 - 5** Pour in the stock and bring to a boil. Add the noodles, mix with the crab meat and continue to cook over moderate heat until most of the stock has been absorbed. Add the scallions, season with the soy sauce and oyster sauce, and check for taste.
 - 6** Transfer to a warm serving dish. Sprinkle the shrimp on top and serve.
- Note:** Leftover noodles reheat well when a little stock is added to them.





Double-faced Brown Noodles with Pork

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces (225 grams) dried or 12 ounces (350 grams) fresh Chinese egg noodles
 8 ounces (225 grams) lean pork, boneless pork chop, shoulder, tenderloin or fresh ham
 6 dried medium Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 12 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 2 or 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 6 scallions cut into 1-inch sections, (2.5-centimeter) white and green parts separated
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 8 ounces (225 grams) bean sprouts
 Chinese red vinegar (optional)

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
 1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
 4 turns black pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ¾ teaspoon potato flour
 1 tablespoon water

For the sauce

2½ teaspoons potato flour
 1 cup stock and mushroom water
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
 2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
 1½ tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 3 for lunch;

8 with 4 other dishes

A toasted noodle dish, crisp and golden brown on both sides—hence the name—but moist and soft in the middle. The contrast of texture in the noodles themselves is enhanced by the topping of stir-fried ingredients and a sauce that permeates the noodles; a delight to the palate! You can also make up your own toppings; for example, chicken, prawns, fish or vegetables.

1 Plunge the noodles into 5 cups boiling water in a large saucepan, bring back to a boil and continue to boil, uncovered, until they are *al dente* (generally 4 minutes for dried noodles, 1 to 1½ minutes for fresh noodles, but use your discretion or follow instructions on the package). Separate them with a pair of chopsticks or a fork while boiling.

2 Drain in a colander and immediately rinse thoroughly under cold running water. Leave to dry for 1 hour, turning them over once to ensure even drying.

3 Cut the pork into matchstick-sized pieces. Put into a bowl.

4 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, pepper, wine or sherry and potato flour to the pork. Stir in the water and coat the meat thoroughly. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes.

5 Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Slice into the thinnest possible strips. Reserve the soaking liquid.

6 Prepare the sauce: Dissolve the potato flour with a little stock in a bowl. Add the salt, soy sauces and oyster sauce and the remaining stock and mushroom water. Set aside.

7 Heat a large flat frying pan over high heat until hot. Add 7 tablespoons of the oil to cover the surface and heat until smoke rises. Add the noodles and arrange them evenly to the edges like a pancake. Shallow fry for about 1 minute, or until golden brown but not burned. Slip the wok scoop or a metal spatula underneath to check the color and loosen edges. Adjust the heat if necessary. Either turn the cake over with the spatula or toss. Fry the other side until golden brown. Transfer to a warm serving plate and keep warm in the oven, with the door open.



- 8** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 3 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, which will take on color instantly, then add two-thirds of the white scallions, and stir a couple of times. Put in the pork and flip and toss until it turns whitish. Pour in the wine or sherry and continue to stir while it sizzles. Add the mushrooms and two-thirds of the green scallions; flip and toss some more and transfer to a warm plate.
- 9** Wash and dry the wok. Reheat over high heat until smoke rises. Add 2 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around; add the remaining white scallions and then the bean sprouts. Flip and toss vigorously and constantly for about 2 minutes or until just cooked and yet still crunchy and firm. Add the remaining green scallions. Transfer to a warm plate.
- 10** Lower the heat and pour in the well-stirred sauce. Slowly bring to a boil, stirring to prevent lumps. Pour in the cooked pork and scallions and bean sprouts, stirring to blend with the sauce. When hot, scoop evenly on the noodle cake.
- 11** To facilitate serving, cut up the noodles with a pair of scissors or a knife and fork. Traditionally, red Chinese vinegar is served at the table to make digestion easier.



Singapore Fried Rice Sticks

It is always interesting to note how cuisines influence each other. When the Fukienese emigrated to Singapore during the 19th century they took with them one of their favorite dishes: Fried rice sticks. As time went by, curry spices were added, to suit local taste, and they remain a distinctive element now that the dish has been readopted by the Southern Chinese.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 ounces (115 grams) fresh or frozen raw shrimp or prawns, shelled
- 6 ounces (175 grams) dried rice sticks
- ½ cup peanut or corn oil
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 small onion, skinned and shredded lengthwise
- 1 small green pepper, seeded and cut into matchstick-sized pieces
- 4 ounces (115 grams) char-siu (Cantonese roast pork, see page 138), cut into matchstick-sized pieces
- 1 teaspoon curry powder

For the marinade

- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon egg white

For the sauce

- ¼ cup clear stock or water
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce

SERVES 3 OR 4 as a snack

1 If frozen shrimp are used, defrost thoroughly, then pat dry. Put into a bowl. If prawns are used, devein and quarter.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt and cornstarch to the shrimp and stir to mix. Add the egg white and stir vigorously in the same direction until the shrimp are well coated. Let marinate for 2 or 3 hours in the refrigerator.

3 Submerge the rice sticks in sufficiently hot but not boiling water to cover them completely. Soak for about 30 minutes, until soft and pliable. Drain. Make several cuts with scissors to shorten their length so that they can be handled more easily.

4 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the stock or water, salt, sugar and soy sauce.

5 Heat a flat frying pan until hot. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and swirl it to the edges. Turn the heat down, pour in the egg and, tilting the pan, spread it to the edges to make a crêpe. As soon as it is set, turn it over, fry the other side for a few seconds and transfer to a plate. Slice into narrow strips about 2 inches (5 centimeters) long.

6 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 4 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the onion and turn and stir for about 30 seconds. Add the shrimp and toss and turn in rapid succession for about 1 minute, or until cooked and turning pinkish. Scoop onto a dish, leaving as much oil behind as possible.

7 Tip the green pepper into the wok and stir for about 30 seconds. Add the char-siu and stir together for another minute, or until piping hot. Scoop onto a dish.

8 Add another 4 tablespoons of the oil to the wok and swirl it around. Add the curry powder and let it sizzle for a few seconds. Add the rice sticks and sauce. Holding 2 pairs of chopsticks or 2 large wooden spoons, lift and toss the rice sticks until they have absorbed almost all the sauce. Add the remaining oil around the side of the wok to prevent the rice sticks from sticking. Taste, and if they are hard rather than *al dente*, add 2 or 3 tablespoons of stock or water and cook for 1 or 2 minutes over low heat with the wok cover on. Return the onion, shrimp, green pepper, char-siu and egg to the wok, toss and mix with the rice sticks. Remove to a warm serving dish. Serve immediately.





Deep-fried Bean Paste Sauce with Noodles

INGREDIENTS

For the bean paste

- 1 pound (450 grams) pork, leg or shoulder, with about 2 ounces (55 grams) fat
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 12 ounces (350 grams) scallions, cut into small rounds
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1½ cups peanut or corn oil
- 1½ pounds (675 grams) ground yellow bean sauce
- 1½ cups hoisin sauce

For the bean paste with noodles

- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1½ teaspoons peanut or corn oil
- 8 ounces (225 grams) bean sprouts
- 1 pound (450 grams) dried Chinese noodles or thin spaghetti, Korean or Japanese U-dong
- ½ long cucumber, about 12 ounces (350 grams) cut into matchstick-sized pieces
- deep-fried bean paste (above)

SERVES 4 as a light meal

Because wheat is so widely grown in Northern China, noodles form an important part of the staple diet for the people of that area. On the whole, unlike the Southern Chinese, they do not put their noodles in soup; they prefer them dressed in a sauce. This is a celebrated Peking sauce.

1 Prepare the bean paste: Chop the pork by hand or mince coarsely. Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Tip in the scallions, turn and toss for about 20 to 30 seconds to release their fragrance. Add the pork and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and toss for about 1 minute, separating any lumps. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir for another 1 or 2 minutes. Transfer to a dish and set aside. If water oozes from the mixture, drain.

2 Add the 1½ cups of oil to a deep heavy saucepan or a wok. Heat until just hot (about 325°F [160°C]). Gently add the yellow bean sauce and hoisin sauce and lower the heat; there will be fierce sizzling and splashing when the sauces touch the oil. The oil must cover the sauces. Deep-fry for 6 or 7 minutes, or until the sauce becomes thicker, stirring gently with a wooden spoon to prevent it from sticking, turning the heat up again if necessary.

3 Add the pork and continue to deep-fry for another 12 to 15 minutes, or until most of the steam has evaporated. Stir continuously and adjust the heat to prevent the sauce from burning.

4 Remove from the heat and let cool. Scoop the bean paste into glass jars or earthenware pots. Cover it with at least 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) of the oil. The bean paste, if stored in the refrigerator, can be kept for several months.

5 Prepare the bean paste with noodles: Put about 2 cups of water with ½ teaspoon of the salt and 1½ teaspoons of oil in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the bean sprouts and return to a boil. Pour immediately into a colander and refresh under cold running water. Drain thoroughly.



- 6** Bring a large pan of water to a boil with the remaining salt added. Add the noodles and boil for about 4 minutes, or until just cooked. Pour into a colander and drain.
- 7** Transfer to a serving bowl or a platter. Sprinkle with the bean sprouts and cucumber.
- 8** To eat, each person helps himself to a bowl of noodles and some topping, then mixes some bean paste, starting with no more than 1 tablespoon, into the noodles.

Tossed Noodles with Ginger and Scallions

If you wish to have a quick and simple, yet appetizing, bowl of noodles, here is the answer for you. They make an ideal lunch dish.

- 1** Plunge the noodles into 5 cups of boiling water in a large saucepan, bring back to a boil and continue to boil uncovered until *al dente*. Generally, allow 1 to 1½ minutes for fresh noodles and 4 minutes for dried noodles. Separate the noodles with a pair of chopsticks or a fork while boiling.
- 2** Drain in a colander and then remove to a warm dish.
- 3** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger, stir for a few seconds, then add the scallions and stir until thoroughly hot. Season with the salt. Remove the wok from the heat.
- 4** Return the noodles to the wok and toss them with a pair of chopsticks or a fork. Add the oyster sauce and toss again. Transfer to a warm serving dish and serve.

Variation: Tossed noodles with cucumber and ham. Cut up ½ of a long cucumber and 4 to 6 ounces (115 to 175 grams) ham into matchstick-sized pieces. Cook the noodles as above. To 3 tablespoons of oil add the cucumber and ham. Toss with the noodles and serve.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces (225 grams) fresh or 5 ounces (140 grams) dried Chinese egg noodles
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 2 inches (5 centimeters) fresh ginger root, cut into silken threads (see page 35)
- 8 scallions, cut into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections and then into silken threads (see page 34)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce

SERVES 2



DESSERTS

Almond Bean Curd

INGREDIENTS

3½ cups water
about 8 heaped tablespoons
or ¼ ounce (10 grams) cut-up agar
5 tablespoons sugar
¾ cup evaporated milk
1 tablespoon almond essence
1 large can lychees

SERVES 6

In cookery, the Chinese often enjoy making up a dish to resemble the looks, if not also the taste, of a particular ingredient and giving the dish the same name. This very light and delightful summer dessert that looks like bean curd is, in fact, not bean curd at all!

- 1** Put the water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the agar, reduce the heat and simmer, to dissolve, for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 2** Add the sugar and stir until completely dissolved.
- 3** Remove the saucepan from the heat. Pour in the evaporated milk and stir once.
- 4** Strain the mixture through a fine sieve into a serving bowl, discarding any dregs from the agar.
- 5** Stir in the almond essence. Let cool and set, then put into the refrigerator to chill.
- 6** Cut the “bean curd” into diamond-shaped pieces. Put into a dish and top with lychees. Serve cold.

Note: Other fruits, fresh or canned, such as kiwi, peaches, grapes, pineapple, mangoes, can also be used. Instead of agar, about 6 level teaspoons of powdered gelatin can be used.





Apples or Bananas Pulling Golden Threads

INGREDIENTS

3 apples, Granny Smith or Golden Delicious or 3 fairly large bananas, on the unripe side
 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 6 tablespoons fresh peanut or corn oil
 9 tablespoons sugar
 1 heaped teaspoon white sesame seeds

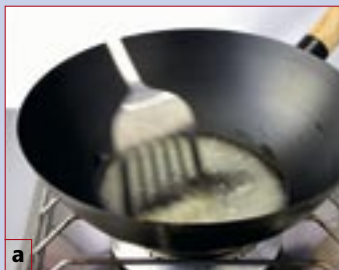
For the batter

4 ounces (115 grams) self-rising flour
 1 large egg, lightly beaten
 about 8 tablespoons water
 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

SERVES 6 TO 8

In this recipe, an ingenious and foolproof Chinese method of caramelizing sugar in a few tablespoonfuls of hot oil is used in the preparation of this delicious dessert. What's more, the oil is then separated from the caramel and can be reused for other cooking.

- 1 Prepare the batter:** Sift the flour into a mixing bowl and stir in the egg. Add the water gradually and stir to blend into a smooth batter, like thick cream in consistency. Let stand for about 15 minutes, then blend in the oil.
- 2** Peel and core the apples or peel the bananas and remove any strings. Divide each apple or roll cut each banana into 8 pieces (see page 33). Sprinkle on the all-purpose flour and toss well to mix.
- 3** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. One by one, dip the fruit pieces into the batter. Add to the oil and deep-fry for about 2 or 3 minutes, or until pale golden. Remove with a pair of chopsticks or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. (This can be done several hours in advance.) Reheat the oil to the same temperature. Deep-fry the fruits for a second time for about 1 minute, or until crisp and golden in color. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels.
- 4** Fill a large bowl with water, add some ice cubes. Set aside.
- 5** Heat a well-cleaned and salt-free wok or heavy saucepan over high heat. Add the fresh oil, swirl it around and heat until smoke rises. Add the sugar and let it dissolve in the oil over moderately high heat, stirring all the time (a). Almost as soon as the sugar has completely dissolved, it will turn light brown in color. Immediately add all the fruit pieces (b) and sprinkle on the sesame seeds (c). Using two wok scoops or







spatulas, toss the pieces around to coat them with the caramelized syrup (d). This must be done with care and speed. Transfer to a large plate (e) and immediately dip them, one by one, into the bowl of ice water, so that the caramel sets. When they are put into the bowl, you will see the golden threads being pulled (f).

6 Quickly lift the pieces from the ice water and put on a serving plate. Serve immediately.

Red Bean Paste Pancakes

This Northern pudding, consisting of two sweet, stuffed pancakes, is both crisp and soft to the bite.

1 In a mixing bowl blend the egg and flour together to a paste. Stir the water, gradually diluting the paste to a thin, runny consistency. Divide the mixture into 2 equal portions.

2 Put a smear of oil on an 8-inch (20-centimeter) flat, nonstick skillet. Wipe all over with a paper towel. Pour all but 1 teaspoon of one portion of mixture into skillet and tilt it to let the mixture run evenly to the edges, forming a thin layer.

INGREDIENTS

1 large egg, lightly beaten
 5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 4 tablespoons water
 a little peanut or corn oil
 4 tablespoons canned red bean paste
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

SERVES 4 TO 6



- 3** Cook over low heat for about 2 minutes, or until it becomes a thin pancake but without any brown spots. Do not turn the pancake over.
- 4** Loosen the edges and, using a spatula, lift the pancake to a lightly oiled plate or a flat surface.
- 5** Make the other pancake the same way.
- 6** Spread 2 tablespoons of the red bean paste across the middle third of each pancake, leaving about 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) either end (a). Fold the near flap over the bean paste (b), the side flaps inward (c) and then the far flap over to the center (d), sealing with a little of the leftover mixture smeared on the edges.
- 7** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Add the pancakes, smooth side up first, and deep-fry for 3 or 4 minutes, or until golden in color, turning over periodically for even browning. The pancakes will puff up, so take care they do not burst. Remove with a perforated spoon.
- 8** Reheat the oil to 350°F (180°C) and fry the pancakes for a few seconds to recrisp. Remove and drain on paper towels.
- 9** Transfer the pancakes to a warm serving plate. Cut each across into 8 strips and serve immediately.





REGIONAL MENUS

Regional Chinese Cooking

China is a vast country and as such is exposed to extremes of both geography and climate. This naturally results in the growth of different agricultural products, so it is little wonder that cuisines vary from province to province. Even though there has never been agreement on the subject, many cookbooks divide Chinese cuisines into eight main streams: Peking, Shantung, Kiangsu, Anhwei, Kwangtung, Fukien, Szechwan and Hunan; others analyze the subregional cuisines within some of these provinces. However, I follow the practice of broadly carving the Chinese gastronomic map into four main regions: Peking or Northern, Shanghai or Eastern, Canton or Southern and Szechwan or Western.

One may well ask what constitutes regional differences, since there are basic national characteristics underlining all of the regional cuisines. The main cooking methods—boiling, steaming, braising, sautéing, deep-frying and stir-frying—are used by all Chinese, the wok is the national cooking utensil, and soy sauce is a ubiquitous and indispensable seasoning. The differences are subtle, and are related to climate, to local produce, to the mixing and use of different condiments, to the emphasis on a certain technique and to the manner of presentation.

Peking or Northern cuisine

This is the largest area, embracing Inner Mongolia, Hopei, Honan, Shantung, Shansi and Shensi provinces. Although Shantung has a more temperate climate, the overall climate of the area is very harsh; Peking itself suffers from extreme heat in the summer and extreme cold in the winter, and in the spring suffers from periodic sandstorms, blown in from the Gobi Desert.

Wheat, millet, sorghum, peanuts, corn and soybeans are the main crops and Tientsin cabbage, better known as Chinese leaf or Chinese celery cabbage, cucumber, and celery are the main vegetables grown. Noodles, steamed breads and buns are a more popular staple than rice, and, unlike the Southern Chinese, who habitually eat their noodles in soup, Northern Chinese eat them on the dry side, seasoned with a sauce.

Food from Inner Mongolia and Shantung forms the backbone of Northern cuisine. The Mongolian influence is reflected in the many

lamb dishes eaten, the most famous of which are Mongolian fire pot and lamb slices barbecued on a spit. In fact, mutton here is eaten and cooked in more ways than in any other region in China. Besides bringing refined dishes to the capital, Shantung chefs left their imprint on Peking cuisine with their liking for raw garlic and leeks.

Peking cuisine may be considered plain and robust, but since the 19th century it has exported one dish that has captivated the imagination of the whole world: Peking duck. The duck is fattened specially for the table, roasted in a special oven, then pancakes and a special sauce are made to accompany it. In Peking, the duck can be an all-in-one meal, in which the head, tongue and feet are served as separate courses alongside the more familiar crispy skin and meat.

Shanghai or Eastern cuisine

This area, based around the Yangtze delta and covering Kiangsu, Chekiang and Anhwei provinces, is temperate in climate and its fertile land, traversed by many rivers and ponds, is a rich agricultural area growing both wheat and rice, and yielding much fish and seafood.

Taken as a whole, Eastern cuisine is rich, decorative and rather on the sweet side; unlike Peking food, garlic is used sparingly, if at all. Although Shanghai is the name used to identify the Eastern school, there are other culinary centers, represented by the main cities of the area—Hangchow, Yangchow, Suchow and Wuhsi, for example. The area as a whole is renowned for certain products and dishes: the specially cured Chinghua ham, with its pinkish red flesh and succulently savory-sweet taste, the rich dark Chinking vinegar and the amber-coloured Shaohsing rice wine. Classic dishes include Crisp stir-fried shrimp, Eel cooked in oil, Yangchow fried rice, Lion's head and fish from the West Lake with a sweet and sour sauce.

One special cooking technique of the region has been adopted nationally. This is *hung-shao*, or the red-braising method of cooking, whereby the ingredients (mainly meat, poultry and fish) are cooked slowly in an aromatic mixture of thick dark soy sauce and rice wine. When, at the end of cooking, the sauce is reduced and spooned over the main ingredient, the resulting taste is both rich and fragrant.

Shanghai cuisine is the least known outside China. Its oiliness and sweetness are perhaps less appealing to the Western palate, and because it is decorative, it tends to be labor-intensive. Moreover, it depends largely on fresh local produce; the famous Shanghai crabs, studded with yellow roe in the autumn, have no counterpart elsewhere, and for the delicate taste of the famous West Lake fish one *has* to go to Hangchow.

Szechwan or Western cuisine

Western cuisine is represented by the provinces of Szechwan, Hunan and Yunnan, and of these Szechwan is the most influential. A land of precipitous mountains and the Yangtze gorges, and home of the pandas, Szechwan is the most populous province in China. Fortunately it is also known as one of China's rice bowls. Very humid and rainy in the summer but mild in the winter, the temperate climate is suitable for agricultural growth almost all year round. With good irrigation, the Szechwan basin in the east of the province grows rice, wheat, rapeseed, corn and bamboo shoots; citrus fruits, especially tangerines, and mushrooms are also grown. A spice, Szechwan peppercorns, and a preserved vegetable are two special products.

Many people, when they first encounter Szechwan food, find it highly seasoned and spicily hot. Fresh and dried red chili are evident, providing the fiery result. But, in fact, the sophistication of Szechwan cooking goes far beyond this apparent overspiciousness. Often in the same dish, the full spectrum of tastes can be experienced: salty, sweet, vinegary and hot. Rather than overpowering the taste buds, the Szechwanese claim that the chili pepper is only a harbinger awakening them, and that once stimulated, they will be able to appreciate the full range of tastes and aftertastes.

Special Szechwanese dishes are Hot and sour soup, Fragrant and crispy duck, Twice-cooked pork and a range of fish fragrant dishes.

In terms of cookery techniques, Szechwan dishes often employ multiple processes; for example, its famous smoked duck, which is first marinated, then smoked, steamed and finally deep-fried.

Cantonese or Southern cuisine

The climate of the area centered in the provinces of Kwantung and Fukien is subtropical, with heavy rainfalls between May and September; the coast is subject to typhoons. The Pearl River delta of Kwantung and the coastal plains of Fukien are rich agricultural areas. Rice crops are harvested twice a year, and rice is the staple, eaten twice a day. Sweet potato, corn, taro and wheat are also cultivated. There are many pig and poultry farms, and fish ponds. Vegetables, especially green leafy vegetables, abound. Tropical fruits, oranges, bananas, peaches, pineapples and juicy lychees are plentiful. High-quality tea is a special product of Fukien, while all along the coast fish and seafood—crabs, crayfish, shrimps, prawns, scallops, clams—are plentiful. This wealth of ingredients has helped to make Cantonese cooking the most versatile and varied of Chinese cuisines.

Cantonese food is not highly seasoned. Instead, a harmonious blending of different flavors is sought in order to bring out the best of the ingredients. However, this does mean that it often relies upon fresh ingredients and when they are not available and substitutes have to be used the results can taste insipid.

Although they are adept at all Chinese culinary techniques, Cantonese cooks are at their most skillful when they stir-fry dishes. Red-braised dishes are an Eastern contribution to Chinese gastronomy, but Southern stir-fried dishes reign supreme

nationwide. Their "wok-fragrance," a term used to describe the aroma so desirable in stir-fried dishes, is matchless.

Dim sum—hot hors d'oeuvres of pastry cases stuffed with a mixture of delicacies such as pork, beef or seafood, bamboo shoots or mushroom, steamed, sautéed or deep-fried—is another Cantonese speciality. There are, of course, dim sum in all the other regional cuisines, but none can beat the Cantonese for variety. Because of the time, labor and special skill called for to make dim sum, they are a treat to be enjoyed at restaurants more than at home.



A Northern or Peking Menu

The main feature of this menu for six is, without doubt, the Peking duck, with its pancake accompaniment. In fact, they alone, with any one of the other dishes, should make four people feel well fed and contented.



4

2

3

6

A collage of Chinese dishes. In the top left, a white bowl contains dumplings with dark spots. In the center, a stack of golden-brown pancakes is shown. To the left, a plate features slices of dark, glazed duck. In the foreground, a grey bowl holds a shredded cabbage salad with red and black garnishes, and a white bowl contains a green vegetable salad. A pair of wooden chopsticks lies in the bottom foreground.

Key

1 Mandarin pancakes
(see pages 200–1)

2 Peking duck
Tender duck served, traditionally, wrapped in a Mandarin pancake with hoisin sauce and scallions (see pages 198–9)

3 “Seaweed”
Deep-fried cabbage greens garnished with sugar and almonds (see page 204).

4 Fish in a wine sauce
Delicate-tasting dish with firm white fish and cloud ears in a wine sauce (see page 203).

5 Pickled cabbage Peking style
Spicy dish served cold as an hors d’oeuvre or side dish (see page 202).

6 Chinese celery cabbage in cream sauce
An unusual dish, one of the few Chinese recipes using dairy produce (see page 205).



Peking Duck

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons honey
1 cup hot water
1 plump oven-ready duck
4½ to 5 pounds (2 to 2.25 kg)
6 cups boiling water
12 scallions, white parts only
1 large cucumber, cut into
matchstick-sized pieces
hoisin sauce or sweet bean sauce
25 to 30 Mandarin pancakes
(see page 200)

SERVES 4 as main course,
6 to 7 with 3 or 4 other dishes

This famous dish was introduced to Europe and America during the latter half of the 19th century: one source gives a definite date of 1875. In the well-established restaurants in Peking, the ducks used are raised for the express purpose of being roasted in a specially constructed oven. Paradoxically, this duck can be made, as in this recipe, in a simple way, with remarkably good results. The duck will be very crisp, with a rich dark red skin, the meat perfectly cooked and juicy. Traditionally, only the skin was eaten with the pancakes. The meat, cut up in the kitchen and stir-fried with bean sprouts, was served as a second course. These days, in both Peking and the West, the meat is carved to be served with the skin.

- 1** Melt the honey in the hot water in a cup or jug. Keep warm.
- 2** Put the duck in a colander. Scald it with the boiling water from a kettle, turning over several times to ensure even scalding. The skin shrinks at once, becoming shiny. Wipe off excess water but leave damp. Put into a large bowl.
- 3** Pour the honey mixture all over the skin, including the wings, neck and tail. Return the liquid to the cup and repeat the process once more. To ensure even distribution, dip a brush into the liquid and smear over less accessible spots as well.
- 4** Hang the duck on either a special Chinese 3-pronged duck hook or on 2 butcher's "S" meat hooks, 1 each securing the shoulder joint and wing. Hang in a windy place for 10 to 24 hours, until the skin is parchment dry. Do *not* prick the skin.
- 5** Place the duck breast side up on a wire rack in the middle of the oven with a pan of hot water underneath to catch the cooking juices. Roast in a preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) for 20 minutes, at the end of which the skin will have turned golden brown. With a wooden spoon or spatula held in one hand and another spoon put inside the cavity, turn the duck over and roast the other side for 25 to 30 minutes. Turn over once more, breast side up again, and roast for another 20 minutes. If the skin is becoming too dark a red, lower the heat to 325°F (160°C); if too pale, raise to 375°F (190°C) for part of the rest of the



roasting time. Do *not* prick the skin during the roasting; the oil that would ooze would spoil both the color and the crispness of the skin. Remove from the oven and put on a wire rack to cool for a few minutes before carving.

6 While the duck is being roasted, cut the scallions into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections. Slice each section lengthwise into strips. Arrange on 1 or 2 dishes. Arrange the cucumber on 1 or 2 dishes.

7 Put 1 or 2 tablespoons of hoisin or sweet bean sauce into individual saucers for each person. One saucer can be shared by 2 people, if preferred.

8 Steam the Mandarin pancakes for 10 minutes and transfer to warm serving plates. Bring to the table when the duck is being carved.

9 Just before carving, pour all the juice in the cavity into a container. Carve the skin into pieces about 2 inches (5 centimeters) square or into irregular shapes of approximate size. Carve the meat in a similar manner. Place the skin and meat on warm serving plates.

10 To eat, put a pancake on a plate (rather than in a bowl), smear on some sauce and top with 1 or 2 pieces of skin, either alone or with meat. Add 1 or 2 pieces of cucumber and scallions before rolling it up and eating.

Variation: Cantonese roast duck. Follow steps 1 to 4, above (the hanging time can be shortened to 6 to 10 hours). Smear a marinade of 4 teaspoons salt, 4 teaspoons sugar, 1½ teaspoons five-spice powder and 2 teaspoons Mei-kuei-lu wine or gin all over and in the cavity of the duck. Roast as in step 5. Serve with a thick soy sauce dip.



Mandarin Pancakes

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) all-purpose flour
1½ cups boiling water
1 tablespoon cold water
little extra flour
2 teaspoons sesame oil

SERVES 6 with Peking duck

Mandarin pancakes are a must with Peking duck, but they are also traditionally served with dishes such as Mu-shu pork (see page 140).

The Northern Chinese like these pancakes to be slightly on the firm side; the little bit of cold water added to the dough does the trick.

1 Sift the flour into a mixing bowl. Pour in the boiling water gradually, stirring vigorously with a wooden spoon or a pair of chopsticks until well mixed. Then stir in the cold water. As soon as your hands can withstand the heat, form the mixture into a dough and knead lightly either in the bowl or on a lightly floured board, or work surface for 3 or 4 minutes or until soft and smooth. Allow to stand in the bowl for 20 to 30 minutes covered with a cloth.

2 Transfer the dough to a lightly floured board or work surface. Divide into 2 equal portions and knead a few more times, until smooth again. Use as little extra flour on the board as possible or the pancakes will taste floury.

3 Using both hands, roll each portion of dough into a roll 16 inches (40 centimeters) long. Then, using a ruler as a guide, divide each roll into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) pieces (a), making a total of 32.





- 4** One by one, stand each piece upright on the heel of your hand, slightly round off the dough, then flatten with the other hand (b), into a circle of about 2 to 2½ inches (5 to 6 centimeters) diameter.
- 5** Using a brush, paint the surface of half of the pieces (16) with sesame oil (c). Place the remaining pieces on the oiled surfaces (d), making 16 pairs. Shape each pair of circles as evenly as possible.
- 6** Using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll out each pair into thin pancakes about 6 to 6½ inches (15 to 16 centimeters) in diameter (e). To ensure even thickness and roundness, rotate the circles quite frequently, turning them over as well.
- 7** Heat an unoled, flat heavy frying pan or griddle over medium-to-low heat. Put in 1 pair of cakes at a time and fry for 1 or 2 minutes, or until light brown spots appear (f). Turn over to fry the other side. In less than 1 minute part of the surface will puff up, indicating that they are done.
- 8** Remove from the frying pan, and while they are still hot separate the 2 thin pancakes with the fingers (g). Put on a plate and cover with a cloth to prevent drying. Repeat until all are done.
- 9** Steam all the pancakes (in 2 batches, if necessary) in a wok or steamer for 5 to 10 minutes before serving (see page 43).





Pickled Cabbage Peking Style

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds (900 grams) white cabbage, quartered and cored
2 tablespoons salt
½ to ¾ inch (1 to 2 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
5 tablespoons sugar
2½ tablespoons peanut or corn oil
2½ tablespoons sesame oil
3 dried red chilies, seeded and chopped
1 teaspoon Szechwan peppercorns
5 tablespoons rice vinegar

SERVES 6 TO 8

Served cold as an hors d'oeuvre, salad or side dish, this dish keeps well in the refrigerator for at least two weeks. Avoid eating the Szechwan peppercorns.

- 1** Shred the cabbage as fine as possible either in a food processor or with a knife. Put into a very large mixing bowl.
- 2** Sprinkle with the salt and mix. Let stand at room temperature for 2 or 3 hours; the cabbage will decrease in bulk, having released some of its water content. Take a handful at a time and, using both hands, squeeze out the excess water but leave damp. Transfer to a clean bowl.
- 3** Place the ginger in a bunch on top of the cabbage in the center of the bowl.
- 4** Sprinkle on the sugar, taking care not to put it over the ginger.
- 5** Heat the peanut oil and sesame oil in a small saucepan over high heat until smoke rises. Remove from the heat and add the chili and peppercorns. Pour the mixture over the ginger first and then the surrounding cabbage in the bowl. The sizzling oil partially cooks the ginger, enhancing the flavor.
- 6** Add the vinegar and mix well. Let stand at room temperature for 2 or 3 hours before serving.



Fish in Wine Sauce

This is a Peking-style fish dish which is very delicate in taste and appearance. It is traditional to use cloud ears to complement the fish.

- 1** Pat the fish dry. Halve each side lengthwise and then slice each half crosswise into about 2-inch (5-centimeter) pieces. Put into a bowl.
- 2 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt, sugar, pepper and the egg and cornstarch mixture to the fish. Coat the fish well. Cover and let marinate in the refrigerator for about 1 hour.
- 3 Prepare the sauce:** Mix together the salt, cornstarch, wine and stock.
- 4** Drain the excess water from the cloud ears but leave damp.
- 5** Fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of about 200 to 225°F (90 to 110°F), or barely hot. Put the fish in very gently and let it “go through the oil” for 1 or 2 minutes, stirring 2 or 3 times to separate the pieces. When the fish turns opaque, turn off the heat and remove with a perforated spoon, handling gently so that the pieces do not crumble. Pour the oil into a container, leaving about 2 or 3 tablespoons in the wok.
- 6** Reheat the oil until smoke rises. Add the garlic, stir, then the ginger, stir, and the cloud ears. Stir a few more times, then add the well-stirred sauce. Slowly bring to a boil, then return the fish to the wok and cook gently in the sauce until thoroughly hot. Transfer to a warm serving dish. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

1 to 1½ pounds (450 to 675 grams) lemon sole, Dover sole or flounder fillet, skinned
2 tablespoons cloud ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
½ inch (1 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon sugar
6 turns white pepper mill
1 egg white, beaten with 1 tablespoon cornstarch until well blended

For the sauce

¾ to 1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon cornstarch
½ cup Shaohsing wine
or semisweet white wine
½ cup clear stock

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



“Seaweed”

This Northern dish uses a special kind of seaweed, which is not available elsewhere. However, the adapted ingredients used below do produce the desired delicious result.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound (450 grams) cabbage greens, washed and dried
- peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoon caster sugar
- 1 ounce (25 grams) blanched, flaked almonds

SERVES 6

- 1** Remove and discard the tough stalks from the greens. Lay them out in a large pan to dry thoroughly.
- 2** Fold 6 or 7 leaves, or however many you can handle at a time, into a neat roll and, using a sharp knife, slice crosswise into the thinnest threadlike strips possible. Lay out in the pan again to air, for the drier the greens at this stage, the easier it is to achieve the desired crispness, without their losing their vivid color when deep-fried. (They can be prepared up to this point 6 to 8 hours ahead.)
- 3** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat the oil to a temperature of 400°F, (200°C) or until a cube of stale bread browns in 40 seconds. Add half the cabbage greens gently and deep-fry for about 2 minutes or until crisp; they will turn a slightly deeper green color. Remove with a large hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Deep-fry the remainder.
- 4** Let cool, then transfer to a serving dish. Sprinkle with the salt and mix thoroughly. Sprinkle with the sugar and again mix thoroughly. Garnish with the almonds.
- 5** Serve at room temperature. The “seaweed” will stay crisp overnight. Do not refrigerate.



Chinese Celery Cabbage in Cream Sauce

It is a well-known fact that, traditionally, the Chinese do not use dairy products in their cooking. However, in this classic modern dish from the Northern and Eastern areas, a small amount of either evaporated milk or cream is used. In Peking and Shanghai, evaporated milk would be used, but light cream is just as good.

- 1 Discard the tough outer leaves of the cabbage. Wash the remaining leaves, cut each one lengthways, then slice them across into strips about 2½ inches (6 centimeters) long.
- 2 Bring 5 cups water to a boil in a large saucepan. Add 1 teaspoon of the salt and 1 tablespoon of the oil. (This will make the cabbage glisten.) Add the cabbage. Boil for about 1 minute, then pour the cabbage into a colander. Refresh under cold running water and let drain until all the excess water has run out.
- 3 **Prepare the sauce:** Dissolve the potato flour in 2 tablespoons of the stock, then stir in the rest. Stir in the milk or cream and add the remaining salt.
- 4 Heat a wok over moderate heat until moderately hot. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the cabbage and stir and turn with a wok scoop or metal spatula until thoroughly hot, taking care not to burn it. Push the cabbage to the sides of the wok, making a well in the center.
- 5 Pour the well-stirred sauce into the center of the wok. Stir the sauce continually until it thickens, then fold in the cabbage. Transfer to a warm serving plate.
- 6 Arrange the cabbage attractively, sprinkle the chopped ham on top and serve.

Variation: Cauliflower in cream sauce. Use 2 cauliflowers; cut the florets into bite-sized pieces and cook in the same way as the celery cabbage.

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ to 1¾ pounds (675 to 790 grams)
Chinese celery cabbage
- 1¼ teaspoons salt
- 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 ounce (25 grams) cooked ham, Chinghua
or Virginia, chopped

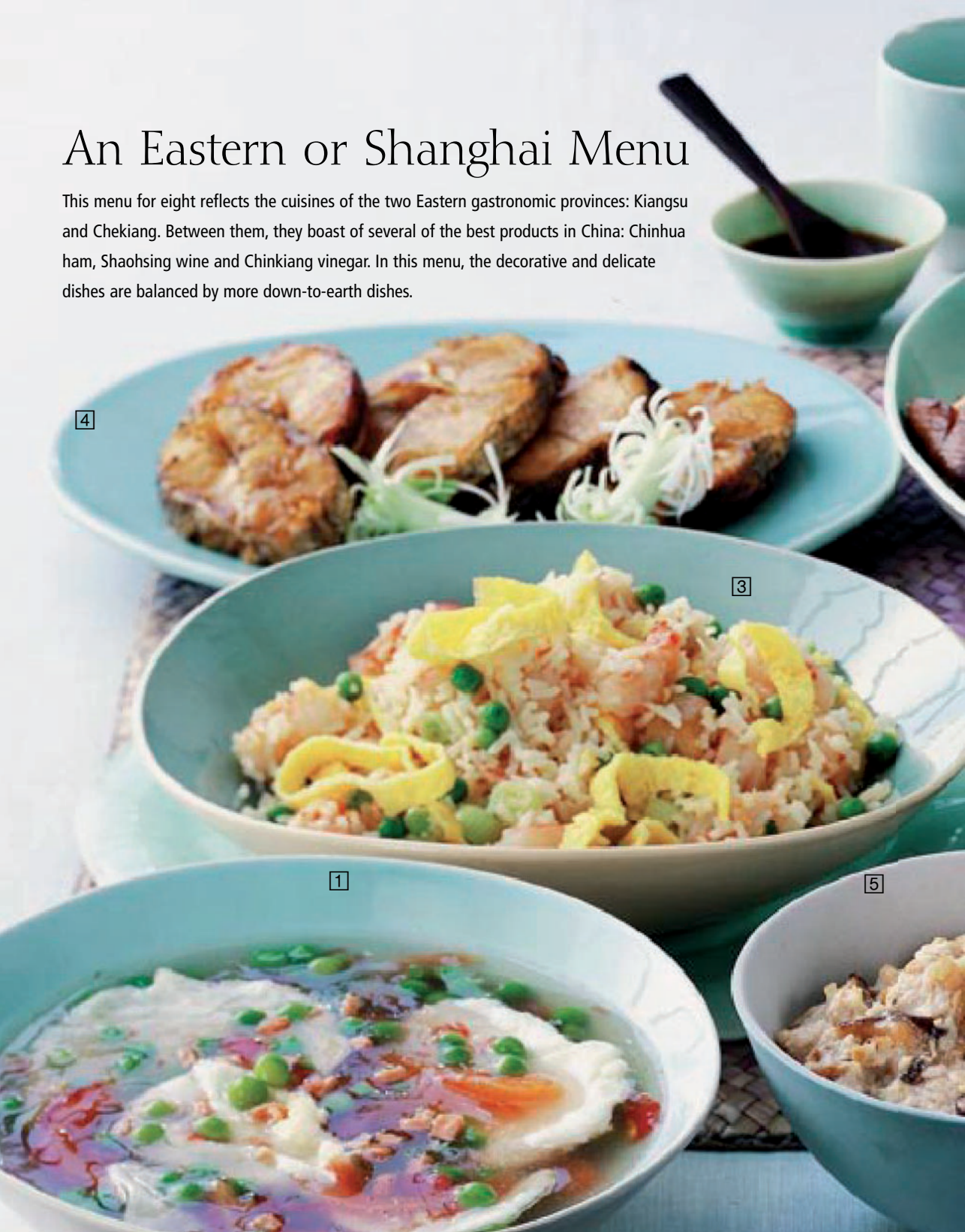
For the sauce

- 1 tablespoon potato flour
- ½ cup clear stock
- ½ cup evaporated milk
or light cream

SERVES 6

An Eastern or Shanghai Menu

This menu for eight reflects the cuisines of the two Eastern gastronomic provinces: Kiangsu and Chekiang. Between them, they boast of several of the best products in China: Chinhua ham, Shaohsing wine and Chinkiang vinegar. In this menu, the decorative and delicate dishes are balanced by more down-to-earth dishes.



4

3

1

5



Key

1 Fu-yung egg slices

Tender pieces of egg served in a nourishing and tasty stock (see page 210).

2 Red-in-snow soup with pork

Tasty soup with pork, cellophane noodles and crisp red-in-snow as main ingredients (see page 208).

3 Yangchow fried rice

Fried rice cooked with ham, shrimp, peas and onions, garnished with strips of egg (see page 213).

4 "Smoked" fish Shanghai style

Cold dish, marinated, deep-fried then steeped in a tangy sauce (see page 209).

5 Eight-treasure bean curd

Savory dish of puréed bean curd flavored with chicken, ham, mushrooms and nuts (see page 212).

6 Crystal sugar pig's hock

Tender meat dish, spiced with ginger, scallions, soy sauce and wine, served whole (see page 211).



Red-in-snow Soup with Pork

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces (55 grams) cellophane noodles
4 ounces (115 grams) lean pork
3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
4 to 6 scallions, cut into 1-inch
(2.5-centimeter) sections, white
and green parts separated
1 small can red-in-snow or
7 ounces (200 grams), chopped

For the marinade

2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
½ teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
4 to 6 turns white pepper mill
1½ teaspoons potato flour
1 tablespoon water
1 or 2 teaspoons sesame oil

SERVES 5 OR 6

Crisp, pickled red-in-snow (labeled pickled cabbage on the can), although quite salty by itself, lends a delicious flavor to the other ingredients of this dish, making a really tasty soup.

- 1** With a pair of scissors, cut the cellophane noodles into shorter lengths, about 3 inches (7.5 centimeters), for easier handling when cooked. Soak in about 3 cups boiling water for about 30 minutes. Drain.
- 2** Cut the pork into matchstick-sized pieces (see page 36). Put into a bowl.
- 3 Prepare the marinade:** Add the soy sauce, sugar, wine or sherry, pepper, potato flour and water to the pork. Let marinate for about 15 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.
- 4** Place 4 cups of water in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the oil, white scallions and cellophane noodles. Pour in the red-in-snow and return to a gentle simmer.
- 5** Add the pork to the saucepan and, using a pair of chopsticks or a fork, separate the strips. Simmer until the pork has cooked and turned opaque; this should not take more than 1 minute. Add the green scallions. Transfer to a warm soup tureen and serve.



“Smoked” Fish Shanghai Style

A favorite cold beginner in Shanghai and Northern restaurants. “Smoked” fish has always been known by this mock title, for the fish is not smoked but marinated, then deep-fried and steeped in a spiced sauce with a special vinegar.

- 1 Pat the fish dry with paper towels, pierce the flesh in several places with a fork for better absorption of the marinade, and place on a large plate.
- 2 **Prepare the marinade:** Using a garlic press, squeeze the juice from the chopped ginger onto the fish and discard the pulp. Add the soy sauce and wine or sherry. Turn the fish over several times so the pieces are coated with the marinade. Let marinate for 2 hours, turning the fish over from time to time.
- 3 **Prepare the sauce:** Put the water, star anise, cinnamon stick, tangerine peel, peppercorns, scallions and ginger into a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 25 or 30 minutes, to reduce the liquid to about 1½ cups. Strain the liquid into a bowl and discard the solids. Return the liquid to the saucepan and add the vinegar and sugar. Leave to one side while deep-frying the fish.
- 4 Put the fish on a wire rack to drain for several minutes before deep-frying.
- 5 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 400°F (200°C) or until a cube of stale bread browns in 40 seconds. Carefully add half the fish and deep-fry for about 15 minutes, until brown and firm but not hard. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated disc and drain on paper towels. Repeat with the rest of the fish.
- 6 Bring the sauce to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Add the fish and ladle the boiling liquid over it for 3 or 4 minutes, using a large spoon. Transfer the fish to a large dish.
- 7 Continue to boil the sauce until it thickens and is reduced to a syrupy glaze. Pour over the fish. Cool, cover and refrigerate for a few hours, or overnight, before serving cold.

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds (900 grams) hake or haddock, ideally from the tail of the fish, cut ¾ inch (2 centimeters) thick
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the marinade

1½ inches (3.5 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped
3 tablespoons thin soy sauce
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the sauce

2½ cups cold water
1 whole star anise or 8 segments
1 inch (2.5 centimeters) cinnamon stick
1 piece preserved tangerine peel, quarter of whole
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
2 large scallions
4 slices fresh ginger root, ½ inch (2 millimeters) thick
3 tablespoons Chinkiang or red wine vinegar
4 or 5 tablespoons sugar

SERVES 8



Fu-yung Egg Slices

Fu-yung is Chinese for lotus. In poetry it is used to describe the pretty face of a young woman, and it is indeed a fitting adjective for this Eastern dish.

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup (frozen small peas)
1 or 2 medium red tomatoes
6 large egg whites
3/4 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cornstarch
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
1 1/2 tablespoons potato flour
2 1/2 cups clear stock
1 ounce (25 grams) ham, Chinha or
Virginia is best, chopped fine

SERVES 4 with 3 other dishes

- 1** Blanch the peas in boiling water for 2 or 3 minutes. Drain.
- 2** Plunge the tomatoes in a bowl of boiling water for 1 or 2 minutes, then peel the skin. Halve lengthwise and seed. Slice each half lengthwise into 4 to 6 pieces.
- 3** Beat the egg whites lightly, add 1/2 teaspoon of the salt and the cornstarch and beat until homogenized. If there are too many bubbles, skim them off.
- 4** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat until barely hot, about 210 to 225°F (100 to 110°C). Pour in the egg-white mixture, about 2 tablespoons at a time, and let it come slowly to the surface. Lift at once with a perforated spoon and put into a bowl. Repeat until all the mixture is used, always adjusting the heat to make sure the oil is not too hot, so that the velvety tenderness of the egg is maintained.
- 5** Dissolve the potato flour in 1 or 2 tablespoons of the stock, then blend well into the remaining stock. Add the remaining salt.
- 6** Place the stock in a saucepan and bring slowly to a boil, stirring as it thickens. Add the peas, cook for a few seconds, until hot, then add the tomato. Now add the *fu-yung* egg slices and cook for a few more seconds, until piping hot. Remove from the heat and gently scoop all the ingredients to a warm deep serving plate.
- 7** Arrange the peas and tomatoes attractively to give the best visual effect. Sprinkle on the ham and serve immediately.



Crystal Sugar Pig's Hock

Eastern Chinese cooks specialize in dishes such as this, where the rind as well as the meat is so tender that only a pair of chopsticks (or a fork and spoon) is necessary to break it up.

- 1** Pluck any hair off the skin of the hock. On the side where the skin is most tender, cut through to, and along the length of, the bone. This helps to keep the hock in shape and to absorb the sauce better as it cooks.
- 2** Put the hock in a heavy saucepan or flameproof casserole and cover with cold water. Bring the water to a boil and cook, uncovered, for 4 or 5 minutes, so that the scum collects on the surface. Pour off the water and, if necessary, rinse the skin free of scum.
- 3** Return the hock to the saucepan or casserole. (If possible, place on a thin latticed bamboo mat, which will prevent the rind from sticking to the pot.)
- 4** Add the ginger, scallions, soy sauce, wine or sherry and sugar to the pot. Pour in 3½ cups water, bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer, tightly covered, for 1 hour, loosening the skin from the bottom of the pot once during cooking.
- 5** Turn the pork over, checking the water level to make sure it is about one-third of the way up the pork. Replace the lid and continue to cook for another 1¼ to 1½ hours, moving the pork 2 or 3 times to make sure the skin is not sticking to the pot. The juice should by now be reduced to about 8 ounces (225 grams) or a little less.
- 6** Increase the heat and boil to reduce the sauce for a few minutes, or until it is thick and glossy, continually spooning it over the pork with a long spoon.
- 7** Transfer the hock to a warm serving dish. Discard the ginger and scallions and pour the sauce over the pork.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pig's hock, about 3 to 3½ pounds (1.3 to 1.6 kilograms)
- 4 thickish slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- 2 or 3 scallions, halved
- 6 tablespoons thick soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 ounce (25 grams) Demerara or granulated sugar

SERVES 6 with 2 other dishes



Eight-treasure Bean Curd

The 18th-century poet and official, Yüan Mei, wrote a cookery book called *Sui-yüan Recipes*, a unique legacy of his times from a Chinese man of letters.

In the recipe called "Prefect Wang's Eight-treasure Bean Curd," Yüan Mei briefly outlined how the dish traced its origin to the Imperial kitchen. This dish consists of many hidden ingredients, which, while they melt in the mouth, give just the hint of a nutty bite.

INGREDIENTS

4 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted (see page 33)
 2 cakes bean curd, drained
 3 egg whites
 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon solid lard
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons potato flour
 2 tablespoons heavy cream
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup prime stock (see page 242)
 2 tablespoons melted lard or 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked chicken breast, chopped fine
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup blanched walnuts, chopped fine
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup blanched almonds, chopped fine
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup ham, chopped fine, Chinhua or Virginia is best
 2 teaspoons melted chicken fat or sesame oil

SERVES 6 with 3 or 4 other dishes

1 Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms but leave damp. Chop fine.

2 Blend or mash the bean curd. The smoother the purée, the smoother the texture of the cooked dish. Put into a large bowl.

3 Add half the egg whites and the salt to the bean curd and beat until well amalgamated. Add the remaining egg whites, the solid lard, potato flour and heavy cream. Beat the mixture until stiff; the volume will have increased. Stir in half the stock.

4 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the melted lard or oil and swirl it around. Pour the bean curd mixture and the remaining stock simultaneously into the wok. Stir with the wok scoop or a large wooden spoon for about 1 minute, or until the mixture turns ivory in color. Lower the heat if the mixture begins to brown. Stir in the mushroom, chicken, walnuts, almonds and half the ham. When well mixed, bring to simmering point and pour the mixture into a warm deep serving bowl.

5 Add the chicken fat or sesame oil and garnish with the remaining ham sprinkled on top before serving.



Yangchow Fried Rice

This dish originated in Yangchow, in Eastern China, but has become a favorite with the Cantonese, too. In fact, it is one of the most well-known and popular rice dishes both inside and outside China. Prawns or small shrimps are always used; in the South, char-siu or Cantonese roast pork (see page 138) is used instead of ham.

1 If frozen prawns are used, defrost thoroughly. Devein the prawns (see page 38) and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (2-centimeter) pieces. Pat dry with paper towels. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Mix together the salt, cornstarch and egg white. Stir into the prawns, making sure they are evenly coated. Refrigerate, covered, for a minimum of 3 hours or overnight.

3 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic and, as soon as it takes on color, tip in the prawns. Separate them, stirring and tossing with a wok scoop or metal spatula for 30 to 45 seconds, or until almost cooked and turning pinkish. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok; as soon as the sizzling dies down, remove the prawns and put aside. Wash and dry the wok.

4 Beat the eggs lightly with 1 tablespoon of the oil and a little salt. Heat a large frying pan until moderately hot, add 1 tablespoon of the oil and swirl it around to cover the whole surface.

5 Pour in half of the beaten egg and tip the pan to spread the egg evenly to the edges. When firm, turn the crêpe over and fry the other side for a few seconds. Transfer the crêpe to a plate and slice into thin strips.

6 Separate the rice grains as much as possible. Blanch the peas in boiling salted water for 3 minutes and drain well.

7 Reheat the wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Stir in the white scallions. Pour in the remaining beaten egg, then immediately tip in all the rice. Sliding the wok scoop or spatula to the bottom of the wok where the runny egg is, turn and toss the rice, separating any lumps.

8 When thoroughly hot, add the ham, stir, then the peas, stir, and then the prawns. Still stirring, add the soy sauce and stock.

9 Finally, put in half of the egg strips and the green scallions. Transfer to a warm serving platter and arrange the remaining egg strips on top for garnish.

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces (225 grams) fresh or frozen raw peeled prawns
8 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine
or medium-dry sherry
2 large eggs
salt
about $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds or 5 to 6 cups boiled rice,
cooked at least 3 or 4 hours in advance
(see page 170)
8 ounces (225 grams) frozen peas
4 scallions, cut into thin rounds,
white and green parts separated
8 ounces (225 grams) cooked ham, diced
1½ tablespoons thick soy sauce
2 or 3 tablespoons clear stock

For the marinade

scant $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
1½ teaspoons cornstarch
 $\frac{1}{2}$ egg white

SERVES 4 as a main course

A Western or Szechwan Menu

This menu for eight, with its delicious tastes and aftertastes, offers the full spectrum of Szechwan flavors, from spicy and numbing to salty, sweet and vinegary. The dishes can be prepared and enjoyed individually, or two or three at a sitting.



6

3

7



Key

1 Silver thread buns

Steamed buns, always served with Fragrant and crispy duck (see page 222–3).

2 Lotus leaf buns

Steamed buns for Fragrant and crispy duck (see page 221–2)

3 Fragrant and crispy duck

Marinated and steamed before being deep-fried, the meat in this dish simply melts off the bone (see page 216).

4 Hot and sour soup

Spicy-hot soup with pork, mushrooms and bean curd (see pages 218–19).

5 Fish fragrant shredded pork

Finely sliced pork combined with chili paste, garlic, ginger and scallions (see page 219).

6 Dry-fried four-season beans

Delicious hot or cold, this dish combines deep-fried beans with a tangy flavoring (see page 220).

7 Pang pang chicken

Peppery-hot dish served cold with cucumber and scallions (see page 217).



Fragrant and Crispy Duck

Deep-fried to golden brown, the meat is nevertheless so tender that it comes away from the bones merely with the help of a pair of chopsticks. And therein lies the secret of this Szechwan duck.

INGREDIENTS

1 oven-ready duck, 4 to 5 pounds
(1.8 to 2.25 kilograms)
2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
2 to 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
12 lotus leaf buns (see page 221)
ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns
and salt (see page 46, omitting the
five-spice powder)

For the marinade

2 tablespoons Shaohsing wine or
medium-dry sherry
1 tablespoon salt
scant 1 teaspoon five-spice powder
4 slices fresh ginger root, peeled
3 scallions, halved

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

1 Prepare the marinade: Rub the wine or sherry, salt and five-spice powder all over the duck skin and inside the cavity. Put the ginger and scallions inside the cavity. Let marinate for at least 6 hours or overnight.

2 Put the duck in a heatproof bowl or dish with raised sides. Steam in a wok or steamer for 1¾ to 2 hours (see page 43). Quite a lot of fat and juice will collect in the bowl. (The juice, after the fat has been skimmed off, can be used as a tasty stock.)

3 Remove the duck from the bowl and stand it on a rack to let all the juice run out. Place the duck on another dish or stand it up to dry for 30 minutes or longer. Care must be taken to keep the duck whole at this stage.

4 Remove and discard all the ginger and scallions from the cavity.

5 Brush the duck skin with the soy sauce. Dust all over with flour.

6 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Place the duck in the oil and deep-fry over low to moderate heat for about 2 minutes. With a wooden spoon or spatula held in one hand and another put inside the cavity, turn the duck over and deep-fry the other side for 2 more minutes. Repeat this process for a total of 8 minutes, after which time the skin should be golden brown. Drain on paper towels.

7 Steam the lotus leaf buns for about 5 minutes or until hot.

8 Place the duck on a warm serving plate and put the buns around it. Serve at the table with either a fork and knife or a pair of chopsticks. The skin of the duck should be so crisp and the meat so tender that they come away easily from the bones with pressure from the chopsticks. Dip in ground peppercorns and salt, and eat with the buns. Silver thread buns also go well with the duck.



Pang Pang Chicken

Interestingly, this dish derives its name, not from the peppery-hot and intriguing dressing, as might be expected, but from the wooden stick (*pang* in Mandarin) that is used to beat the chicken in order to loosen the fibers.

To many people, this Szechwan dish is also known as Bon bon chicken.

- 1** Halve the cucumber lengthwise and scoop out the seedy pulp in the center. Cut the cucumber into thin pieces.
- 2** Sprinkle the salt over the cucumber and mix well. Set aside so that water can ooze out.
- 3** Put the stock in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the chicken and poach for about 15 minutes, or until cooked. Remove the chicken breasts and leave to cool.
- 4 Prepare the dressing:** Stir the sesame paste, in the jar, then put in a bowl and stir in the soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, hot chili oil, peppercorns and sesame oil.
- 5** Rinse the cucumber in cold water to rid it of the salt, then squeeze out excess water. Arrange attractively on a serving plate.
- 6** When the chicken breasts are cool enough to handle, beat lightly on the skin side with a wooden rolling pin to loosen the fibers. Peel off the skin and tear the meat into long strips with your fingers. If you like the skin, cut it up into longish strips as well. Arrange them in the center of the plate.
- 7** Place the scallions on top of the chicken.
- 8** When ready to eat, pour the well-stirred dressing over the ingredients and mix to coat. Serve cold.

Note: This dish can be prepared hours in advance and refrigerated, covered, until ready to serve. It keeps quite well until the following day, though the dressing inevitably becomes a little watery.

INGREDIENTS

- 10 ounces (280 grams) cucumber, peeled
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups clear stock or water
- 2 chicken breasts, 1 pound to 1 pound 2 ounces (450 to 500 grams) boned, but with skin left on
- 8 scallions, white parts only, cut into silken threads (see page 34)

For the dressing

- 4 teaspoons sesame paste
- 2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon rice or white wine vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- 4 teaspoons hot chili oil with flakes (see page 240)
- ½ teaspoon ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns (see page 17)
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 4 OR 5 as first course



Hot and Sour Soup

Pungent, peppery hot and slightly glutinous in consistency, this Szechwan and Peking peasant soup surprises the palate with its tastes and aftertastes. Now popular with Westerners, it originally called for a special ingredient: fresh chicken's or duck's blood. I must confess, however, that I am quite happy to do without it. Indeed, in restaurants outside China this soup is invariably made without blood.

1 Slice the pork into matchstick-sized strips. Put in a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, soy sauce, pepper and wine or sherry to the pork. Sprinkle with the potato flour and stir in the water to coat the meat. Let marinate for 15 to 30 minutes or longer. Blend in the sesame oil.

3 Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms, cloud ears and golden needles but leave damp. Slice the mushrooms into the thinnest possible slivers. Break up or cut the cloud ears into similar-sized pieces. Cut the golden needles into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections.

4 Slice the bean curd cakes into ¼-inch (5-millimeter) thick pieces and then carefully slice again into strips 1 by ¼ inch (2.5 centimeter by 5 millimeters).

5 In a small bowl, dissolve the potato flour in the water.

6 In a large saucepan add the mushrooms, cloud ears and golden needles to the stock and season with the salt, sugar and soy sauces. Bring to a boil and add the pork, separating with a pair of chopsticks or a fork. Then add the bean curd, and as soon as the soup returns to a boil, slowly stir in the well-stirred dissolved potato flour. Slowly bring to a boil again.

7 Slowly pour in the beaten egg through the gap of a pair of chopsticks or along the back of a fork, moving the chopsticks or fork in a circular motion at the same time. Remove from the heat and cover for 45 seconds, to allow the egg to set in tender flakes.

8 Add the coriander and stir to mix.

9 Stir in the vinegar and then the black pepper for seasoning.

INGREDIENTS

4 ounces (115 grams) lean pork
 6 dried Chinese mushrooms,
 reconstituted (see page 33)
 ½ ounce (15 grams) cloud ears,
 reconstituted (see page 33)
 1 ounce (25 grams) golden needles,
 reconstituted (see page 33)
 2 cakes bean curd, drained
 2 tablespoons potato flour
 4 tablespoons water
 5 cups prime or clear stock
 (see page 242)
 1½ teaspoons salt
 ¾ teaspoon sugar
 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
 2 eggs, lightly beaten with
 2 teaspoons oil and pinch salt
 1 or 2 ounces (25 or 55 grams) fresh
 coriander leaves, torn into pieces
 3 or 4 tablespoons rice or
 white wine vinegar
 1 to 1½ teaspoons ground
 black pepper
 dashes of sesame oil (optional)

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
 3 turns black pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or
 medium-dry sherry
 1 teaspoon potato flour
 1 or 2 tablespoons water
 1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 6 TO 8



10 Serve piping hot. Stir in dashes of sesame oil, if desired, just before serving. Put extra vinegar and black pepper on the table for those who like it really hot and pungent.

Note: Leftover soup can be reheated, but a little more vinegar and pepper may have to be added to renew the sharp taste.

Fish Fragrant Shredded Pork

Another Szechwan dish, which uses the special fish fragrant sauce (see page 150).

1 Slice the pork into threadlike strips about 2 to 2½ inches (5 to 6 centimeters) long and ⅛ inch (about 1 millimeter) thick. Put in a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, potato flour and water to the meat. Stir to coat. Let marinate for 20 to 30 minutes. Blend in the oils.

3 Cut the drained cloud ears, water chestnuts and bamboo shoots into narrow strips.

4 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the dissolved potato flour, soy sauce and sugar. When ready to cook, add the green scallions.

5 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, which will sizzle and take on color instantly. Add the ginger and white scallions; stir a few times. Stir in the chili paste and then add the pork, cloud ears, water chestnuts and bamboo shoots. Sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, flip and toss for 1 minute, separating the pork strips. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, stirring as it sizzles. Continue to stir for about 1½ to 2 minutes, or until the pork, having turned white, is cooked. Add the well-stirred sauce, stirring as it thickens.

6 Remove from the heat, add the vinegar and blend well. Put on a warm plate and serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound (450 grams) lean loin pork or fresh ham
- ½ ounce (15 grams) cloud ears, reconstituted (see page 33)
- 6 water chestnuts, peeled fresh or drained canned
- 2 or 3 ounces (55 or 85 grams) canned bamboo shoots
- 4 or 5 scallions, cut into small rounds, white and green parts separated
- 5 or 6 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 5 or 6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- ¼ inch (5 millimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
- 1 or 2 tablespoons Szechwan chili paste (see page 240)
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 or 3 teaspoons rice or white wine vinegar

For the marinade

- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon potato flour
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 teaspoon peanut or corn oil
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil

For the sauce

- ¾ teaspoon potato flour dissolved in 4 tablespoons clear stock or water
- 1½ teaspoons thin soy sauce
- 1½ teaspoons sugar

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



Dry-fried Four-season Beans

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons dried shrimp, rinsed
 1 ounce (25 grams) Szechwan preserved vegetable, rinsed
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 1 to 1¼ pounds (450 to 560 grams) green beans, topped and tailed
 3 or 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 ½ inch (1 centimeter) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
 2 teaspoons sugar
 2 tablespoons shrimp water
 2 teaspoons rice or white wine vinegar
 1 teaspoon sesame oil
 2 scallions, cut into small rounds

SERVES 4 TO 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

A typical Szechwan dish in that it contains a variety of tastes to surprise the palate. Traditionally stir-fried, first, the beans here are deep-fried for speed.

- 1** Soak the shrimp for 15 minutes in just enough boiling water to cover them. Drain them, reserving the soaking liquid. Chop into the size of matchstick heads (see page 37).
- 2** Chop the preserved vegetable by hand (it does not work with a food processor) into pieces the same size as the shrimp.
- 3** Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 375°F (190°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 50 seconds. Add the beans and deep-fry for about 4 or 5 minutes, or until they wrinkle. Remove with a large hand strainer and drain on paper towels. Pour all but 2 or 3 tablespoons of oil into a container and save it for future use.
- 4** Reheat the oil until smoke rises. Add the garlic, let it sizzle, then add the ginger and stir a couple of times. Add the shrimp and stir continuously. As the aroma rises, add the preserved vegetable and continue to stir, lowering the heat if they jump about too much.
- 5** Add the salt, soy sauce, sugar and shrimp water. Return the beans to the wok. Turn up the heat again and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss the beans until the water has been absorbed.
- 6** Sprinkle in the vinegar and sesame oil. Add the scallions and transfer to a warm serving plate.

Note: Since the taste of this dish actually improves if left standing, it can be cooked several hours or even a day in advance and then heated up just before serving. If there is any left over, the beans are also delicious eaten cold.



Bun Accompaniments

So called because they resemble lotus leaves and silver threads, these buns are the standard accompaniment to the Szechwan Fragrant and crispy duck.

Lotus Leaf Buns

- 1 Put the dried yeast and sugar in a small bowl, add the water and stir. Leave in a warm place until the yeast froths on the surface.
- 2 Sift the flour into a mixing bowl. Rub in the lard. Stir in the yeast liquid and work it into a dough. Knead lightly for 1 or 2 minutes, until the dough is smooth. Either cover the dough with a damp cloth or cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let stand in a warm place for at least 1 hour, so that the dough will rise to more than double in size.
- 3 Knead the risen dough on a lightly floured board for a few seconds, until smooth. Divide into 2 equal portions.
- 4 With both hands, roll each portion into a cylindrical roll 12 inches (30 centimeters) long. Using a ruler as a guide, divide into 12 equal pieces.
- 5 One by one, stand each piece upright on the heel of your hand: slightly round off the dough with the other hand, then flatten it.
- 6 Using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll each into a circle 2 inches (5 centimeters) in diameter, making the edges slightly thinner than the center.
- 7 With one finger, smear a little oil on half of the surface of each circle. Fold the other half over to form a semicircle (a).

INGREDIENTS

- ½ teaspoon dried yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¾ cup tepid water
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons lard
- little extra flour
- 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

MAKES 24 BUNS





- 8** Using an unserrated table knife, make a crisscross pattern on each semicircle (b). Then, using the blunt side of the knife, make 2 indentations, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1 centimeter) deep, along the edge (c).
- 9** Space the buns out in one layer on a very wet cloth on a steaming rack. Steam in a wok or steamer over high heat for about 12 minutes (see page 43). Remove from the heat.
- 10** Transfer the buns to a wire rack for a few seconds, then put on a warm plate and serve.

Silver Thread Buns

INGREDIENTS

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon dried yeast
2 teaspoons sugar
1 cup tepid water
 $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
 $3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces (100 grams) lard
little extra flour
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons sugar

MAKES ABOUT 18 TO 20 BUNS

- 1** Put the dried yeast and sugar in a small bowl, add the water and stir. Leave in a warm place until the yeast froths on the surface.
- 2** Sift the flour into a mixing bowl. Rub in 1 tablespoon of the lard with the fingertips. Stir in the yeast liquid and work it into a dough. Knead lightly for 1 or 2 minutes, until the dough is smooth. Either cover the dough with a damp cloth or cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let stand in a warm place for at least 1 hour, so that the dough will rise to more than double in size.
- 3** Cream the remaining lard and sugar until well blended.
- 4** Knead the risen dough on a lightly floured board for a few seconds, until smooth.
- 5** Roll out the dough with a lightly floured rolling pin into a thin circular or oblong sheet about 20 inches (50 centimeters) across. Spread evenly with the sugar-and-lard mixture, using a broad knife. Fold the sheet over and over at 3-inch (7.5-centimeter) intervals. Slice crosswise into thin "silver" threads about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 millimeters) wide (a).
- 6** Group 7 or 8 strings of silver threads together and, using both hands, pull them slowly across into a rope 12 inches (30 centimeters) long (b).



7 Lay the rope on the floured board, turn one end away from you (c), and roll toward the other end to make a spiral tower, the base being about 2 inches (5 centimeters) in diameter. Repeat until all are done.

8 Space them out in one layer on a very wet cloth on a steaming rack (d). Steam in a wok or steamer over high heat for 15 minutes (see page 43). Transfer the buns to a wire rack for a few seconds, then put on a warm plate and serve.

2

A Southern or Cantonese Menu

Cantonese and Fukienese cuisines, the two distinctive representatives of the Southern region, specialize in seafood. Hence this predominantly seafood menu for eight. However, for those less fond of seafood there are more than enough classic meat and poultry dishes from the south from which to choose.

6



5



4





Key

- 1 Asparagus with crabmeat**
Sweet-tasting combination of firm asparagus and tender crabmeat (see page 226).
- 2 Red bean fool**
Purée of red beans and rice, traditionally served hot (see page 231).
- 3 Stir-fried fillet of beef with mango**
Colorful dish combining sweet and piquant tastes (see page 229).
- 4 Dry-fried prawns**
Prawns lightly fried in a tangy sauce of ginger, garlic, chili and soy sauce (see page 230).
- 5 Golden prawn balls**
Deep-fried balls of prawn meat and water chestnuts with a crunchy bread coating (see page 227).
- 6 Clear-steamed sea bass**
Simply steamed, then served with scallions, ginger, garlic and oil poured on top (see page 228).



Asparagus with Crabmeat

Crabmeat adds rather than detracts from the natural sweetness of asparagus, and the sight of the red-and-white meat on a bed of green makes this dish especially appealing.

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ pounds (675 grams) asparagus, cleaned and trimmed
- 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 4 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup prime stock (see page 242)
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- ¼ inch (5 millimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
- 2 or 3 scallions, white parts only, cut into small rounds
- 8 ounces (225 grams) cooked crabmeat

For the sauce

- ¾ teaspoon potato flour
- 5 tablespoons clear stock or water
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
- salt to taste

SERVES 6 with 3 or 4 other dishes

1 Cut the asparagus into sections, the tips about 2¼ inches (5.5 centimeters) long, the remainder about 1¼ inches (3 centimeters) long.

2 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the potato flour, stock or water, oyster sauce and salt.

3 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add 3 tablespoons of oil and swirl it around. Add the ginger and let it sizzle for a few seconds. Add the asparagus and turn and toss with the wok scoop or metal spatula. When hot, splash in ½ tablespoon of the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. When the sizzling dies down, reduce the heat, add the salt and stock. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer fast for 4 or 5 minutes if the asparagus is thin, 6 or 7 minutes if medium-sized, longer if extra thick. The asparagus should be tender but crisp. Remove and keep warm.

4 Wash and dry the wok. Reheat over high heat until smoke rises. Add the remaining oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, ginger and scallions, stir and let sizzle, releasing their aroma. Add the crabmeat and stir to mix. As soon as it is very hot, splash in the remaining wine or sherry. Pour in the well-stirred sauce and continue to stir as it thickens. Remove and spoon over the asparagus. Serve immediately.



Golden Prawn Balls

Crunchy to the bite, the prawn paste inside these deep-fried balls is firm but tender in texture. To achieve this, salt and egg white are essential ingredients.

- 1** The bread is best if left out for 2 or 3 hours. Dice into small cubes, about ¼ inch (5 millimeter) square.
- 2** Chop fine or mince the water chestnuts.
- 3** Chop fine or mince the fatback. Put into a large, deep bowl.
- 4** Shell and devein the prawns (see page 38).
- 5** Crush the prawns with the flat side of a cleaver and then chop about 100 times. Alternatively, coarsely mince. Transfer to the bowl with the pork.
- 6 Prepare the marinade:** Add the salt and sugar to the prawns. Sprinkle with the cornstarch and stir vigorously for 1 minute.
- 7** Stir in the water chestnuts.
- 8** Add the egg white and stir again vigorously for 1 or 2 more minutes. This gives the paste a firm, elastic texture.
- 9** Refrigerate for about 30 minutes. The paste can be prepared well ahead of time and left, covered, in the refrigerator until ready for use.
- 10** Spread the bread cubes on a clean pan.
- 11** Roll about 1 tablespoon of the paste between your palms into a ball. Then roll it on the bread cubes until more or less covered. Set aside. Repeat until the paste is used up.
- 12** Half fill a wok or a deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Add the balls, 8 or 10 at a time or as many as can float freely, and deep-fry for 2 or 3 minutes, or until the bread cubes are golden in color. The paste should be cooked by now. Remove with a hand strainer or perforated spoon and drain on paper towels. Transfer to a warm serving plate and serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

6 to 8 slices white bread, crusts removed
6 water chestnuts, fresh peeled or
canned, drained
2 ounces (55 grams) fatback
1 pound (450 grams) medium raw
prawns without heads about
12 ounces (350 grams), shelled
peanut or corn oil for deep-frying

For the marinade

1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 egg white, lightly beaten

SERVES 6 as a starter;

MAKES ABOUT 24 BALLS



Clear-steamed Sea Bass

The sea bass and the striped bass are arguably the most popular fish for Chinese living in Europe and America. Not surprisingly, they serve them steamed.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 sea bass, 1½ to 2½ pounds (675 grams to 1.15 kilograms), cleaned with head left on
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- ½ to ¾ inch (1 to 2 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and cut into silken threads (see page 35)
- 5 to 7 scallions cut into 2-inch (5-centimeter) sections and then silken threads (see page 34), green and white parts separated
- 4 or 5 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 2 or 3 tablespoons thin soy sauce

SERVES 2 as a main course;
4 to 6 with 2 or 3 other dishes

- 1** Pat the fish dry. Make 2 or 3 diagonal slashes on both sides of the fish. Lay it on a heatproof serving dish with slightly raised sides. If your wok or steamer is rather small, the fish can be halved.
- 2** Steam in a wok or steamer over high heat for about 8 minutes, until the fish is cooked and the flesh flakes easily (see page 43). Remove the cover, reduce the heat or turn it off. If too much water from the steam has collected on the dish, use paper towels to absorb some of it.
- 3** Sprinkle with the salt and sugar. Spread the ginger, then the green, and finally the white scallions on the fish.
- 4** Heat the oil in a small saucepan over high heat until smoke rises. Pour it, little by little, over the scallions and ginger. The sizzling oil partially cooks them, enhancing the flavor.
- 5** Remove the dish from the wok or steamer. Add the soy sauce and serve immediately.



Stir-fried Fillet of Beef with Mango

This sophisticated modern dish is especially popular in the South of China where mangoes are greatly enjoyed. The combination of the sharpness of the ginger, the natural sweetness of the mango and the savory sauce makes the beef an intriguing proposition to the palate.

1 Cut the fillet across the grain into chunky strips, about 2 inches (5 centimeters) long and ½ inch (1 centimeter) thick. Beat the beef strips with the broad side of a cleaver to loosen the fibers. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, sugar, soy sauces, wine or sherry and pepper to the beef. Sprinkle with the potato flour, add the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and stir vigorously to coat the pieces well. Let marinate in the refrigerator for 20 to 30 minutes.

3 Peel the mango, slice the flesh from the stone and then cut into strips.

4 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the potato flour, oyster sauce, soy sauce and water in a cup and put aside.

5 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Tip the beef into the oil and, using a long pair of chopsticks or a wooden spoon, stir gently to make sure that all the pieces “go through the oil” for about 30 seconds, to have their juices sealed in. Transfer them at once to a warm plate with a large hand strainer.

6 Empty all but 3 tablespoons of the oil into a container and reserve for other use.

7 Reheat the oil over high heat until smoke rises. Add the garlic, which will sizzle and take on color. Add the white scallions, stirring, and then add the ginger. Now return the beef to the wok and turn and toss with the wok scoop or metal spatula for about 30 seconds. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. If you like your beef underdone, remove once the sizzling has died down. If you prefer your beef well done, leave to cook a little longer, stirring until done. Keep warm.

8 Add up to 1 tablespoon of oil to the wok, swirl it around and add the mango. Cover and fry over a gentle heat for about 1 minute.

9 Add the well-stirred sauce to the wok. When it thickens and bubbles, add the green scallions. Attractively arrange the mango, green scallions and sauce with the beef. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 grams) beef fillet, trimmed
 1 large mango, not too ripe
 peanut or corn oil for deep-frying
 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections, white and green parts separated
 ¾ inch (2 centimeters) fresh ginger root, cut into silken threads (see page 35)
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the marinade

¼ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
 1 teaspoon thick soy sauce
 1 teaspoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 4 turns black pepper mill
 1½ teaspoons potato flour
 2 tablespoons water

For the sauce

½ teaspoon potato flour
 2 teaspoons oyster sauce
 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
 3 tablespoons water

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes



Dry-fried Prawns

This dish traditionally calls for large prawns, but I have adapted it to medium-sized ones.

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ pounds (675 grams) fresh or frozen medium raw prawns in the shell, without heads
- ¾ teaspoon sea salt
- peanut or corn oil
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
- ½ to ¾ inch (1 to 2 centimeters) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped fine
- 2 fresh green chillies, seeded and chopped
- 4 large scallions, cut into small rounds, white and green parts separated

For the sauce

- ½ teaspoon potato flour
- 2 tablespoons thin soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 tablespoon ketchup

SERVES 6 TO 8 with 3 or 4 other dishes

1 If frozen prawns are used, defrost thoroughly. Wash the shells well and remove the legs. Devein, if preferred, although there is no harm in not doing so (see page 99). Pat dry with paper towels. Put into a large bowl.

2 Sprinkle with the salt and mix well. Let stand for about 20 minutes.

3 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the potato flour, soy sauce, sugar, wine or sherry and ketchup.

4 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat to a temperature of 350°F (180°C), or until a cube of stale bread browns in 60 seconds. Tip in all the prawns, “to go through the oil” for about 30 seconds, moving them gently with either long bamboo chopsticks or a wooden spoon. Turn off the heat, remove immediately with a large hand strainer and drain on paper towels. The prawns, now pinkish, will be almost cooked.

5 Empty all but 2 or 3 tablespoons of oil into another container and keep for future use.

6 Reheat the oil in a wok until smoke rises. Add the garlic, stir a couple of times, then the ginger, stir, then the chili, stir, and then the white scallions and stir a few more times. Return the prawns to the wok and spread them out into a single layer, if possible. Lower the heat and sauté the prawns for about 30 seconds, letting them absorb the aroma of the garlic and ginger. Turn them over and sauté for another 30 seconds, taking care not to burn them.

7 Pour the well-stirred sauce over the prawns. As you do so, turn and toss the prawns with a wok scoop or metal spatula until most of the sauce has been absorbed. Add the green scallions, transfer to a warm serving platter and serve immediately.

8 To eat, pick up one prawn with a pair of chopsticks, bite into it and shell it with your front teeth while savoring the sauce on the shell. Neatly spit the shell onto a side plate and eat the prawn meat in the normal way. If you want an easier way of eating the prawns, I suggest you use your fingers.



Red Bean Fool

It is not the Chinese custom to serve a dessert after each meal; fruit is served instead. However, this inexpensive pudding is very popular with the Cantonese; it has a thickish consistency and is not overly sweet.

They serve it hot, without cream.

- 1** Soak the beans and rice for half a day or overnight in 5 cups of cold water. Do not drain. (This step may be omitted.)
- 2** Put the beans, rice and peel into a large saucepan, add the oil and the remaining cold water. If step 1 has been omitted, add all the cold water. Bring to a boil. (If boiling water is poured on the tangerine peel, it will taste bitter.) Lower the heat, cover and simmer for 2 hours, stirring occasionally and checking the water level. The volume should be reduced to 4 to 4½ cups for the right consistency—gluey—with water just covering the beans.
- 3** Add the sugar and simmer until completely dissolved. Remove and discard the tangerine peel. Leave uncovered to cool.
- 4** Liquidize the bean mixture. Chill the fool in the refrigerator. Serve, with cream, at the table.

Note: For those who like a more pronounced flavor of the tangerine peel, it can be liquidized with the cooked red beans. Also try the fool served hot with cream.

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces (225 grams) red beans (azuki beans), washed and drained
4 teaspoons glutinous rice, washed and drained
6 cups cold water
1 piece dried tangerine peel, washed
3 teaspoons peanut or corn oil
1 cup sugar
heavy cream to serve (optional)

SERVES 6

A Mixed Regional Menu

In planning your own menus, I urge you to mix the different regional dishes so that you can get the full benefit of the various tastes and flavors from the four corners of China. This menu for eight should be but a starting point for you.

1



6



5





Key

1 Lion's head

Tender pork meatballs offset by crisp cabbage and water chestnuts (see page 236).

2 Eight-treasure rice pudding

Decorative dessert combining boiled rice and dried fruits served with a sweet syrup (see pages 238–9).

3 Yu-ling's hot and numbing chicken

An intriguing dish, deriving its heat from chilies and Szechwan peppercorns (see page 234).

4 Dried oysters and hair seaweed

An unusual New Year dish combining stir-fried pork, oysters and mushrooms with seaweed (see pages 237–8).

5 Paper-thin lamb with scallions

Tender pieces of lamb stir-fried with plenty of scallions rightly make this one of Peking's most famous dishes (see page 235).

6 Plain boiled vegetables

Chinese flowering cabbage, briefly boiled and served with oyster sauce (see page 235).



Yu-ling's Hot and Numbing Chicken

INGREDIENTS

2 chicken breasts, about 1 pound 2 ounces to 1 pound 4 ounces (500 or 550 grams), skinned and boned
 peanut or corn oil
 1 teaspoon Szechwan peppercorns
 2 large cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
 4 thin slices fresh ginger
 1 large scallion, cut into 1½-inch (3.5-centimeter) sections
 2 or 3 fresh green chilies, each about 3 inches (7.5 centimeters) long, seeded and sliced diagonally into long strips
 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ¼ to ½ teaspoon sugar
 ½ teaspoon ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns
 ½ teaspoon cornstarch dissolved in 2 tablespoons water
 1 teaspoon sesame oil

For the marinade

½ teaspoon salt
 6 turns white pepper mill
 1 teaspoon cornstarch
 ½ egg white, lightly beaten

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

Chiang Yu-ling, my Mandarin teacher and friend, herself an excellent cook of Northern cuisine, has contributed much interest and information to this book. She has kindly given me this recipe.

1 Cut the chicken into large cubes. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the salt, pepper, cornstarch and egg white to the chicken. Stir in the same direction until well coated. Let marinate for 20 to 30 minutes.

3 Half fill a wok or deep fryer with oil. Heat until it is just hot (about 225°F [110°C]). Add the chicken to “go through the oil” for about 60 to 75 seconds, separating the pieces with a long pair of chopsticks. Remove with a large hand strainer or perforated spoon and keep nearby. The chicken, having turned whitish, will be almost cooked.

4 Empty all but 2 tablespoons of the oil into a container and save for other uses. Reheat the oil over medium heat. Add the Szechwan peppercorns and fry for about 1 minute, or until they have released their aroma and turned dark brown. Remove and discard.

5 Add the garlic, ginger and scallion and fry over high heat until the edges are brown and their aroma released. Remove and discard.

6 Lower the heat and add the chilies. Stir and turn for about 1 minute to release their peppery hot flavor, taking care not to burn them. Transfer to a small dish and keep nearby.

7 Turn up the heat. Return the chicken to the wok and stir and turn in rapid succession for about 30 seconds, or until hot. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, stirring continuously as it sizzles. Add the salt and sugar and sprinkle on the ground peppercorns. Trickle in the well-stirred, dissolved cornstarch and continue to stir as it thickens. Return the chilies to the wok and stir to mix for about another 10 seconds. Sprinkle on the sesame oil, then transfer to a warm serving plate. Serve immediately.



Paper-thin Lamb with Scallions

This is one of the famous Peking dishes. The scallions are an indispensable ingredient, because they add so much flavor to the lamb, not to mention increasing the overall fragrance of the dish.

1 Slice the lamb into paper-thin pieces (chilling the meat in the refrigerator beforehand for 1 or 2 hours to make slicing easier). Pat dry, if necessary. Put into a bowl.

2 Prepare the marinade: Add the soy sauce and wine or sherry to the lamb. Let marinate for 20 to 30 minutes.

3 Prepare the sauce: Mix together the salt, sugar, soy sauce, wine or sherry and oil in a small bowl and put aside.

4 Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic; let it sizzle and take on color. Put in the lamb and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for 20 to 30 seconds, or until partially cooked. Pour in the sauce, stirring to incorporate, and add the scallions. Flip and toss until the lamb is cooked and the mixture has absorbed most of the sauce. The dish should be slightly dry in appearance.

5 Remove to a warm serving plate and sprinkle with sesame oil to enhance the flavor. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces (350 grams) lamb loin, trimmed
3 or 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced thin
8 ounces (225 grams) scallions, sliced into long slivers
dashes of sesame oil to taste

For the marinade

2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry

For the sauce

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sugar
2 teaspoons thick soy sauce
2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
1 teaspoon sesame oil

SERVES 4 with 2 other dishes

Plain-boiled Vegetables

In the South, where green vegetables grow in abundance, boiling is as popular a method of cooking as stir-frying. Chinese flowering cabbage and broccoli are especially suitable.

1 Put 5 cups of water into a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the salt and $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of the oil.

2 Place the cabbage in the water and return to a boil. Boil for about 30 to 60 seconds. It should be tender but still have a bite. Drain well in a colander.

3 Transfer the cabbage to a warm serving plate. Pour the rest of the oil over it evenly and then the oyster or soy sauce. Serve hot.

INGREDIENTS

1 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
1 pound (450 grams) Chinese flower cabbage, trimmed
2 tablespoons oyster sauce or $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons soy sauce

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes



Lion's Head

This dish originated in Yangchow, in Kiangsu Province. It is so called because each pork meat cake is supposed to resemble a lion's head, and the cabbage its mane.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound (450 grams) Chinese celery cabbage
- 8 water chestnuts, fresh peeled or canned drained
- 1 pound (450 grams) pork, about 2 to 3 ounces (55 to 85 grams) of which is fat
- scant 3 tablespoons water
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons thick soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 cup clear stock
- 2 or 3 teaspoons potato flour

SERVES 6 with 3 other dishes

1 Cut each cabbage leaf crosswise into 2-inch (5-centimeter) pieces, separating the stalk from the leafy top pieces.

2 Chop the water chestnuts by hand or mince coarsely.

3 Chop the pork by hand or mince coarsely. Put into a large bowl. Stir in the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and continue to stir in the same direction for 1 or 2 minutes, or until smooth and almost gelatinous. Pick up the pork mixture and throw it back into the bowl about 20 to 30 times. This stirring and throwing action makes the pork light and tender, producing the desired effect when cooked.

4 Add the salt, soy sauce, wine or sherry and sugar and mix well. Stir in the water chestnuts. Divide the mixture into 4 equal portions, shaping them into thick round cakes—each a lion's head.

5 Mix the cornstarch and water into a thin paste in a slope-sided plate. Roll the lions' heads in the paste to coat all over.

6 Heat a wok over moderate heat. Add the oil and when smoke rises, put in the lions' heads to brown, 2 at a time, for about 2 minutes each side or until golden in color. Transfer to a plate, leaving the oil in the wok.

7 Add the stalk pieces of the cabbage and stir-fry for about 30 seconds, then add the leafy pieces and continue to stir-fry for another minute to cook partially and reduce their bulk.

8 Transfer half of this cabbage to line the bottom of a large flameproof or ovenproof casserole. Place the lions' heads on top, then cover them with the remaining cabbage, adding the oil from the wok as well. Add the stock.

9 To cook, either: bring the casserole to a boil on top of a stove. Lower the heat and simmer, covered, for 2 hours. This traditional way produces the best result. Or cook in a preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) for 20 minutes, reduce the heat to 325°F (160°C) and continue to cook for a further 2 hours.

10 To serve, arrange the cabbage underneath and around the meat cakes on a warm plate, to give the illusion of a lion's head and mane. Thicken the sauce with the potato flour mixed with a little water and pour over the meat.



Dried Oysters and Hair Seaweed

The Chinese are very fond of puns, and the Chinese language lends itself particularly to play on words, for it is very rich in tones. Mandarin, the official language, has four tones to each sound; Cantonese, the lingua franca in the South, has at least seven. This often allows two, or even three, meanings to a term, each with a slightly different pronunciation. This dish, beloved of the Cantonese, is a classic example of this point. Dried oyster and hair seaweed sounds similar to the Chinese New Year greeting: “Good deeds and prosperity” or “Good business and prosperity.” For this reason, Southern Chinese make sure they eat this dish during the first fortnight of the Chinese New Year, when much food and many different dishes are consumed.

- 1** Rinse the dried oysters thoroughly, rubbing gently with the fingers to get rid of any impurities. Put into a bowl and pour over them sufficient boiling water to just cover. Soak for about 3 or 4 hours or even overnight, until quite soft. Remove and discard the hard muscles. Reserve soaking liquid.
- 2** Soak the hair seaweed in plenty of cold or tepid water for about 10 minutes, so that it will become pliable. Then squeeze and rinse in many changes of water, picking it over, removing impurities and discarding the fine sand that settles at the bottom of the bowl.
- 3 Cure the hair seaweed:** Put the water, ginger slices, wine or sherry and oil in a wok and bring to a boil. Submerge the seaweed and boil for about 5 minutes. Drain through a fine sieve and discard the ginger.
- 4** Drain and squeeze out excess water from the mushrooms, but leave damp. Reserve the soaking liquid.
- 5** Cut the pork belly into rectangular pieces of more or less the same size as the dried oysters.
- 6** Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, stir, then the ginger, stir, and the white scallions and stir. Add the pork, oysters and mushrooms and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss gently for about 1 minute or until very hot. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok. When the sizzling dies down,

INGREDIENTS

- 24 dried oysters
- ½ ounce (15 grams) hair seaweed
- 16 medium dried Chinese mushrooms, reconstituted in 1½ cups boiling water (see page 33)
- 12 ounces (350 grams) roast pork belly (see page 146)
- 2 or 3 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic, peeled and cut diagonally into thin slices
- 4 to 6 thin slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- 6 scallions, white parts only, cut into 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) sections
- 1 tablespoon Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 cups liquid, made up of oyster water, mushroom water and clear stock
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 1 tablespoon thin soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons potato flour, dissolved in ½ cup water

For curing hair seaweed

- 2 cups water
- 2 thickish slices fresh ginger root, peeled
- 2 teaspoons Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 teaspoons peanut or corn oil

SERVES 8 with 4 or 5 other dishes



add the liquid, oyster sauce, soy sauce and sugar. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer fast, covered, for about 30 to 45 minutes.

7 Make a well in the middle of the wok contents, add the seaweed and continue to simmer fast for another 15 minutes. Add more liquid if necessary—at the end of the cooking time there should be about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup of liquid still unabsorbed.

8 Leaving the liquid in the wok, remove the pork, oysters and mushrooms and arrange them attractively on a warm serving plate or in a bowl. Place the whole bunch of seaweed on top in the center so that your family or guests recognize the symbolic greeting of prosperity immediately.

9 Return the liquid in the wok to simmering point. Mix in sufficient well-stirred dissolved potato flour to thicken the sauce enough to coat the back of a spoon. Pour over the ingredients and serve hot.

Eight-treasure Rice Pudding

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces (350 grams) white glutinous rice
 2 cups water
 6 dried Chinese red dates
 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 10 ounces (280 grams) canned red bean paste
 2 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lard
 3 tablespoons sugar
 1 glacé cherry
 18 small cubes candied orange peel
 18 golden raisins
 18 black raisins

For the syrup

Either:

3 tablespoons sugar
 1 cup water
 2 teaspoons cornstarch, dissolved
 in 2 tablespoons water

Or:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple syrup

SERVES 8

This Northern pudding is served anytime, but more especially during Chinese New Year. "Eight-treasure" is a reference to the eight treasures in Buddhism that guard and enrich one's life. For decorating the pudding, nuts or other dried fruits can be substituted.

1 Wash the glutinous rice 3 or 4 times, or until the water is no longer milky. Drain and put into a baking pan or a heatproof plate. Add the water. Steam in a wok or steamer for about 25 minutes (see page 43).

2 Meanwhile, soak the dates in hot water for 15 minutes, then slit open and remove the pits, leaving the dates whole.

3 Prepare the red bean paste: Add the flour to the bean paste and blend well. Heat a wok or frying pan over moderate heat, add the oil and then the bean paste. Cook for about 5 minutes, turning and stirring all the time to prevent it from sticking. This thickens it sufficiently to keep it from leaking through the rice during steaming. Remove and leave to cool.

4 Well grease a 4-cup glass heatproof bowl, with some of the lard.

5 Blend the remaining lard and the sugar into the cooked rice.



- 6** Form a decorative pattern in the bottom of the bowl with the dried fruits. Put the cherry in the center. Make a ring of 6 triangles around it with the orange peel. Make 6 lines, alternating golden and black raisins, to go up the sides of the bowl between the orange peel. Place 1 red date between the lines of raisins.
- 7** Gently but *firmly* press one fairly thick layer of rice on the bottom and sides of the bowl to cover the dried fruits without disturbing the pattern. Put the red bean paste in the center. Cover with the remaining rice, pressing down to make the surface flat and even. There should be about 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) between the rice level and the rim of the bowl, so that the rice does not overflow when steamed.
- 8** Put the bowl inside the wok or steamer and steam for about 1¼ hours. Check the water level periodically, adding more if necessary.
- 9** About 15 minutes before the rice pudding is ready, prepare the syrup. If the traditional syrup is used, put the sugar and water in a saucepan and slowly bring to a boil. When the sugar is completely dissolved, trickle in the dissolved cornstarch, stirring as the mixture thickens. Pour into a warm bowl. Alternatively, bring the maple syrup to a boil and pour into a warm bowl. This syrup complements the pudding well, in both flavor and color.
- 10** Remove the bowl from the wok or steamer and invert the pudding onto a warm plate, so that the decorative pattern is on top. The best way to do this is to put the bowl in the middle of a long towel. Cover the bowl with the plate. Pick up the towel, bowl and plate with both hands and turn upside down, then gently remove the bowl as the rice pudding slips onto the plate.
- 11** Pour the syrup over it and serve hot.



SPECIAL RECIPES

Szechwan Chili Paste

INGREDIENTS

dried red chilies
ground yellow bean sauce

- 1** Grind sufficient red chilies in a food processor or use a mortar and pestle.
- 2** In a bowl, mix the chilies and the yellow bean sauce, in the proportion of 1 tablespoon ground chili to 2 tablespoons ground yellow bean sauce. (Natives of Szechwan will no doubt find this proportion too mild, and people unused to spicy foods will find it almost too hot. Use your judgment to suit your own taste.) The chili paste will keep for months in a jar stored in a cool place.

Hot Chili Oil

This is sometimes sold in a bottle as Chili oil, but I prefer the taste of this homemade version.

INGREDIENTS

12 dried red chilies, each about 3 inches
(7.5 centimeters) long, or 24 small ones
1 cup peanut or corn oil

- 1** Slit open the dried chilies. Remove and discard the seeds. Chop into flakes and put into a glass jar.
- 2** Heat the oil in a saucepan until it smokes. Remove at once from the heat. Let cool for 3 or 4 minutes.
- 3** Pour into the jar. The chili flakes will rise to the surface but will sink to the bottom gradually. The oil becomes spicy hot almost immediately, but will become more so in a few days time. It keeps for months in a cool place.

Sweet Bean Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon water
- 9 tablespoons sugar
- 9 tablespoons ground yellow bean sauce
- 1 tablespoon peanut or corn oil

- 1** Put the water, sugar, yellow bean sauce and oil in a wok or saucepan. Heat over low heat for 3 or 4 minutes, or until the sugar has completely dissolved, stirring all the time to mix into a smooth sauce.
- 2** Let cool and serve at room temperature.

Flavor-potting

Flavor-potting is a cooking technique popular in every Chinese region whereby meat, poultry or offal is cooked and then steeped in a specially prepared sauce. The idea is that the flavor of the sauce will permeate the meat, and the sauce will in turn be enriched by the taste of the meat and its fat. The spices used in the sauce vary from area to area and from cook to cook, but the ones most frequently used are: star anise, Szechwan peppercorns, fennel seeds, cinnamon, ginger and liquorice. In China, flavor-potting spices are generally bought ready-made from an herbal pharmacy, and these mixtures, labeled "mixed spices," are now exported and sold in Chinese shops. In this recipe I have also added preserved tangerine peel.

The flavor-potting sauce, if properly kept and periodically reheated, should last indefinitely. Indeed, many families pride themselves on keeping the same sauce for months, if not years!

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SAUCE

- 4 ounces (115 grams) mixed flavor-potting spices or 12 whole star anise
- ½ ounce (15 grams) cinnamon
- 1 cardamom (*t'sao kuo*)
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 3 tablespoons fennel seeds
- 4 tablespoons Szechwan peppercorns
- ½ ounce (5 grams) licorice
- 1 ounce (25 grams) dried ginger root
- 10 to 11 cups water
- 2 ounces (55 grams) fresh ginger root, unpeeled and bruised
- 2 or 3 large pieces preserved tangerine peel
- 2 tablespoons sea salt
- 2 cups thick soy sauce
- ¼ cup thin soy sauce
- 5 ounces (140 grams) Demerara or granulated sugar
- 6 ounces (175 grams) Shaohsing wine or medium-dry sherry
- 2 tablespoons mei-kuei-lu wine or gin

- 1** Put the mixed spices in a bag made from 3 layers of cheesecloth or muslin and tie the opening with cotton or string. Put into a large, deep stockpot.
- 2** Add the water, fresh ginger and tangerine peel. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer for about 15 minutes, to release the aromatic flavors.
- 3** Add the sea salt, soy sauces, sugar and wine or sherry, continuing to simmer until the sugar has completely dissolved. Check the taste of the sauce: it should be quite salty, rich and aromatic. It is now ready for other ingredients to be cooked in it.

Stock

INGREDIENTS

PRIME STOCK

1½ pounds (675 grams) chicken thighs, drumsticks and necks

1½ pounds (675 grams) mostly lean pork, without rind

1½ pounds (675 grams) ham or mild gammon, without rind

MAKES 6 CUPS

CLEAR STOCK

leftover ingredients from prime stock
salt to taste

MAKES ABOUT 3½ CUPS

There are many ways of making stock, but the Chinese believe that the most balanced result comes from a long simmering of chicken, pork and ham. Abalone was traditionally included, but because it is now so expensive, most people are content to dispense with it. In the Chinese kitchen, a distinction is made between the first yield of this simmering, called "prime stock," and the second yield, called "clear or secondary stock."

A question often raised is whether or not you should use stock cubes. If you are desperate, by all means use them, but I suggest using them only in an emergency. Stock keeps well in the refrigerator for up to a week but will keep longer if brought to a boil every second day.

Prime Stock:

- 1 Put the chicken, pork and ham or gammon into a deep stockpot or saucepan and add 10 cups of water. Bring to a boil and skim off the scum that surfaces until the water is clear.
- 2 Partially cover with a lid. Lower the heat to maintain a fast simmer and cook for about 3 hours. The liquid, which should have reduced to about 6 cups, is the prime stock. Pour through a sieve into a storage container. Refrigerate.

Note: The meat in the stockpot is still tasty enough to serve as a meal if clear or secondary stock is not to be made. Dip the chicken or pork in thin soy sauce and eat the ham as it is.

Clear Stock:

- 1 Refill the stockpot or saucepan with 6 to 8 cups of water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to maintain a fast simmer and cook, partially covered, for 1½ to 2 hours, reducing the liquid to 3 to 4 cups. This is the clear or secondary stock.
- 2 Pour through a sieve into a storage container. Discard the meat. Season with salt to taste. Keep in the refrigerator.

Variation: Another way of making prime and clear stock is to use about 4½ pounds (2 kilograms) of pork or ham bones, spare ribs, chicken or duck carcass, giblets and stalks from dried Chinese mushrooms. Simmer them in about 14 cups of water, reducing the liquid to about 9 cups for prime stock. Add water again to make more or less the same amount for clear or secondary stock.



GLOSSARY

Vegetables

Bamboo shoots (*Dendrocalamus latiflorus*) The young shoots of several species of bamboo cultivated for consumption in China. Those available from November to January are called winter shoots and those available from January to April are called spring shoots. Fresh bamboo shoots are only occasionally available in the West; what are available, however, are canned bamboo shoots in chunks or in slices; they should be rinsed before use. If they are not all used at once, the remainder must be transferred to another container, covered with water and refrigerated. If the water is changed every other day, they keep well for 2 to 3 weeks.

Bean sprouts (*Phaseolus aureus*) Sprouts from small green mung beans, about 2 to 4 inches (7.5 to 10 centimeters) long. When choosing these sprouts, which are high in protein, look for those that are white and plump and avoid any that are limp and yellow. Although bean sprouts can be eaten raw in salads, the Chinese prefer to eat them slightly cooked but retaining their light and crisp qualities. Fresh bean sprouts can be kept refrigerated in a plastic bag for up to 3 days. Do not buy canned bean sprouts; they are just a soggy mass.

Chinese broccoli (*Brassica albobolabra*), Chinese kale, gai-iaan Chinese broccoli is distinguished by its oval-shaped leaves, which have a bluish green sheen, and the white flowers in the middle of the plant. The stalk is like that

of broccoli but the taste is more pronounced, reminiscent of asparagus. It keeps in the refrigerator for about 3 days.

Chinese cabbage (*Brassica chinensis*), Chinese white cabbage, bok-choy, bai-tsai Thick, white-skinned cabbage with tender dark green leaves. It is similar in appearance to Swiss chard, but it is sweeter and juicier.

Chinese celery cabbage (*Brassica pekinensis*), Tientsin cabbage, Peking cabbage, Chinese leaves, wong nga baak A tight head of cylindrical white stalks extending into yellowish-white crinkled leaves. This Northern Chinese vegetable is popular among most Chinese because of its sweet, mild flavor and its versatility: it can be stir-fried, braised and put into soups. In recent years, it has become popular in the West and is therefore available in supermarkets. Choose firm heads and see that the leaves are not shriveled. If refrigerated, it keeps for about 2 to 3 weeks.

Chinese chives (*Allium tuberosum*) Similar to chives in appearance, they are, however, darker green in color, more fibrous in texture, stronger in taste and have flat, not tubular, leaves. They are available only in Chinese supermarkets and keep well in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Chinese flowering cabbage (*Brassica parachinensis*), choi-sum This vegetable is distinguished by its yellow flowers and

long stems of about 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 centimeters). It has a subtle taste, and is a great favorite of the Southern Chinese, served either stir-fried or simply blanched; the stems need not be peeled. It keeps well in the refrigerator for about 3 days.

Ginkgo nuts (*Ginkgo biloba*), silver apricot The ginkgo tree was originally a sacred Chinese tree, but it now grows in Japan and other parts of the world. The nuts, pits of the ginkgo fruit, have to be cracked and peeled. Unfortunately, the flesh inside the beige shell seems to dry up easily, with the result that exported nuts are often rotten and hard inside. It is therefore advisable to use canned ginkgo nuts. Mild and tender, they are a favorite of vegetarians. Any leftover nuts should be transferred to a container, covered with water and put in the refrigerator.

Hair seaweed (*Borgia fuscopurpurea*), cow hair seaweed, fa-t'sai Black, hairlike moss, this product of the Hopeh and Shensi provinces is sold in a dried form and must be reconstituted by soaking. Totally tasteless alone, it absorbs other flavors and provides a slippery and bouncy texture. Stored in a covered container, it keeps indefinitely.

Mustard green (*Brassica juncea*), mustard cabbage, gai-choi There are many varieties of mustard green and some, with their bitter tangy taste, are more suitable for pickling than cooking.

A common variety, whose green stalks extend into single, large oval, ribbed leaves, has a distinctive taste when simply blanched or put into soup. It is only sold in Chinese supermarkets. Choose firm green plants and avoid those with limp yellow leaves. It keeps well for a few days in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Red-in-snow (*Brassica juncea* var. *multiceps*), pickled cabbage A red-rooted variety of mustard plant grown in Chekiang province which, being very resistant to cold, can be seen sprouting up through the spring snows, hence the name. This crisp green vegetable is cut and preserved in salt. Available in cans and soaked in brine, it is mostly used as an accompaniment to pork or in soup.

Sugar peas, snow peas, mange tout (*Pisum sativum*) Tender green peapods containing flat, barely formed peas. Valued for their crisp texture and sweet, subtle flavor, they are best stir-fried. When choosing, look for the flat, tender green ones. If refrigerated in a plastic bag, they will keep for more than 1 week.

Szechwan preserved vegetable (*Brassica juncea* var. *tsatsai*), cha-t'sai, ja-choi Made from the swollen nodules on the stems of a species of mustard plant grown in Szechwan province, which have been preserved in salt, pressed to squeeze out much of their liquid content and then pickled with a fine red chili powder. The chili has to be rinsed off before use. Spicy hot and salty, it gives both a crisp texture and a peppery flavor to other ingredients. Sold in cans, it keeps for a long time if stored in a covered jar.

Taro (*Colocasia antiquorum*) Root vegetable that, whether small, like potatoes, or long and fat like yams, has dark brown skin, often with earth-encrusted root hairs, and a gray or purple flesh. When choosing, press the skin to make sure that it is firm, rather than soft, rotten or dried up. When cooked, it is slimy. It is often cooked with duck or fatty pork. Taro keeps well in a cool place for more than a week.

Water chestnuts (*Eleocharis tuberosa*) Fresh water chestnuts are the walnut-sized bulbs of a sedge cultivated in swampy paddy fields or in muddy ponds. As a result,

their mahogany-colored skin is often encrusted with mud, but when washed and peeled, the flesh is white, very crisp and subtly sweet; they can be eaten raw. Canned water chestnuts, although less crisp and sweet, will provide a crunchy texture to vegetables and meat dishes. Press fresh water chestnuts to make sure they are not rotten or dried up. They can be kept in the refrigerator for up to a week. Canned ones last up to 1 week if covered with water.

Winter melon (*Benincasa hispida*) Wax gourd with a white pulp, it can weigh from a few pounds up to 100 pounds (45 kilograms); it is often cut up and sold by weight in wedges. When buying a wedge, make sure that the pulp has not dried up or turned yellow. The flesh, which when cooked is almost transparent, is often used in soup with pork, chicken or duck. A whole winter melon keeps for 2 to 3 months in a cool place; a wedge keeps for up to a week if refrigerated in a plastic bag.

Young corn (*Zea mays*) Tender, miniature corn on the cob, usually sold in cans. They are either put into vegetarian dishes or used as an ingredient with meat.

Herbs and Spices

Cassia (*Cinnamomum cassia*), Chinese cinnamon Dried bark of the cassia tree. It is used in the master sauce for flavor-potting and is one of the ingredients of five-spice powder. Cinnamon sticks can be used as an alternative.

Dried red chilies (*Capsicum frutescens*), chili peppers Crimson red, often simply called dried chilies, they are sold in two sizes: small, up to 1½ inches (3.5 centimeters) long and large, about 3

inches (7.5 centimeters) or longer. An indispensable ingredient in Szechwan/Hunan cuisine, they provide fiery spiciness. For the uninitiated, it is perhaps advisable to remove the seeds and the white internal walls, since they are the hottest part of a chili. They keep indefinitely in a covered container.

Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), Chinese parsley, cilantro Fresh, green herb with a long stalk branching into flat, serrated leaves; usually sold by the bunch.

Pungent, acidic and aromatic, it is used both as a garnish and as a seasoning, especially in Northern China. It will remain fresh for up to a week if refrigerated in an open plastic bag.

Five-spice powder Golden brown powder, consisting of five and sometimes six ground spices, with a licorice-like flavor. The four basic spices are: star anise, cassia or Chinese cinnamon, cloves and fennel seeds. The remainder are often

Szechwan peppercorns and sometimes ginger and cardamom. Five-spice powder is mostly used in marinades for meat, poultry or fish, but it must be used sparingly. It is sold in small packages and can be kept indefinitely in a covered jar.

Flavor-potting mixed spices Labeled Mixed Spices, these ready-mixed packages are sold in Chinese stores especially for use in flavor-potting. Each packet contains the most commonly used spices in flavor-potting: star anise, Szechwan peppercorns (fagara), cinnamon, ginger, fennel seeds, cloves, licorice and cardamom.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) The bulb of a perennial plant. Like ginger root and scallions, it is indispensable in Chinese cooking.

Ginger powder Dried ginger root ground into a powder. Used as a seasoning, it cannot be used as a substitute for fresh ginger root.

Ginger root, fresh (*Zingiber officinale*) The knobby, yellowish green root stalk of

the ginger plant. Spicy hot in taste, it is used to provide flavor and to counter rank odor, especially fishiness. Like garlic and scallions, it is an essential ingredient in Chinese cooking, dating back to the Han times. Choose firm ginger with smooth skin. It keeps well if refrigerated in a perforated plastic bag.

Ground roasted Szechwan peppercorns Szechwan peppercorns roasted in a dry wok and then ground up into a powder. Used to add aroma to other ingredients, they can be made at home.

Scallions (*Allium cepa*), spring onions A young onion with a long, white bulb topped with tubular green leaves. "White" refers to the firm, essentially white, section which makes up most of the onion; "green" refers to the leaves. The roots attached to the white end must be chopped off and discarded before use. Dating back to the Han times, scallions form one of the three basic condiments in Chinese cooking; the other two are

garlic and ginger. They keep fresh in the refrigerator for a few days.

Shallots (*Allium ascalonicum*) Small, firm onions with a milder flavor than Spanish onions.

Star anise (*Illicium verum*) Shaped like a star, with eight segments, and reddish brown in color, this hard spice is widely used in Chinese cooking to flavor meat and poultry; it has a distinctive liquorice taste and aroma. It keeps indefinitely in a covered jar.

Szechwan peppercorns (*Xanthoxylum piperitum*) Tiny, reddish-brown peppercorns which have a stronger aroma than black peppercorns and produce a numbing rather than a burning effect. Available both whole and seeded. The seeded variety has a better aroma and flavor.

White sesame seeds (*Sesamum indicum*) Tiny, flat seeds from the sesame plant; they keep for a long time in a covered container. (See also sesame oil and sesame paste.)

Cereals, Grains and Noodles

Buckwheat noodles Very thin, beige-colored noodle strips made of buckwheat flour and wheat flour with water. They are a great favorite of the Northern Chinese and are available as dry noodles in some Chinese and Japanese stores.

Cellophane noodles, transparent vermicelli, bean thread Made from ground mung beans, these noodles are usually sold in a bundle tied by a thin thread. Wiry and hard in their dry state, they have to be soaked in water and then drained before use. Not so much as a staple, they are eaten as a vegetable, which

absorbs tastes from other ingredients and provides a slippery texture. They keep indefinitely in a cool place.

Egg noodles, fresh or dry Made of wheat flour, egg and water, these are the most common all-purpose Chinese noodles. They are usually sold in two widths: thin thread-like and broad strip. Fresh, soft noodles are sold in plastic bags; dry noodles are sold in compressed rounds (often called noodle cakes) and are sometimes precooked by steaming. Fresh noodle cakes keep well in a sealed bag in the refrigerator for up to a week or they

can be frozen if each is wrapped individually. Dried noodles keep for months in a covered jar. Egg noodles, seldom made at home, are bought in Chinese grocery stores. Noodles from other countries can be used as a substitute; the only difference is that Chinese noodles are more elastic in texture.

Long-grain rice (*Oryza sativa, spp.*) The white grains of this versatile rice are husked and polished. It is known that the Chinese grew and ate this rice as early as the 12th century BC in the Chou dynasty, and indeed, it remains the staple food

for the Chinese today. Rice keeps for months in a covered container.

Rice noodles, rice sticks Wiry white noodles made from rice flour. Although slender too, they do not look translucent, like cellophane noodles. They are sold, dried, in tightly folded bundles and keep for months in a covered jar. Only a brief soaking and cooking time are required.

River rice noodles Made from rice ground with water, steamed in thin sheets, then rolled and cut up into strips about 1/2 inch (1 centimeter) wide, these are sold both dry and fresh. The dry noodles have to be boiled and drained before use. Despite the fact that the dry variety will last for months in a covered jar, the fresh ones are by far superior, especially for stir-frying. However, they must be used within 1 or 2 days after buying or they will lose their tender quality.

Spring roll wrappers Two types: Cantonese, which are smooth, like noodle dough, and Shanghai, which are transparent, like rice paper. Sold frozen, they are easily pulled apart when defrosted. The Shanghai type is used in this book.

Tientsin fen pi Dry, transparent, brittle round sheets, about 9 inches (23 centimeters) in diameter, made from ground mung beans. When soaked in boiling water, they have a slippery texture and are eaten as a cross between rice noodles and cellophane noodles. They keep for a long time in a cool place.

U-dong noodles Off-white noodle strips about 1/8 inch (2 millimeters) wide, made of wheat flour and water. These Japanese and Korean noodles are similar in texture to Northern Chinese noodles and are available as dry noodles in Oriental stores.

White glutinous rice (*Oryza sativa spp.*) More rounded in shape than long-grain rice, white glutinous rice is sticky when boiled. It is eaten by the Chinese both as a savory dish (see Stir-fried glutinous rice) and as a pudding (see Eight-treasure rice pudding); it is also used as a stuffing (see Duck stuffed with glutinous rice). It keeps for months in a covered container.

Wonton wrappers Made of the same dough as egg noodles (wheat flour, egg and water), and sold in 3-inch (7.5 centimeter) squares. They are not usually made at home but are bought fresh from Chinese stores. They can be frozen.

Yi noodles, yifu noodles Egg noodles woven into a round cake, already deep-fried when sold in Chinese stores. They keep well in a cool place for about 2 weeks. If left too long, they may become rancid.

Dried Products

Abalone (*Haliotis tuberculata*)

For most people, this shelled mollusk is available only in canned form, with its ivory-colored flesh already cooked. Even so, it is delicious eaten cold or hot, alone or with other ingredients. If eaten hot, it must be cooked very briefly; overcooking will make it rubbery. The juice in the can is valuable as a basis for sauces or soups.

Agar Processed gelatin extracted from dried seaweed, it is usually sold in bundles of long, narrow crinkly strips. Used as a thickener, it is extremely heat resistant and can only be dissolved slowly in boiling water. Store in a sealed plastic bag in a cool place, but *not* in the refrigerator.

Bird's nest Nests made by swallows of the genus *Collocalia*, which live on the cliffs of the Southeast Asian islands. What makes these nests unique is that the birds line them with a gelatinous mixture of predigested seaweed, which hardens to form a transparent layer. There are many grades of bird's nest, but since whole nests are extremely expensive and rarely available in the West, it is all right to use the broken ones. The whiter the color and the fewer specks of feathers there are, the better the quality of the nest. Sold in Chinese stores, they are usually preprocessed, so the cleaning job is not too laborious.

Chinese black mushrooms (*Lentinus edodes*) Edible tree fungi that add both flavor and texture to a dish. They vary in

quality, size and price. The best and most expensive are the floral mushrooms (*fa gu* in Cantonese, *hua ku* in Mandarin). These have floral patterns on the surface of the caps, which curl under. Second in quality are the mushrooms whose relatively thick caps also curl slightly inward along the edges. The lowest quality are the mushrooms that have thin flat caps. Usually available in Chinese stores are packages of mixed quality and sizes. They keep for a long time in a covered container.

Chinese sausages Wind-dried pork, or pork and duck-liver sausages, usually sold in pairs about 6 inches (15 centimeters) long. The pork sausages should look pinkish with white pork fat showing

through the casing; the liver sausages should look dark brown. Both types must be cooked before eating. In a covered jar, they will keep for months in the refrigerator.

Cloud ears (*Auricularia auricula*)

Edible tree fungi grown in large quantities in the western provinces of Szechwan, Hunan and Yunnan. Thin and brittle when dry, they expand to form thick brown clusters when soaked for about twenty minutes. More delicate and refined than wood ears, they are used in stir-fried dishes to absorb flavors from other seasonings and, above all, to provide a slimy but crunchy texture. They should be well rinsed to remove sand, and the hard knobs should be removed if necessary. Store in a covered container.

Cornstarch Fine, white starch extracted from corn, it is used to thicken sauces and marinades.

Creamed coconut Milky white in color and solid in form, like a bar of soap, concentrated coconut milk can be kept in the refrigerator for months.

Dried red dates (*Ziziphus jujuba*)

Dried red fruits of the jujube tree. They have a sweet, prunelike taste.

Edible jellyfish (*Rhopilema esculenta*)

Beige in color and rubbery, this jellyfish is sold in round sheets about 15 to 16 inches (38 to 40 centimeters) in diameter, dried, folded and packaged in a plastic bag with large grains of salt between the folds. The salt must be shaken off and the jellyfish soaked in water for 2 to 3 days before use. Jellyfish already cut up in strips is also available, but less economical to buy. Jellyfish keep indefinitely in a sealed bag.

Golden needles (*Hemerocallis fulva*), tiger-lily buds Dried buds of the tiger-lily flower, which grows in abundance in Northern China. Usually about 3 inches (7.5 centimeters) long, they are called golden needles because of their color and shape. They absorb the tastes of other ingredients that they are cooked with and also provide a subtle lightness of texture. They keep indefinitely if stored in a covered jar or in a sealed plastic bag.

Oysters (*Crassostrea gigas*) Brown, rectangular and quite firm to the touch, these oysters have been salted and dried in the sun. Considered an epicurean delicacy, they add a "smoky" taste to meat and bland ingredients. Because they are expensive, make sure that they are not moldy when you buy them. If refrigerated they keep for a long time.

Potato flour Flour ground from cooked potatoes. As a thickening agent, it is more gelatinous than cornstarch and gives a more subtle and glossy finish to a sauce. In thickening the same amount of liquid, use about two-thirds the amount of potato flour as you would cornstarch. Tapioca and arrowroot are also popular thickening agents.

Rock sugar, crystal sugar This crystallized, pale topaz-colored cane sugar comes in lumps and has a "pure" taste. Demerara sugar comes closest to it in taste but white granulated sugar can also be used as a substitute. It keeps indefinitely in a dry container.

Scallops (*Amusium pleuronectes*) Golden and round, the large ones weighing between 1/3 to 1/2 ounce (8 to 15 grams) each, these are white scallops that have been dried in the sun. Inherently sweet, they are used to add a sweet flavor to

other ingredients; they are also used as the main ingredient in sophisticated dishes such as Dried scallop soup (see page 67). They keep for a long time in a covered jar in a cool place.

Shark's fin The cured and sun-dried fin of one of several species of shark. Many countries in Asia, Europe and South America produce shark's fin, but the product from Manila, the "Manila yellow," is the best. Such fins are, however, extremely expensive and take about four days to prepare. The fin used in this book had already been processed, partially cooked and dried again, and it consisted of the cartilage with some "fin needles." Shark's fin has no taste, but when combined with other ingredients in a prime stock, it is without peer. The Chinese regard the highly nutritious shark's fin, whether in a soup or a red-braised dish, as the pinnacle of gastronomy. Store in a covered jar in a cool place.

Shrimp Small, shelled shrimp of various sizes, salted and dried in the sun. They are used as a seasoning for vegetables and meat and are very often used in stuffings. Choose those with a fresh, pinkish color. To store, put in a covered jar in a cool place.

Straw mushrooms (*Volvariella volvacea*), paddy-straw mushrooms Small mushrooms with cone-shaped black caps, cultivated on rice straw in paddy fields. The canned product, mostly from Taiwan, is popular but should be drained and rinsed before use. They add texture more than taste to other ingredients. (Dried straw mushrooms, with their stronger smell, are used to lend taste

to bland vegetables or in soups.) Store in the refrigerator.

Tangerine peel Dark brown, hard and brittle dried peel of tangerines, often used in combination with star anise and Szechwan peppercorns. Sold in packages, it keeps indefinitely in a cool place.

Water chestnut flour Flour with a grayish tinge, ground from water chestnuts, used as a thickener in certain savory and sweet dishes when a light and subtle effect is called for.

Wood ears (*Auricularia polytricha*) Like cloud ears, these edible fungi are

cultivated in large quantities in Western China. They are larger in size than cloud ears, coarser in texture, often black on the surface and white underneath, and need to be cooked for a longer period of time. They are used more in soups than in stir-fried dishes. Store in a covered container.

Beans and Bean Products

Bean curd "cheese," red fermented

Brick red in color, very strong and cheesy in taste, this type of bean curd is fermented with salt, red rice and rice wine. It is used for flavoring meat, poultry and vegetarian dishes and is usually stored in jars or earthenware pots in 1- to 2-inch (2.5- to 5-centimeter) square cakes. After a jar has been opened, the bean curd "cheese" keeps for months if refrigerated.

Bean curd "cheese," white

fermented Ivory in color, sold in 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) cakes, this fermented bean curd often has chili added to it. It is used to flavor certain vegetables, or is served as a side dish with rice or congee. It is sold in jars and keeps for months if refrigerated.

Bean curd, fresh White, custardlike product made from ground soybeans and used extensively in Chinese cooking—its role is equivalent to that of dairy products in Western cuisine. Bean curd is made from soybeans which have been finely ground with water, then strained through a cloth. The resulting "milk" is brought to a boil before gypsum is added to set it into a curd. The curd is then put into boxes and weights are applied to squeeze out the remaining whey. Because it is impractical to make at home, bean curd is usually sold in Chinese stores in cakes about 1 inch

(2.5 centimeters) thick and 2½ inches (6 centimeters) square. Bean curd keeps for up to 3 days in the refrigerator if the water in which it stands is changed every day.

Bean curd, puffed Fresh bean curd cubes, deep-fried until golden in color and airy inside. They keep well in the refrigerator for about a week.

Bean curd sheets Thin, dried bean curd sheets, about 6 by 18 inches (15 to 46 centimeters), sold with about one-third of their length folded in. To make them pliable, either soak them or spray them with water. Store them in a cool, dry place.

Black beans, fermented Whole soybeans preserved in salt and ginger. Although pungent in taste, when combined with garlic and cooked in oil they lend a delicious flavor to any other ingredients. Some black beans are canned in brine, but the dried ones are by far the best. They keep for months if stored in a cool, dry place.

Crushed (ground) yellow bean sauce

Nut brown purée of fermented yellow soybeans, wheat flour, salt and water. Usually sold in cans labeled "Crushed yellow bean sauce" or "Ground yellow bean sauce," this is a major seasoning in Chinese cooking of all regions.

Once opened, store in a covered jar in the refrigerator.

Red beans (*Phaseolus angularis*),

azuki beans Native to China, but now also grown in America and Europe, these small red beans are the seeds of the plant *vigna angularis*. In Chinese cuisine they are eaten mostly as a dessert.

Red bean paste Thick, reddish-brown paste made from puréed, sweetened red beans or azuki beans; a very popular filling for sweet dishes.

Soybean paste, hot Very hot and spicy paste of soybeans crushed with chili, sugar and salt; an indispensable ingredient for making the Szechwan twice-cooked pork (see p.127). Usually sold in jars, it keeps for a long time.

Sweet bean sauce Made of crushed yellow bean sauce sweetened with sugar. This is the traditional dipping sauce for the famous Peking duck, although the readily available hoisin sauce is more widely used in the West.

Szechwan chili paste, chili paste Hot paste of dried red chili peppers and ground yellow bean sauce. It forms the basis of the famous Szechwan fish fragrant sauce. When

topped with a little oil to prevent it from drying out and stored in a covered jar, it keeps for months in a cool place.

Yellow beans in salted sauce

Whole yellow soybeans fermented with salt, wheat flour and sugar. Although not as widely used as fermented black beans,

they too are used as a seasoning when cooking meat or vegetables. Sold in cans, they should be refrigerated in a covered jar once opened.

Sauces

Chili sauce This tangy, orange-red sauce is made of crushed fresh chili peppers, vinegar, salt and plums. It is used both as a spicy hot seasoning and as a dip for crisp food. Store in a cool place.

Fish sauce Golden brown, transparent sauce made from fish, salt and water. It adds more fragrance and taste to other ingredients or sauces than a sniff of it alone might suggest. Stored in a cool place, it keeps for a long, long time.

Hoisin sauce Reddish brown and thick, sweet yet slightly hot, this sauce is made from soybeans, wheat flour, salt, sugar, vinegar, garlic, chili and sesame oil. It is used as a dip as well as in cooking and marinating. It keeps in a covered jar for a long time and, if refrigerated, will keep indefinitely.

Oyster sauce Nut brown in color, this sauce is made from oyster juice, wheat flour, cornstarch and glutinous rice, salt and sugar. Not as strong as soy sauce, the sweet and “meaty” taste it lends to other

ingredients, whether as part of a sauce mixture or as a dip for meat, poultry and vegetables, makes it a special favorite with the Cantonese. Bottled oyster sauce can be kept in a cool place; canned oyster sauce, once opened, should be transferred to a covered jar or bottle.

Sesame sauce, sesame paste Thick, aromatic paste of pulverized sesame seeds. The paste has to be thoroughly incorporated with the oil covering it and then thinned with oil or water before use. Tahini paste should *not* be used as a substitute; rather, use peanut butter, which has a similar fragrance.

Shrimp paste, shrimp sauce Made from ground shrimp fermented in brine, this paste is available in two forms: a pinkish purée and a more solid, slightly saltier paté. The purée form is used in this book. Both kinds have to be diluted with water before being used, very often to enhance the taste of bland seafood, such as squid. Usually sold in a jar, it keeps almost indefinitely in a cool place.

Soy sauce Made from fermented soybeans with wheat or barley, salt, sugar and yeast, this sauce is one of the most ancient seasonings in Chinese cookery. It is at once the most basic and the most versatile condiment for all Chinese cuisines, whatever the regional differences. There are two main kinds of soy sauce: the thick, also called dark, and the thin, also called light. Both are used in general cooking, for marinating and as dips. Very often they are used together with salt. It is the mark of a good cook to know how much of each to use, thereby achieving the delicious end result.

Thick soy sauce is thicker in consistency than thin soy sauce, darker brown in color and sweeter in taste. Since it gives a reddish brown hue to food, it is the predominant sauce in red-braised dishes and in flavor-potting. Because of its sweetness, it is preferred by many as a dip at the table.

Thin soy sauce is thinner in consistency, lighter brown in color and saltier in taste.

Oils and Fats

Chicken fat Rendered by slowly frying the solid fat removed from near the tail and other parts of the chicken, it is used by the Chinese for stir-frying certain vegetables to enhance their flavor.

Corn oil Light, odorless, polyunsaturated oil processed from corn. Even though it lacks the special nutty flavor of peanut oil, it is a very satisfactory substitute because it is less expensive and more easily available.

Hot chili oil, chili pepper oil Easily made by steeping dried red chili flakes in hot oil (see p.240), this oil is used to add extra spiciness to food. It can be bought in bottles but the homemade product is generally superior.

Lard Fat rendered from pork, this used to be considered the aristocratic fat for cooking in China because of the flavor and richness it added to food. Even today cookbooks published in China call for the use of lard in stir-frying and deep-frying. However, lard is heavy and high in saturated fats, and most Chinese people do not use it for daily home cooking; they use peanut oil, corn oil or other vegetable oils instead. Lard keeps well in the refrigerator for several months.

Peanut oil, groundnut oil Before the introduction of peanuts or groundnuts to China from America in the 16th century, vegetable oils, in particular rapeseed oil, were commonly used for cooking. Since the intensive cultivation of peanuts in succeeding centuries, peanut oil, with its rich and nutty flavor, has become the most important cooking oil in China. Corn oil, which is much more easily available and less expensive in other parts of the world, can be used as a satisfactory substitute. (For deep-frying, however, other vegetable oils will do equally well.)

Sesame oil, sesame seed oil Thick, aromatic, and light brown in color, this oil is pressed from roasted white sesame seeds. As such, it is quite different from the cold-pressed Middle Eastern sesame oil, which should not be used as a substitute. Chinese sesame oil is not used for general cooking; rather, because of its heavenly aroma, it is used for marinating ingredients or for sprinkling on food just before it is served. It will keep indefinitely in a cool place.

Wines and Vinegars

Chinkingiang vinegar Thick, dark brown product of Chinkingiang in Chekiang province, this has a low vinegar content and a special fragrance and flavor. It is used in cooking or as a dip. It comes in bottles and keeps indefinitely in a cool place. If red wine vinegar is used as a substitute, either use less of it or add more sugar.

Kao-liang liqueur A clear spirit made from sorghum (*kao-liang* in Chinese) grown in Northeast China. This very strong liqueur, which the Chinese drink with food, is produced in the distillery founded in Harbin in 1930. Vodka can be used as a substitute.

Mei-kuei-lu wine Made from Kao-liang spirit and the petals of a special species of rose, this is a very strong liqueur with a unique aroma. It is used in the master sauce for flavor-potting, and is used to

add fragrance to marinades. Gin or vodka can be used as a substitute.

Moutai wine Production of this spirit began in 1704 in a small town called Moutai in Kweichow province, Western China. Made from wheat and sorghum, it is as much these ingredients as the local spring water that give this spirit its distinctive bouquet. It is drunk in small quantities with food.

Red vinegar Red in color, this vinegar is also low in vinegar content. It is usually used as a dip to go with fried noodles or Shark's fin soup because the Chinese believe that it makes these foods more easily digestible.

Rice vinegar Clear in color and used in cooking or pickling vegetables, this vinegar is neither as sharp nor as pungent as malt

vinegar; it keeps indefinitely. Use cider or white wine vinegar as a substitute.

Shaohsing wine Named after the town in the eastern province of Chekiang, this yellow wine, with its golden sheen, is one of the oldest wines ever produced in China. Fermented from glutinous rice with yeast, this wine owes its fame as much to these ingredients as to the water from the Chien Lake. Between 15 and 20 proof, there are numerous brands of Shaohsing wine, differing in age and quality, although the one most commonly available in Chinese stores abroad is labeled simply Shaohsing wine. The Chinese drink it warm, with food, because it tastes much better that way. It is also used in small quantities in marinades and in cooking, to enhance the flavor and the taste of the food. Medium-dry sherry can be used as a substitute.

Index

Page numbers in *italic* refer to the illustrations.

A

abalone, 22, 23, 246; 23
with Chinese mushrooms, 84; 85
agar, 21, 246; 21
almonds: almond bean curd, 188; 189
"seaweed," 204; 196
ants climbing a tree, 144
apples pulling golden threads, 190–2; 190–2
asparagus: beef in oyster sauce, 132
with crabmeat, 226; 224
azuki beans, *see* red beans

B

bamboo shoots, 15, 243; 15
braised, 153
cutting, 32
dried scallop soup, 59
dry-braised, and Chinese mushrooms, 151
Lohan's delight, 166
paper-wrapped chicken, 106; 107
red-braised gluten, 157
stuffed Chinese mushrooms, 154; 155
wonton wrapper crisps soup, 68; 69
bamboo steamers, 28, 30; 28
bananas pulling golden threads, 190–2; 191–2
bean curd:
almond, 188; 189
"cheese," 25, 248; 25
"cheese" sauce, 169
deep-fried bean curd in earthen pot, 162–3
deep-fried five-spice rolls, 56–7; 56
eight-treasure, 212; 207
fermented, 25, 248; 25
fresh, 24, 248; 24
pi pa bean curd, 158–9; 158
Pock-ma bean curd, 159
puffed, 24, 248; 24
puffs, 163
sheets, 24, 248; 24
in a simple sauce, 168
soup, 66
soup with fish stock, 83
bean-paste: deep-fried sauce with noodles, 186
red, in pancakes, 192–3; 193
bean products, 24, 248; 24–5
bean sprouts, 243; 13
double-faced brown noodles

with pork, 182–3
rainbow salad, 160; 161
stir-fried, 164
stir-fried, with shredded pork, 124; 125
bean thread, *see* cellophane noodles
beans, 24–5, 248; 24–5
see also individual types of beans
beef: braised with garlic, 128
Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
cutting, 36; 36–7
dry-fried, 134–5
fried rice, 174
green pepper beef in black bean sauce, 129
in oyster sauce, 132
with preserved tangerine peel, 142; 143
rustic steamed beef, 126
stir-fried Chinese broccoli with, 147
stir-fried fillet with mango, 229; 224
stir-fried, with pickled mustard green, 141
bird's nest, 22, 246; 22
soup, 71
black beans (fermented), 25, 248; 25
green pepper beef in black bean sauce, 129
steamed prawns in mixed bean sauce, 80; 81
steamed trout with, and garlic, 98
stir-fried clams in black bean sauce, 93
willow chicken in black bean sauce, 112; 113
boiled Northern dumplings, 176–7; 177
boiled rice, 170
braised bamboo shoots, 153
braised beef with garlic, 128
braised fish Hunan-Szechwan style, 86
broccoli, Chinese, 243
cutting, 32
duck stuffed with glutinous rice, 114–15
stir-fried Chinese broccoli with beef, 147
stir-fried, and Chinese mushroom, 165
buckwheat noodles, 19, 245; 19
buns: lotus leaf, 215, 221–2; 214, 221
silver thread, 215; 222–3, 214, 223

C

cabbage, 13, 243; 13
see also Chinese celery cabbage;
Chinese flowering cabbage;
Chinese white cabbage
cabbage, pickled, *see* red-in-snow
cabbage, greens, 197, 204; 196
Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
Cantonese roast pork, 138
Cantonese wonton soup, 70
caramel: apples or bananas pulling
golden threads, 190–2; 190–2
carrots, 33
cutting, 33
rainbow salad, 160; 161
special spring rolls, 54–5; 54
cashew nuts: chicken glazed in hoisin sauce, 111
cassia, 17, 244; 17
cauliflower, 32
celery, 32
celery cabbage, *see* Chinese celery cabbage
cellophane noodles, 19, 245; 19
ants climbing a tree, 144
Mongolian lamb fire pot, 76–7
cereals, 18, 245; 18–19
char-siu (Cantonese roast pork), 138
chestnuts: red-braised chicken with, 109
chestnuts, water, *see* water chestnuts
chicken: Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
chicken velvet, 71, 73
cutting, 37, 39; 37, 39
dragon flying and phoenix dancing, 105
glazed in hoisin sauce, 111
Kung Pao chicken, 102; 103
lettuce-wrapped chicken, 110–11
pang pang chicken, 217
paper-wrapped chicken, 106 107
red-braised, with chestnuts, 109
shark's fin soup, 72
shredded chicken with Tientsin fen pi, 44; 45
soy sauce chicken, 121
stir-fried, with sugar peas, 104
stock, 242
sweet-corn soup, 78
willow chicken in black bean sauce, 112; 113
winter melon and chicken velvet soup, 79
Yu-ling's hot and numbing chicken, 234
in Yunnan steam pot, 122; 123
chicken fat, 27
chicken livers, sautéed, 117
chili, 16, 244; 17
hot chili oil, 27, 240, 249; 27
Szechwan chili paste, 25, 240, 248; 25
Yu-ling's hot and numbing chicken, 107; 109
chili oil, *see* hot chili oil
chili paste, Szechwan, *see* Szechwan chili paste
chili sauce, 26

Chinese celery cabbage, 13, 243; 13
 boiled Northern dumplings, 176–7, 177
 Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
 in cream sauce, 197, 205; 197
 cutting, 32; 33
 Mongolian lamb fire pot, 76–7
 sautéed Northern dumplings, 177–8; 177
 stir-fried, with dried shrimp, 94; 95

Chinese chives, 13, 243; 13
 scrambled egg with, 108

Chinese flowering cabbage, 12, 243; 12
 plain boiled vegetables, 235

Chinese leaves, *see* Chinese celery cabbage

Chinese mushrooms, *see* mushrooms

Chinese parsley, 16, 244; 16

Chinese white cabbage, 13, 243; 13
 pickled cabbage Peking style, 197, 202; 197

Chinkiang vinegar, 27, 250; 27

chives, *see* Chinese chives

choi-sum, *see* Chinese flowering cabbage

chopsticks, 28, 42; 28, 42

cilantro, *see* coriander

cinnamon, 16, 244; 17

clams, stir-fried in black bean sauce, 93

clear-steamed sea bass, 225, 228; 225

cleavers, 30–1; 31

cloud ears (mushrooms), 20, 247; 20
 eight-treasure vegetarian assemblage, 148; 149
 Mu-shu pork, 140
 rustic steamed beef, 126

coconut, creamed, 21, 247; 21
 deep-fried milk, 60

coriander, 16, 244; 16

corn oil, 27, 249; 27

corn on the cob, 15, 244; 15
 eight-treasure vegetarian assemblage, 148; 149

cornstarch, 21, 247; 21

cow hair seaweed, *see* hair seaweed

crabmeat: asparagus with, 226
 deep-fried milk, 60
 dry-braised Yi noodles, 180; 181
 stuffed crab claws, 62; 63
 wonton wrapper crisps soup, 68; 69

cream sauce, 197, 205

crisp stir-fried shrimp, 47

crystal sugar pig's hock, 207, 211; 207

cucumber: edible jellyfish with, 48; 49
 pang pang chicken, 215, 217; 215
 rainbow salad, 160; 161
 shredded chicken with Tientsin fen pi, 44; 45

cutting: equipment, 30–1
 meat, 36–8; 36–8
 poultry, 39
 vegetables, 32–3; 32–3

D

dates, dried red, 21, 247; 21
 eight-treasure rice pudding, 238–9

deep-fried bean curd in earthen pot, 162–3

deep-fried bean-paste sauce with noodles, 186–7

deep-fried fish with sweet and sour sauce, 88–90; 89

deep-fried five-spice rolls, 56–7; 56, 195

deep-fried milk, 60

deep-fried phoenix-tail prawns, 58; 59

deep-fried wontons, 52–3; 52–3

deep-frying, 42; 42

desserts, 188–93; 189–193

double-faced brown noodles with pork, 182–3

dragon flying and phoenix dancing, 105

dried products, 20–3, 246–8; 20–3

dry-braised bamboo shoots and Chinese mushrooms, 151

dry-braised Yi noodles, 180; 181

dry-fried beef, 134–5

dry-fried four-season beans, 215, 220; 215

dry-fried prawns, 225, 230; 224

duck: chopped, 39; 39
 fragrant and crispy, 215, 216; 214
 Peking, 197, 198–9, 196
 smoked duck, Szechwan style, 116
 stuffed with glutinous rice, 114–15
 stuffed with myriad condiments, 118–20; 119
 wonton wrapper crisps soup, 68; 69

dumplings: boiled Northern dumplings, 176–7; 177
 sautéed Northern dumplings, 177–8; 177

E

egg noodles, 19, 245; 19
 Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
 double-faced brown noodles with pork, 182–3
 tossed noodles with ginger and scallions, 187

eggplant, fish fragrant, 150

eggs: eggdrop soup, 66
 Fu-yung slices, 207, 210; 206
 Mu-shu pork, 140
 scrambled egg with Chinese chives, 108
 Whampoa stir-fried egg, 120

eight-treasure bean curd, 207, 212; 207

eight-treasure rice pudding, 233, 238–9; 232

eight-treasure vegetarian assemblage, 148; 149

equipment, 28–31

F

fish: bean curd soup with fish stock, 83
 braised fish Hunan-Szechwan style, 86
 deep-fried fish with sweet and sour sauce, 88–90; 89
 fish in a wine sauce, 197, 203; 197
 sautéed mackerel, 87
 “smoked,” Shanghai style, 207, 209; 206
 steamed trout with black beans and garlic, 98
 stir-fried fish fillet, 82–3

fish fragrant eggplant, 150

fish fragrant shredded pork, 215, 219; 215

fish sauce, 26, 249, 26

five-spice powder, 17, 244; 17
 deep-fried, rolls, 56–7; 56

flavor-potting, 241

flavor-potting mixed spices, 245

floral mushrooms, 20

fragrant and crispy duck, 215, 216; 214

French beans: dry-fried four-season beans, 220; 215

fried rice, 172, 207, 213; 173; 206

Fu-yung egg slices, 207, 210; 206

G

garlic, 16, 245; 16
 braised beef with, 128
 cutting, 35
 steamed trout with black beans and, 98

ginger, 17, 245; 17
 cutting, 35
 ginger, ground, 245; 17
 lobster with, and scallions, 96–8; 97
 sautéed mackerel, 87
 shark's fin soup, 72–3
 soup with pork and wood ears, 64; 65
 tossed noodles with, and scallions, 187

ginkgo nuts, 15, 243; 15

eight-treasure vegetarian assemblage, 148; 149
 Lohan's delight, 166; 167

gluten, 156–7; 156
 Lohan's delight, 166; 167
 red-braised, 157

glutinous rice, *see* rice, glutinous

golden needles, 21, 247; 21
 Mu-shu pork, 140
 rustic steamed beef, 126

golden prawn balls, 225, 227; 225

grains, 18, 245–6; 18

green pepper beef in black bean sauce, 129

guoba (roasted rice), 90–1

H

hair seaweed, 15, 243; 15

dried oysters and, 233, 237; 232

Lohan's delight, 166; 167

halibut: bean curd soup with fish stock, 83

stir-fried fish fillet, 82–3

ham: chicken in Yunnan steam pot, 122; 123
stock, 242

Yangchow fried rice, 207, 213; 206

herbs, 16, 244–5; 16

hoisin sauce, 26, 249; 26

chicken glazed in, 111

honey: char-siu (Cantonese roast pork), 138

hors d'oeuvres, 44–63; 45, 49, 51, 52–3,
55, 56, 59, 63

hot and sour soup, 215, 218; 214

hot chili oil, 27, 240, 249; 27

J

jellyfish, edible, 22, 23, 247; 23

with cucumber, 48; 49

K

Kao-liang liqueur, 27, 250; 27

Kung Pao chicken, 102; 103

L

lamb: Mongolian fire pot, 76–7

paper-thin, with scallions, 233, 235; 233

lard, 27, 250; 27

lettuce-wrapped chicken, 110–11

lion's head, 233, 236; 232

liver (chicken), sautéed, 118; 119

lobster with ginger and scallions, 96–8; 97

Lohan's delight, 166; 167

long-grain rice, 18, 245–6; 18

lotus leaf buns, 221–2; 221

lychees: almond bean curd, 188; 189

M

mackerel, sautéed, 87

Mandarin pancakes, 197, 200–1; 197, 200–1

mango: stir-fried fillet of beef with, 225, 229; 224

meat, cutting, 36–9; 36–9

see also individual types of meat

Mei-kuei-lu wine, 27, 250; 27

melon, winter, *see* winter melon

milk, deep-fried, 60

mixed spices, 17; 17

flavor-potting, 241, 245

Mongolian lamb fire pot, 76–7

Moutai wine, 27, 250; 27

Mu-shu pork, 140

mung beans, *see* bean sprouts

mushrooms, 20, 246–7; 20

abalone with Chinese mushrooms, 84; 85

braised bamboo shoots, 153

chicken in Yunnan steam pot, 122; 123

cutting, 32; 32

dry-braised bamboo shoots with, 151

lettuce-wrapped chicken, 110–11

Lohan's delight, 166; 167

paper-wrapped chicken, 106; 107

rainbow salad, 160; 161

reconstituting, 33

red-braised gluten, 157

stir-fried broccoli and Chinese, 165

stuffed Chinese, 154; 155

see also straw mushrooms

mustard cabbage, *see* mustard green

mustard green, 12, 13, 244; 12, 13

pickled, 15; 15

stir-fried beef with pickled, 141

N

noodles, 18–19, 245–6; 19

deep-fried bean paste sauce with, 185; 181

Mongolian lamb fire pot, 76–7

see also buckwheat noodles; cellophane

noodles; egg noodles; rice noodles;

river rice noodles; Tientsin fen pi;

U-dong noodles; Yi noodles

O

oils, 27, 249–50; 27

hot chili oil, 27, 240, 249; 27

oyster sauce, 26, 249; 26

beef in, 132

stir-fried scallops in, 100–1

oysters, dried, 22–3; 229; 23

and hair seaweed, 233, 237; 232

P

pancakes: Mandarin, 197, 200–1; 197, 200–1

red bean paste, 192–3; 193

pang pang chicken, 215, 217; 215

paper-thin lamb with scallions, 233, 235; 233

paper-wrapped chicken, 106; 107

parsley, Chinese, 16, 244; 16

peanut oil, 27, 250; 27

peanuts: Kung Pao chicken, 102; 103

pearly pork balls, 136; 137

peas: bean curd soup, 66

Yangchow fried rice, 213

see also sugar peas

Peking cabbage, *see* Chinese celery cabbage

Peking duck, 197, 198–9; 196

peppercorns, Szechwan, 16–17, 245; 17

peppers: green pepper beef in black bean sauce, 129

sautéed stuffed peppers, 152

phoenix-tail prawns, deep-fried, 58; 59

pi pa bean curd, 158–9; 158

pickled cabbage, *see* red-in-snow

pickled cabbage Peking style, 197, 202; 197

pickled vegetables Cantonese style, 57

plain boiled vegetables, 233, 235; 233

plain fried rice, 172; 173

Pock-ma bean curd, 159

pork: ants climbing a tree, 144

boiled Northern dumplings, 176–7; 177

char-siu (Cantonese roast pork), 138

crystal sugar pig's hock, 207, 211; 207

cutting, 37

deep-fried bean-paste sauce with noodles, 186–7

deep-fried five-spice rolls, 56–7; 56

double-faced brown noodles with, 182–3

dried oysters and hair seaweed, 233,

237–8; 232

fish fragrant shredded pork, 215, 219; 215

ginger soup with, and wood ears, 64; 65

lion's head, 233, 236; 232

Mu-shu pork, 140

pearly pork balls, 136; 137

Pock-ma bean curd, 159

red-in-snow soup with, 207, 208; 207

roast pork belly, 146

sautéed Northern dumplings, 177–8; 177

sautéed stuffed peppers, 152

Singapore fried rice sticks, 184; 185

special spring rolls, 54–5; 55

spiced-salt spareribs, 46

stir-fried, with red-in-snow, 135

stir-fried, with Szechwan preserved vegetable, 139

stir-fried bean sprouts with shredded

pork, 124; 125

stir-fried glutinous rice, 171

stock, 242

stuffed Chinese mushrooms, 154; 155

sweet and sour pork, 130; 131

twice-cooked pork, 127
 white-cut pork, 133
 Yin-Yang rice, 175
 potato flour, 21, 247; 21
 prawns: Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
 deep-fried phoenix-tail prawns, 58; 59
 deep-fried wontons, 52–3; 52–3
 deveining, 38
 dragon flying and phoenix dancing, 105
 dry-fried, 225, 230; 224
 golden prawn balls, 225, 227; 225
 mincing, 38
 spiced-salt, 99
 steamed prawns in mixed bean sauce, 80; 81
 stir-fried, in tomato sauce, 101
 stuffed crab claws, 62; 63
 wrapped in rice paper, 61
 Yangchow fried rice, 207, 213; 206
see also shrimp

R

radishes, white, 32
 rainbow salad, 160; 161
 reconstituting, 33
 red bean paste, 25, 248; 25
 pancakes, 192–3; 193
 red beans (azuki beans), 25, 248; 25
 fool, 225, 231; 224
 red-braised chicken with chestnuts, 109
 red-braised gluten, 157
 red-braised ox tongue, 145
 red-in-snow, 15, 244; 15
 soup with pork, 207, 208; 206
 stir-fried pork with, 135
 red vinegar, 27, 250; 27
 rice, 18, 245–6; 18
 beef fried rice, 174
 boiled, 170
 plain fried rice, 172; 173
 sizzling rice with shrimp and tomato
 sauce, 90–1
 Yangchow fried rice, 207, 213; 206
 Yin-Yang rice, 175
 rice, glutinous, 18, 246; 18
 duck stuffed with, 114–15
 eight-treasure rice pudding, 233, 238–9; 232
 pearly pork balls, 136; 137
 red bean fool, 225, 231; 224
 stir-fried, 171
 rice noodles, 18, 246; 18
 rice paper, prawns wrapped in, 61

rice sticks, 246
 Singapore fried, 184; 185
 rice vinegar, 27, 250; 27
 river rice noodles, 246
 roast pork belly, 146
 rock sugar, 21, 247; 21
 crystal sugar pig's hock, 207, 211; 207
 roll cutting, 33, 33
 rustic steamed beef, 126

S

salt, spiced, 46
 sauces, 26; 26
 bean curd "cheese," 169
 black bean, 80, 112, 129, 93; 81, 113
 cream, 197, 205; 197
 flavor-potting, 241
 sweet and sour, 52–3, 88–90, 130; 52–3, 89
 sweet bean, 26, 240, 248; 26
 tomato, 90–1, 101
 sausages, dried, 22, 246–7; 22
 paper-wrapped chicken, 106; 107
 stir-fried glutinous rice, 171
 sautéed chicken livers, 117
 sautéed mackerel, 87
 sautéed Northern dumplings, 177–8; 177
 sautéed stuffed peppers, 152
 scallions, 16, 245; 16
 cakes, 178–9; 179
 cutting, 34; 34
 lobster with ginger and, 96–8; 97
 paper-thin lamb with, 233, 235; 233
 sautéed chicken livers, 117
 tossed noodles with ginger and, 187
 scallops (dried), 22–3, 247; 23
 soup, 67
 scallops (fresh): Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
 steamed, in the shell, 50; 51
 stir-fried, in oyster sauce, 100–1
 scrambled egg with Chinese chives, 108
 sea bass, clear-steamed, 225, 228; 225
 seafood, *see individual types of seafood and fish*
 "seaweed," 197, 204; 196
 sesame oil, 27, 250; 27
 sesame paste, 26, 249; 26
 sesame seeds, 17, 245, 249; 17
 shallots, 16, 245; 16
 Shaohsing wine, 27, 250; 27
 shark's fin, 22–3, 247; 23
 soup, 72–3
 shredded chicken with Tientsin fen pi, 44; 45

shrimp (dried), 22–3; 23
 stir-fried Chinese celery cabbage with, 94; 95
 shrimp (fresh): crisp stir-fried shrimp, 47
 Singapore fried rice sticks, 184; 185
 sizzling rice with tomato sauce and, 90–1
 special spring rolls, 54–5; 55
 see also prawns
 shrimp noodles, 19
 shrimp paste, 26, 249; 26
 stir-fried squid in, 92
 silver apricot, *see* ginkgo nuts
 silver thread buns, 215, 222–3; 214, 223
 Singapore fried rice sticks, 184; 185
 sizzling rice with shrimp and tomato sauce, 90–1
 smoked duck, Szechwan style, 116
 "smoked" fish Shanghai style, 207, 209; 206
 snow peas, *see* sugar peas
 sole: Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
 soup: bean curd, 66
 bean curd with fish stock, 83
 bird's nest, 71
 Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
 Cantonese wonton, 70–1
 dried scallop, 67
 egg drop, 66
 ginger, with pork and wood ears, 64; 65
 hot and sour, 215, 218; 214
 red-in-snow with pork, 207, 208; 207
 shark's fin, 72–3
 sweet-corn, 78
 winter melon and chicken velvet, 79
 wonton wrapper crisps, 68; 69
 soybean paste, 25, 248; 25
 soybeans, 24, 25, 26, 248, 249
 soy sauce, 26; 26
 soy sauce chicken, 121
 special spring rolls, 54–5; 55
 spiced-salt prawns, 99
 spiced-salt spareribs, 46
 spices, 16–17, 244–5; 16–17
 spinach: Cantonese fire pot, 74–6; 75
 stir-fried, in bean curd "cheese" sauce, 169
 spring greens, "seaweed," 197, 204; 196
 spring onions, *see* scallions
 spring roll wrappers, 18, 246; 18
 spring rolls, 54–5, 55
 squid: stir-fried in shrimp paste, 92
 star anise, 16, 17; 245; 17
 soy sauce chicken, 121
 steamed prawns in mixed bean sauce, 80; 81
 steamed scallops in the shell, 50; 51

steamed trout with black beans and garlic, 98
 steamers, *see* bamboo steamers
 steaming, 30, 43; 30, 43
 stir-fried bean sprouts, 164
 stir-fried bean sprouts with shredded pork, 124; 125
 stir-fried beef with pickled mustard green, 141
 stir-fried broccoli and Chinese mushrooms, 165
 stir-fried chicken with sugar peas, 104
 stir-fried Chinese broccoli with beef, 147
 stir-fried Chinese celery cabbage with dried shrimp, 94; 95
 stir-fried clams in black bean sauce, 93
 stir-fried fillet of beef with mango, 229
 stir-fried fish fillet, 82–3
 stir-fried glutinous rice, 171
 stir-fried pork with red-in-snow, 135
 stir-fried pork with Szechwan preserved vegetable, 139
 stir-fried prawns in tomato sauce, 101
 stir-fried scallops in oyster sauce, 100–1
 stir-fried spinach in bean curd “cheese” sauce, 169
 stir-fried squid in shrimp paste, 92
 stir-frying, 40–1; 40–2
 stock, 242
 straw mushrooms, 20, 247–8; 20
 eight-treasure vegetarian assemblage, 148; 149
 wonton wrapper crisps soup, 68; 69
 see also mushrooms
 stuffed Chinese mushrooms, 154; 155
 stuffed crab claws, 62; 63
 sugar, rock, 21, 247; 21
 sugar or snow peas, 13, 243; 13
 special spring rolls, 54–5; 55
 stir-fried chicken with, 98; 99
 stir-fried fish fillet, 82–3
 sweet and sour pork, 130; 131
 sweet and sour sauce, 88–90, 130
 sweet bean sauce, 26, 240, 248; 26
 sweet-corn soup, 78
 Szechwan chili paste, 25, 240, 248; 25

braised fish Hunan-Szechwan style, 86
 Szechwan peppercorns, 16–17, 245; 17
 Szechwan preserved vegetable, 15, 244; 15
 lettuce-wrapped chicken, 110–11
 stir-fried pork with, 139

T
 tangerine peel (dried), 21, 248; 21
 beef with preserved, 142; 143
 taro, 14, 244; 14
 techniques, 32–43; 32–43
 cutting meat, 36–9; 36–9
 cutting vegetables, 32–35; 32–35
 deep-frying, 42; 42
 deveining prawns, 33; 33
 reconstituting mushrooms, 38; 38
 steaming, 43; 43
 stir-frying, 40–2; 40–2
 Tientsin cabbage, *see* Chinese celery cabbage
 Tientsin fen pi (noodles), 19, 246; 19
 shredded chicken with, 50; 51
 tomato: sizzling rice with shrimp and tomato sauce, 90–1
 stir-fried prawns in tomato sauce, 101
 Yin-Yang rice, 175
 tongue: red-braised ox tongue, 145
 tossed noodles with ginger and scallions, 187
 transparent vermicelli, *see* cellophane noodles
 trout, steamed with black beans and garlic, 98
 twice-cooked pork, 127

U
 U-dong noodles, 19, 246; 19

V
 vegetables, 12–15, 243–4; 12–15
 cutting, 32–5; 32–5
 pickled vegetables Cantonese style, 57
 plain boiled, 233, 235; 233
 see also individual vegetables

vermicelli, transparent, *see* cellophane noodles
 vinegars, 27, 250; 27

W
 water chestnut flour, 21; 21
 water chestnuts, 14, 244; 14
 deep-fried five-spice rolls, 56–7; 56
 golden prawn balls, 225, 227; 225
 stuffed Chinese mushrooms, 154; 155
 Whampoa stir-fried egg, 120
 wheat gluten, 156–7; 156
 white-cut pork, 133
 willow chicken in black bean sauce, 112; 113
 wines, 27, 250; 27
 fish in a wine sauce, 197, 203; 197
 winter melon, 24, 244; 24
 and chicken velvet soup, 79
 woks, 28, 28–9
 deep-frying, 42; 43
 steaming, 43
 stir-frying, 40–2; 40–2
 wonton wrappers, 18, 246; 18
 Cantonese soup, 70–1
 deep-fried, 52–3; 52–3
 wonton wrapper crisps soup, 68; 69
 wood ears (mushrooms), 20, 248; 20
 ginger soup with pork and, 64; 65

Y
 Yangchow fried rice, 207, 213; 206
 yellow bean sauce, 25, 26, 248; 25, 26
 sweet bean sauce, 26, 240, 248; 26
 Szechwan chili paste, 25, 240, 248; 25
 yellow beans, 25, 248; 25
 crushed in a sauce, 25, 248; 25;
 steamed prawns in mixed bean sauce, 80; 81
 yellow beans in salted sauce, 25, 249; 25
 Yi noodles, 246; 19
 dry-braised, 180; 181
 Yin-Yang rice, 175

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their help on the 2006 edition of this book, Dorling Kindersley would like to thank the home economists Eliza Baird, Angela Boggiano and Linda Tubby; Helen Trent for her work on styling the new photography, Paul Banville for his illustration and Alamy and Dennis Cox for their kind permission to reproduce the image on page 8.

Dorling Kindersley would also like to thank those who worked on the original edition of this book: the editor Fiona MacIntyre, the art editor Sue Storey and the managing editor Amy Carroll. Thanks also go to Barbara Croxford for initial work on the recipes; Chiang Yu-ling and Charlene Stolper for assisting Yan-kit in photographic sessions; Chiang Hsueh-lien and Kuo Kang Chen for their art services; the stylist Penny Markham and Paul Williams for photography.

I would like to thank the following for encouraging and helping me embark on cookery professionally: Joanna Collingwood-Anstey, Felicity Bryan, Pamela Harlech, Nancy Royal, Alice Tessier and Caroline Waldegrave. Thanks are also due to those who have contributed ideas and materials, and to those with whom I have discussed various aspects of the book: Alan Davidson, Hilda Ho, Catherine Hwang, Kester Kong, May Kong, Charlene Stolper, So Yan-lap, Agnes Tang, Chef Lam Yi-ling and Chef Woo Kwun. I am especially grateful to Chiang Yu-ling for sharing with me her knowledge and skill on Peking and Szechwan cooking. Last, but not least, I wish to thank the editors, Barbara Crawford and Fiona MacIntyre, and the designer, Sue Storey, for their editorial and artistic effort in shaping the book.

Yan-kit So
1984

THE AUTHOR

Yan-kit So (1933–2001) was a well-known Chinese cookery expert who successfully demonstrated her special techniques and recipes at leading London Cookery schools, including Leith's School of Food and Wine. Born in Chungshan, China, raised and educated in Hong Kong, and later in London, Yan-kit spent some time in India and the USA, but for most of her life lived in London.

Yan-kit So is the author of numerous books and articles on Chinese cuisine and she contributed recipes and features on regional cooking to *Robert Carrier's Kitchen*. She held a PhD in history from the University of London and translated several Chinese short stories for publication by the Chinese University of Hong Kong.