

STEP-BY-STEP


Vegetarian Chinese Cooking

WENDY LEE



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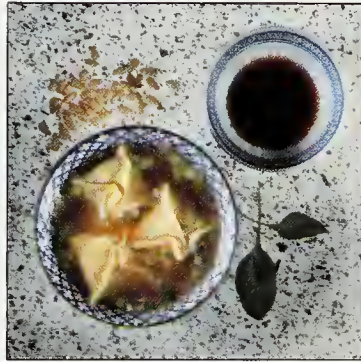


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SHOOTING STAR PRESS

This edition printed in 1995 for:
Shooting Star Press Inc
230 Fifth Avenue – Suite 1212
New York, NY 10001

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230 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1212, New York, NY 10001

ISBN 1-57335-002-8

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Produced by Haldane Mason, London

Printed in Italy

Acknowledgments:

Art Direction: Ron Samuels

Editor: Joanna Swinnerton

Series design: Pedro & Frances Pra-Lopez/Kingfisher Design

Page design: Somewhere Creative

Photography: Joff Lee

Styling: John Lee Studios

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Note:

Cup measurements in this book are for American cups. Tablespoons are assumed to be 15ml. Unless otherwise stated, milk is assumed to be full-fat, eggs are AA extra large and pepper is freshly ground black pepper.

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Appetizers



A selection of small portions of several different dishes usually starts the Chinese meal. The majority of these appetizers consist of tasty fillings enclosed in pastry-type wrappers which are fried until crisp. These are served with a simple dipping sauce of soy sauce, sherry and strips of scallion and chili.

Snacks and appetizers are also sold at many roadside stalls throughout China, and are bought and eaten by people as they go about their daily tasks. After dusk, the sidewalks are filled with groups of families and friends cooking, eating and selling many delicious meals; this is an important part of their social lives, and is an enjoyable way of getting together and sharing their food.

Use the dishes in this section as appetizers to the main meal, or as snacks in their own right.

*Opposite: Hong Kong harbour
shrouded in mist.*



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

CRISPY WONTONS WITH PIQUANT DIPPING SAUCE

Mushroom-filled crispy wontons are served on skewers with a dipping sauce flavored with chilies.

SERVES 4

8 wooden skewers
1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tbsp chopped onion
1 small garlic clove, chopped
½ tsp chopped gingerroot
½ cup flat mushrooms, chopped
16 wonton skins (see page 22)
vegetable oil for deep-frying
salt

SAUCE:

2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 scallions, thinly shredded
1 red and 1 green chili, deseeded and thinly shredded
3 tbsp light soy sauce
1 tbsp vinegar
1 tbsp dry sherry
pinch of sugar

1 Heat the oil in a wok or skillet. Add the onion, garlic and gingerroot, and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms, and fry for an additional 2 minutes. Season well with salt, and let cool.

2 Place 1 teaspoon of the cooled mushroom filling in the center of each wonton skin. Bring two opposite

corners together to cover the mixture, and pinch together to seal. Repeat with the remaining corners.

3 Thread 2 wontons onto each skewer. Heat enough oil in a large saucepan to deep-fry the wontons in batches until golden and crisp. Remove with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels.

4 To make the sauce, heat the oil in a small saucepan until quite hot, i.e. until a small cube of bread dropped in the oil browns in a few seconds. Put the scallions and chilies in a bowl, and pour the hot oil slowly on top. Then mix in the remaining ingredients, and serve with the crispy wontons.

HEATING THE OIL

Do not overheat the oil for deep-frying, or the wontons will brown on the outside before they are properly cooked inside.

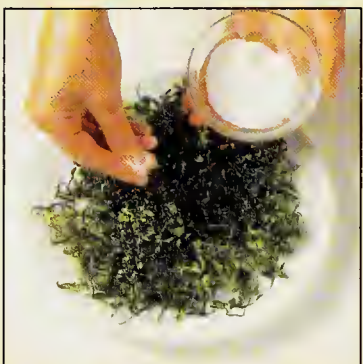




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CRISPY SEAWEED

Popular in many Chinese restaurants, this dish is served as an appetizer. This “seaweed” is in fact deep-fried spring greens.

SERVES 4

*8 ounces spring greens
vegetable oil for deep-frying
1½ tsp superfine sugar
1 tsp salt
¼ cup slivered almonds*

- 1** Wash the spring greens thoroughly. Trim off the excess tough stalks. Place on paper towels or a dry dish cloth and let drain thoroughly.
- 2** Using a sharp knife, shred the spring greens finely, and spread out on paper towels for about 30 minutes to dry.
- 3** Heat the oil in a wok or deep-fat kettle. Remove the pan from the heat, and add the spring greens in batches. Return the pan to the heat, and deep-fry until the greens begin to float to the surface and become translucent and crinkled. Remove the spring greens, using a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels. Keep each batch warm.
- 4** Mix the sugar and salt together, sprinkle over the “seaweed,” and toss together to mix well.

- 5** Add the slivered almonds to the hot oil, and fry until lightly golden. Remove with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels.
- 6** Serve the crispy “seaweed” with the slivered almonds.

TIME-SAVER

As a time-saver you can use a food processor to shred the greens finely.

Make sure you use only the best of the leaves; sort through the spring greens and discard any tough outer leaves, as these will spoil the taste and texture of the finished dish if they are included.





TOFU SANDWICHES

Slices of tofu are sandwiched together with a cucumber and cream cheese filling and coated in batter. Serve with a mint and yogurt dipping sauce.

MAKES 28

4 Chinese dried mushrooms (if unavailable, use thinly sliced open-cup mushrooms)

9 ounces tofu

½ English cucumber, grated

½-inch piece gingerroot, grated

¼ cup cream cheese

salt and pepper

BATTER:

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 egg, beaten

½ cup water

½ tsp salt

2 tbsp sesame seeds

vegetable oil for deep-frying

SAUCE:

⅔ cup natural yogurt

2 tsp honey

2 tbsp chopped fresh mint

1 Place the dried mushrooms in a small bowl, and cover with warm water. Let soak for 20–25 minutes. Drain and squeeze out the excess water. Remove the tough centers and chop the mushrooms.

2 Drain the tofu, and slice thinly. Then cut each slice to make 1-inch squares.

3 Squeeze the excess liquid from the cucumber, and mix the cucumber with the mushrooms, grated ginger and cream cheese. Season well. Use as a filling to sandwich slices of tofu together to make about 28 sandwiches.

4 To make the batter, sift the flour into a bowl. Beat in the egg, water and salt to make a thick batter. Stir in the sesame seeds. Heat the oil in a large saucepan or wok. Coat the sandwiches in the batter, and deep-fry in batches until golden. Remove with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels.

5 To make the dipping sauce, blend together the yogurt, honey and mint. Serve with the tofu sandwiches.

VARIATION

For a change you could try using smoked tofu, which will add extra flavor to the sandwiches.



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 4



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

SPRING ROLLS

Thin slices of vegetables are wrapped in pastry, and deep-fried until crisp. Spring roll wrappers are available fresh or frozen from oriental suppliers and some supermarkets.

MAKES 12

5 Chinese dried mushrooms (if unavailable, use open-cup mushrooms)
1 large carrot
1 cup canned bamboo shoots
2 scallions
 $\frac{1}{4}$ head Chinese leaves
2 tbsp vegetable oil
4 cups beansprouts
1 tbsp soy sauce
12 spring roll wrappers
1 egg, beaten
vegetable oil for deep-frying
salt

- 1 Place the dried mushrooms in a small bowl, and cover with warm water. Let soak for 20–25 minutes.
- 2 Drain the mushrooms, and squeeze out the excess water. Remove the tough centers, and slice the mushrooms thinly. Cut the carrot and bamboo shoots into very thin julienne strips. Chop the scallions, and shred the Chinese leaves.

- 3 Heat the 2 tablespoons of oil in a wok or skillet. Add the mushrooms, carrot and bamboo shoots, and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add the scallions, Chinese leaves, beansprouts and soy sauce.

Season with salt, and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Let cool.

- 4 Divide the mixture into 12 equal portions, and place one portion on the edge of each spring roll wrapper. Fold in the sides, and roll each one up, brushing the join with a little beaten egg to seal.

- 5 Deep-fry the spring rolls in batches in hot oil in a wok or large saucepan for 4–5 minutes, or until golden and crispy. Take care that the oil is not too hot, or the spring rolls will brown on the outside before cooking on the inside. Remove and drain on paper towels. Keep each batch warm while the others are being cooked. Serve at once.

SPRING ROLL WRAPPERS

If spring roll wrappers are unavailable, use sheets of filo pastry instead.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

SWEET & SOUR CUCUMBER

Chunks of cucumber are marinated in vinegar and sweetened with honey to make a sweet and sour appetizer.

SERVES 4

*1 English cucumber
1 tsp salt
2 tsp honey
2 tbsp rice vinegar
3 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
2 tsp sesame oil
1/4 tsp crushed red peppercorns
strips of red and yellow bell pepper to garnish*

1 Peel thin strips off the cucumber along the length. This gives a pretty striped effect. Cut the cucumber in quarters lengthways, and then into 1-inch long pieces. Place the pieces in a colander.

2 Sprinkle the salt over the cucumber pieces, and let rest for 30 minutes to allow the salt to draw out the excess water from the cucumber. Wash the cucumber thoroughly to remove the salt. Drain and pat dry with paper towels.

3 Place the cucumber in a bowl. Combine the honey with the vinegar, and pour over. Mix together, and let marinate for 15 minutes.

4 Stir in the cilantro and sesame oil, and place in a serving bowl.

5 Sprinkle over the crushed red peppercorns. Serve garnished with strips of red and yellow bell pepper.

RICE VINEGAR

Rice vinegar is a common Chinese cooking ingredient. White rice vinegar is made from rice wine, whereas red rice vinegar is made from fermented rice. Both have a distinctive flavor, but the white version tends to be used more often, as it will flavor but not color all kinds of food. If rice vinegar is unavailable, use white wine vinegar instead.





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Soups



In China soups are not usually served at the beginning of a meal, but between courses to clear the palate. It is also quite common for Chinese families to have a large tureen of clear soup on the table which is served at the same time as the other dishes. Chinese cooks will often add some boiling clear stock or water to leftovers from the main course, and serve it as an instant soup at the end of the meal.

Generally the soups are made from a good stock of vegetables, which are boiled for about 30 minutes before being strained, which gives a thin, clear broth. This can be served on its own, with a little soy sauce added for flavor. With the addition of a few suitable vegetables you can make a simple but tasty soup.

Most Chinese soups are of the thin, clear variety; however they do have a few thickened ones, such as the Hot & Sour Soup to which cornstarch is added. These soups can be eaten as a lunch or snack on their own.

Opposite: The familiar sight of a one-man "taxi" in the backstreets of Hong Kong.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

VEGETARIAN HOT & SOUR SOUP

This is a popular Chinese soup, which is unusual in that it is thickened. The characteristic “hot” flavor is achieved by the addition of plenty of black pepper.

SERVES 4

*4 Chinese dried mushrooms (if unavailable, use open-cup mushrooms)
4 ounces firm tofu
1 cup canned bamboo shoots
2½ cups vegetable stock or water
⅓ cup peas
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
2 tbsp cornstarch
salt and pepper
sesame oil to serve*

- 1** Place the Chinese dried mushrooms in a small bowl, and cover with warm water. Let soak for 20–25 minutes.
- 2** Drain the mushrooms, and squeeze out the excess water, reserving this. Remove the tough centers, and cut the mushrooms into thin shreds. Shred the tofu and bamboo shoots.
- 3** Bring the stock or water to a boil in a large saucepan. Add the mushrooms, tofu, bamboo shoots, and peas. Simmer for 2 minutes.
- 4** Mix together the soy sauce, vinegar, and cornstarch with 2

tablespoons of the reserved mushroom liquid. Stir into the soup with the remaining mushroom liquid. Bring to a boil, and season with salt and plenty of pepper. Simmer for 2 minutes.

- 5** Serve in warmed bowls with a few drops of sesame oil in each.

MUSHROOMS

If you use open-cup mushrooms instead of dried mushrooms, add an extra $\frac{2}{3}$ cup vegetable stock or water to the soup, as these mushrooms do not need soaking.





STEP 1



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STEP 4

WONTON SOUP

Spinach and pine nut filled wontons are served in a clear soup. The recipe for the wonton skins makes 24, but the soup requires only half this quantity. The other half can be frozen ready for another time.

SERVES 4

WONTON SKINS:

1 egg
6 tbsp water
2 cups all-purpose flour

FILLING:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen chopped spinach, defrosted
1 tbsp pine nuts, toasted and chopped
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup minced TVP
salt

SOUP:

$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups vegetable stock
1 tbsp dry sherry
1 tbsp light soy sauce
2 scallions, chopped

1 Beat the egg lightly in a bowl, and mix with the water. Stir in the flour to form a stiff dough. Knead lightly, then cover with a damp cloth, and let rest for 30 minutes.

2 Roll the dough out into a large sheet about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Cut out 24×3 -inch squares. Dust each one lightly with flour. Only 12 squares are required for the soup, so freeze the remainder.

3 To make the filling, squeeze out the excess water from the spinach. Mix the spinach with the pine nuts and TVP. Season with salt.

4 Divide the mixture into 12 equal portions, and place one portion in the center of each square. Seal by bringing the opposite corners of each square together, and squeezing well.

5 To make the soup, bring the stock, sherry and soy sauce to a boil, add the wontons, and boil rapidly for 2–3 minutes. Add the scallions, and serve in warmed bowls immediately.

FREEZING WONTON WRAPPERS

To freeze the leftover wonton skins, place small squares of baking parchment in between each skin, then place in a freezer bag and freeze. Defrost thoroughly before using.





CORN & LENTIL SOUP

This pale-colored soup is made with corn and green lentils, and is similar in style to the traditional crab and corn soup.

SERVES 4

2 *tbsp green lentils*
 4 *cups vegetable stock*
 1/2-inch *piece gingerroot, finely chopped*
 2 *tsp soy sauce*
 1 *tsp sugar*
 1 *tbsp cornstarch*
 3 *tbsp dry sherry*
 1 1-ounce *can of corn*
 1 *egg white*
 1 *tsp sesame oil*
 salt and pepper

TO GARNISH:
 strips of *scallion*
 strips of *red chili*

1 Wash the lentils in a strainer. Place them in a saucepan with the stock, gingerroot, soy sauce and sugar. Bring to a boil, and boil rapidly, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Skim off any froth on the surface. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

2 Mix the cornstarch with the sherry in a small bowl. Add the corn with the liquid from the can and cornstarch mix to the saucepan. Simmer for 2 minutes.

3 Whisk the egg white lightly with the sesame oil. Pour the egg mixture into the soup in a thin stream. Remove from the heat, and stir. The egg white will form white strands.

4 Season to taste. Pour into 4 warmed soup bowls, and garnish with strips of scallion and chili before serving.

USING CANNED LENTILS

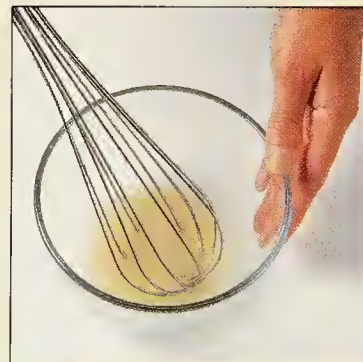
As a time-saver use a 14-ounce can of green lentils instead of dried ones. Place the lentils and corn together in a large saucepan with the stock and flavorings. Bring to a boil, and simmer for 2 minutes; then continue the recipe from step 2 as above. There is no need to boil canned lentils rapidly for 10 minutes.



STEP 1



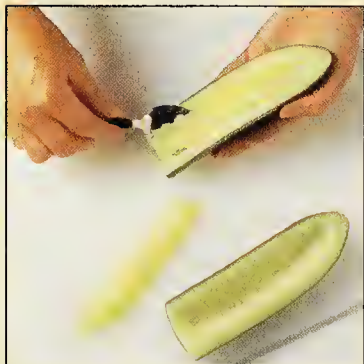
STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 3



STEP 1



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

MUSHROOM & CUCUMBER NOODLE SOUP

A light, refreshing clear soup of mushrooms, cucumber and small pieces of rice noodles, flavored with soy sauce and a touch of garlic.

SERVES 4

4 ounces flat or open-cup mushrooms
½ English cucumber
2 scallions
1 garlic clove
2 tbsp vegetable oil
¼ cup Chinese rice noodles
¾ tsp salt
1 tbsp soy sauce

1 Wash the mushrooms, and slice thinly. Do not remove the peel as this adds more flavor. Halve the cucumber lengthways. Scoop out the seeds, using a teaspoon, and slice the cucumber thinly.

2 Chop the scallions finely, and cut the garlic clove into thin strips.

3 Heat the oil in a large saucepan or wok. Add the chopped scallions and garlic, and stir-fry for 30 seconds. Add the mushrooms, and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes.

4 Stir in 2½ cups water. Break the noodles into short lengths, and add to the soup. Bring to a boil.

5 Add the cucumber slices, salt and soy sauce, and simmer for 2–3 minutes.

6 Serve the soup in warmed bowls, distributing the noodles and vegetables evenly.

CUCUMBER SEEDS

Scooping the seeds out from the cucumber gives it a prettier effect when sliced, and also helps to reduce any bitterness, but if you prefer, you can leave them in.

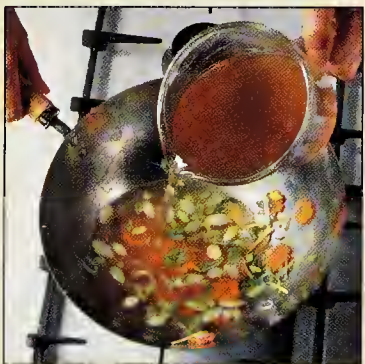




STEP 1



STEP 2



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STEP 4

LETTUCE & TOFU SOUP

This is a delicate, clear soup of shredded lettuce and small chunks of tofu with sliced carrot and scallion.

SERVES 4

7 ounces tofu
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 carrot, thinly sliced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece gingerroot, cut into thin shreds
3 scallions, diagonally sliced
5 cups vegetable stock
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp dry sherry
1 tsp sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups shredded romaine lettuce,
salt and pepper

1 Cut the tofu into small cubes. Heat the oil in a wok or large saucepan. Add the tofu, and stir-fry until browned. Remove with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels.

2 Add the carrot, gingerroot and scallions to the wok or saucepan, and stir-fry for 2 minutes.

3 Add the stock, soy sauce, sherry and sugar. Bring to a boil, and simmer for 1 minute.

4 Add the lettuce, and stir until it has just wilted.

5 Return the tofu to the pan to reheat. Season with salt and pepper, and serve in warmed bowls.

DECORATIVE CARROTS

For a prettier effect, score grooves along the length of the carrot with a sharp knife before slicing. This will create a flower effect as the carrot is cut into rounds. You could also try slicing the carrot on the diagonal to make longer slices. Try garnishing the soup with carrot curls – very fine strips of carrot that have been placed in iced water to make them curl up.





Main Meals



An abundance of high-quality produce can be bought from the markets in the towns and villages of China, and fresh food is purchased daily by endless streams of people buying the freshest goods for their family meals.

The simplest meal has a central dish of rice or noodles with a stir-fry or steamed dumplings, all of which are served at the same time, quite different from our Western way of eating. When entertaining, choose several different dishes to give as much variety of taste as possible, and prepare as much as you can ahead to enable you to spend more time with your guests than in the kitchen.

The following recipes contain ingredients that blend together to achieve a balanced contrast in color, flavor and texture. They are quick to prepare and cook. All the recipes in this section may be served as main courses with an accompaniment of rice or noodles.

Opposite: One of the great wonders of the world – the Great Wall of China.



STEP 1



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

VEGETABLE & NUT STIR-FRY

A colorful selection of vegetables are stir-fried in a creamy peanut sauce and sprinkled with nuts to serve.

SERVES 4

3 tbsp crunchy peanut butter
2/3 cup water
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp sugar
1 carrot
1/2 red onion
4 baby zucchini
1 red bell pepper
8 ounces egg thread noodles
1/4 cup peanuts, roughly chopped
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tsp sesame oil
1 small green chili, deseeded and thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
7 1/2-ounce can of water chestnuts, drained and sliced
3 cups beansprouts
salt

1 Blend the peanut butter with the water gradually in a small bowl. Stir in the soy sauce and sugar.

2 Cut the carrot into thin matchsticks, and slice the onion. Slice the zucchini on the diagonal, and cut the bell pepper into chunks.

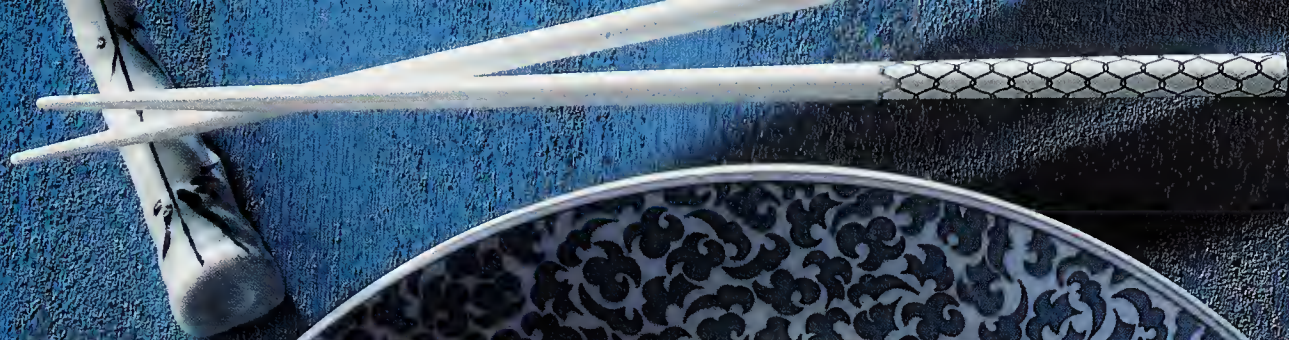
3 Bring a large pan of water to a boil, and add the egg noodles. Remove from the heat immediately, and let rest for 4 minutes, stirring occasionally to divide the noodles.

4 Heat a wok or large skillet. Add the peanuts, and dry-fry until they are beginning to brown. Remove and set aside.

5 Add the oils to the pan, and heat. Add the carrot, onion, zucchini, bell pepper, chili and garlic, and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes. Add the water chestnuts, beansprouts and peanut sauce. Bring to a boil, and heat thoroughly. Season to taste. Drain the noodles, and serve with the stir-fry. Sprinkle with the peanuts.

VARIATION

The vegetables in this dish can be varied according to your taste and their availability. Make sure you choose a variety of colors for the best effect.





STEP 1



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STEP 4

EGGPLANTS IN BLACK BEAN SAUCE

Stir-fried eggplant is served in a black bean sauce with garlic and scallions. This would go well with rice and another vegetable dish such as stir-fried baby corn and green beans.

SERVES 4

*generous 1/3 cup dried black beans
scant 2 cups vegetable stock
1 tbsp malt vinegar
1 tbsp dry sherry
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp sugar
1 1/2 tsp cornstarch
1/2-inch piece gingerroot, chopped
1 red chili, deseeded and chopped
2 eggplants
2 tsp salt
3 tbsp vegetable oil
2 garlic cloves, sliced
4 scallions, cut diagonally
shredded radishes to garnish*

1 Soak the beans overnight in plenty of cold water. Drain and place in a saucepan. Cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and boil rapidly, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Drain. Return the beans to the saucepan with the stock, and bring to a boil.

2 Mix the vinegar, sherry, soy sauce, sugar, cornstarch, gingerroot, and chili in a small bowl. Add to the pan. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the beans are tender and the sauce has thickened.

3 Cut the eggplants into chunks, and place in a colander. Sprinkle over the salt, and let drain for 30 minutes. Rinse well to remove the salt, and dry on paper towels.

4 Heat the oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the eggplant and garlic. Stir-fry for 3–4 minutes until the eggplant has started to brown.

5 Add the sauce to the eggplant with the scallions. Heat thoroughly, and garnish with radish shreds.

TIME-SAVER

To save time, you can use a ready-made black bean sauce instead of making your own. You will need to use about 6 tablespoons.





STIR-FRIED MUSHROOMS, CUCUMBER & SMOKED TOFU

Chunks of cucumber and smoked tofu stir-fried with straw mushrooms, snow peas and corn in a yellow bean sauce.

SERVES 4

1 large English cucumber
1 tsp salt
7½ ounces smoked tofu
2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 ounces snow peas
8 baby corn
1 celery stalk, sliced diagonally
14-ounce can of straw mushrooms, drained
2 scallions, cut into strips
½-inch piece gingerroot, chopped
1 tbsp yellow bean sauce
1 tbsp light soy sauce
1 tbsp dry sherry

1 Halve the cucumber lengthways. Remove the seeds, using a teaspoon. Cut into cubes. Place in a colander, and sprinkle over the salt. Let drain for 10 minutes. Rinse thoroughly in cold water to remove the salt, and drain thoroughly.

2 Cut the tofu into cubes. Heat the oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the tofu, snow peas, baby corn and celery. Stir until the tofu is lightly browned.

3 Add the straw mushrooms, scallions and gingerroot, and stir-fry for an additional minute.

4 Stir in the cucumber, yellow bean sauce, soy sauce, sherry and 2 tablespoons of water.

5 Stir-fry for 1 minute before serving.

STRAW MUSHROOMS

Straw mushrooms are available in cans from oriental suppliers and some supermarkets. If unavailable, substitute 8 ounces baby button mushrooms.



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STEP 4



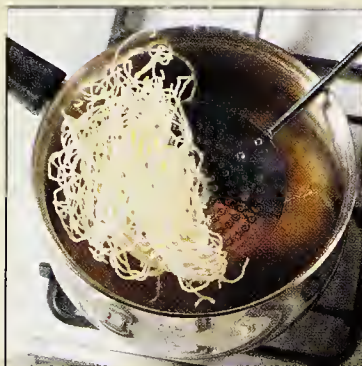
STEP 2



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STEP 6

VEGETABLE CASSEROLE WITH BLACK BEANS

This colorful Chinese-style casserole is made with tofu, vegetables and black bean sauce.

SERVES 4

6 Chinese dried mushrooms (if unavailable, use thinly sliced open-cup mushrooms)

9 ounces tofu

3 tbsp vegetable oil

1 carrot, cut into thin strips

4 ounces snow peas

8 baby corn, halved lengthways

7½-ounce can of sliced bamboo shoots, drained

1 red bell pepper, cut into chunks

1½ cups shredded Chinese leaves

1 tbsp soy sauce

1 tbsp black bean sauce

1 tsp sugar

1 tsp cornstarch

vegetable oil for deep-frying

8 ounces Chinese rice noodles

salt

1 Place the dried mushrooms in a small bowl, and cover with warm water. Let soak for 20–25 minutes. Drain and squeeze out the excess water, reserving the liquid. Remove the tough centers, and slice the mushrooms thinly.

2 Cut the tofu into cubes. Boil in a saucepan of lightly salted water for 2–3 minutes to firm up. Drain thoroughly.

3 Heat half the oil in a large flameproof casserole or saucepan. Add the tofu and fry until lightly browned all over. Remove with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels.

4 Add the remaining oil, and stir-fry the mushrooms, carrot, snow peas, baby corn, bamboo shoots and bell pepper for 2–3 minutes. Add the Chinese leaves and tofu, and stir-fry for a further 2 minutes.

5 Stir in the soy sauce, black bean sauce and sugar, and season with salt. Add 6 tablespoons of the reserved mushroom liquid (or water if you are using regular mushrooms), mixed with the cornstarch. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat. Cover and braise for 2–3 minutes until the sauce has thickened slightly.

6 Heat the oil for deep-frying in a large saucepan. Add the noodles in batches, and deep-fry until puffed up and lightly golden. Drain on paper towels, and serve with the casserole.





STEP 2



STEP 5



STEP 5



STEP 6

MONEY BAGS

These traditional steamed dumplings are made with a mushroom and corn filling. Eat them as they are, or try dipping them in a mixture of soy sauce, sherry and slivers of gingerroot.

SERVES 4

3 Chinese dried mushrooms (if unavailable, use thinly sliced open-cup mushrooms)

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 egg, beaten

1/3 cup water

1 tsp baking powder

3/4 tsp salt

2 tbsp vegetable oil

2 scallions, chopped

1/2 cup corn kernels

1/2 red chili, deseeded and chopped

1 tbsp brown bean sauce

1 Place the dried mushrooms in a small bowl. Cover with warm water, and let soak for 20–25 minutes.

2 To make the wrappers, sift the flour into a bowl. Add the egg and mix in lightly. Stir in the water, baking powder and salt. Mix to make a soft dough. Knead lightly until smooth on a floured board. Cover with a damp cloth, and set aside for 5–6 minutes. This allows the baking powder time to activate, so that the dumplings swell when steaming.

3 Drain the mushrooms, squeezing them dry. Remove the tough centers, and chop the mushrooms.

4 Heat the oil in a wok or large skillet, and stir-fry the mushrooms, scallions, corn and chili for 2 minutes. Stir in the brown bean sauce, and remove from the heat.

5 Roll the dough into a large sausage, and cut into 24 even-sized pieces. Roll each piece out into a thin round, and place a teaspoonful of the filling in the center. Gather up the edges to a point. Pinch together, and twist to seal.

6 Stand the dumplings in an oiled steaming basket. Place over a saucepan of simmering water. Cover and steam for 12–14 minutes before serving.

COOKING WITH CABBAGE LEAVES

For extra flavor, and to help to prevent the dumplings falling through the steamer, place them on cabbage leaves inside the steamer.





CARROTS & PARSNIPS WITH COCONUT

Sliced carrots and chunks of parsnip are cooked in a creamy coconut sauce with ground almonds, and served on a bed of spinach.

SERVES 2

1/3 cup creamed coconut
1 1/4 cups hot water
2 tbsp slivered almonds
4 tbsp vegetable oil
5 cardamom pods
4 thin slices gingerroot
2 1/2 cups sliced carrots
2 1/2 cups parsnips, cut into small chunks
1/4 tsp five-spice powder
2 tbsp ground almonds
4 cups young spinach leaves
1/2 red onion, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, sliced
salt

1 Crumble the creamed coconut into a bowl or jug. Add the hot water, and stir until dissolved.

2 Heat a saucepan, and dry-fry the slivered almonds until golden. Remove and set aside.

3 Heat half the oil in the saucepan. Add the cardamom pods and gingerroot. Fry for 30 seconds to flavor the oil. Add the carrots and parsnips. Stir-fry for 2–3 minutes.

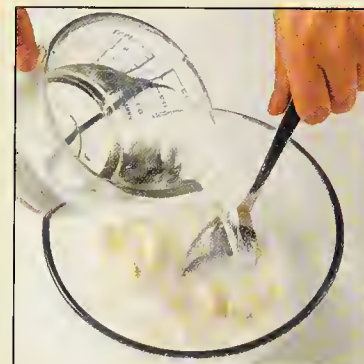
4 Stir in the five-spice powder and ground almonds, and pour in the coconut liquid. Bring to a boil, and season with salt to taste. Cover and simmer for 12–15 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Stir occasionally, adding extra water if necessary.

5 Wash the spinach, and drain thoroughly. Remove any stalks. Heat the remaining oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the onion and garlic, and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add the spinach, and stir-fry until it has just wilted. Drain off any excess liquid formed. Season with salt.

6 Remove the cardamom pods and gingerroot from the carrots and parsnips, and adjust the seasoning. Serve on a bed of the spinach sprinkled with the almonds.

CARDAMOM

Lightly crush the cardamom pods before using, as this helps to release their flavor.



STEP 1



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 4



STEP 5

LENTIL BALLS WITH SWEET & SOUR SAUCE

Crisp golden lentil balls are served in a sweet and sour sauce with bell peppers and pineapple chunks.

SERVES 4

1 cup red lentils
scant 2 cups water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ green chili, deseeded and chopped
4 scallions, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 tsp salt
4 tbsp pineapple juice from can
1 egg, beaten
vegetable oil for deep-frying

SAUCE:

3 tbsp white wine vinegar
2 tbsp sugar
2 tbsp tomato paste
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp cornstarch
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
6 tbsp water
2 canned pineapple rings
2 tbsp vegetable oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ red bell pepper, cut into chunks
 $\frac{1}{2}$ green bell pepper, cut into chunks

1 Wash the lentils; then place in a saucepan with the water, and bring to a boil. Skim and boil rapidly for 10 minutes, uncovered. Reduce the heat, and simmer for 5 minutes until you have a fairly dry mixture. Considerably less water is used to cook these lentils than is

normally required, so take care they do not burn as they cook. Stir occasionally.

2 Remove from the heat, and stir in the chili, scallions, garlic, salt and pineapple juice. Let cool for 10 minutes.

3 To make the sauce, mix together the vinegar, sugar, tomato paste, sesame oil, cornstarch, salt and water, and set aside. Cut the pineapple into chunks.

4 Add the beaten egg to the lentil mixture. Heat the oil in a large saucepan or wok, and deep-fry tablespoonfuls of the mixture in batches until crisp and golden. Remove with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels.

5 Heat the 2 tablespoons oil in a wok or skillet. Stir-fry the bell peppers for 2 minutes. Add the sauce mixture with the pineapple chunks. Bring to a boil then reduce the heat, and simmer for 1 minute, stirring constantly, until the sauce has thickened. Add the lentil balls, and heat thoroughly, taking care not to break them up. Serve with rice or noodles.



減批果鮮

鮮批零沽



批發
140

特價
95

批發
140

特價
75

批發
95

批發
115

批發
235



Vegetables & Salads



Due to the vast size of China, in which there are many different climates, the country produces a huge variety of vegetables. These play a significant role in the Chinese diet, and are considered important in their own right rather than as mere accompaniments.

Many Westerners overcook their vegetables, boiling them in too much water and causing them to lose all their flavor and color as well as their valuable vitamins and minerals. Stir-frying was until recently a method of cooking unique to the Chinese. The raw ingredients are cooked quickly with a minimum of oil or water over a high heat. This ensures that flavors, colors and nutrients are preserved, leaving the vegetables crisp and colorful.

A mixture of raw and cooked vegetables is often used in Chinese salads, and these are picked fresh as they are needed. Choose firm crisp vegetables, and cook them while they are at their best, as this will make all the difference to your final dish.

Opposite: A tempting array of fresh fruits and vegetables in the western district of Hong Kong.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 4



STEP 5

EGGPLANTS IN CHILI SAUCE

Strips of eggplant are deep-fried, then served in a fragrant chili sauce with carrot matchsticks and scallions.

SERVES 4

1 large eggplant
vegetable oil for deep-frying
2 carrots
4 scallions
2 large garlic cloves
1 tbsp vegetable oil
2 tsp chili sauce
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp dry sherry

1 Slice the eggplant into thick slices, and then cut into strips about the size of French fries.

2 Heat enough oil in a large heavy-based saucepan to deep-fry the eggplant in batches until just browned. Remove the eggplant slices with a perforated spoon, and drain them on paper towels.

3 Cut the carrots into thin matchsticks. Trim and slice the scallions diagonally. Slice the garlic cloves.

4 Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the carrot matchsticks, and stir-fry for 1 minute; then add the chopped scallions and

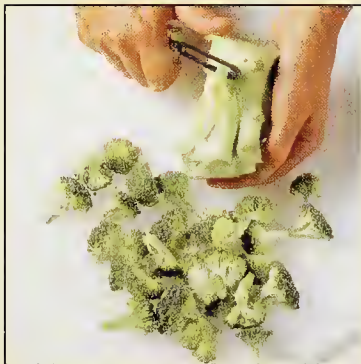
garlic, and stir-fry for an additional minute.

5 Stir in the chili sauce, soy sauce, and sherry, then stir in the drained eggplant. Mix well to make sure the vegetables are heated through thoroughly before serving.

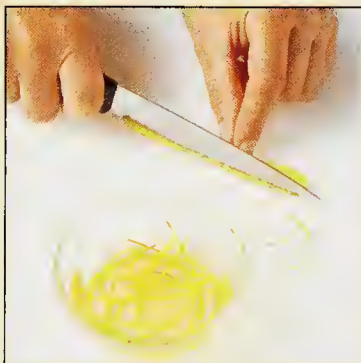
MILDER FLAVOR

For a milder dish, substitute hoisin sauce for the chili sauce. This can be bought ready-made from all supermarkets.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

GINGERED BROCCOLI WITH ORANGE

Thinly sliced broccoli florets are lightly stir-fried and served in a ginger and orange sauce.

SERVES 4

*1½ pounds broccoli
2 thin slices gingerroot
2 garlic cloves
1 orange
2 tsp cornstarch
1 tbsp light soy sauce
½ tsp sugar
2 tbsp vegetable oil*

1 Divide the broccoli into small florets. Peel the broccoli stems, using a vegetable peeler, and then cut the stems into thin slices. Cut the gingerroot into matchsticks, and slice the garlic.

2 Peel 2 long strips of zest from the orange, and cut into thin strips. Place the strips in a bowl. Cover with cold water, and set aside. Squeeze the juice from the orange, and mix with the cornstarch, soy sauce, sugar and 4 tablespoons water.

3 Heat the oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the broccoli stem slices, and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add the gingerroot, garlic and broccoli florets, and stir-fry for an additional 3 minutes.

4 Stir in the orange sauce mixture, and cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce has thickened and coated the broccoli.

5 Drain the reserved orange rind, and stir in before serving.

VARIATION

This dish could be made with cauliflower, if you prefer, or a mixture of cauliflower and broccoli.





LEMON CHINESE LEAVES

These stir-fried Chinese leaves are served with a tangy sauce made of lemon juice, grated lemon rind and ginger.

SERVES 4

1 pound Chinese leaves
3 tbsp vegetable oil
1/2-inch piece gingerroot, grated
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
1/2 cup water or vegetable stock
1 tsp grated lemon rind
1 tbsp cornstarch
1 tbsp lemon juice

1 Separate the Chinese leaves. Wash and drain them thoroughly, and pat dry with paper towels. Cut into 2-inch wide slices.

2 Heat the oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the grated gingerroot, followed by the Chinese leaves. Stir-fry for 2–3 minutes, or until the Chinese leaves begin to wilt. Add the salt and sugar, and mix well until the leaves soften. Remove with a perforated spoon, and set aside.

3 Add the water or vegetable stock to the pan with the lemon zest, and bring to a boil. Meanwhile, mix the cornstarch to a smooth paste with the lemon juice, then add to the water or stock in the pan. Simmer, stirring

constantly, for about 1 minute to make a smooth sauce.

4 Return the cooked leaves to the pan, and mix thoroughly. Arrange on a serving plate, and serve immediately.

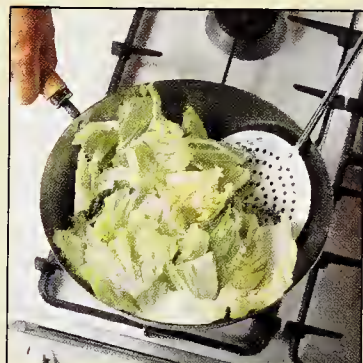
CHINESE LEAVES

If Chinese leaves are unavailable, substitute slices of savoy cabbage. Cook for 1 extra minute to soften the leaves.

VEGETABLES & SALADS



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

GOLDEN NEEDLES WITH BAMBOO SHOOTS

Golden needles are the dried flower buds of the tiger lily. They are usually sold in the dried form, and can be obtained from specialist Chinese shops. They give a unique musky flavor to this dish.

SERVES 4

*1/4 cup dried lily flowers
2 × 7 1/2-ounce cans of bamboo shoots,
drained
1/2 cup cornstarch
vegetable oil for deep-frying
1 tbsp vegetable oil
scant 2 cups vegetable stock
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
1 tbsp dry sherry
1 tsp sugar
1 large garlic clove, sliced
1/2 each red, green and yellow bell peppers*

- 1** Soak the lily flowers in hot water for 30 minutes.
- 2** Coat the bamboo shoots in cornstarch. Heat enough oil in a large heavy-based saucepan to deep-fry the bamboo shoots in batches until just beginning to color. Remove with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels.
- 3** Drain the lily flowers, and trim off the hard ends. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the lily flowers, bamboo shoots, stock, soy sauce, sherry, sugar and garlic.

- 4** Slice the bell peppers thinly, and add to the pan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; then reduce the heat, and simmer for 5 minutes. Add extra water or stock if necessary.

COATING THE BAMBOO SHOOTS

To coat the bamboo shoots easily with cornstarch, place the cornstarch in a plastic bag, add the bamboo shoots in batches, and shake well.





STEP 1



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

SPINACH WITH STRAW MUSHROOMS

Straw mushrooms are available in cans from oriental shops. Here they are served with spinach, raisins and pine nuts. You can use button mushrooms instead, if straw mushrooms are unavailable.

SERVES 4

*1/4 cup pine nuts
1 pound fresh spinach leaves
3 tbsp vegetable oil
1 red onion, sliced
2 garlic cloves, sliced
14-ounce can of straw mushrooms, drained
3 tbsp raisins
2 tbsp soy sauce
salt*

- 1** Heat a wok or large skillet, and dry-fry the pine nuts until lightly browned. Remove and set aside.
- 2** Wash the spinach thoroughly, picking the leaves over and removing long stalks. Drain and pat dry with paper towels.
- 3** Heat the oil in the wok or skillet. Add the onion and garlic, and stir-fry for 1 minute.
- 4** Add the spinach and mushrooms, and continue to stir-fry until the leaves have wilted. Drain off any excess liquid.
- 5** Stir in the raisins, reserved pine nuts and soy sauce. Stir-fry until

thoroughly heated and well-mixed. Season to taste with salt before serving.

ADDING FLAVOR

Soak the raisins in 2 tablespoons dry sherry before using. This helps to plump them up as well as adding extra flavor to the stir-fry.





GADO GADO SALAD

This salad is a mixture of cooked and raw vegetables in a spicy peanut dressing. The vegetables can either be arranged in individual piles on the serving platter or mixed together.

SERVES 4

8 ounces new potatoes
4 ounces cauliflower, broken into small florets
4 ounces green beans
1½ cups shredded white cabbage
1 carrot, cut into thin sticks
¼ English cucumber, cut into chunks
2 cups beansprouts
2 hard-cooked eggs

SAUCE:

6 tbsp crunchy peanut butter
1¼ cups cold water
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 fresh red chili, deseeded and finely chopped
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp dry sherry
2 tsp sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice

1 Scrub the potatoes, and halve them. Place in a saucepan of lightly salted water. Bring to a boil, and then simmer for 12–15 minutes, or until cooked through. Drain and plunge into cold water to cool.

2 Bring another pan of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the cauliflower, green beans and cabbage,

and cook for 3 minutes. Drain and plunge the vegetables into cold water to cool and prevent any further cooking.

3 Drain the potatoes and other cooked vegetables. Arrange in piles on a large serving platter with the carrot, cucumber and beansprouts.

4 Remove the shells from the hard-cooked eggs. Cut into quarters, and arrange on the salad. Cover and set aside.

5 To make the sauce, place the peanut butter in a bowl, and blend in the water gradually, followed by the remaining ingredients.

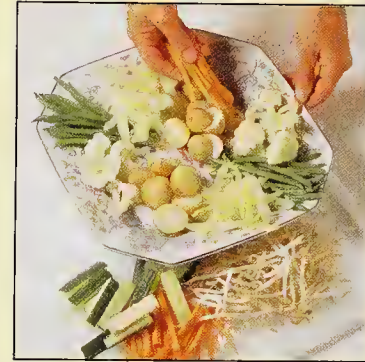
6 Uncover the salad. Place the sauce in a separate serving bowl, and drizzle some over each serving.

COCONUT MILK

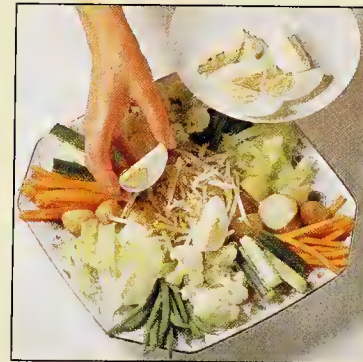
For extra flavor to the peanut sauce, use coconut milk instead of water. This can be purchased from specialist oriental shops and some supermarkets.



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



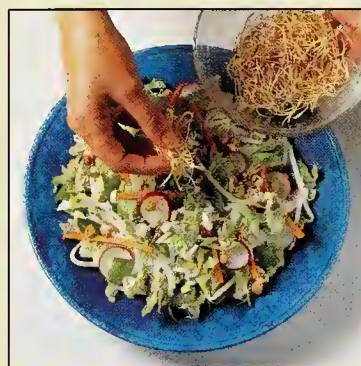
STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

ORIENTAL SALAD

This colorful crisp salad has a fresh orange dressing, and is topped with crunchy vermicelli.

SERVES 4-6

1/4 cup dried vermicelli
1/2 head Chinese leaves
2 cups beansprouts
6 radishes
4 ounces snow peas
1 large carrot
4 ounces sprouting beans

DRESSING:

juice of 1 orange
1 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted
1 tsp honey
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tbsp hazelnut oil

1 Break the vermicelli into small strands. Heat a wok or skillet and dry-fry the vermicelli until lightly golden. Remove from the pan, and set aside.

2 Shred the Chinese leaves, and wash with the beansprouts. Drain thoroughly, and place in a large bowl. Slice the radishes. Trim the snow peas and cut each into 3. Cut the carrot into thin matchsticks. Add the sprouting beans and prepared vegetables to the bowl.

3 Place all the dressing ingredients in a screw-top jar, and shake until well-blended. Pour over the salad, and toss.

4 Transfer the salad to a serving bowl, and sprinkle over the reserved vermicelli before serving.

SPROUTING BEANS

If you are unable to buy sprouting beans, you can make your own. Use a mixture of mung, aduki and garbanzo beans. Soak the beans overnight in cold water, drain and rinse. Place in a large glass jar, and cover the mouth of the jar with a piece of cheesecloth tied on to secure it. Lay the jar on its side, and place in indirect light. For the next 2-3 days rinse the beans once each day in cold water until they are ready to eat.





Rice & Noodles



Rice and noodles form the central part of most oriental meals, particularly in the southern part of China. In the north the staple foods tend to contain more wheat-based products, such as dumplings. Rice and noodles supply the carbohydrate necessary for a nutritious meal, and though bland in themselves, they provide a complementary texture to the other ingredients, and absorb the stronger flavors of other dishes, making them an essential and very satisfying part of the Chinese meal.

The most common types of rice used in Chinese cuisine include white or brown long-grain rice and glutinous rice. The shorter grain of the glutinous rice has a slight stickiness when cooked, which makes it ideal for eating with chopsticks.

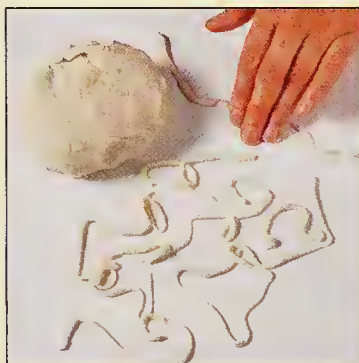
Rice can be boiled and then steamed, or it can be fried with other ingredients added, such as scrambled eggs, scallions or peas, then flavored with soy sauce. It is also used to make wines, vinegars, noodles and flour, which makes it a very important ingredient.

A wide variety of Chinese noodles are available, made from wheat, buckwheat or rice flours. Like rice, they are very versatile; they can be boiled or fried, and served plain with a sauce, or in a soup.

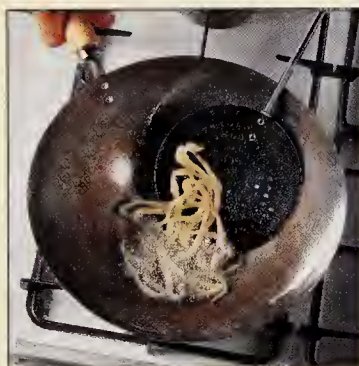
Opposite: A 1000-year old banyan tree overhangs a rice field in the Guangxi province.



STEP 1



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

HOMEMADE NOODLES WITH STIR-FRIED VEGETABLES

These noodles are simple to make; you do not need a pasta-making machine, as they are rolled out by hand.

SERVES 2-4

NOODLES:

1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tbsp cornstarch
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup boiling water
5 tbsp vegetable oil

STIR-FRY:

1 zucchini
1 celery stalk
1 carrot
4 ounces open-cup mushrooms
1 leek
4 ounces broccoli
2 cups beansprouts
1 tbsp soy sauce
2 tsp rice wine vinegar (if unavailable, use
white wine vinegar)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar

1 To prepare the noodles, sift the flour, cornstarch and salt into a bowl. Make a well in the center, and pour in the boiling water and 1 teaspoon of the oil. Mix quickly, using a wooden spoon, to make a soft dough. Cover and leave for 5-6 minutes.

2 Prepare the vegetables for the stir-fry. Cut the zucchini, celery and

carrot into thin sticks. Slice the mushrooms and leek. Divide the broccoli into small florets; peel and thinly slice the stalks.

3 Make the noodles by breaking off small pieces of dough and rolling into balls. Then roll each ball across a very lightly oiled counter with the palm of your hand to form thin noodles. Do not worry if some of the noodles break into shorter lengths. Set the noodles aside.

4 Heat 3 tablespoons of oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the noodles in batches, and fry over a high heat for 1 minute. Reduce the heat, and cook for an additional 2 minutes. Remove and drain on paper towels. Set aside.

5 Heat the remaining oil in the pan. Add the zucchini, celery and carrot, and stir-fry for 1 minute. Add the mushrooms, broccoli and leek, and stir-fry for an additional minute. Stir in the remaining ingredients, and mix well until thoroughly heated.

6 Add the noodles, and toss to mix together over a high heat. Serve immediately.





STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

CHOW MEIN

Egg noodles are fried with a colorful variety of vegetables to make this well-known dish.

SERVES 4

*1 pound egg noodles
4 tbsp vegetable oil
1 onion, thinly sliced
2 carrots, cut into thin sticks
1 1/3 cups quartered button mushrooms
4 ounces snow peas
1/2 English cucumber, cut into sticks
2 cups shredded spinach
2 cups beansprouts
2 tbsp dark soy sauce
1 tbsp sherry
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp cornstarch
1 tsp sesame oil*

1 Cook the noodles according to the package instructions. Drain and rinse under running cold water until cool. Set aside.

2 Heat 3 tablespoons of the vegetable oil in a wok or large, heavy skillet. Add the sliced onion and sticks of carrot, and stir-fry for 1 minute. Add the mushrooms, snow peas and cucumber sticks, and stir-fry for an additional minute.

3 Stir in the remaining vegetable oil, and add the drained noodles with the spinach and beansprouts.

4 Blend together the remaining ingredients, and pour over the noodles and vegetables.

5 Stir-fry until thoroughly heated, and serve.

FOR A HOTTER FLAVOR

For a spicy hot chow mein, add 1 tablespoon chili sauce, or substitute chili oil for the sesame oil.





SPECIAL FRIED RICE

In this simple recipe, cooked rice is fried with vegetables and cashew nuts. It can either be eaten on its own or served as an accompaniment.

SERVES 2-4

generous ¾ cup long-grain rice

½ cup cashew nuts

1 carrot

½ English cucumber

1 yellow bell pepper

2 scallions

2 tbsp vegetable oil

1 garlic clove, crushed

¾ cup frozen peas, defrosted

1 tbsp soy sauce

1 tsp salt

cilantro leaves to garnish

1 Bring a large pan of water to a boil. Add the rice, and simmer for 15 minutes. Tip the rice into a strainer and rinse; drain thoroughly.

2 Heat a wok or large skillet. Add the cashew nuts, and dry-fry until lightly browned. Remove and set aside.

3 Cut the carrot in half along the length; then slice thinly into semi-circles. Halve the cucumber, and remove the seeds, using a teaspoon; dice the cucumber. Slice the bell pepper and chop the scallions.

4 Heat the oil in the wok or large skillet. Add the prepared vegetables and the garlic. Stir-fry for 3 minutes.

5 Add the rice, peas, soy sauce and salt. Continue to stir-fry until well mixed and thoroughly heated.

6 Stir in the reserved cashew nuts, and serve garnished with cilantro leaves.



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

LAST-MINUTE MEAL

You can replace any of the vegetables in this recipe with others suitable for a stir-fry, and using leftover rice makes this a perfect last-minute dish.



STEP 1



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6

FRAGRANT STEAMED RICE IN LOTUS LEAVES

The fragrance of the leaves penetrates the rice, giving it a unique taste. Lotus leaves can be bought from specialist Chinese shops. Large cabbage or spinach leaves can be used as a substitute.

SERVES 4

2 lotus leaves
4 Chinese dried mushrooms (if unavailable,
use thinly sliced open-cup mushrooms)
generous $\frac{3}{4}$ cup long-grain rice
1 cinnamon stick
6 cardamom pods
4 cloves
1 tsp salt
2 eggs
1 tbsp vegetable oil
2 scallions, chopped
1 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp sherry
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp sesame oil

1 Unfold the lotus leaves very carefully, and cut along the fold to divide each leaf in half. Lay on a large baking sheet, and pour over enough hot water to cover. Let soak for about 30 minutes, or until the leaves have softened.

2 Place the dried mushrooms in a small bowl, and cover with warm water. Let soak for 20–25 minutes.

3 Cook the rice in plenty of boiling water in a saucepan with the

cinnamon stick, cardamom pods, cloves and salt for about 10 minutes – the rice should be partially cooked. Drain thoroughly, and remove the cinnamon stick.

4 Beat the eggs lightly. Heat the oil in a wok or skillet, and cook the eggs quickly, stirring constantly until set; then remove and set aside.

5 Drain the mushrooms, squeezing out the excess water. Remove the tough centers and chop the mushrooms. Place the drained rice in a bowl. Stir in the mushrooms, cooked egg, scallions, soy sauce, sherry, sugar and sesame oil. Season with salt to taste.

6 Drain the lotus leaves, and divide the rice mixture into four portions. Place a portion in the center of each lotus leaf, and fold up to form a package. Place in a steamer. Cover and steam over simmering water for 20 minutes. To serve, cut the tops of the lotus leaves open to expose the fragrant rice.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 5

SPICY COCONUT RICE WITH GREEN LENTILS

Rice and green lentils are cooked with creamed coconut, lemon grass and curry leaves. This recipe will serve 2 people as a main course or 4 as an accompaniment.

SERVES 2-4

- 1/3 cup green lentils*
- generous 1 cup long-grain rice*
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil*
- 1 onion, sliced*
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed*
- 3 curry leaves*
- 1 stalk lemon grass, chopped (if unavailable, use grated rind of 1/2 lemon)*
- 1 green chili, deseeded and chopped*
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds*
- 1 1/2 tsp salt*
- 1/3 cup creamed coconut*
- 2 1/2 cups hot water*
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro*

TO GARNISH:
shredded radishes
shredded cucumber

1 Wash the lentils, and place in a saucepan. Cover with cold water. Bring to a boil, and boil rapidly for 10 minutes. Wash the rice thoroughly, and drain well.

2 Heat the oil in a large saucepan, which has a tight-fitting lid, and fry the onion for 3-4 minutes. Add the garlic, curry leaves, lemon grass, chili, cumin seeds and salt, and stir well.

3 Drain the lentils, and rinse. Add to the onion and spices with the rice, and mix well. Add the creamed coconut to the hot water, and stir until dissolved. Stir into the rice mixture, and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat to low. Put the lid on tightly, and let cook undisturbed for 15 minutes.

4 Without removing the lid, remove the pan from the heat, and let rest for 10 minutes to allow the rice and lentils to finish cooking in their own steam.

5 Stir in the cilantro, and remove the curry leaves. Serve garnished with shredded radishes and cucumber.

CREAMED COCONUT

If creamed coconut is unavailable, use 2/3 cup shredded coconut. Infuse it in the hot water for 20 minutes; drain well, squeezing out any excess water. Discard the coconut, and use the liquid.





STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 5



STEP 6

EGG FU-YUNG WITH RICE

In this dish, cooked rice is mixed with scrambled eggs, Chinese mushrooms, bamboo shoots and water chestnuts, and it is a great way of using up leftover cooked rice. It can be served as a meal by itself or as an accompaniment.

SERVES 2-4

generous $\frac{3}{4}$ cup long-grain rice
2 Chinese dried mushrooms (if unavailable, use thinly sliced open-cup mushrooms)
3 eggs, beaten
3 tbsp vegetable oil
4 scallions, sliced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ green bell pepper, chopped
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup canned bamboo shoots
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sliced canned water chestnuts
2 cups beansprouts
2 tbsp light soy sauce
2 tbsp dry sherry
2 tsp sesame oil
salt and pepper

- 1** Cook the rice in lightly salted boiling water according to the package instructions.
- 2** Place the dried mushrooms in a small bowl. Cover with warm water, and let soak for 20–25 minutes.
- 3** Mix the beaten eggs with a little salt. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a wok or large skillet. Add the beaten eggs, and stir until just set. Remove and set aside.

4 Drain the mushrooms, and squeeze out the excess water. Remove the tough centers, and chop the mushrooms.

5 Heat the remaining oil in a clean wok or skillet. Add the mushrooms, scallions and green bell pepper, and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add the bamboo shoots, water chestnuts and beansprouts. Stir-fry for 1 minute.

6 Drain the rice thoroughly, and add to the pan with the remaining ingredients. Mix well, heating the rice thoroughly. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in the reserved eggs, and serve.

WASHING BEANSPROUTS

To wash beansprouts, place them in a bowl of cold water, and swirl with your hand. Remove any long tail ends.



CHINESE COOKING

SPECIAL INGREDIENTS

Here are a few of the ingredients commonly used in Chinese cooking. They are becoming widely available, particularly in larger supermarkets and health-food stores, but substitutes can be used for the more unusual items.

Bamboo shoots

This is the first growth of the bamboo plant, cut just as it emerges from the ground. The tender shoots are crisp and ivory-colored with a slightly sweet taste. They are available sliced in cans. Store them in a small bowl in the refrigerator, covered with cold water which should be changed daily. They will keep for up to 7 days.

Beansprouts

Grown from mung or soya beans, these are available fresh, canned or in jars. They have a crunchy texture.

Black beans

Salted fermented soya beans, available in packages or cans.

Chilies

These can be red or green, and come in a variety of sizes – the smaller the chili, the hotter it is, and dried chilies are hotter than fresh. Take care when handling them, as chili juice stings; avoid touching your eyes and always wash your hands thoroughly afterward. Discard the seeds, as these are the hottest part.

THE CHINESE DIET

The daily diet of the Chinese is one of the healthiest in the world. Being such a vast country, China encompasses a number of different climates, which gives rise to a wide variety of produce. In addition, the selection of vegetables available in the markets has increased in recent years as China's peasants have been encouraged to grow and sell their own crops.

The vegetarian element

Widespread poverty means that many people are unable to afford meat, and many follow a vegetarian diet for religious reasons. But even when they have the choice, the Chinese have many reasons for eating a largely vegetarian diet. They recognize that a mostly vegetarian diet is the healthiest way to eat, and base their diet on vegetables and carbohydrates (such as rice or noodles), with only a little fish or meat added for flavor. In addition, it is more economical to use the land for growing vegetables and rice than for grazing livestock, as the crops will feed far more people than the livestock will – a crucial factor, considering China's huge and increasing population.

EATING THE CHINESE WAY

Chinese cooking is one of the oldest known cuisines, and its influence has spread throughout the world. The secret of Chinese cooking lies in the art of combining ingredients to give a harmonized contrast in flavor, color and

texture. The recipes in this book have been designed to do just that. They are quick and simple to prepare, and they mostly use ingredients obtained from supermarkets. Occasionally you may need to visit a Chinese food store to find one or two ingredients. Some of the recipes have been adapted for the vegetarian from traditional Chinese recipes, and others are vegetarian dishes that have been developed to suit the Western kitchen.

Meal times in China are often family gatherings, at which many different dishes are served. A wide range of ingredients is used, but the different flavors of the many dishes are always made to work together. The meal is served all at once, including the soup. Unlike the Western convention, the Chinese never serve an individual dish to each person; all the dishes on the table are shared.

Preparing a Chinese meal

When planning a menu for this kind of shared meal, allow one dish per person. For example, if you are cooking for only two or three people, serve one main dish with one vegetable side dish and one rice or noodle dish, plus a soup if desired. For an informal meal for four to six people, serve four dishes plus soup and rice; for a formal dinner allow six to eight dishes. Always increase the number of dishes rather than the quantity of ingredients when cooking for many people, as this will give more variety on the table.

Do not choose too many dishes that have a lot of last-minute preparation or have to be served immediately, such as stir-fries. Vary the dishes so that some may be prepared in advance, and then you too can enjoy the meal and not spend all evening in the kitchen.

Preparing to cook

Chinese food generally takes much longer to prepare than it does to cook, so it is very important to prepare each dish as much ahead as possible. Have all the vegetables chopped and sauces blended before you start cooking.

The ingredients should be cut into small, uniformly sized pieces. This insures that the food will cook evenly. The prepared food is often cooked very briefly over a high heat, which seals in the natural juices and helps to preserve the nutrients. This short cooking time leaves the end product more succulent and preserves its texture as well as its natural flavors and colors. Thinly shredding vegetables and slicing them diagonally ensures fast cooking, as it increases the area that comes into contact with the hot oil.

COOKING METHODS AND EQUIPMENT

It can be very easy to cook Chinese-style in a Western kitchen, and it is not essential to have a collection of exotic cooking utensils. Below are explanations of the methods and equipment most commonly used in Chinese cooking.

Stir-frying

This is the method of cooking most commonly associated with Chinese

cooking. The correct piece of equipment for this is a wok, although any large skillet or heavy saucepan will do. The wok is a large sloping-sided heavy metal pan with a rounded bottom. Nowadays it is usually made from carbon iron, and has one or two metal or wooden handles attached to it.

Stir-frying with a wok is a very healthy way to cook, because it uses very little oil and preserves the nutrients in the food as they cook for such a short time. It is very important that the wok is very hot before you begin to cook. This can be tested by holding your hand flat 3 inches over the base of the interior, when you will feel the heat radiating from it. The success of stir-frying lies in having the wok at the right temperature, and correct timing when cooking the food.

Add a small amount of oil to the wok, and heat it; then add, in stages, the various ingredients to be cooked – those requiring longer cooking go in first, while those that require only very little cooking go in last. The ingredients should be stirred constantly for a very short time, using a long-handled metal or wooden spoon or flat scoop. Constantly stirring insures that all the ingredients come into contact with the hot oil so the natural juices of the food are sealed in, leaving it crisp and colorful. It also ensures that all the ingredients are evenly cooked. Stir-fried dishes are best served immediately.

Clean the wok after each use by washing it with water, using a mild detergent if necessary, and a soft cloth or brush. Do not scrub or use any abrasive cleaner as this will scratch the surface. Dry thoroughly with paper towels or over

Chili oil

This very hot oil is flavored by chilies and red in color; use sparingly. You can make your own by adding a few dried chilies to some oil, and leaving them to soak for a few days to let the flavor come out.

Chinese dried mushrooms

These add flavor and a distinctive aroma. Sold dried, they can be expensive, but only a few are needed per dish, and they store indefinitely. Soak in warm water for 20 minutes, squeeze dry, and discard the stalks. Use open-cup mushrooms as a substitute.

Chinese leaves

Now widely available, these look like a pale, elongated head of lettuce with light green, tightly packed crinkly leaves.

Cilantro

Also known as Chinese parsley. The pretty leaves make a very good garnish, as well as adding a distinctive flavor to the dish.

Five-spice powder

An aromatic seasoning made from a blend of five spices: star anise, fennel seed, cloves, cinnamon and Sichuan pepper.

Gingerroot

A knobby root that is peeled before use. Use chopped, sliced or grated. It will keep for several weeks in a cool dry place. Can also be kept frozen – break off lumps as needed.

Lemon grass

An aromatic herb, available as fresh stems or dried as serai powder. Chop or slice the lower part of the stem to use.

Lily flowers

Also known as Golden Needles, these are dried lily-flower buds. Soak in water before use.

Lotus leaves

These are very large, and sold dried. Soak in hot water before use. They are often used as a shell in which to cook other ingredients, such as steamed rice.

Noodles

Noodles are made from rice, pulses or wheat. There is a large variety available, all of which can be interchanged in recipes. Cook according to package instructions, as times vary from one type to another.

Rice vinegar

This light delicate vinegar is made from rice. White wine vinegar can be used in its place.

Sesame seeds

These add texture and a nutty flavor. Dry-fry to add color and accentuate the flavor.

Soy sauce

Made from fermented soya beans, this is widely used and is the main flavoring in Chinese cooking. It is dark or light, the light having a more delicate flavor than the dark.

a low heat; then wipe the surface all over with a little oil. This forms a protective layer from moisture, and helps to prevent the wok from rusting.

Steaming

This is another very popular Chinese method of cooking. The piece of equipment the Chinese use is a bamboo steamer. As these are not airtight, they allow a certain amount of steam to escape, preventing any condensation from forming on the lid. They are designed to stand one on top of another, enabling you to cook several dishes at the same time. Bamboo steamers can be bought at Chinese specialty stores or good cookware stores in a range of sizes.

There are two methods of steaming; in the first the food is arranged on a plate or bowl, which is then put inside a steamer on the perforated rack, and placed over a large pot of boiling water, or put inside a wok. The steam passes through the steamer, and cooks the food. Larger items of food, such as dumplings, can be placed straight onto the rack or laid on cabbage or soaked lotus leaves, which prevents the food from falling through, and adds extra flavor. Alternatively, the bowl of ingredients can be immersed partway into the boiling water, and the food is cooked partly by the boiling water and partly by the steam it produces.

Deep-frying

Use either a wok, a deep-frying kettle or a heavy-based saucepan. When deep-frying in a wok, use enough oil to give a depth of about 2 inches, and heat it over a moderate heat until you can see a faint

haze of smoke rising before gently lowering in the food to be fried. Make sure the oil is up to temperature before adding the food; the hot oil should cook the food quickly on the outside, sealing it and forming a barrier around it, which prevents the food from acting like a sponge and becoming soggy and greasy, which is what will happen if the oil is not hot enough.

Cook the food in small batches so as not to overcrowd the wok or pan, as this can reduce the temperature of the oil, and lead to unevenly cooked food. Always remove the food from the oil with a perforated spoon, and drain on paper towels, to absorb any excess oil.

Braising

This method is very similar to Western braising. Stir-fry the ingredients, then add stock, and cook over a low heat. Thicken the sauce at the end of cooking.

Chopsticks

These are long wooden or plastic sticks used not only for eating but also for cooking, as they can be used to stir, whip and beat the food. They can be bought in most cookware stores and from many Chinese restaurants.

GARNISHES

Chinese food must please the eye as well as the palate. The dishes can be intricately garnished with delicately cut vegetables, adding color as well as a finishing touch. The garnishes can be as simple or elaborate as you wish, depending on time and patience. The more simple garnishes could be sprigs of

fresh herbs or chopped herbs such as cilantro, chervil or chives, thin shreds of scallion, chili, lemon zest, slices of radish, or twists of lime or lemon slices.

Scallion brushes

Trim the green top, and remove the white part. Shred the green end finely, leaving 1 inch intact. Place in iced water until the cut end opens out and curls. This can also be done for short lengths of celery and chilies, cutting the end opposite the stalk.

Radishes

For radish roses, trim the ends; then hold the knife flat against the radish skin and make short vertical cuts around the sides, as if to shave off the outer skin, but without detaching each "petal." Plunge straight into iced water to open out.

Carrot flowers

Scrub and peel the carrot. Using a small, sharp knife, make about 5 or 6 tiny V-shaped cuts along the length of the carrot. Then cut the carrot into slices: the V-shapes will insure that each slice looks like a flower.

Cucumber

Cut a piece of cucumber about 1 inch long, and divide this in half lengthways, leaving you with two semi-circles. Lay one of these pieces of cucumber cut side down, and, using a sharp knife, cut thin slices along the length to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the end. Carefully turn over alternate slices until they are doubled over, and tuck in. Place in iced water until required.

Tomatoes

For tomato roses, peel off the skin of a tomato, using a sharp knife, in one long strip. Curl the skin into a circle.

ADDED EXTRAS

In addition to the staple ingredients shown in this section, there are some delicious Chinese sauces you can add while cooking your dish, or just before serving it, which will enhance its authentic flavor. Here are a few suggestions:

Bean sauce

Black and yellow bean sauces are used for flavoring dishes or as a condiment. They are both made from ground salted soya beans mixed with flour and spices.

Chili sauce

A very hot sauce made from chilies, salt and vinegar, usually sold in bottles. Use sparingly – you can always add more if the taste is too mild. Tabasco sauce can be used as a substitute.

Hoisin sauce

Also known as barbecue sauce, this is made from soya beans and seasonings. It is sold in jars ready made, and will keep for several months in the refrigerator after it has been opened.

Sesame seed oil

Sesame seed oil has a strong flavor, and is used for flavoring rather than for frying, particularly as it tends to burn. Add in small quantities to salad dressings and sauces, or sprinkle lightly over food before serving.

Straw mushrooms

These are small, smooth, oval-shaped mushrooms, which are usually available in cans. Button mushrooms can be used as a substitute.

Tofu

Made from puréed soya beans, this is white, with a soft cheese-like texture, and is sold in blocks, either fresh or vacuum-packed. It is high in protein and low in fat which makes it an invaluable vegetarian food. Although it has a bland flavor, it blends well with other ingredients and absorbs the flavor of spices and sauces. It is also available smoked.

Water chestnuts

Available fresh or in cans, these are white with a satisfyingly crunchy texture. They will keep in the refrigerator in a small bowl covered in water for up to 7 days, if you change the water each day. They are particularly good for adding texture to stir-fried dishes.

Wonton skins or wrappers

These are made from flour, egg and water. They can be deep-fried on their own, and served with a dipping sauce, or filled, then deep-fried, steamed or boiled. Buy them ready-made or make your own (see page 22). Layers of filo pastry make a reasonable substitute. They can be kept frozen for up to 6 months.

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Chinese cooking is ideal for vegetarian tastes; many of its traditional dishes use a wide range of vegetables, noodles and rice as well as beans, lentils, nuts and fruit, and the Chinese have devised many delicious uses for these versatile and nutritious ingredients. This book selects 30 of the best vegetarian Chinese recipes, from soups and appetizers to rice and noodle dishes, which are delicately flavored and use colorful ingredients that make the dish as good to look at as it is to eat. Suitable for all tastes and appetites, these recipes will add interest to any meal, from family snacks to dinner parties, and all are explained clearly and illustrated in color with step-by-step photographs. A final section explains the basics of Chinese cuisine, including ingredients, techniques and equipment.



SHOOTING STAR PRESS

ISBN 1-57335-002-8



9781573350020

01/12/2017 12:08-3

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