

My friend Ana Matos told me that she likes Chinese food but she couldn't find a good Chinese restaurant in Portugal. She asked me to teach her how to cook Chinese dishes. The only requirement was that she didn't want me to give her a specific recipe. She wanted to know the essence of Chinese cooking. Then she could customize it to her styles.

Good morning, Mr. Toastmaster, Fellow Toastmasters, and welcome guests.

Today I'll show you my way of Chinese cooking. Some of my western friends thought Chinese cooking is complicated. The truth is, most of the time, Chinese cooking is simple and fast, especially in my kitchen as simplicity is always my life style.



There are many spices in Chinese cooking, but I use the following three spices the most.

- Ginger
- Green onion
- Garlic

I have some rules to use these three spices. All of them can be used for cooking meat. I use ginger and green onions for white meat, ginger and garlic for red meat.

Usually I only use green onion and garlic for vegetables.

I use garlic for strong flavored vegetables, like celery and spinach, and green onion for mild flavored vegetables, like baby bok choy, zucchini, and bean sprouts. They are just my rules. You can decide which spice you want to add. If you like garlic, you can add garlic in all of your dishes. It's a very personal choice.

3 March 15, 2011

2 sauces

- Soy sauce
 - Light
 - Dark
- vinegar



Photos from online

I use two main sauces in my cooking.

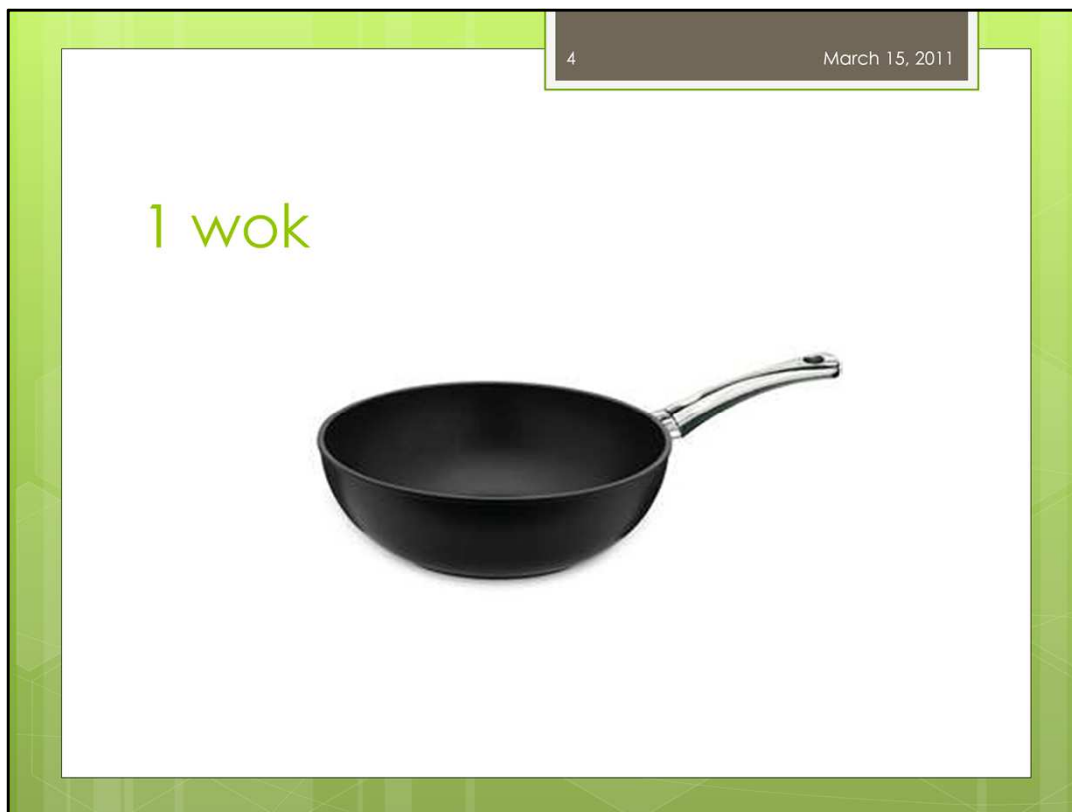
First is soy sauce. There are two kinds of soy sauces.

Light soy sauce is a thin, lighter brown soy sauce. It is the main soy sauce used for seasoning, since it is saltier, has less noticeable color, and also adds a distinct flavor.

Dark soy sauce is a darker and slightly thicker soy sauce. It has a richer, slightly sweeter, and less salty flavor than light soy sauce.

For a dish, you can use either dark or light soy sauce. They will give the dish different appearance and taste. I am showing you Chinese fried noodle. The left one used dark soy sauce. The right one used light soy sauce. Which one is better? It's a personal choice. In my family, my husband likes dark color; I prefer light color; and my son likes both. Sometimes I mix the light soy sauce and dark soy sauce to cook.

The second sauce is vinegar. I use Chinese black rice vinegar.



I like to use a wok to cook Chinese dish because it's big and deep enough to stir during stir frying. If you don't have a wok, don't bother to buy a wok. Just use a big pan.

Basic Cooking step

1. Choose ingredients
 - Vegetables + meat/tofu
2. Wash and cut
3. Stir fry
4. Add salt and other sauces

Here is my cooking steps.

1. First, I check my refrigerator to look what I have. I usually choose one to three vegetables and meat or tofu for one dish so that there is an interesting variety of flavors, textures, and colors. I can't tell which vegetable must go with which one, but I have a basic rule for choosing ingredients: different colors and similar textures. For example, I may choose bean sprouts, green bell peppers and pork for a dish, or Napa cabbage, celery, and dried tofu. I only use fresh vegetables and meat.
2. Second, wash the vegetables and cut them into small pieces. You can slice or cube the ingredients. I always keep all the ingredients in the similar shapes. For example, if I am cooking Napa cabbage and green bell pepper, I would cut them all into small squares. If I have meat ingredients, I will marinate the meat at this step.
3. The third step is to stir- fry. For traditional Chinese cooking, we heat the oil to a high temperature and add the ingredients to cook. It's very easy to make the kitchen sticky. Meanwhile, my son is oversensitive to the cooking noise. As a result, I use the following ways to stir- fry. Turn on the stove at the medium heat. Drizzle the oil down the sides of the wok. Add spices and meat (if you have meat ingredients) into the wok. Cover the wok with a lid. Turn the heat to high until the meat is almost well done. Turn the heat to low. Add vegetables and cover the wok. Turn the heat to medium until the dish is done. The cooking time depends on what textures you like. For example, a crunchy celery dish need less time than a tender celery dish. I have a tip for stir- frying. To use less oil, I add a little bit of water after I put the vegetables

into the wok.

I add salt and other sauces into the dish before I serve the dish. This can decrease the salt consumption.

Dishes from Yiling's Kitchen



Red bell pepper, green bell pepper, and eggs

Dishes from Yiling's Kitchen



Celery, asparagus, and pork

Dishes from Yiling's Kitchen



Eggplant, leek, and pork

References

- <http://chinesefood.about.com/od/cookingtechniques/p/chinesecooking.htm>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soy_sauce#Chinese_soy_sauce