

Easy Recipes

Easy Chinese

我爱中国菜

吉璋 编著



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About the Author

The author is many things to many people: philosopher, diplomat, social activist. In his private hours, he is a gourmet, and a connoisseur of the finer things in life. Professionally, he has devoted many years to the study of international affairs and has become a leading expert in the field. He graduated from Fudan University, and completed his PhD courses at Harvard University. Once awarded the title of Outstanding Young Teacher, he also took part in the design of Shanghai International Conference Centre. Being the President of an international media group, he also holds important positions in the Shanghai Gastronomy Association, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, China International Public Relations Association, and the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese.

The author of this book has had many rich experiences in life, from working in coal mines to studying in some of the best universities in the world, and has showcased his talents in many fields.

Preface

Lao Zi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, once said, “Governing a great nation is much like cooking a small fish.”

From the art of cooking, the philosopher learned the principle of governing a state. Though seemingly unrelated fields, cooking and governing share one common tenet — don’t stir it too often.

Food is an essential part of Chinese culture. Cooking Chinese food, one can taste the delicacies of China, acquaint oneself better with its culture, and feel the inspiration drawn from learning more about this millennia old civilization.

In terms of cuisine, there is a considerable difference between China and the West. Chinese cuisine can be much more individualized and impulsive than Western cuisine. Although there are recipes to follow, cooks frequently adjust the seasonings and even ingredients they use, according to the preferences and wishes of their customers, which makes each dish creatively unique. Take the cold dish Flavored Cucumber as an example. The flavor of this simple, cold dish differs from place to place, depending on local tastes. People in Shanxi Province (in North China) like vinegar, so they will add more vinegar to the dish; people in Sichuan Province (in southern China) prefer spicy foods, so naturally they will prepare this dish with more chilies; people in Jiangsu Province (in eastern China) enjoy sweet foods, and therefore sugar will be the seasoning of choice for this dish. Though the style of cuisine may vary from place to place, the pursuit of taste remains the main aim of every region.

Familiar with recipes that list specified quantities of ingredients, Westerners may feel confused when running into units of measurement such as “a pinch of”, or “to taste” in Chinese recipes. How-

ever, this is merely a reflection of the flexibility and creativity used in the art of Chinese cooking. Cooks can add their own desired flavors to the dishes using the recipes as a base; by cooking this way each dish will end up being a unique creation.

Thanks to globalization, a growing number of Chinese are now enjoying Western-style food; at the same time Chinese food is enjoying wider popularity among people in the West. For some, Chinese cuisine may appear to be rather exotic and mysterious. Actually, for most Chinese dishes the ingredients and seasonings are simple and readily available; the preparation of the dish itself is also relatively easy. You don't need to be Chinese to cook a tasty Chinese meal!

Hopefully, this book can introduce foreigners to the wonderful diversity of Chinese food, and offer them a glimpse into Chinese culture.

The editor
August 28, 2009

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Qiángbàn huángdòu yá

* 炆拌黄豆芽 (Soybean Sprouts Dressed with Hot Oil)

Ingredients:

250g soybean sprouts; 1 carrot; 2 sprigs of coriander; 10 pieces of Chinese prickly ash; 1/2 tbsp oil; 1 tsp salt; sesame oil to taste

Directions:

1. Thoroughly rinse the soybean sprouts. Peel the carrot and shred finely. Wash the coriander and cut into 3cm long sections.
2. Boil some water in a saucepan. Add the soybean sprouts and blanch for 1 minute, then drain. Blanch the shredded carrot for 20 seconds, and then drain.
3. Place the soybean sprouts, carrot, and coriander into a big bowl. Add the salt and sesame oil, and mix well.
4. Heat the oil and add in the Chinese prickly ash for flavor. Add the oil to the vegetables when hot. Mix well and serve.





Tips

Lao Zi Says...

The Chinese philosopher Lao Zi, who is estimated to have lived between 580 BC and 500 BC, once said: "Governing a great nation is much like cooking a small fish." He meant that governing a country required just the right amount of seasoning and care for successful results. This metaphor illustrates the significance that food occupies in Chinese culture.

Liángbànmù'ěr

* 凉拌木耳 (Cold Dressed Wood Ear Mushroom)

Ingredients:

A handful of wood ear mushrooms; half each: garlic, red and yellow pepper; 1 tbsp white vinegar; 1 tbsp mature vinegar; salt to taste; 1 tsp sugar; 1 tsp chili oil; 1/4 tsp sesame oil

Directions:

1. Soak the wood ear mushrooms in warm water and add some cornstarch to clean them.
2. Heat water in a pot over high heat. Bring to the boil. Blanch the wood ear mushrooms for three minutes. Remove, add cold water and then drain.
3. Tear the wood ear mushrooms into small pieces. Seed the peppers and remove the pedicels and then cut them into 4cm long fine strips. Grate the garlic.
4. Place the wood ear mushrooms, peppers, and garlic into a big bowl. Add the white vinegar, mature vinegar, salt, sugar, chili oil and sesame oil. Blend until mixed well, and then serve.





Tips

Order of Courses in a Chinese Meal

There is an order to follow when it comes to serving a Chinese meal. In a normal meal, cold dishes are the first to be served, followed by hot dishes, main dishes, desserts and soups, and lastly, fruits. Salty desserts should be combined with salty soups, and sweet desserts with sweet soups.

Jiāoxiānghǎidàisī

* 椒香海带丝 (Cold Dressed Seaweed Strips with Peppers)

Ingredients:

200g seaweed; 1 chili; 1/2 green pepper; 1/2 red pepper; 3 garlic cloves; 1/2 tsp salt; 1 tsp sugar; 1 tbsp vinegar; 1/2 tsp light soy sauce; 1/2 tsp sesame oil

Directions:

1. Seed the chili, green and red peppers and cut them into fine strips. Soak in water for 10 minutes or until the strips become curly. Rinse the seaweed and cut it into fine strips. Grate the garlic.
2. Heat water in a pot and bring it to the boil. Add the seaweed strips and blanch for 2 minutes. Then soak in cold water, remove, and drain.
3. Place the seaweed, peppers, chili and garlic in a bowl. Add the salt, sugar, vinegar and sesame. Mix well and serve.