

Chinese Food Culture and History

China was an agricultural country in the ancient time. Plenty of vegetables of any kinds, pigs, poultries, fruits and sea-foods are easily found in this world largest area. Chinese chefs have no difficulty to obtain the fresh ingredients to prepare their delicious dishes. Having a long history and culture, some of the Chinese cuisines are influenced by the Palace dishes which were created by the Palace chefs in order to please the individual Emperors. Chinese cuisine is now as a glistering pearl in the food-world. The Chinese has a long history as food connoisseurs. Its rich range of styles, ceaseless improvement, and the unlimited wealth of dishes, plus skilful cooking technique, Chinese food provides a lifetime of discovery with something for everyone , every time.

Food is very important in our life. The richer people are even willing to spend on the delicious foods. Meantime, people are also looking for the foods which can improve their health and longer life. Essentially, Chinese cooking technique is emphasized on YING and YANG balance so the healthy foods are created.

China has extensive land and rich resources. Geography wise, the great contrast in conditions from sub-tropical in the south to the sub-artic in the north, thus created varying lifestyles and as a result, varying eating habits. Generally Chinese cuisine is divided into four main regional groups: Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western. Each group has its own distinctive quality and unique cooking style.

The Characteristic of Chinese Cuisines

The delicious taste of the Chinese food becomes acceptable and well known all over the world. People would be so pleasant to enjoy the various Chinese dishes. "Good Looking", "Good Smelling" and "Good Tasting" are the three major requirements for successfully cooking, and I like to share my experience with you in this Journal.

" Good Looking" The Chinese food emphasizes a sense of beauty. In Chinese cooking, the selection of ingredients is fastidious; the complement of colours of the ingredients provides a pleasurable effect. Properly matched ingredients together with seasoning components to cook an attractive beautiful dish, help to stimulate the appetite.

"Good Smelling" Controlling the cooking temperature, not only that various ingredients have thoroughly cooked, but also to display their aroma. Adding of ginger, green onion, garlic, chilli or pepper to the cooking, will increase the fragrant of the food. This will facilitate the desirous of EAT.

"Good Tasting" The freshness of ingredients, plus proper use of seasoning components, are the key point for a delicious Chinese dish. There are not too many seasoning components in the cooking recipe, and some seasoning components are quite often in used for many different tasty

dishes. This is the secret of how to balance the seasoning components incorporate with the fresh ingredients. Understand the characteristic of individual seasoning components is also helpful.

Last but not the least, once you understand the importance of “Good Looking”, “Good Smelling” and “Good Tasting” concept, you may very easily to cook and enjoy a beautiful, good smelling and super delicious Chinese dish.

LMT Chinese Cooking School Recommendation

(A) Fried Prawns in Spicy Sauce (Gan Shao Ming Xia 干燒明蝦)

Prawn (蝦 HA in Cantonese pronounce, means laughing and cheerful), which becomes lustre beautiful pink colour after cooking, and also contains high proteins, is a symbolic food of “HAPPINESS”. It is always considered as a kind of high grade food, and is quite often used in the Chinese Banquets or ordinary meal.

Fried Prawns in Spicy Sauce is a dish of Szechwan taste, but with addition of tomato sauce (Ketchup) which has been used as a kind of seasoning condiments in the South China for long times. Therefore, the taste of this dish, with spicy but also sweet and sour, is very special and very delicious. Everybody will enjoy it. You are also able to cook it at home if you follow my recipe.

Ingredients

1 pound	uncooked prawn (large raw shrimp), shell on, headless
2 slice	ginger, finely chopped
2 clove	garlic, chopped
1 stalk	green onion (scallion), diced
1 stalk	coriander, (for garnish)
1 pc	cucumber

Prawn Marinade

1/3 teaspoon	salt
	A pinch of ground white pepper
3/4 tablespoon	corn starch

Seasoning

3/4 tablespoon	Chinese cooking wine or dry sherry
2-3 teaspoon	chilli bean sauce (to taste)
3 tablespoon	tomato sauce (Ketchup)
2 teaspoon	light soy sauce
1 1/2 teaspoon	sugar
4-6 tablespoon	water
	A pinch of ground white pepper
	Few drops sesame oil

Method

- (1) Trim the prawns slit down center back and remove the black vein. Rinse and pat dry. Put the prawns in a bowl, add the prawn marinade, and then marinate in the refrigerator for 15 minutes or longer.
- (2) Combine all the seasoning ingredients in a bowl. Set aside.
- (3) Cut the cucumber in half lengthwise, slice and arrange over in a circle around the platter.
- (4) Heat the wok over high heat when hot, add some oil, add the prawns, reduce the heat to moderate, stir fry for 1-2 minute or until change to pink colour and lightly brown on both sides. Then add the ginger, garlic and green onion. Stir well. Add the seasoning mixture. Cover and cook about 30 second to 1 minute. Remove the lid; and stir fry until the liquid almost dry. Transfer to the center of platter which containing the sliced cucumber. Garnish with coriander and serve.

Tips

- (1) The prawns are cooked with shell and leave the head on, as is the traditional method done in China, so the prawns are more tasty; but you have to cut off the pointed tip if you keep the shell and head on, or cook without shell and head.
- (2) You can also use the frozen, uncooked, deveined, and shell on prawns.
- (3) More spicy taste may be obtained at your desired by adding dried red chilli crust.



(B) (Shuang Dong Mun Ji 雙冬炆雞)

Chicken is one of the most popular ingredients in Chinese cuisine. In restaurants, and especially for a formal dinner, people often include at least one dish with chicken in the menu. There is even a Chinese proverb saying that “there is no banquet without a chicken”!

Black mushrooms and bamboo shoot add more flavour and some texture to the dish. When combined with braised chicken, they offer an interesting colour contrast and an exceptional tasty Cantonese meal.

Ingredients

1 pound	chicken meat or chicken thighs, cut into chunk
6 pc	Dry black mushroom, soaked
3 oz	bamboo shoot, sliced
2 pc	shallot, chopped
1 clove	garlic, chopped
1 stalk	green onion (scallion), sectioned
1 slice	ginger, chopped
Few pieces	lettuce for bedding

Chicken marinade

¼ teaspoon	salt
½ teaspoon	sugar
2 tablespoon	light soy sauce
1 tablespoon	corn starch
	A pinch of ground white pepper

Seasoning

2 teaspoon	light soy sauce
¼ teaspoon	sugar
½ tablespoon	Chinese cooking wine or dry sherry
¼ teaspoon	salt
¾ cup	water
	A pinch of ground white pepper
	Few drops of sesame oil

Thickening: Dissolves 1 teaspoon cornstarch with 2 tablespoon cold water in a bowl

Method

- (1) Soak the dry mushrooms in water until soft. Cut the caps in half. Set aside but retain the soaking liquid for further purpose.
- (2) Cut the chicken into chunk, then put in a bowl and add the chicken marinade, mix well. Add some water and some oil (about 1 tablespoon). Cover and marinate in the refrigerator about 20 minutes or longer.
- (3) Mix all the seasoning ingredients in a bowl. Set aside.

- (4) Heat the wok on high heat, add some oil (about 2 tablespoon); when the oil is hot, stir fry the shallot and garlic until fragrant. Then add the chicken and stir fry for a while. Stir in the bamboo shoot, mushroom together with the mushroom liquid and the seasoning mixture. Bring to boil. Reduce the heat to medium. Cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes. In between stir one or two more times. Remove the lid, continue stir fry until the chicken is done and the sauce is slightly thickened. If necessary, thicken with cornstarch solution. Garnish with green onion and transfer to the serving plate which is bedded with lettuce. Serve.

Tips

- (1) Medium size dry black mushrooms are commonly used. Rinse the mushrooms before soaking. Add enough water to cover the mushrooms and soak until soft. Remove the hard part of stem if necessary. Hot water can be used to speed up the soaking time (soaking about 20 minutes).
- (2) The bamboo shoot for this recipe is in cans in water. After opening, refrigerate in covered container of water. Change water every day and will keep about one week. Best to blanch the bamboo shoot in boiling water for few seconds, then rinse in cold water before using.
- (3) Time of simmering depends on the size of chicken.
- (4) More delicious taste may obtain by replacing the chicken meat with chicken wing.

