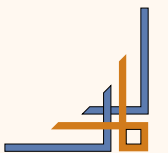
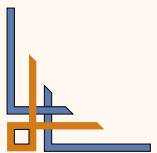


THE GRINNELL STUDENT'S -
GUIDE TO -

Chinese Cooking

A CULINARY CAPSULE -



Preface

This book was created as a final project for Professor Feng's Chinese Food for Thought class, in the final spring term of 2021. As a group, we were all located in different areas of the country—Grinnell (Ethan), New Orleans (Claudia), and Minneapolis/St. Paul (Kat). Despite the distance, we knew we wanted to create a tangible and practical project that reflected the themes and lessons introduced throughout our class, which is why the idea of a cookbook seemed like the perfect fit.

Some of the recipes included here are more commonly found in urban centers with a large Chinese diaspora, some of them are Chinese home cooking, and some are Chinese American in style. As we've learned in this class, Chinese food is very hard to pin down, looks different based on country, and authenticity is subjective at best—this book reflects that complexity.

We want this book to be useful to future Grinnellians. All of us have dealt with the unique frustration of trying to locate good food, let alone good Chinese food, in Grinnell. Because of this, our book features recipes that use ingredients that are found at Grinnell grocery stores,

substituting rarer ingredients like Sichuan peppercorns or fermented tofu in favor of more easily found ingredients. We recognize that cooking in a dorm presents its own unique challenges, so we've pared down the technical aspects of these recipes, or modified them if they originally called for more complex kitchen gadgets.

The recipes included here are by no means a complete introduction to Chinese and Chinese American cuisine—that would be impossible. We've selected these recipes because they balance the fine line between accessible to make, not found at Chuong garden (for the most part), and representative of the complexities of Chinese and Chinese-American cuisine. We included recipes that were quick to make, keeping in mind time constraints and the energy it takes to cook in college.

While we can't promise authenticity or perfection, we believe these recipes will satisfy any curiosity or craving that the typical Grinnell student will have in regards to exploring Chinese cooking.

The Chinese Exclusion Act and Cuisine

The first legal measures meant to remove and exclude Chinese immigrants from the United States began in California from the 1850s to the 1870s. Fueled by racial and economic resentment, these laws ranged from the requirement of special licenses for Chinese businesses and workers to prevention of naturalization. These laws violated the U.S.'s 1868 Burlingame-Seward Treaty with China, allowing the federal government to negate many of these discriminatory laws ("The Burlingame-Seward Treaty, 1868").

The 1868 treaty, which the U.S. initially used to gain access to trade opportunities and spread Christianity throughout Asia, allowed the Chinese the right to free immigration and travel within the United States ("Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts"). In 1879, advocates for immigration restriction succeeded in passing anti-immigration legislation in Congress. The bill, which aimed to limit the number of Chinese immigrants, was vetoed by President Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes would later seek to revise the Burlingame-Seward Treaty with China, in which China agreed to limit Immigration to the U.S. The new 1880 Angell Treaty permitted the US to restrict, but not entirely prohibit, Chinese immigration.

The Chinese Exclusion Act and Cuisine

This new treaty would later lead to the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that suspended the immigration of Chinese Laborers for 10 years. Congress would later pass the 1888 Scott Act, which banned Chinese immigrants from reentry into the U.S. after visiting China. The exclusion act was renewed with the passage of the Geary Act in 1902, which expanded the bill's coverage to Hawaii and the Philippines.

However, there were exceptions to these laws. In 1915, restaurants were added to the list of businesses through which Chinese business owners could receive special merchant visas (Godoy). These visas would then allow the holder to travel to China and bring back employees. Recipients needed to be major investors in a high-grade fancy eatery and were required to manage the restaurant full time for at least a year. During this time, they could not participate in any menial labor such as cooking, waiting tables, or ringing up guests. The addition of restaurants to the visa list contributed to a massive increase in the number of Chinese restaurants in the U.S., with the number of restaurants doubling between 1910 and 1920. The number would double again from 1920 to 1930.



Large chop suey restaurants were a favorite of immigrating Chinese investors, with the restaurant management rotating between investors every year or 18 months to fulfill the visa requirements. The legacies of these laws and their impacts are still felt around the country today; Chinese American restaurants are still extremely popular, numerous, and continue to flourish.

Essential Ingredients Available at



Grinnell Grocery Stores

SPICES

- Star anise
- White pepper
- MSG
- Chinese five spice powder
- Cajun seasoning

LIQUIDS/SAUCES

- Rice vinegar
- Chinese rice wine
- Hoisin sauce
- Oyster sauce
- Light soy sauce
- Soy sauce
- Sesame oil
- Fish sauce
- Beef bouillon

Recipe Rating Guide



Level 1: Easy/Beginner

Anyone with little to no cooking experience can attempt this recipe with sure success.



Level 2: Medium

Some cooking and/or baking experience would be helpful for this recipe.



Level 3: More Challenging

While all of these recipes are manageable for a college cook to complete, regular cooking and/or baking expertise would be helpful for this recipe. This recipe also may require more time and attention to detail.

Street Food



Street food and urbanization have been linked throughout history, and can be traced back through centuries over many different cultures. Generally, street food was purchased by the poorer members of society because they didn't have kitchens in their homes. Street food in ancient China however was originally bought by servants and then brought home to the wealthy family members to eat. Chinese street food ranges from fried meats doughs to sweeter dessert items, and the experience of eating street food while walking around in China is hard to replicate, especially in the rural cornfields of Iowa. We include this recipe for tanghulu to help summon some of the street food experience.

Tanghulu, sometimes called bing tanghulu, originated in northern China. According to folk legend, hawthorne berries covered in sugar were used as a medicine to treat illness. Tanghulu appears in the written records as early as the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE). Hawthorne berries are still used, but it is not uncommon to find vendors covering strawberries, kiwis, or even blueberries in sugar and selling it as tanghulu. These sugar covered fruit skewers can be found at the street corners of most major cities, especially in the North as the cooler temperatures provide the ideal surrounding for the sugar to set and stay crunchy.

Tanghulu

Ingredients

Strawberries, washed and thoroughly dried

Granulated Sugar

Water

Skewers

1. Stack 3-5 strawberries on each skewer
2. Bring water and sugar mixture to a boil over medium-high heat
3. Continue to boil the sugar until it's visibly bubbling in the pan. You can test the temperature by dipping a spoon into cold ice water and then dipping the spoon into the syrup. If it hardens immediately, then you have reached the proper temperature.
4. Take each skewer and coat the fruit in the sugar syrup mixture. Make sure each piece is properly coated, but don't take too long or the sugar will start to harden. If needed, you can use a spoon to baste the strawberries with the sugar.
5. Place coated skewers on an oiled plate.
6. Skewers can be eaten almost immediately.



Bao

Bao are thought to have originated in Northern China where wheat is the staple crop rather than rice. Like many traditional Chinese dishes, bao are so old that it is difficult to pin down its exact origins. Bao are generally considered the stuffed version of mantou, a plain steamed wheat bun. There are a wide variety of fillings for bao, with xiaolong soup dumplings and char siu bao being some of the more recognizable in the west. The buns generally range in size from smaller dim sum buns to larger fist-sized bun. Bao can often be found at Chinese bakeries, dim sum restaurants, and street vendors.

We are including two variations of bao, a plain version that is also known as mantou, which can be steamed and then filled with various fillings after the fact, and steamed barbecue pork buns that come filled.



Fluffy Steamed Buns

Ingredients

250 g or 2 cups all-purpose/plain flour
1 teaspoon active dry yeast
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking powder
1 tablespoon sugar, or to taste
130 ml lukewarm water

Note: To steam without a steamer basket, fill a medium pot with 1/2 inch of water, place three golf ball-sized balls of aluminum foil on the bottom, rest a heat-proof plate on top of the foil balls, cover the pot, and bring the water to a boil. Add buns to the plate and proceed as usual.

1. Mix flour, yeast, baking powder, and sugar. Add water gradually. Mix until no more loose flour can be seen. Combine and knead briefly into a dough. Leave to rest for 10 minutes (covered). Knead again until very smooth. If using a stand mixer knead on slow speed until a smooth dough forms.
2. Divide the dough into 6 pieces (4 pieces if you prefer bigger buns). Knead and fold the dough piece towards the center of the ball resulting in a smooth outer surface. Rotate the ball between your hands to form a slightly raised shape
3. Place the buns in the steamer basket (line with steamer parchment paper or brush a thin layer of oil to avoid sticking). Make sure to leave ample space between each bun.
4. Leave to rest uncovered for around 30 minutes. Well-rested buns should be slightly bigger (not double the size) and very smooth on the surface. When pressed gently, the dough bounces back.
5. Place the steaming basket onto a pot/wok filled with cold water. Boil water over high heat.
6. Turn down to medium-low once the water is at a full boil. Steam for 10 minutes (add 2 mins if your buns are bigger). Serve warm.

Scallion Pancakes



The exact origins of Chinese scallion pancakes, or cong-you-bing, are difficult to pin down given how long it has been a part of Chinese cuisine. One of the more widely accepted theories is that the dish originated in the large Indian community in Shanghai due to the dish's similarity with Indian flatbreads such as paratha and naan. One popular legend regarding the dish is that Marco Polo missed the pancakes so much that he asked Italian chefs to prepare something similar, resulting in what would become pizza.

Regardless of the validity of these speculations and legends, scallion pancakes remain a popular street food throughout much of China and Taiwan. While traditional scallion pancakes consist of leavened bread made from wheat flour layered with scallion onions, lard, and salt, other versions sometimes include eggs, seafood, and other spices. Our version is more traditional and swaps lard for roux made of flour and oil. Vegetable shortening would also work well.

Scallion Pancakes

Ingredients

DOUGH

- 1 ⅛ cup all-purpose flour
- Generous pinch salt
- ½ cup warm water
- ½ teaspoon peanut oil or other neutral oil

UNCOOKED ROUX

- 1 ½ tablespoons oil
- Heaping ⅛ cup all-purpose flour
- Generous pinch salt

FILLING

- 1 bunch scallions, finely chopped
- Oil



Scallion Pancakes

1. In a mixing bowl, mix 1 ⅓ cups flour, salt, and warm water with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula until a sticky dough forms. The dough should be sticky, but not wet. You can add up to a tablespoon more flour if you feel the dough is really wet.
2. Use a teaspoon of oil to coat the top of the dough round. Don't worry about the dough sticking to the bowl for now. Cover with plastic wrap and let rest for 1 to 2 hours.
3. Make the flour and oil roux by combining 1 ½ tablespoons of oil, heaping ⅓ cup of flour, and salt. Set aside.
4. After the dough has rested, use a teaspoon or two of oil to coat your work surface. Divide the dough into 4 equal pieces and roll each piece out lengthwise into a long strip. Take about ¼ of the roux, and spread it across the entire length of the dough. Take ¼ cup of the chopped scallions, and spread them evenly across the length of the dough.
5. Tightly roll the dough into a log, folding and tucking in the edges every so often so you don't have any scallions leaking out of the sides.
6. Set aside and cover each log with a piece of plastic wrap to avoid drying out. Repeat for the other three pancakes.
7. Heat a pan over medium heat, and add 4 tablespoons of oil. Next, stand up each dough log on its end on your work surface. Flatten it with your hands or a rolling pin, so the dough round is about one-half-inch thick.
8. The pan should be hot enough so the dough is sizzling, but browning slowly. When the bottom is slightly browned (about 2 minutes), flip and brown other side.
9. Transfer the scallion pancake to a preheated oven at 350 degrees F, and let bake for another 5 minutes for more crisping.
10. Take the pancakes out of the oven and cut into wedges to serve. More salt can be sprinkled over the top if needed.

The Egg

Chinese cooking would not be without the egg. Chicken, duck, goose, and quail eggs can be found in numerous recipes throughout the cuisine. The egg has been an easy source of protein since the beginning of time. What came first, the chicken or the egg? Available throughout the nation, eggs are the cheapest and most accessible form of protein for poor families. This is not to say that it cannot be part of high cuisine for the wealthy.

Boiled, fried, poached, tea, lucky red, century, and marinated eggs are just the tip of the iceberg. The egg is incorporated into soups, rice, baked goods, and more. What can the egg NOT do?

As you continue to explore Chinese cooking, remember the egg is vital. It will impress you with its abilities to transform a dish. If you're able to find non-chicken eggs in Grinnell we encourage you to substitute those in the recipes to create new and different flavor profiles.

Fun Egg Fact: Red Egg and Ginger Parties are often hosted after a newborn's first month of life. Red eggs are given to guests representing fertility, luck, and unity.



While pickled ginger is meant to regain the body's balance after childbirth. This tradition has been celebrated for centuries. When infant mortality rates were high, the celebration was used as a means of saying, "The baby made it!" Now in the 21st century, the celebration is a presentation of the baby to family and friends. It is also not uncommon for parties to be hosted when the baby is 100 days old.

Fun Egg Fact: Egg balancing is practiced on Lichun, the 1st solar term of the Chinese calendar. Children often decorate eggs and try their best to balance them. On this day, usually February 4th or 5th, the center of the sun passes directly over the equator.

Tea Eggs

Also called cha ye dan (literally meaning tea leaf egg), tea eggs are a street food common in China and in Chinese diasporic communities. Like many street foods, their exact origin is unclear or not recorded.

Tea eggs are distinct for the marbled design that appears through the cracks in the egg shell. Many recipes use five spice powder, but ours is a version that uses whole versions of the star anise, cinnamon, and other spices, which ideally leads to a fuller flavor.

Original recipes call for Sichuan peppercorns which have their own distinct taste, but due to how difficult it is to get Sichuan peppercorns in most areas of the United States, we have omitted the Sichuan peppercorns and substituted coriander and black peppercorns. This substitution will not yield the exact same taste, but it is a close second.



Tea Eggs

Ingredients

4-6 eggs
1 slice ginger
1 ½ pieces star anise
½ cinnamon stick
1 bay leaf
1 tablespoon black tea leaves or tea bag
equivalent
¼ teaspoon coriander seeds
¼ teaspoon black pepper corns
1 ½ tablespoons light soy sauce
½ teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon rice wine, gin, or grape juice
3 ½ cups water

1. Bring the eggs to room temperature by leaving them out of refrigerator for a couple hours.
2. While the eggs are warming, prepare the sauce base by adding the rest of the ingredients to a medium pot. Bring the mixture to a boil, and then turn the heat down to a simmer. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Then turn off the heat, open the lid, set it aside, and let it cool completely.
3. Bring another pot of water to a boil for the eggs. Once boiling, gently and quickly lower the eggs into the boiling water using a large spoon. Avoid dropping them and cracking them on the bottom of the pot. Let the eggs cook in the boiling water for 7 minutes. Once the 7 minutes are up, turn off the heat, quickly scoop out the eggs, and transfer to an ice bath. Allow them to sit in the ice bath until they are completely cool to the touch.
4. Once the eggs are cooled, lightly crack the egg shells. The goal here is to make enough cracks to allow the flavor of the sauce base to seep into the egg. Use a spoon and be gentle.
5. Soak the cracked eggs in your sauce base for 24 hours in the refrigerator, making sure all the eggs are completely submerged in the sauce base. After 24 hours, they're ready. You can also soak them longer for a stronger flavor. These eggs last for 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator.

Tomato Egg Drop Soup

Tomato egg drop soup is a staple in Chinese households. This soup combines eggs, tomatoes, green onions, chicken broth, and spices to make a tasty light appetizer. Because of the availability of tomatoes in the Summer, it is associated with the season and helped to replenish hydration with its saltiness. The soup was often made at the beginning of the day and left to cool for lunch and dinner. Egg drop soup has been popularized in Chinese-American restaurants across the United States as an appetizer. The tomato variation is unique in color, flavor, and texture taking the original to the next step.

Many Grinnellians love to spend their Summers in town doing research or enjoying the Iowa life. This soup is the perfect dish to diversify your cooking and take advantage of the farmer's market tomato selection. In less than 30 minutes you will have created a savory dish that will surely ignite hunger and impress your friends. Who said soup can't be a Summer staple?



Tomato Egg Drop Soup

Ingredients -

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 10 ounces tomatoes, cut into small chunks
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 2 cups water (or more chicken stock)
- 2 teaspoons light soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- Salt to taste
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 ½ teaspoons cornstarch, mixed with 2 tablespoons water
- 1 finely chopped scallion
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, optional

1. Heat the oil in a pot or wok over medium-low heat. Add the tomato chunks and stir-fry for 5 minutes until the tomatoes are softened and start to fall apart.
2. Add in the chicken stock, water, light soy sauce, sesame oil, ground white pepper, and salt to taste. Bring to a boil, and then lower the heat so that the soup is simmering with the lid on.
3. Quickly beat the egg in a small bowl and prepare the cornstarch slurry in a separate bowl.
4. Use a ladle to slowly swirl the soup in a whirlpool motion. Keep swirling as you pour in the cornstarch slurry until well incorporated. Now pour a thin stream of egg into the middle of the whirlpool as you slowly swirl the soup.
5. Serve hot or at room temperature. Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with chopped scallions and cilantro, if using.

Pork in Chinese Cuisine



For early Chinese people, the main source of meat was game and what was available in the rivers and oceans. While seafood reigned supreme, once the pig was domesticated it grew just as popular as seafood, and is now one of the most common meats in many Chinese dishes. In fact, pork and meat in Chinese can sometimes be synonymous.

Pigs were domesticated fairly early in Chinese agricultural history, around 5000 BC, and China currently raises a third of all the domesticated pigs in the world. There are a multitude of ways of cooking pork for Chinese meals, and every part of the animal is used, including its bristles (toothpicks, brushes), and blood (coagulated and fried).

Barbequed pork is considered an art form in Southern China, specifically the Guangdong region. This style of barbequed pork originates back when ovens were not common in China, so all meats had to be roasted over an open flame. This pork recipe will taste familiar to those who have eaten dim sum, or individual steamed pork buns, but this pork is also a key ingredient in the Yangzhou Fried Rice recipe. It is extremely versatile, and can be eaten hot or cold, used in soups, or dumplings, among other things. Adjust portions as needed.

Barbecue Pork

Ingredients

- ~1 pound lean boneless pork loin
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon dark soy sauce*
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey
- Generous pinch salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoons oyster sauce**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon gin
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon hoisin sauce
- Pinch white pepper
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon red miso***
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon five spice powder

1. Cut the pork into lengthwise strips 2 inches wide and 1 inch thick. Using a small knife, pierce the meat repeatedly every $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to tenderize it.
2. Line a roasting pan with foil. Disposable aluminum roasting pans can be found at the grocery store if you don't have one. Place the pork strips in a single layer at the bottom of the pan.
3. In a small bowl, mix all the other ingredients and pour over the strips. Coat the pork well and marinate for 4 hours or overnight in the refrigerator.
4. Heat the oven to broil. Place the roasting pan in the broiler about 4 inches from the heat and roast for 30 to 50 minutes. To test for doneness, remove one strip of pork after 30 minutes and slice it to see if it is cooked through. During the cooking., the pork should be basted five or six times and turned over 4 times. If the sauce dries out, add some boiling water to the pan. When the meat is cooked, remove from the pan, allow to cool, and refrigerate until ready to use.

*If you don't have dark soy sauce, you can make it by using a 1:1 ratio of soy sauce and molasses

**If you don't have oyster sauce, compensate by increasing the amount of soy sauce and hoisin sauce accordingly

***Original recipes call for half a cake red preserved bean curd, which can't be found in Grinnell. If you have it, feel free to substitute. If red miso can't be found, just supplement with more soy sauce



Steamed Barbecue Pork Buns

Ingredients

Barbecue Pork Recipe
Fluffy Steamed Bun Recipe

1. Make the Barbecue Pork according to the recipe on the previous pages.
2. Make the Fluffy Steamed Buns up to step 2
3. Shred the pork using forks
4. After the pork and bun dough have been prepared, separate the dough into six even pieces and roll out each piece into a circle using your hands. Each circle should be about one-half-inch thick.
5. Fill each dough circle with shredded pork, and shape the dough around the pork to create a round bun. How the bun looks and how it is closed is up to you, if you are a beginner it will be easiest to simply tuck the excess dough beneath the bun.
6. After making each bun, let them sit uncovered at room temperature for 30 minutes.
7. After the 30 minutes are up, place the buns into a greased steamer basket/alternative steaming system. Steam the buns for 10-12 minutes depending on size.
8. Buns can be eaten immediately, or frozen for a couple of weeks. If frozen, simply steam to reheat.

Fried Rice

Rice serves as the core element of essentially every Chinese meal, and while the grain was originally dominant in Southern China, it has become the overwhelming favorite carb of choice. To eat a meal in Chinese is literally to eat rice (chi fan), and the fan cai principle dictates that rice and another vegetable/meat component make a complete meal together.

Fried rice is familiar to any who has entered a Chinese restaurant in America, and fried rice could even be considered an emblem food of Chinese Cuisine. While we all have probably eaten some variation of fried rice, the recipe included in our book is a more complex take on the average leftover-filled fried rice that a home cook makes. Yangzhou fried rice is considered the gold standard of fried rice, and while many restaurants have it on their menus in name, few actually serve it correctly as it is intended. A distinguishing feature of Yangzhou fried rice is the proteins. Instead of being full of vegetables, this fried rice features shrimp, barbecue pork, and plenty of eggs. This recipe would be perfect for a celebratory meal or for someone looking to improve and broaden their fried rice-making skills.



Standard grocery store white rice will suffice for this recipe, though if you can find it we recommend long grain white rice. Since the best fried rice is made using day-old rice, and this recipe calls for Barbecue Pork, it is best if you have plenty of time set aside for the preparation. Making the rice itself will be fairly quick and easy once the appropriate preparations have been done.

Yangzhou Fried Rice

Ingredients

3 cups cooked rice cooled to room temperature

1 cup peanut oil or other neutral oil (not olive)

¼ pound shrimp shelled, deveined, and cut into ¼ inch pieces

3 eggs beaten with a pinch white pepper and ¼ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger

2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 cup BBQ pork (see page 1) cut into ½ inch cubes

3 scallions trimmed and finely sliced

SAUCE

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon dry cooking sherry

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon sugar

½ tablespoon oyster sauce

½ teaspoon sesame oil

Pinch of white pepper

1. Cook the rice, reserve.
2. Heat wok over high heat for 45 seconds. Add the peanut oil and heat to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. Add the shrimp and blanch them for 30 seconds. Turn off the heat remove the shrimp, drain, and reserve. Transfer the oil from the wok to a bowl and reserve.
3. Heat the wok on high heat for 10 seconds. Add the beaten eggs and scramble until medium soft. Turn off the heat and, with a spatula, cut the egg into small pieces. The egg will harden slightly as you do this. Remove and reserve.
4. Combine the sauce ingredients in a bowl and reserve.
5. Wipe off the walk and spatula with paper towels. Heat the walk over high heat for 20 seconds, return 2 tablespoons of the reserved peanut oil to the walk, and coat the walk with the oil using the spatula. When a wisp of white smoke appears, add the ginger and stir briefly. Add the garlic. When it turns light brown, add the pork. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the cooked rice. Cook, stirring well, for 2 minutes. Add the reserved shrimp and stir well. Stir the sauce, drizzle into the rice, and stir well.

Noodles in Chinese Cuisine



Noodles have been a staple of the Chinese diet for approximately 2000 years since the Han Dynasty. Known as mein or mian, noodles come in varying widths but tend to stay long. They represent longevity in one's life and it is considered unlucky to cut them. Wheat, rice, and cellophane noodles add a diversity to the very popular starch.

Wheat noodles are made with or without eggs and are the most common. They are easily recognizable because of their yellow color.

Ramen soups, popularly consumed by Grinnellians, are made with wheat noodles.

Rice noodles are made from rice flour, water, and salt. They are nicknamed "rice sticks" and should be soaked in hot water for 15 to 20 minutes before use.

Cellophane noodles are transparent and are made from ground mung bean paste. These are very good at absorbing the flavors of the food they are cooked with, and are ideal for soups and stir-fries.

Popular dishes with noodles in Chinese cooking include lo mein, chow mein, and noodle salads. Lo mein and chow mein have been popularized in Chinese American restaurants throughout the US.

Noodles are extremely versatile in the ways in which they are prepared for consumption. They can be eaten hot or cold and adapted to a variety of recipes. Noodles are not only popular in Chinese cuisine but across the world. Because of their popularity across cultures, we have chosen to include a recipe that embodies the worldly characteristic of the noodle, yakamein.

Yakamein

Yakamein, a regional Chinese American noodle soup, is best known in New Orleans amongst the Black community. The dish consists of spaghetti noodles, a cajun spiced soy-sauce broth, scallions, a boiled egg and most important, a source of protein. Variations include shrimp, pork, and beef. It's origins trace back to early menus found in Chicago, Illinois and Denver, Colorado although not spelled quite the same, yet-ca-mein. Yakamein, like chop suey, is one of the earlier Chinese-American dishes that were popularized in the early 20th century.

In New Orleans, this dish can be found at corner stores and Chinese American restaurants within the city limits. For no more than ten dollars, this tasty dish can cure your Sunday hangovers and prepare you for the week ahead. Although its origins are unclear, Yakamein has molded itself into the cuisine of the city. Yakamein is often used as a means to explain the various influences in creole cajun cuisine found in South Louisiana. The Black and Chinese Americans' lasting influences are represented in this small noodle dish.



Photo by Claudia Handal

As you prepare yourself to make this dish remember that unlike most traditional Chinese cooking, this recipe is very flexible and any of the ingredients can be substituted. The most important aspect of the dish that should remain is the broth's spiciness and saltiness. You are welcome to use udon or ramen noodles instead of spaghetti. Are you vegan or vegetarian? Scrap the egg and meat and use tofu! Yakamein is as versatile and fun as any New Orleans citizen.

Yakamein

Ingredients

12 oz top round steak or whatever substitute you would like (tofu, shrimp, chicken)
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

STEAK MARINADE

4 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
2 tablespoons brown sugar
2 teaspoons cajun seasoning

BROTH

2 cloves garlic , minced
4 cups Low Sodium Beef Broth(do not use Better than Bouillon as this will result in a salty broth)

NOODLE BOWL

8 oz spaghetti
2 eggs, boiled to the degree you prefer
2 green onions, chopped
Chili garlic sauce or your favorite hot sauce
Soy sauce

1. Combine all the marinade ingredients in a big plate or tray that is large enough to hold the steak. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the steak to the marinade and marinate for 1 to 2 hours. Flip the meat occasionally to make sure it is evenly marinated.
2. Cook the spaghetti according to the instructions on the package. Drain and set aside.
3. Heat the oil in a large pan over high heat until hot. Add the marinated steak and save the marinade liquid for later. Let it cook without moving until the bottom is charred, 2-3 minutes. Flip to brown the other side, another 2-3 minutes. The steak is done if you prefer a medium-rare texture. For a well-done steak, turn to medium-low heat and cook for another 2-3 minutes. Transfer the steak to a plate and let sit for at least 10 minutes before cutting.
4. Turn the heat to low while you add the garlic and cajun seasoning to the pan and saute until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Then add the leftover marinade and lightly scrape the bottom of the pan to release any brown bits.
5. Add the beef broth, stir all the ingredients, and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat.
6. Once the meat is fully rested, slice it into strips. Add half of the spaghetti to a big bowl. Pour 2 cups of beef broth over the noodles. Top with the sliced steak, boiled egg, and green onions. Serve with hot sauce and soy sauce on the side.

Acknowledgements

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