

Celebrate holiday with festive stir-fry dish

If you've already broken your New Year's resolutions, don't despair. There's another chance to start over on Sunday, Feb. 9. That marks the first day of Chinese lunar year 4684, the Year of the Tiger.

People born in the Year of the Tiger (1902, 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962 and 1974) are said to be sensitive, compassionate and considerate. However, being short-tempered, they can be powerful enemies.

Although they may appear relaxed, they are never truly at rest, always on the lookout and ready to pounce. Some well-known Tigers include Queen Elizabeth, Charles De Gaulle, Germaine Greer, Evel Knievel, Rudolph Nureyev and Marilyn Monroe.

In old China, and today in this country, the New Year is celebrated with a burst of firecrackers, colorful parades and feasting. Especially feasting. Though the menu changes from one household to another, you can be sure that all feasts will include a stir-fried family favorite, the most common method of Chinese cooking.

AS THE highlight of your special Chinese feast, choose Beef with Broccoli and Cherry Tomatoes, a festive main dish fragrant with the flavors of ginger, garlic and soy sauce. Quickly prepared in the traditional Chinese stir-fry method, the entrée is served over plenty of chow mein noodles.

Year of the Tiger

BEEF WITH BROCCOLI AND CHERRY TOMATOES

1/2 cup chicken broth
3 tbsp. soy sauce
3 tsp. dry sherry
1 1/2 tsp. corn starch
1/4 tsp. prepared ginger

1 lb. boneless beef, cut across grain into 2-inch strips
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 lb. broccoli flowerettes
1 (8-oz.) can sliced water chestnuts, drained
8 to 10 cherry tomatoes, halved
Chow mein noodles

soy mixture; toss to coat and let stand 30 minutes. In a large skillet or wok, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat. Add beef and cook until no longer pink; remove and set aside. Add remaining oil to the skillet and lightly saute the garlic 1 minute. Add the broccoli and water chestnuts; continue cooking until vegetables are crisp-tender. Add remaining soy mixture and cook, stirring frequently, until mixture thickens. Add beef and tomatoes and heat until hot. Serve over chow mein noodles. Makes 6 servings.

Welcome Spring with vegetables

It may look like winter outdoors, but Sunday, Feb. 9, is the first day of spring in the Chinese calendar. It's New Year's Day, too, marking the first day of the Year of the Tiger, the year 4684 on the Chinese lunar calendar.

In China, as well as across this country, this major holiday will be celebrated with a feast.

As a main dish, try Spicy Chicken and Vegetables over rice noodles. With bright red and green bell peppers and bite-size chicken pieces fried to a golden hue, this entrée is as attractive to the eye as it is to the palate.

SPICY CHICKEN AND VEGETABLES

Sauce:
1/2 cup chicken broth
3 tsp. soy sauce
1 tsp. dry sherry
1 tsp. corn starch
1 tsp. rice vinegar
1 tsp. sugar
1/4 tsp. sesame oil

Chicken and vegetables:
2 tsp. soy sauce
1 tsp. corn starch
1 chicken breast, boned, skinned and cut into chunks
1/4 cup vegetable oil
6 dried red chili peppers
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp. minced fresh ginger
1 (8-oz.) can bamboo shoots, cut into very thin strips
1 green bell pepper, cut into chunks
1 red bell pepper, cut into chunks
1/4 cup sliced green onions

In small bowl, blend together sauce ingredients; set aside. In a medium bowl, combine 2 tablespoons soy sauce, 1 teaspoon corn starch and chicken; toss to coat and set aside. In a large skillet or wok, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat. Add dried peppers; cook 1 minute. Add chicken and cook until no longer pink; remove chicken and peppers; set aside. Heat remaining oil in skillet. Add garlic and ginger; saute lightly 1 minute. Turn heat to high, add remaining vegetables and stir-fry 2 minutes. Add sauce to vegetable mixture and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened. Stir in chicken; heat until hot. Serve immediately with chow mein or rice noodles. Makes 6 servings.

Egg rolls: gifts of food

The Chinese New Year, which begins on Sunday, Feb. 9, this year, is the most important family celebration of the Oriental lunar year. During the festivities there is a constant round of visiting between families and friends.

It's customary for guests to bring gifts of food. During these visits they are traditionally served spring rolls with hot tea.

Westerners know spring rolls by the more familiar name, egg rolls. This name comes from the light egg batter wrappers that are used to enclose a shredded meat filling, such as beef, pork, ham or other processed meats. Equal portions of this mixture are placed in the middle of each square-shaped wrapper and enclosed, envelope-style.

After placing the filling on the wrapper, fold the bottom corner up to the center. Then fold over the left and right corners toward the center. Roll from the bottom to enclose the filling, sealing the loose flap with beaten egg.


Spring rolls may be cooked by deep-frying, steaming or pan-frying. Serve them whole or cut into little bite-size pieces with mustard-based dip or plum sauce.

Oven temperature can vary greatly

Even though the temperature gauge on your oven is set to 350 degrees F., the actual interior temperature may range anywhere from 300 degrees to 400 degrees F. Because oven temperature variations do occur, use a meat thermometer when roasting or broiling meat for the most accurate guide to doneness.

When cooking large cuts of meat, remove them from the oven when the temperature gauge registers about 5 degrees F. below the desired end temperature.

Large meat cuts usually continue to cook while standing in a warm place 15 to 30 minutes after removal from the oven. The final temperature registering on the meat thermometer should be 140 degrees F. for rare; 160 degrees F. for medium; and 170 degrees F. for well done.



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