

Stir-fry suppers ready in a hurry

For great-tasting, fast and fresh midweek meals, stir-fry cooking is hard to beat. With cooking time trimmed to a matter of minutes, food flavors, colors and textures are at their peak.

And with their focus on fresh vegetables, stir-fry suppers make healthy eating easy.

Two new recipes from Pace Picante Sauce Test Kitchen bring favorite Chinese restaurant flavors to the table fast.

In traditional Chinese style, each recipe is a small amount of meat or poultry with a bright mix of vegetables and seasonings.

Szechwan-Style Chicken Stir-fry complements chicken with bell peppers, pea pods, scallions and a lively ginger-soy sauce.

Serve either recipe solo, over rice or with Oriental rice noodles as preferred.

Far East Beef and Broccoli Stir-fry mixes beef sirloin with onion, broccoli, bell peppers and water chestnuts in a garlicky, sherry-spiked sauce.

SZECHWAN-STYLE CHICKEN STIR-FRY

1/2 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast
2 large garlic cloves, minced
1/2 cup picante sauce
2 tablespoons reduced sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 to 3 teaspoons shredded fresh ginger root
1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 red bell pepper, cut into short,

thin strips
4 ounces (1 cup) pea pods, diagonally sliced in half
1 cup diagonally sliced green onions with tops (1/4-inch pieces)
Hot rice cooked (optional)

Cut chicken into thin strips about 2x1/4-inches. Combine picante sauce, soy sauce, cornstarch, ginger and sugar in small bowl; set aside. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and garlic and stir-fry 2 to 3 minutes or until cooked through. Remove chicken from skillet and reserve. Add remaining oil to skillet. Add bell pepper and pea pods; stir-fry 3 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Stir picante sauce mixture and add to skillet with green onions and reserved chicken. Cook and stir 1 minute or until sauce thickens. Serve with rice, if desired, and additional picante sauce. Serves 4.

FAR EAST BEEF AND BROCCOLI STIR-FRY

1/2 cup picante sauce
3 tablespoons reduced sodium soy sauce
2 tablespoons dry sherry
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 teaspoons sugar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 pound lean boneless beef sirloin cut into 1/4 x 2-inch strips
2 large garlic cloves, minced
1 small onion, cut into thin wedges
1/4 cups small broccoli florets
1 can (8 ounces) sliced water chestnuts, rinsed and drained



Bring favorite Chinese restaurant flavors to the table in short order with Szechwan-style chicken stir-fry. A bright mix of chicken, red bell pepper, scallions and pea pods accented with soy sauce and ginger.

1 small red bell pepper, cut into short, thin strips
Hot cooked rice (optional)

Combine picante sauce, soy sauce, sherry, cornstarch and sugar in small bowl; set aside. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add beef and garlic; stir-fry 2 to 3 minutes or until beef is no longer pink. Remove beef from skillet and reserve. Add

remaining oil to skillet. Add remaining ingredients except rice; stir-fry 1 minute. Reduce heat to medium low; cover and cook 5 to 6 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Stir picante sauce mixture and add to skillet with reserved beef; cook and stir 1 minute or until thickened. Serve with rice, if desired, and additional picante sauce. Makes 4 servings.

Tips for pairing cheese, red wine

AP — When is a Burgundy not a Burgundy? What's the difference between a claret and a cabernet? If your cheese tray has Cheddar, which wine should you serve?

If the answers aren't exactly harrowing off your tongue, take a sip and take heart. These are some of the finer points of wine tasting. Not knowing them won't ruin your party, but learning them may help you enjoy red wines even more.

THE WORLD of red wines is wide ranging and complex, and there's more to know about each new vintage year. That doesn't mean you have to know it all. Just decide whether you enjoy drinking red wine. Then use this primer to help you choose which varieties you prefer and the cheeses that go best with them.

Technically, Burgundy comes from a legally defined area in France and includes both red and white wines. Because French law reserves the name "Burgundy" only for certain wines, all French Burgundies are better-than-average wines.

Worldwide, the name Burgundy is used to describe any full-bodied red wine. If you're looking for an honorable American counterpart of a true French Burgundy, look for bottles labeled pinot noir and gamay-beaujolais (red), or chardonnay (white). Serve with Cheddar, port du salut, provolone, or Gorgonzola cheeses.

Beaujolais (BO-zho-lay)
MADE from the gamay grape is one of the best-loved red wines from the Lyon region of France. It has a fruity, full-bodied, almost spicy flavor, with no trace of harshness.

Each November, another Beaujolais, Beaujolais Primeur (also known as Nouveau), hits the market. The French call it the "wine of the new year." It is a light, almost fizzy pale red wine that should be drunk before New Year's Day. Serve both types of Beaujolais with Cheddar cheese.

Cabernet Sauvignon (kab-er-NAY

SO-veen-yon)

This great red wine grape, originally from the Bordeaux region of France, is responsible for the high quality of some of the world's most celebrated wines. In France, it becomes some of the classic clarets of Bordeaux. In America, the name cabernet or cabernet sauvignon on a wine label indicates a superior red wine. Try serving cabernet sauvignon with brie, Camembert, sharp Cheddar, or blue cheeses.

Chianti (key-AIN-tee)
CHIANTI is a red Italian table wine that's famous worldwide, thanks to its straw-covered bottle (fiasco). Within the Chianti region of Italy is a strictly defined zone where wines may be labeled Chianti Classico. Chianti Classico carries a seal consisting of a black target with a rooster in the center and varying colors of borders. The color of the border color indicates the number of years of aging.

California Chianti — with or without the fancy bottle — is a blend of red wines. It is ruby red, medium tart and medium-bodied. Serve Chianti with blue cheese.

Pinot Noir (pea-no NWAR)
THE PINOT noir grape is responsible for all fine red French Burgundies. On a California label, pinot usually assures an above-average wine. A good pinot noir is smooth, soft and light in character. Serve with Gorgonzola, Stilton, or blue cheeses.

Zinfandel (ZIN-fan-dell)
Although it may have an Italian origin, zinfandel is a longtime California specialty grape that's now gaining recognition and popularity. These red wine grapes produce a distinctive wine that may be enjoyed as either a young or aged table wine, or a rich, late-harvest wine.

When young, zinfandel tastes fruity and dry, with a berrylike aroma and flavor. When aged, the bouquet suggests black currants, pepper, herbs and spice. Serve with Monterey Jack, Edam, port du salut, or bel paese cheeses.

Warm up with spiced orange tea

AP Keep this stir-together drink mix on hand for a quick warm-up. In your microwave oven, you can heat from one to four servings in mere minutes. But before you sip, take a whiff. The steamy, cinnamon-y aroma is as soothing as the tea itself.

SPICED ORANGE TEA MIX
1 cup orange-flavored instant breakfast drink powder

1/2 cup instant tea powder
1/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
Whole stick cinnamon (optional)

In an airtight container stir together drink powder, tea powder, sugar, ground cinnamon and cloves. Cover and store for up to 4 months in an airtight container in a cool, dry

place. Stir before using. Makes 2 cups mix (enough for 12 servings).

For 1 serving: In a microwave, safe mug stir 1 rounded tablespoon of mix into 1/2 cup water. Cook, uncovered, on 100 percent power (high) for 1 to 2 minutes or until hot. If desired, serve with a cinnamon stick.

For 2 servings: Cook on high for 2 to 3 minutes.

For 4 servings: Cook on high for 5 to 6 minutes, rearranging once.

Nutrition information per serving: 33 cal., 0 g fat, 0 mg chol, 1 g carb., 21 g carbs., 1 mg sodium, 0 g fiber. U.S. RDA: 13 percent vit. A, 67 percent vit. C.

Flip over low fat apple pancakes

AP — We think you'll flip for these all-American flapjacks, because we've cut back on cooking oil and added apple juice instead. Remember, if you want to keep pancakes low in fat, top them with syrup and use little or no butter.

HONEY-APPLE PANCAKES
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon apple pie spice

1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 egg
1/2 cup apple juice
2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon cooking oil

In a medium mixing bowl stir together flour, baking powder, salt, apple pie spice and baking soda. In a small mixing bowl beat egg slightly; stir in apple juice, honey and oil. Add egg mixture all at once to flour mixture; stir until blended but still slightly lumpy.

For each pancake, pour about 1/4 cup of the batter onto a hot, lightly greased griddle or heavy skillet. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes or until pancakes have a bubbly surface and slightly dry edges. Turn and cook for 2 to 3 minutes more or until golden brown. Makes about eight 4-inch pancakes.

Nutrition information per pancake: 124 cal., 3 g pro., 3 g fat, 34 mg chol., 169 mg sodium, 59 mg potassium, 1 g dietary fiber.

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