

Cooking Corner



Easy, Everyday Asian Cooking At Home

(NAPSA)—Asian cooking—including Chinese, Japanese and Thai—continues to grow in popularity, thanks to the variety of dishes, the aromatic sauces for flavoring and the abundant use of fresh, healthy, low-fat ingredients, such as vegetables, fresh herbs, exotic mushrooms and nutrient-rich tofu or bean curd. Dishes are typically quick-cooked by stir-frying or steaming to preserve flavor as well as vitamins and minerals. Artful presentation is important. Combine key colors such as jade (broccoli or snow peas) and coral (carrots) in dishes to enhance visual appeal.

For best results in Asian cooking, the key is in the food preparation. While the cooking can take just minutes, prep takes longer since foods are customarily cut, sliced or diced in small pieces just before cooking. When stir-fried, ingredients are added in batches until everything is combined.

Moderation is central. Steak, for example, is frequently finely sliced and used sparingly. Chicken is cut into mouth-size pieces. Vegetables are thinly cut, usually on the diagonal. Shellfish, such as shrimp, is cut into three pieces before cooking. For sushi lovers, it's all about shopping for the freshest fish, slicing it for easy consumption and making a beautiful presentation.

With Asian dishes, the proper utensils and cooking tools are not only essential, but part of the fun in cooking. The wok allows for tossing and turning ingredients over high heat without splattering the range top. A stackable bamboo steamer for preparing fresh veg-



The fine art of Asian cooking includes an elegant presentation, as well as healthful ingredients and superb taste.

etables is not only exotic but highly functional. And sushi mats allow for precision rolling of cooked Japanese rice.

All of these dishes and more can be prepared with tools from Ekco Pao!, a new collection of 47 Asian culinary utensils, many crafted of heat- and stain-resistant bamboo, an attractive and eco-friendly resource. The line features bamboo steamers, cutting boards, spatulas and slotted spoons, as well as carbon steel woks, reusable chopsticks and Japanese-style santoku knives and sushi sets—just about everything needed to prepare and create an assortment of Asian dishes any day of the week.

Here's an easy and delicious recipe that's likely to be a crowd pleaser at any table:

Grilled Beef Skewers with Cucumber-Carrot Slaw

Serves 4

2 teaspoons sugar

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon mirin (Japanese rice wine)
- ½ teaspoon chili sauce
- 1 lb. thick rib-eye steak, cut into 1-inch cubes
- ¾ lb. English cucumbers, peeled
- ¾ lb. carrots, peeled
- ½ cup unseasoned rice wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar

In a bowl, combine the sugar, soy sauce, mirin, and chili sauce. Add the beef, toss well, cover with plastic wrap, and place in the refrigerator for 2 hours to marinate. For the slaw, carefully julienne cucumbers and carrots into 4-inch slices. Place cucumber in a colander for about 20 minutes to allow any extra juice to drain. In a small bowl, mix the vinegar, salt and sugar. Add the carrots and cucumbers, toss well, cover with plastic wrap and let marinate in the refrigerator for 2 hours. Let the mixture come to room temperature before serving. To prepare the beef, thread the cubes onto bamboo skewers that have been presoaked in water. Preheat grill until hot. Place skewers of beef on the grill and cook over direct heat for 4 minutes, turning every minute or so. Remove from the grill and serve hot with a spoonful of the slaw on the side.

For more information, visit www.ekco.com.