

DELICIOUS CHINESE NEW YEAR RECIPES

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Gong Xi Fa Cai!

That means Happy New Year in Mandarin. A hugely important time of year, the Chinese New Year, has many exciting customs and activities.

All over the world there are parades and other events that celebrate and bring in the Chinese New Year. But it's more than just red paper lanterns and brightly coloured parades doing the lion dance through the streets.

Traditionally, families plan a reunion dinner hosted in the most elderly member's home to send off the former year, and to welcome in the New Year.

Like most cultures this means indulging and enjoying many different types of food. Incidentally, they also use this time of year to clean their house spotless with the idea of "out with the old" and "in with the new".

The idea is that it helps to get rid of any bad luck from the past, and bring in good luck for the New Year. Why not bring some of these traditions home to your family?

If you want to participate in the traditions of the Chinese New Year, the easy recipes included in this cookbook will help you incorporate some of these customs.

In the Chinese culture, each food is very symbolic and representative of letting go of the old, and bringing in the new. For example, foods like pomegranate and tangerines are given at the New Year to symbolize life and new beginnings.

This recipe book includes 9 delicious and easy authentic Chinese recipes. Try one or try them all and Gong Xi Fa Cai!

THE RECIPES

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Longevity Noodles with Chicken Meatballs

If you want something meaningful to make for the New Year celebration, or anyone's "New Year" such as their birthday, then you have to try these noodles. This soup is very delicious and satisfying. With the inclusion of meatballs and egg, it's earthy and filling. This is also a great dish to enjoy on a cold winter day; true comfort food.

The noodles are considered to be very special because of their length. They are usually created from one dough ball, and then folded and stretched until there are 1000 strands, which symbolizes luck for the New Year. The longer the noodle, the better. Hence, be sure not to cut the noodles. Also, in some families, this is served with an egg to signify fertility, or new beginnings.

In this recipe, we used medium egg noodles, however you can use any type of noodle you have in your store cupboard including the Japanese style ones such as Udon or Soba

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients

- 500grams chicken breast or pork loin, cut into chunks
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cornflour
- 4 cups good chicken stock
- 4-5 large dried Chinese mushrooms soaked until soft and sliced (you can also use fresh portabella or shiitake mushrooms)
- 3 cups water
- 3 bundles of noodles
- Chopped spring onions for garnish
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 2 tablespoons oil, preferably groundnut oil.
- 4 hard boiled eggs



Cooking Instructions:

In a small frying pan, heat oil and add chopped garlic. Cook on medium heat until garlic is golden. Set aside.

In a food processor, put meat chunks, white pepper, cornflour, and salt. Process until no large chunks are found. Set aside. (If you prefer, you can prepare this ahead of time).

In a large pot, bring chicken stock to a boil.

Add salt then turn heat down to medium and add sliced Chinese mushrooms.

Using a small ice cream scoop or a teaspoon, create meatballs about 19mm (3/4 inch) diameter. Spoon the meatballs into the stock. Gently boil until meatballs are cooked about 6 - 8 minutes.

When ready to eat, in a smaller pot, bring water to a boil.

Add noodles to boiling water, cook until soft - about 2-3 minutes. Do not overcook or noodles will be too soft.

Drain noodles using a strainer and immediately dip noodles into cold water. You can also run them under cold water.

Divide the noodles between the 4 bowls. Ladle broth into the bowl with desired amount of meatballs and mushroom.

Add one hardboiled egg to each serving. Garnish with green onions and garlic oil combo. Serve immediately.



Pineapple Tarts

The pineapple jam is what makes this tart special. It's sweet and tangy and tastes like you're having a party in your mouth.

Traditionally these tarts are enjoyed during the Chinese New Year. The reason pineapple is so symbolic is that the vowels you use to pronounce the Chinese word stand for prosperity. They're simple to make if you follow my method and are a real crowd pleaser.

Makes: About 12 tarts

Ingredients for Pineapple Jam

1 can crushed pineapple
3/4 - 1 cup sugar
1 cinnamon stick
2-3 cloves

Ingredients for Pastry

1 cup flour
1/2 cup cold butter, cubed
2 - 4 tablespoons ice cold water
1/2 teaspoon salt
A handful of cloves
1 beaten egg

Cooking Instructions for Pineapple Jam

Preheat oven to 200°C or Gas Mark 6

Place entire contents of the can of pineapple, sugar, cinnamon, and cloves into a sauce pan. Cook over medium heat until mixture starts boiling.

Turn heat down to low and continue cooking, stirring regularly until the water dries out and jam thickens. It will have a sticky consistency, and brown, caramel color.

Let cool.

Cooking Instructions for Pastry and Assembly

Place 1 cup flour, butter, and salt in a mixing bowl.

Using a pastry cutter, blend into a coarse crumbly mixture.

Add 2 tablespoons ice cold water into the mixture, mix until it forms into dough. Add more water if mixture is too dry to form into a dough. The dough should not be too dry nor sticky.

Divide the dough out into small 25mm (1 inch) sized balls. Roll each ball out to about 3mm (1/8 of an inch) thick.

In the center of the dough, place about 1 teaspoon pineapple jam.

Wrap the dough around the pineapple jam. Pinch away excess dough, if any.

Roll between your palms to form a shape of a pineapple. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Using a pair of small, sharp scissors, snip the body of the dough to form a pattern like a pineapple has.

Push a clove into the top of the cookie to form the pineapple stem.

Brush whisked egg over.

Bake at 200°C or Gas Mark 6 for about 10 - 15 minutes or until pastry is golden.



Rice Cooker or Casserole Chicken with Garlic Rice

On a cold winter's day, nothing is better than Roasted Chicken and the smell of garlic permeating throughout the house.

In Chinese cultures, the whole chicken symbolizes prosperity, joy and family togetherness. But don't worry, it's not complicated. This recipe calls for boiling the chicken, however our method is going to be roast chicken that is semi-home cooked, if you're running short of time, and super easy.

This is actually a very easy one-pot meal when using a rice cooker, however, we've also included casserole (clay pot) instructions, if you're more adventurous. Traditionally, this dish is served with fried salted fish, but it's a great side dish or meal on its own.

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients for Chicken:

- 2 Chinese sausage, sliced (optional)
- 1 kilo chicken, cut into chunks
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 2 tablespoons rice wine
- 2 inch ginger, peeled and cut into thin strips
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 1/2 tablespoons oil preferably groundnut oil

Ingredients for Rice:

- 4 cups of rice
- 4 cups good chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon dark soy sauce

- Chopped spring onions for garnishing

Rice Cooker Instructions:

In a bowl, add light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, white pepper, and rice wine to chicken. Mix well and let marinate for at least 1 hour in the refrigerator. For better results, prepare the night before.

If cooking in a rice cooker, wash rice, add chicken stock, dark and light soy sauces. Set aside.

Heat oil in a frying pan. Add marinated chicken, ginger and sesame oil. Do not cook all the way. Add to the rice.

Cover and start the rice cooker. When the rice cooker is done cooking, mix the rice and chicken evenly. Let the rice sit in the rice cooker on warm for about 10-15 minutes.

When ready to eat, serve and garnish with green onions.

Alternative Clay Pot Instructions:

Cooking in a clay pot is trickier as you have to be much more careful. The biggest difference is, to first cook the rice in chicken stock in the casserole (clay pot), adding the chicken when the rice is half done. Serve when chicken and rice is cooked. The rice may be a little burnt at the bottom but that's part of the smoky flavour of the dish in a casserole (clay pot).



If you have ever had egg custard and liked it, you have to try these Egg Tarts.

The egg is a symbol of fertility and is often enjoyed during the New Year. These are sweet and buttery and will truly make your taste buds and your tummy happy. You can also make these ahead of time to have ready for later use.

Makes: 12 tarts

Ingredients for Pastry:

- 1 to 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup cold butter, cubed
- 1/2 cup caster sugar
- 2 tablespoons ice cold water
- 1 egg, beaten

Ingredients for Egg Filling:

- 3/4 cups water
- 1/3 cups sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions for Pastry:

Preheat oven to 200°C or Gas Mark 6

Place 1 cup flour, butter, and caster sugar in a mixing bowl.

Using a pastry cutter, blend butter, flour and sugar into a coarse crumbly mixture.

Add egg, vanilla extract, and ice cold water into the mixture, mix until it forms a dough. If the dough is too wet and sticks, add more flour in small tablespoon increments. If it is too dry, add ice cold water a tablespoon at a time. The dough should not be too dry nor sticky.

Roll out the dough to about 3mm (1/8 of an inch) thick or a little thinner if you can do so without breaking it.

Use a round biscuit cutter, cut out 12 rounds. Use a cutter with a fluted edge for prettier tarts.

Place the pastry rounds into a muffin or tart pan, gently pressing it in. For easier removal and better presentation, you can also line the pans with cupcake liners beforehand.

Set aside.

Instructions for Egg Filling and Assembly:

In a sauce pan, warm water, and add sugar. Stir over low heat until the sugar dissolves. Let cool to room temperature.

In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs lightly. Add evaporated milk and vanilla. Beat until well combined. Strain into the sauce pan with cooled syrup. Mix.

Strain the egg mixture into each tart shell, taking care not to over fill them.

Bake the tarts in the oven at 200°C or Gas Mark 6 for about 15 - 20 minutes. Keep a watch on this so the pastry does not burn. When the filling rises, it's usually set and ready.



Chicken, Pork or Turkey Stuffed Fried Won Ton

The process of wrapping the dumplings is as important as eating them. Need a filling snack that makes everyone happy? These deep fried dumplings offer an explosion of flavour that will keep a crowd happy. This is a great finger food that you can use as hors d'oeuvres or as part of a meal.

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients:

- 500g minced chicken, turkey or pork
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame seed oil (optional)
- 2 teaspoon cornflour
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 package wonton wrappers
- A little bit of water
- Oil for frying

Instructions:

Mix meat, salt, sesame oil, corn starch and white pepper.

Lay out a wonton wrapper. Place about 1 teaspoon meat mixture in the center.

Brush a little water on the wrapper, around the meat to the edges. Bring all the sides of the wrapper up around the meat. Pinch together to seal. Alternatively, you can fold the wrapper diagonally to form triangles.

Continue wrapping until all meat is used.

In a deep frying pan, heat oil to 180°C. Place won tons into hot oil. Fry till wrappers are golden.

Remove from oil, drain on plate or colander lined with paper towels.

Serve as is or with sweet chili sauce.

Alternatives:

If you prefer more texture and variety in the meat, you can add finely chopped water chestnuts, carrots, and even mushrooms.



Chinese Pork Dumplings

Once you learn to wrap dumplings, which is a very delicate thing and difficult for most, you can create so many different fillings that will taste delicious and fill you and your guests with delight.

These dumplings have a delicate pork and cabbage filling with just enough ginger to excite your taste buds.

Makes: 18-20 dumplings

Ingredients:

- 3 cups chopped Chinese cabbage leaves
- Sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh grated ginger
- 2 spring onions, roughly chopped
- 150g ground pork
- Pepper
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/2 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- Dumpling wrappers (available from Chinese shops and most supermarkets).
- 1/2 tablespoon cornflour mixed with 1/4 cup water

Instructions:

Place cabbage leaves in food processor until finely minced. Salt lightly with sea salt and let sit 10 minutes. Squeeze out water.

Next place ginger, onions, pork, pepper, soy, rice vinegar, sesame oil in food processor and pulse until chopped and combined.

Mix together cabbage and pork filling.

Fill a large saucepan about half way with water. Bring to a boil.

Next spoon about 3/4 tablespoon of filling onto center of each dumpling wrapper. Gently fold over, so the wrapper form a half circle. Dip your fingers into the cornflour and water mixture and run your finger along the open edge of the dumpling to seal.

Carefully add dumplings to boiling water and cook for about 6 minutes once the water starts to boil again. Remove dumplings with a slotted spoon. Serve hot with soy or hoisin sauce.



Chinese New Year Cake (Niangao)

A way to improve your luck, according to the Chinese, is to enjoy these rice cakes. And no, these are nothing like the rice cakes you get off the shelves in the grocery store. These are delicate, full of flavour, and delicious.

Plus, you get the symbolism of the roundness of the cake which represents togetherness, prosperity, and the sweetness, a “sweet life”.

This recipe is a slightly non-traditional as it has a crispy toasted coconut crust that is to die for. We've also reduced the sugar content on this very sweet dessert. It's very easy to prepare and includes just a few simple ingredients.

Please note, this recipe uses and requires glutinous rice flour that is also known as sweet rice flour. You can find it in many Supermarkets and Asian grocery stores.

Makes: 1 – 33mm x 23mm (9” x 13”) dish

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons shredded coconut
- 4 eggs
- 3 cups glutinous rice flour
- 3 cups milk
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons melted butter

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 180°C or Gas Mark 4

Spread shredded coconut on a baking sheet and bake for 5 minutes or until golden. Set aside

Grease a 33 x 23 (9 x 13) baking dish. Set aside.

In a large bowl, combine eggs, glutinous rice flour, milk, sugar, salt and melted butter. Whisk until smooth.

Pour into baking dish and place in oven. Bake for about 25 minutes and remove from oven.

Sprinkle the top with the toasted coconut.

Return to oven for about 25 more minutes, until the cake has set and the edges are browning. The cake will not be as firm as a traditional cake, so just make sure it has set on the top.



Cantonese Pork and Shrimp Spring Rolls

There are many forms of spring rolls that you can enjoy. The filling depends on the originating culture.

These have cabbage, mushroom, carrots, shrimp, pork and more inside a spring roll wrapper and fried to golden perfection. In Chinese culture the shrimp symbolize happiness and good fortune.

Makes: 10-12 spring rolls

Meat and Mushroom Ingredients:

- 3 dried Chinese or shiitake mushrooms
- 1/8 pound ground pork (brown first)
- 6 small, shelled cooked prawns

Marinade Ingredients:

- 1/2 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1/2 tablespoon sake
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch

Veggie Filling Ingredients:

- Vegetable oil for frying
- 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon minced ginger
- 1/2 carrot, shredded
- 1/4 finely chopped bell pepper (we used yellow)
- 1/2 cup shredded Chinese cabbage
- 2 finely chopped spring onions
- 1/2 cup chopped bean sprouts

Other Ingredients:

- Spring roll wrappers
- Vegetable oil for frying
- 1/2 tablespoon cornflour, mixed with 1/4 cup water

Instructions:

Soak the dried mushrooms in water for 30 minutes.

Brown the pork in a skillet. Set aside. When cool enough, chop into finer pieces.

Chop shrimp finely.

Combine all the marinade ingredients in a bowl. Add the pork and prawns. Let marinate for 15 or so minutes, while you prepare the remaining ingredients.

Squeeze water out of mushrooms and chop finely.

Preheat vegetable oil in deep fryer to 180°C

Heat wok or frying pan over medium heat and add 1/2 tablespoon vegetable oil. Sauté mushrooms for 1 minute. Then add the garlic, ginger, carrots, cabbage and pepper and sauté for 1 minute more. Finally, add the green onions and bean sprouts and sauté until softened.

Mix vegetable and meat mixture together. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the mixture near the bottom of the wrapper placed on an angle. Fold the bottom up part way. Fold the sides in and roll up until closed. Dip your finger in the cornstarch and water mixture and use your finger to seal the roll. **(See diagram below for more detail)**



Gently place the spring rolls into the hot oil. Do not let the rolls overlap, so you may have to cook in batches. Fry for about 3-4 minutes or until crispy and golden.



Sweet and Sour White Whole Fish

You no longer have to seek out an Asian restaurant to have this traditional crispy, pan fried fish. The sweet and sour flavour represents love and passion combined while the word for fish, “yu” in china has the same sound of the word “abundance and prosperity”.

Not only is this dish said to bring good luck, the flavour will delight your guests and the presentation will too.

The dish is sweet and savory and outstanding on so many fronts that you cannot miss out on making it and enjoying it.

You can use any type of gutted whole white fish you’d like for this recipe. We are using a tilapia, but sea bass is also very good.

Unless, you want to scale the fish yourself, ask your fishmonger to scale it for you. Even supermarket fish counters do this nowadays.

Ingredients:

Sauce Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons tomato ketchup
- 1/2 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon chili oil
- 1 tablespoon cornflour, mixed with 2 tablespoons water

Fish Ingredients:

- 1 whole fish, dressed (tilapia, sea bass, etc.)
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- Salt
- 2 beaten eggs
- Cornflour
- Vegetable oil

Topping:

- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 inch carrot slivers
- 2 spring onions, cut in 25mm (1 inch) pieces

Instructions:

Combine all the sauce ingredients, except cornflour mixture, in a small saucepan and set aside.

Make 3-4 cuts on each side of the fish, about 25mm (an inch) a part. Make sure to reach the bone. Rub the fish all over and into the cuts with rice vinegar and salt. Now, dip the fish into the beaten eggs and then rub with cornflour to cover. Let stand for a few minutes.

In the meantime, heat a large frying pan with a few tablespoons of vegetable oil over medium-high heat. Make sure the pan is wide enough to fit your fish. Once it's heated, cook for about 6 minutes per side, ensuring it's cooked all the way through.

Chop up your vegetables while the fish cooks, if you haven't already. At this point, you should also heat the sauce mixture over medium heat. Once it comes to a boil, add the cornflour mixture and stir until thickened. Remove from heat.

Remove the fish and set on a plate once it's done. Now fry the ginger, carrots and onion for about a 2-3 minutes or so, until just tender. Top the fish with sauce and vegetables and serve.

Let's Get Cooking

We hope you'll find some family favourites in this collection. You should be able to find most of the ingredients at your local supermarket otherwise try a Chinese/Asian shop.