

## Chinese Eat-In Food

I love Chinese food---in fact, any type of Asian cuisine easily ranks high in my list of favorite ethnic flavors. Even so, not all Chinese food is created equal. As far as restaurants go, I have had some really good Chinese food and I have had some that is down right terrible. When I try something at a restaurant or at someone's house that I really like, my favorite thing to do is to go home and try to recreate the dish. There are many advantages to doing this. First of all, you get to control the quality of the ingredients. In addition, you can make the dish as spicy as you like, or tone it down for family members who do not like it so spicy. Perhaps most importantly when it comes to Asian-type foods, you can control the sodium level and leave OUT the MSG. When you prepare "take out" foods in your own kitchen, you can also be more mindful of the caloric content. The way I look at it, the less fattening ingredients I use when I prepare the food (like not deep frying and opting instead for baking), the more of the food I can consume! Next time you have a craving for Chinese take out, why not try a few of these recipes instead. Some of the ingredients may seem exotic, but I have found all of them at the grocery store and/or your favorite super center. Add to the fun by picking up a box of fortune cookies and a package of chopsticks.

These are some of my very favorite Chinese recipes. Even if you do not think of yourself as an expert Asian cook, with a little practice, you will find you can prepare these dishes in less time than it takes for you to dial that Chinese restaurant and wait for the delivery person.

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You can easily leave out the meat in this soup—nobody will know the difference.

### Hot and Sour Soup

- 1 cup fresh shitake mushrooms, stems removed and sliced thinly
- 1 small can bamboo shoots, drained, sliced into matchsticks
- 8 cups chicken stock or low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 3/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper

1/2 pound chicken, tofu, or pork, cut into small bite-size strips or chunks  
3 tablespoons cornstarch  
3 tablespoons water  
3 tablespoons soy sauce (preferably Kikkoman)  
1 teaspoon sesame oil  
1 teaspoon white vinegar  
1 egg, beaten mixed with a pinch of cornstarch  
Hot chile oil, for drizzling  
2 tablespoons thinly sliced green onions

In a medium saucepan heat the vegetable oil and, when hot, add the ginger, garlic and crushed red pepper; cook for 2 minutes, or until fragrant. Add the chicken stock, shiitake slices, and bamboo shoots and bring to a simmer. Add the chicken, tofu or pork and stir to combine. Simmer for 20 minutes. In a small bowl or cup, combine the cornstarch with the water and stir until smooth. Whisk the cornstarch mixture into the hot soup and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add the soy sauce, sesame oil and vinegar. Slowly pour in beaten egg and stir in a swirling motion. Garnish with hot chile oil and sliced green onions.

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I love egg rolls. I often make these vegetarian by omitting the pork. Feel free to substitute other vegetables. You can also make these with regular egg roll wrappers, but the smaller size makes a nice presentation. If you have children or grandchildren, these are fun to make together.

#### Mini Egg Rolls with Dipping Sauce

1/4 cup olive oil  
1 {2-inch} piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1 (1/2-pound) boneless pork chop, cut into thin strips  
2 scallions, white and 1 inch of the green parts, thinly sliced  
1 carrot, julienned

1 large red bell pepper, julienned  
1 cup thinly shredded cabbage (the kind in the bag is fine)  
1/4 cup chicken stock  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
30 square wonton wrappers  
Soy Sesame Dipping Sauce, recipe follows

To make the egg roll, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large skillet or wok over medium heat. Add the ginger and garlic and cook, stirring until slightly softened, about 2 minutes. Add the pork and stir until it turns white, about 2 minutes. Transfer the pork to a plate and set aside. Add the scallions, carrot, and red pepper to the skillet. Cook, stirring, until slightly softened, about 2 minutes. Add the cabbage, stock, and soy sauce. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the liquid has evaporated and the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Return the pork to the skillet and let the contents of the skillet cool to room temperature. You should have about 2 cups. Lay the wrappers flat on a work surface. Brush the edges lightly with water. Top with about 1 tablespoon of the filling and roll into a cylinder, tucking in the sides and pressing the edges to seal. (The egg rolls can be frozen at this point.) Heat the remaining olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until almost smoking. Working in batches, add the rolls and cook, turning often with tongs, until golden brown on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes. Cool slightly before serving.

Soy Sesame Dipping Sauce:

6 tablespoons soy sauce  
1/4 cup rice vinegar  
2 teaspoons sesame oil  
2 teaspoons sugar

To make the dipping sauce, combine the soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, and sugar in a small bowl. Stir well and serve on the side with the rolls.

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This is a great way to use up leftover rice. Fried rice is actually supposed to be prepared with rice that has cooled and had time to "dry out." I store leftover rice in a container in the freezer until I have enough to make this dish.

### Fried Rice

4 cups cooked white rice, cooled (better if it is leftover and has been refrigerated overnight)  
3 tablespoons canola oil  
2 eggs, beaten  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 inches fresh ginger, minced or grated  
3/4 cup shredded carrots  
1 small red bell pepper, diced (optional)  
4 scallions, thinly sliced on an angle  
3/4 cup frozen peas  
1/3 cup Tamari, dark aged soy sauce

Heat a wok, wok shaped skillet or large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add oil to the pan. Add egg to hot oil and break into small bits as it scrambles. When eggs are scrambled, add garlic and ginger to the pan. Add carrots, pepper, scallions to the pan and quick stir-fry veggies 2 minutes. Add rice to the pan and combine with veggies. Fry rice with veggies 2 or 3 minutes. Add peas and soy sauce to the rice and stir fry 1 minute more, and then serve.