

Kylie Kwong's Simple Chinese Cooking Class

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Extract

Introduction

When I wrote *Simple Chinese Cooking* my aim was to demystify Chinese cooking and to make it accessible. I had come to realise that many otherwise enthusiastic cooks were reluctant to try cooking Chinese food, because they thought the ingredients were too exotic or the techniques too difficult. I decided it was high time someone wrote an easy-to-follow Chinese cookbook that would dispel the myth that Chinese cooking was not for the home cook by presenting simple recipes using everyday ingredients. I could not have been more thrilled with the response – *Simple Chinese Cooking* seems to have really struck a chord, and many people have contacted me to share their delight at being able to produce fresh and delicious Chinese meals for their family and friends so easily.

With my *Simple Chinese Cooking Class* I want to offer you more of the same – simple, authentic Chinese recipes using the best-quality fresh produce. However, I also aim to take your Chinese cooking to the next level by introducing you to some exciting new ingredients and techniques.

Most of these recipes use ingredients that are readily available at any supermarket. One of the things I love most about Chinese cooking is that you can achieve the most stunning results using the simplest of ingredients – among my favourites in this book are the deep-fried soft-boiled eggs with iceberg lettuce and chilli salt. But I also want to tempt you to venture further afield and explore the shelves of your local Chinese supermarket or grocer, where you will discover a whole new world of flavours to inspire you. Don't worry – I'm not going to fill your cupboard with endless bottles of half-used sauces and condiments, but the addition of, say, lup cheong sausage to a stir-fry or some Asian mushrooms to a soup will add a new dimension of flavour and texture that will lift your cooking from the simple to the sublime.

Of course, besides ingredients, the other vital element of good cooking is technique. So, in this book, I've included step-by-step instructions, with photographs, to help you master some of the classic Chinese cooking techniques. Before long you'll be tea-smoking oysters to toss into a stir-fry, making your own spring rolls and dumplings and confidently poaching or steaming a lobster – trust me, it's not as tricky as you think! You can also see

how to season a wok properly, and how to make those delicious sticky rice parcels wrapped in bamboo leaves.

I would also like to introduce you to what I call 'investment cooking'. By this I mean those little extras that expand your repertoire and can be made in advance and then stashed away in the refrigerator for later use. Having a few homemade sauces and pickles in your fridge is like having money in the bank!

That's why I have included a whole chapter on sauces and salts. Here you will find some of the staples of the Chinese kitchen, such as spring onion-ginger sauce, sweet chilli sauce and the famous XO sauce, an intensely flavoured garlic and chilli paste that can transform anything from scallops to fried rice with its layers of flavour and complexity. In the chapter on salads and pickles, you'll learn how to pickle everything from cauliflower and zucchini through to beetroot and radishes, then how to serve the pickles and use them in other recipes. So, for example, a few slivers of pickled ginger will enhance any number of salads and stir-fries.

Another indispensable staple in the Chinese kitchen is a red braise master stock, a simple aromatic stock that forms the basis for numerous other recipes. Once you've made it, you'll wonder how you managed without it. Red braising is such a beautiful way to gently cook meat and poultry, infusing them with flavour. And the really great thing is that you only need to make red braise master stock once, as you can freeze it and re-use it indefinitely (like sourdough cultures, some master stocks have been in use for many years, with their flavour becoming deeper and more complex over time). Another classic is braised Chinese mushrooms. With a batch of these on hand, you have the makings of at least another eight simple Chinese recipes in this book, from stir-fried vegetables or lamb to steamed fish fillets. See what I mean about 'investment cooking'? A little time spent in the kitchen at the weekend or when you have a quiet evening can make supper on busy weeknights or an impromptu dinner for friends so much easier – and tastier.

I hope that you enjoy this book, and that it provides you with inspiration for many years to come. I also hope it demonstrates, once and for all, that there is nothing to be afraid of when it comes to Chinese cooking – all it takes is a passion for good food and a willingness to have a go!

Kylie Kwong (born 31 October 1969) is an Australian television chef, author, television presenter and restaurateur. Kwong attended Epping North Public School and Cheltenham Girls High School. As a third-generation Chinese Australian, she learned the fundamentals of Cantonese cooking by her mother's side. She undertook much of her apprenticeship at Neil Perry's Rockpool and Wockpool, and later at Restaurant Manfredi.