

CHINESE CUISINE

History of Chinese Cuisine

Chinese cuisine is famous the world over. Its fame was not achieved in a day. China's is an ancient civilization and the cuisine developed with it through its 5,000 years of recorded history. Chinese cooking is a crystallization of the imagination and diligence of Chinese cooks these thousands of years.

In the remote, primitive beginnings of mankind's existence our ancestors led a life eating what has been described as "raw meat with fur and blood." There was no such thing as cooking. Archeologists have conjectured that cooking began with forest fires. Lightening storms naturally caused forest fires. Primitive man would flee from the conflagration and return to the forests when the fire was over. The animals which had not escaped were now cooked, as it were and hungry primitive man found the smell of a burnt carcass appetizing and the cooked meat better testing than raw meat. Man came to know that cooking made his food tasty. He preserved kindling's for fire, and discovered methods to make fire by rubbing sticks together, striking flint and stone. Cooked food became a universal phenomenon, the Chinese word "PENG" from "PENG TIAO" meaning the art of cooking originates from the use of fire in cooking.

People learned to cook food but they did not know how to flavor their food. It is possible that after many years primitive peoples living in costal areas left their kill on the sea shore by chance. The meat may then have been covered with salt crystals from evaporated sea water. When these salt covered meats were cooked, they tested better. As a consequence primitive man learned to collect salt for flavoring. The word "TIAO" of "PENG TIAO" means flavoring and flavoring originated from use of salt.

The discovery of cooking and flavoring played a significant role in the evolutions of mankind and the development of human society. The fact that man no longer ate raw meat differentiated humans from other animals. Cooking and flavoring killed germs in food, made it more digestible and nutritious. People gradually cultivated the taking of meals at regular times of the day. Cooked food improved man's physical and intellectual abilities and this led to the development of his productive forces. Mankind gradually emerged from the age of barbarism and moved towards civilization.

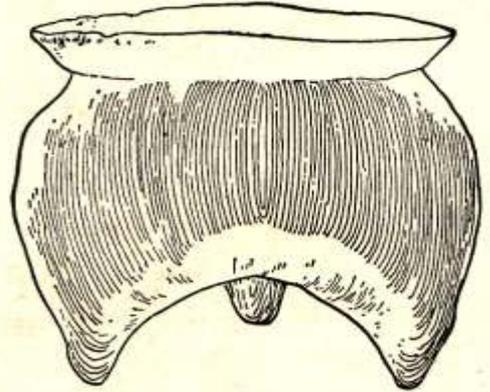
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Chinese culinary arts have gone through thousands of years of refinement and development. When man first learn how to cook, the methods were very simple. They simply put food on the fire to bake on hot stones. Pottery was eventually invented, and with it came a variety of cooking utensils: the "DING", the "LI", the "YAN" and the "ZENG". These were combinations of pots and stove.

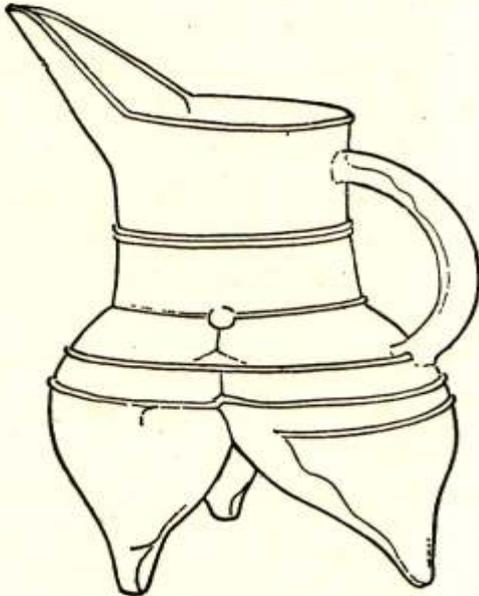
Cooking vessels of ancient China



Ding was a cooking vessel with two loop handles and three legs. It was made of bronze.



Li was a cooking vessel with hollow legs.



Gui was a pitcher with three hollow legs. It was an earthenware cooking utensil.



Yan was double boiler made of bronze or clay.



Bu was a vessel made of either clay or bronze used for holding wine or water.



Zeng was an earthenware utensil for steaming rice.

Different methods of cooking developed at the same time. Man began to cook by wrapping his food with mud and straw before roasting; roasting food directly over the fire; first slicing the meat and roasting the sliced meat on a spit; putting the food in a cooking utensils with water to boil; putting food over water to steam it. Oil in cooking came much later. Before the "HAN" Dynasty (206BC) only animal fat was used. According to "Zhou Li" (A book on the Governmental system of the Zhou dynasty) the kings of the Zhou dynasty ate lamb and piglet cooked in butter in the spring. They ate dried chicken and fish cooked in dog fat in the summer. In the autumn they ate veal and fawn cooked in lard and in the winter fresh fish and wild geese cooked in sheep fat. In the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD) plant seeds were pressed for their oil. The use of these oils for cooking accelerated the development of culinary art. People learnt first to fry and then to crackle fry. Saute or stir fry over a blazing fire.

With progress, the increasing varieties and abundance of foods, experimentation and study, the Chinese culinary arts have
Been perfected through the ages.

Ancient history books, the "Zhou Li" and the "Li Ji" mention 8 precious foods prepared for the kings. They may have been ways of preparation or they may simply have been eight famous dishes. One of them was roast ewe. Its preparation is more complicated than today's 'roast suckling pig'. The preparation involve roasting, frying and stewing. Ingredients included rice flour, thick soybean paste, vinegar and spices. The recipes show the sophistication of the culinary arts at that time. During the Warring States period, Qu Yuan, the great poet of the state of Chu, (340 - 278 BC) wrote an essay entitled: "Call Bake the Souls". It was a tribute to the dead generals and soldiers of Chou. The essay contained a long menu including such dishes as Beef, Roast Soft-Shell Turtle, Roast lamb, Wild Goose, Steamed Duck, Spiced Chicken, Braised Turtle, Fish Soup, Pork Meatballs & Quail Soup. Flavorings included soy sauce, vinegar, salt, plum, molasses and honey to make the dishes taste salty, pungent or sweet. Cooking techniques were complicated and numerous. The only methods absent were the frying techniques. By the late Warring states Period, an essay on culinary theory appears. This was the "Chapter on Natural Tastes" in the "Annals of Lu". The essay pointed out that the control of the flame and mastery of seasonings were crucial to good cooking. The right flame, the proper cooking time and the appropriate use of seasoning would eliminate the unwanted and bring out the best flavors in food. During the Han dynasty, Zhang Jian (? - 114 BC) brought back alfalfa, grapes and other new foods from his travels to the west. Walnuts, broad beans, carrots, onions, pepper and cucumbers were also introduced to China. Meanwhile Bean Curd and many Bean products were invented in China. With the increase in the variety of foods, cooking techniques developed.

During the Wei, the Jin, the northern and southern dynasties (220 - 587) there was, in China, a massive migration and mixing of peoples of various ethnic origins. The resulting meeting of cultures and customs naturally included an exchange of foods and cooking styles. Roasting and quick boiled meats slices came from the peoples of Xin Jiang and the central Asia. Hot pepper oil and the fish flavored sauce came from the peoples of south west Hunan and Sichuan. From Fujian and Guang Dong in the south came roast pork and raw fish and from the southeast coast of China came distinctive seafood cooking. The various styles of cooking complemented and enriched each other. The book "Qi Min Yao Shu" written by Jia Sixie, a well known scholar of northern Wei dynasty describes a number of cooking techniques and includes many recipes. It is an important work on the agriculture and culinary arts of China.

By the Tang dynasty (618 - 907) China was the most powerful empire in the east. Domestic stability and a flourishing culture attracted many people from other countries and they came to learn. Culinary art was flourishing as well. Not only were color, smell, taste, important, shape and design of the dish had become essential to gourmet cooking. Evidence of this can be found in 'Recipes' by Wei Qiyuan of the Tang dynasty; in 'Yu Gong Pi' written by palace chefs of the Song dynasty; and in 'Zhong Kui Lu' by Wu Shi of Pujiang also of the Song dynasty. The Tang dynasty recipe mentions a dish called, 'Fragrance through the Doors'. The style of cooking is similar to the 'Quan Bao' frying method found in Beijing cooking. It is evidence of the sophistication that frying techniques had reached by that time. During the Ming and Qing dynasties (14th - 20th century) the development of sea transportation brought such delicacies as shark's fin, sea cucumber and bird's nest to the banquet table. These were usually preserved in dried form and had to be soaked and reconstituted in water or other liquids before cooking. The skill was a special one and the chefs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties had mastered it. Shark's fin, sea cucumber and bird's nest are themselves very bland. Their delicacy is in their texture and the balance of seasonings to complement the texture. 'Menus of the Sui Garden' written by Qing dynasty scholar Yuan Mei (1716 - 1798) is a masterpiece on Chinese cuisine. The author describes not only the preparation of the many delicacies and sumptuous foods he had sampled, he expounds on the theories of cooking and his own analysis of them. In the Qing dynasty, a luxurious Manchu-Han banquet was made up of 6 major courses, six minor courses, four accompanying courses, 2 or 3 desserts and 24 trays (4 of dried fruits, 4 of fresh fruits, 4 of preserved fruits, 8 cold foods and 4 hot foods) in addition, the guests were served appetizers and 2 courses of tea before the meal. The banquet was extravagant and wasteful, but it brought together the best of Han-Manchu cooking and was a magnificent display of the exquisiteness of Chinese cuisine.

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Chinese food appeals to the senses through color, shape, aroma and taste. To achieve perfection in Chinese cooking, one must understand the techniques underlying the art.

A) Cutting - Shape depends in the main on cutting. Cutting will also affect the color, aroma and taste. Raw materials should be sliced, diced, shredded, cubed, minced or pureed depending upon the requirements of the dish and the character of the raw food. Cutting has been an integral part of the art for centuries. Confucius, the Great Philosopher and Educator said 2000 years ago, "I will not eat food which is not properly cut". We cannot fault Confucius for being too particular here. Improper cutting makes food unattractive and causes an unevenness in color and taste. In stir-frying improper cutting will result in the small pieces being overcooked and big pieces remaining raw.

A famous dish called 'Thick Soup of Perch and Water Shield' made its appearance sometime around the Jin dynasty. The above

mentioned 'Qi Min Yao Shu' describes a preparation of the dish that calls for precise cutting. The bones of the perch must be picked out and the meat cut into slices 6cm long. Water shields had to be shredded. 'Perch and Shield' was so delicious that according to one historical text, a man named Chang Han chose to abandon his official post in Loyang so that he could return to his native Wuxian country in Jiang Su province to test the famous dish. Emperor Yangdi of the Sui dynasty was said to have praised 'Perch and Shield' highly. The many recipes left to us from the Tang dynasty show that dexterity with the knife was required of all good Chefs. And today we enjoy a rich variety of cold and hot foods which are presented in intricate design and artful arrangement.

B) Flavouring - Taste depends in the main on flavouring. The proper use of seasonings and spices is extremely important. There are many tastes - salty, sweet, sour, pungent, fragrant, bitter and so forth and of them salty is predominant. Salt can not only improve the flavour, it can eliminate fishy or gamey flavours in food. Sugar sweetens and it can dissolve fats and eliminate or offset bitter flavours in some foods. Vinegar dissolves calcium found in food and it cuts the greasiness of a dish. Peppers have their unique pungent aromas which make food more appetising. Bitter tastes are not usually desirable in a dish, but a little bitter can eliminate certain undesirable flavour and can enhance the deliciousness of other ingredients. The proper use of seasonings will produce a variety of dishes to suit a variety of appetites. In cooking a good cook must know what to add, how much to add and when to add it. Different spices should be added at different stages of preparation. Mastery of the condiments, spices and seasonings is mastery of the arts. The ancient text 'Shang Shu' or 'The Book of History' notes that salt and plum were necessary ingredients in making soup. Vinegar did not exist at the time and sour plums were used instead. In the Spring and Autumn Period, Duke Qi Huan, the leader of five states, (?- 720BC) was recorded to have failed unwell one night. His mouth was hot and dry and his heart was pounding, Yi Ya, his favourite subject, a Chef famous for his use of flavours, made a bowl of soup for the Duke. The soup cured him of his condition and he recovered quickly. Regardless of the taste of the original ingredients, a truly delicious dish depends on the seasoning. By varying their use of flavourings, Chinese chefs have created new tastes: tingling spiciness of 'Mala', the combination of sweet, hot and salty of 'Yuxiang' (fish flavour), the spicy, sesame of 'Guaiwei' and so on.

C) Fire - Chinese chefs pay particular attention to the control of the fire, manipulating it to bring out certain flavour and to cook, raw foods to just the right degree of doneness. Chinese chefs have known the importance of the controlling of fire since the earliest recorded recipe. The 'eight delicacies' of the 'Zhou Li' and 'Li Ji' call for stewing or braising, cooking over a slow fire for a long time. In the 'Chapter on Natural Tastes' of 'The Annals of Lu' control of the fire was pointed to as affecting the taste of food. A proper fire meant a delicious dish. Su Dongpo (1037 - 1101), the great writer of the Song Dynasty, was also expert in cooking. He created a way of stewing pork and it has been known ever since as 'Dongpo Pork'. The great writer even immortalized his pork in a poem. 'A slow

fire, a little water and it will be delicious'. Generally speaking, where the food is cut in large pieces it should be cooked over small or tiny fire for a long time. Such cooking methods are essentially stewing or simmering. Foods cut in small pieces are cooked quickly over a high flame and these cooking methods are all a form of frying or stir frying. There are other cooking methods to use all depending on the dish you want to prepare. In stewing or simmering particular attention is paid to the pot or cooking utensil. Instead of the common everyday pot, special pots are used and they are sometimes sealed before the heat is applied. For instance there is a dish called 'Earthen Jar Pork' in Beijing cooking which is stewed in a sealed earthenware jar. The famous Fujianese dish 'Buddha Jumps over the Wall' is prepared by putting the ingredients in a Shaoxin wine jar, sealing the jar with lotus leaves and then cooking them over a slow fire for a fairly long time. The ingredients should be soft, glutinous and fresh with a delicious aroma. It will assault your senses as soon as it is put on the table. A poem has described it: 'The aroma perfumes the air the moment the jar is opened; Buddha will give up meditation and jump over the wall'. The name of the dish came from the poem. Its success depends on controlling the fire.

D) Regional Styles - China is a big country. Different regions enjoy different climates, natural resources and different foods. The variety of regional styles and dishes is enormous, calling on special condiments and cooking techniques to produce different flavours. For condiments, Sichuan is known for its broad bean paste; Guangdong has oyster sauce; Fujian has 'Hongzao', a red fermented grain; and Hunan has fermented Soy Beans or Black Beans. For regional styles, Beijing is known for its fried foods, crisp and tender. Suzhou style is noted for its simmering and braising techniques. Suzhou cooking is a bit on the sweet side but very heavy in flavour and flavouring a melt in your mouth tenderness. Sichuan cooks specialize in chillies and hot pepper and are famous for aromatic and spicy sauces. Guangdong cooking makes use of many, many ingredients and looks for fresh, tender, crisp textures. Fujian cooks work with clear broths and different frying techniques favouring light sweet and sour flavours. Hongzao, a red fermented grain, is frequently used to flavour Fujian dishes. Anhui cuisine is famous for its use of game. It stresses the natural flavours of the ingredients. Zhejiang dishes tend to be fried and are delicately crisp. Hunan cooking favours the use of vinegar. Its smoked foods are distinctive and hot and sour flavours characterize the regions dishes. Shandong cuisine is famed for its soups: clear soups and milk soups.

Individual tastes may vary, but colour, design, taste and aroma are what bring a person to the table. An only by coming to the table, can one sample the different flavours and foods from the regions of China which make Chinese cuisine so rich and varied.

DIET & HEALTH

People must consume a certain amount of food everyday to maintain their existence. According to statistical calculation, an individual eats several thousand times his weight in food in a lifetime. In all, water will account for over

75 tons of it, carbohydrates, over 17 tons, protein more than 2.5 tons and fat more than 1.3 tons. What role does food play in the human body? How can we make more efficient use of the foods we eat? Let's look for the answer by looking at the relationship between diet and health.

The human body takes in seven basic substances from food: carbohydrates, fat, protein, vitamins, inorganic salts, cellulose and water. Each has its own particular function in the human physiology, but they are closely related to each other, coming together in an integrated unity, the human body.

Of the nutrients, carbohydrates and fats are the body's major source of heat energy calories. 80 - 90% of the calories that a human body consumes are supplied by carbohydrates and fat. Grains and tubers are rich in carbohydrates, and they are widely available as foods. Fats are a rich source of caloric energy but they are not easily digested. Fats mixed with other foods can slow down the digestion of proteins and carbohydrates. The main function of protein is to supply raw material for the production of tissue in the human body to form new tissue or to supplement and repair the tissue that is old or damaged.

Protein contained in tissue can be broken down into heat energy and is therefore, one of the sources of energy in the human body. Protein exists in all forms of animal and plant tissue: in egg, milk, meats, grains such as rice, wheat, corn, in soy bean, potato etc.

While many foods are extremely nutritious, they must be eaten in a proper manner so that the body may fully absorb them. The egg is a good example. It is known that the egg contains high quality proteins, calcium, phosphorus, iron, inorganic salts as well as vitamins A, D, B2 and so on. If eaten boiled or fried (in both cases, the egg should not be cooked over a high flame), it is an ideally nutritious food. But if eaten raw or half cooked, it is quite a different matter. According to medical investigation, the protein contained in raw egg has a kind of antibiotic protein which can not be absorbed by the human body. The lab tests have shown that approximately 88% of all raw eggs contain bacteria, such as staphylococcus, colonbacillus, or streptococcus, which are harmful to the human body. It is very important therefore to know how to eat an egg or any other food.

Vitamins are another nutrient. They neither produce heat nor form tissue in the human body and the body does not require great quantities of them everyday. In fact it needs less than 200 milligrams of them per day. But a deficiency in any one vitamin will affect the health causing a number of possible deficiency diseases.

Vitamin "A" promotes the growth of tissue and maintenance of normal eyesight. Vitamin "A" deficiencies will cause poor eyesight and possibly night blindness (nyctalopia). The deficiencies can be made up by eating foods which are rich in vitamin A such as liver, milk, egg, vegetables and fruit.

Beriberi is caused by an insufficient amount of vitamin B1 in the diet. People who suffer from beriberi should eat more lean meat, liver and other coarse grains or beans and bean products. Vitamin B2 deficiencies will lead to inflammations of the mouth and of the skin.

Scurvy is caused by insufficient intake of vitamin C in the diet. Osteomalacia results from the lack calcium, phosphorus and vitamin D. It is apparent therefore, that foods rich in vitamins, especially fresh vegetables and fruits, should be included in the daily diet to prevent certain diseases.

Certain chronic conditions are not caused by a deficiency in nutrients but their cure still involves some regulation of the diet. For example, gastric ulcer sufferers should eat fixed quantities at fixed times taking more meals but eating less at each meal. They should choose easily digestible foods avoiding raw foods or foods that are too cold, oily or spicy. They should increase their intake of vitamin U which can be found in cabbage and other vegetables and is available in pill form.

Diabetics must control their consumption of high starch content foods and they cannot eat candy and between-meal sweets. Their diet must balance the proportions of sugar, fat and protein they consume. For non-staple foods, they may be allowed lean meats, fish poultry, eggs, milk, bean products and vegetables which have a lower than 30% starch content. They can have milk (without sugar), hard-boiled eggs, nuts and seeds and fruits with low sugar content. Diabetics should eat foods rich in plant fibre and eat more onions. Onions contain a substance similar to the medicine tolbutamide which is used in diabetes cases and therefore is of some therapeutic use. Plant fibre can slow down the absorption of glucose preventing sudden increases of blood sugar and they satisfy the appetite.

Sufferers of hyperlipidemia, hypertension and arteriosclerosis should eat low calorie, low fat and low cholesterol foods, light protein and vitamin rich foods. Foods which help lower lipid levels, blood pressure and prevent hardening of the arteries include wheat, corn, green beans, celery, rape, onion garlic, mushroom, edible fungi, cabbage, lettuce, cauliflower, tomato, fish and bean products. Soybeans and soybean products are as nutritious as meat and have always been known as "Plant meat". They can, as part of the diet, lower blood serum, and cholesterol levels. Hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes cases should include soybean products in the diet.

Onion and garlic have been shown to lower lipid levels in the blood and increase fibrinolytic activity.

Eating onions and garlic is more beneficial to the body than unsaturated fatty acid which is clinically used in lipidemia cases. Regular consumption of onion and garlic can prevent and treat arteriosclerosis and heart disease.

Celery is rich in vitamin D, calcium and phosphorus. It has shown to produce a tranquillizing effect and is beneficial to maintaining blood vessels. Celery is of some therapeutic use in curing hypertension, vascular sclerosis, neurasthenia, chyluria and infantile osteomalacia. Celery or celery roots brewed with dates and consumed as a soup can lower serum cholesterol because dates are rich in vitamins and iron and the soup is like a natural vitamin pill.

Older people should eat foods which contain iodine, chromium and vitamins A, E, C. Vegetables and fruits are a good source of vitamin C which prevents increased capillary permeability. It acts in shifting cholesterol deposits in the inner walls of blood vessels to the liver where they are broken down to cholic acid. Vitamin C is effective in preventing and treating arteriosclerosis.

Cabbage, lettuce and cauliflower contain vitamin E which has also been useful against arteriosclerosis, in lowering blood pressure, promoting cell reproduction and tissue replacement.

Cellulose in the diet lowers serum cholesterol and vegetables have shown some effectiveness in preventing cancer. Lettuce, turnip, bean sprouts, pumpkin, peas, cauliflower and cabbage contain an enzyme which can decompose nitritamine which is formed by amino and nitrite contained in fresh fish, meat and medicines. Nitritamine is a carcinogen. By decomposing nitritamine, vegetables are in effect anticancer agents.

Chinese medicine has historically used certain foods, their nutrients and their pharmaceutical qualities, to treat certain conditions and diseases. Garlic has been used against infections and in the treatment of carbuncles and inflammations and has been effective in getting rid of worms and parasites in the intestinal tract; scallions have been used in the treatment of clods and influenza and eating raw scallions has been thought to improve blood circulation and the body's resistance to severe cold. Radishes reduce phlegm and relieve coughing. Bean milk and bean curd check and prevent fevers. Ginger is good for the stomach and intestine. Tomatoes can help digest fat and is good for the liver. The bulb of scallions and watercress are good for the brain. Raw peanuts, dates and walnuts are good for the bone marrow and can serve a function in the production of red blood cells and platelet. They prevent and are used to treat all sort of anaemias. Black edible fungi clears the villi in the stomach, intestines and lungs. Tremella, known as "the best fungi" contains protein, sugar, vitamins and amino acids. If eaten, it is said to moisten the lungs, promote the secretion of saliva and body fluids, improve the blood and the condition of the stomach.

Diet is closely related to health. But in addition, the diet is inseparable from physical beauty. Some say that "food is as important as cosmetics". There is some truth to the saying. All sorts of vitamins play important roles in a person's

physical appearance. Vitamin A gives you bright piercing eyes and good healthy skin; vitamin B can smooth away wrinkles and eliminate pigment spots in the skin. Vitamin E is good for the skin as well. Bean oil and bean milk supplies protein and fat for the skin and sour bean curd and yogurt can fill out the skin cells. It is not enough to rely on cosmetics for a beautiful complexion. Nutrition will determine whether it is really healthy.

The functions of food in the human body are many-faceted. To study and understand these functions is only the first step. More important, how do we harming one's health. The answer is in organizing the diet or balancing the diet. The fundamental principle here is to make food go through the human body, according to the body's needs, at fixed times and in fixed proportions. The quality and quantity of the food is critical. The quality means that foods must be fresh, pure and untainted. The nutrients must remain intact. Quantity means amounts of various foods; not too much, not too little. Fixed times mean regular meals and a reasonable period of time between two meals. Fixed proportions means proper portions of all the nutrients without partiality for a physiological needs. A person may thus stimulate, if followed, will satisfy all the physiological needs. A person may thus stimulate growth, increase vigor and vitality, raise working efficiency, improve resistance to disease and prolong the robust years of his life.

Overnutrition will cause disease. When the individual has taken in too many calories, too much meat or fat and carbohydrates (especially simple sugars), and has not had sufficient amounts of vegetables and fruits and when the individual has not had sufficient amounts of vegetables and fruits and when the individual has not had proper exercise, he may suffer obesity, hyperlipemia, hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, or other overnutrition diseases. Excesses in the diet are never beneficial to the health, the more so during adulthood.

What is a balanced diet?

An ancient Chinese medical book "Huang Di Nei Jing" divided our foods into four categories: staples, the cereals; nutritious foods, meats; digestive foods, fruits; and supplementary nutritious foods, vegetables.

A proper diet means that foods should meet the needs of the human body; quality, quantity and proportions of the seven basics. The diet should include cereals, meats, fruits and vegetables and a mix of these will enhance the nutritional value of each. No single food contains all the nutrients and all the substances necessary for life. Vegetables will reduce the deleterious effect of fats for instance. Research has shown that vegetable dishes have a cancer preventing effect in the body. Sugar, protein and fat can provide the human body with caloric energy. They should be consumed in a ratio of 5:1:0:7. In planning one's diet, we should pay attention to the following points:

1. Vary the foods in the diet, the more variety, the better. It's better to eat both poultry and meat than only meat. One of the characteristics of Chinese cuisine is its rich variety of ingredients and this is one of the reasons that Chinese food is nutritionally sound.

2. Balance the menu by including "protective" foods, vegetables and fruits, meats and milk products and energy foods (starches, sugars and fats).

Cooking and preparation can protect the nutrient content in food. In stir-frying a vegetable dish, the vegetables should, of course, be washed but do not soak them in the water for too long. Stir-fry them on a high flame quickly. Add just a little water and don't throw away the soup. Try to shorten cooking time. Don't keep cooked dishes too long and don't heat them repeatedly.

Diet will determine a person's growth, a person's energy and strength, life span and appearance.

Regularly in living habits and in diet is an important guarantee for health and longevity.

The traditional Chinese meals are the three meals a day, with four to five hours between meals, giving the food time to pass through the digestive system. Breakfast should supply 30 - 40% of the day's nutrients, lunch 40 - 50% and supper 20 - 30%. A good breakfast, a full lunch and a light supper will maintain a balance between the absorption and consumption of calories. A balanced diet according to your own age, sex, profession and your health will allow you to be healthy, beautiful and to live a long life.

INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE COOKING

China is a land of vast territory and rich resources. Customs and habits vary greatly from place to place. Over the centuries, the people have created an extraordinary variety of delicious foods which have become a part of the country's cultural legacy. An incomplete count yields more than five thousands recipes in the culinary repertoire.

Sophisticated Chinese cuisine can be extremely complex, requiring careful selection of ingredients, expert cutting and use of condiments, and fineness in cooking, skills not easy to master. However, ordinary home cooking is quite simple and easy to do.

Generally speaking, there are several processes that are involved in the making of a dish: selecting the ingredients, preparation, cutting, preparing the condiments, and regulating the fire. Each process is linked to the others. Once

you learn the basics and practice them, following the recipes, it is entirely possible for you to master the skills and the art of producing a tasty Chinese meal.

Preliminary Preparation of Ingredients

The process of preparing the ingredients before cutting and cooking directly affects the color, aroma and taste of the final product, and even more, its nutritional value.

I. Cleaning and Washing

1. Vegetables: Different methods are used to get rid of inedible parts: trimming, stripping, snapping, cutting with scissors or knife, scraping or peeling. All vegetables should be washed clean before cutting to avoid loss of nutrients.

2. Dried foods: Dried foods such as tiger lily buds, tree ears, dried bamboo shoots and Chinese mushrooms are usually soaked in warm water until soft, then boiled until they fill out. Chinese Mushrooms should be soaked in boiling water for 15 minutes. The water is then changed and the mushrooms soaked again several times. Do not throw away the water after each soaking. After it settles, it can be boiled and used as a cooking stock.

3. Fish: Scrape off the scales, remove the gills, cut off the fins, and clean out the organs. There are two ways of removing the internal organs, one by making an incision down the belly between the anus and the pelvic fins and the other by making a horizontal incision at the anus to cut the intestines. Then insert two chopsticks through gill and into the abdomen and pull out the internal organs. The method used depends on the requirements of the dish. Be careful not to puncture the gall bladder while eviscerating.

4. Poultry: Slaughter the fowl by cutting the blood vessels and the windpipe at the neck. Be sure to drain the blood thoroughly to keep the meat from turning red use boiling water for older chickens, 80°C water for spring chickens. Also use 80°C water for duck and goose but soak them longer, and stir with a stick continuously to help the feathers fall off. There are three ways of removing the internal organs: by making a two inch slit between the anus and the belly at the ribs under the wings (used for roast duck and chicken); or down the back. Whichever method is used first pull out the windpipe and crop, then remove the internal organs and finally wash the fowl under cold running water.

5. Meat: Wash off traces of blood and dirt with water. The lungs, intestines and stomach and other internal organs, should be washed by rubbing salt, alum and vinegar into the meat so that they are thoroughly clean. When cleaning the lung, cut open the windpipe and wash under running water until the lobes turn whitish.

II. Preparing dried foods

1. Shark's fin : Sharks's fins must be soaked in water and allowed to reconstitute. Separate the fins according to size, tenderness and thickness to ensure even soaking. Do not use metal containers for soaking, the fins will take on yellow spots. Soak first in hot water, and scrape the sand off. Tougher fins must be soaked twice in boiling water before scraping. After cleaning, throw the fins in a pot of cold water. Heat until the water boils, remove from fire and leave it to cool. Then remove the bones and put the fins in a pot of cold water. Add soda (not too much, or else the fins will become mushy), and boil for about one hour until they are tender to the touch. Rinse with hot water once or twice to remove the taste of the soda.
2. Sea cucumber (Sea Slug) : "Wu" sea cucumber and "Ci" sea cucumber have thin skins and tender meat and may be prepared by putting them in cold water, heat until the water boils and then let them sit until the water cools. Then slit open each sea cucumber lengthwise. Change the water and soak in clear water for three or four days, changing the water frequently. "Yan" sea cucumber and "Hui" sea cucumber have hard skins. Burn the skin over a fire until it is scorched, then soak it in water until it softens. Gently scrape off the burnt layer with small knife, soak again. With tender young sea cucumbers, a simple method is to put them in a thermos flask filled with boiling water and soak. After 24 hours, the sea cucumbers will have fully expanded and will be ready for cooking.
3. Squid : For every 500g. of dried squid, add three ounces of sesame seed oil and a little soda to the water and let the squid soak and expand. Or prepare a solution with 15% soda, 5% lime and 80% water, filter it, then soak the dried squid in the solution. After three hours, rinse the squid with clear water until it is completely rid of the alkaline taste. Tender squids are pale yellow and transparent, tough ones are the color of Chinese wisteria.
4. Dried Scallop : Soak in cold water for three to four hours, trim off the tough meat around the edges, wash until clean, then put it in a bowl and steam it for two to three hours.
5. Fish Tongue : Soak in boiling water for two hours in a non-metal container. Then use your hands to rub off the grains of sand on the surface. If the sand does not come off, soak again. Then cook over a fire until tender, take out the bones and rinse in clear water until clean.
6. Fish maw : Soak in cold oil until it expands. Then cut it into small pieces and deep fry in oil over a low fire until it is translucent. Next soak it in hot water until tender, rub it and wash out the oil.

CUTTING

Cutting is a very important part of Chinese cooking and there is a definite relationship between cutting and cooking. The use of the knife is a skill and an art.

I. Basic requirements in cutting

1. Cutting must, first of all, suit the particular method of cooking and the character of the food.
2. Cutting must prepare the ingredient so that it retains a clear and attractive form. This is an important factor in the design and flavor of a dish.
3. In cutting, be familiar with the character of the ingredients themselves, their textures and their colors. The character of the dishes should vary, and colors play an important role here.
4. In cutting, make efficient use of ingredients. Don't waste. Use large pieces for larger cuts and small pieces for finer cuts.

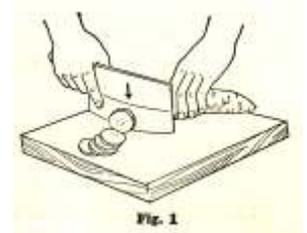
II. Cutting technique

Chinese cooking calls on the cook to produce a number of shapes and textures and to use a number of different cooking methods. The shapes, textures and methods often depend on how the ingredients are cut. There are three types of cutting. The first is rough preparation; reducing the meat or vegetable to a manageable size by using the knife to 'split' things open, to 'hack' etc. The second is fine preparation; using the knife to 'cut', 'slice' and so on. The third is decorative preparation; using the knife to 'carve' and to create garnishes.

The following are commonly used cutting methods and techniques.

1. The "cut" is used on meat which have been deboned and on vegetables

Vertical Cut - This method calls for the knife to cut straight downward through the ingredients; the blade perpendicular to the cutting board. Use it on crisp vegetables such as lettuce, bamboo shoots.

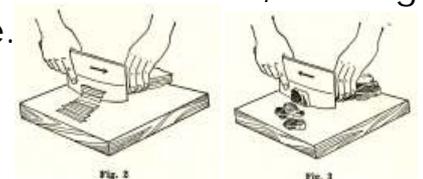


Push or Pull Cut - Push cut by pushing the knife into the material, cutting through in one stroke. The force is on the back of the knife.

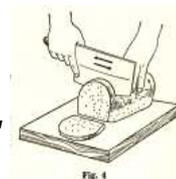
Push the knife right to the end and using the whole length of the blade. The pull cut is the converse. In either

case, the blade is perpendicular to the cutting board and

force is applied not just downward but either away from or towards you. Use either cut for tough and crisp items such as thin sheets of bean curd, dried thread ingredients and boneless but relatively tough meat.



Saw-Cut - This method is as it sounds; sawing back and forth with the knife, blade perpendicular to the cutting board. Use it in cutting deboned but tough raw meat and things which might be soft like bread, ham, or boiled meat.

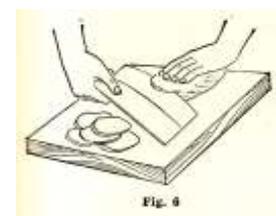


Roll Cut - Press firmly down on the ingredient and cut through, the blade perpendicular to the cutting board but at an oblique angle to the thing being cut. After each cut, roll the ingredient 1/4 turn. The resulting wedge should be assymetrical. Use it to cut crisp, round or cylindrically shaped vegetables like radishes, potatoes or carrots.

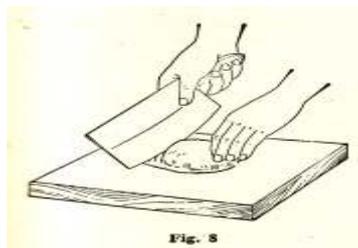
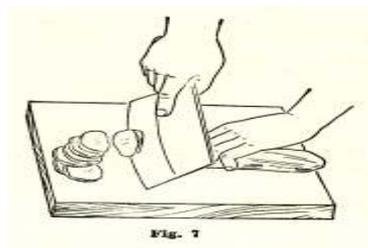


2. The "Slice"

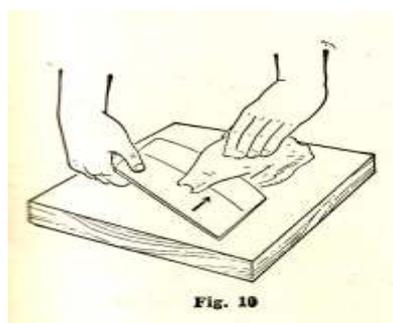
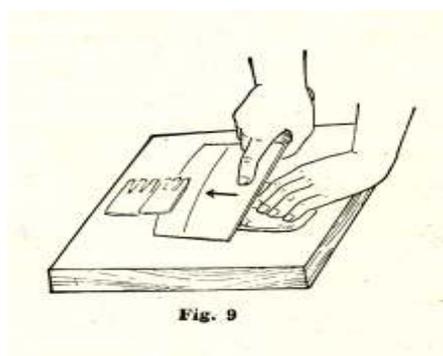
Horizontal Slice - Hold the knife so that the blade is parallel with the chopping board and slice through the ingredient starting from the bottom. Use this for ingredients such as dried bean curd, jellied meats and jellies.



Diagonal Slice - This method calls for the knife blade to be at an oblique angle to the cutting board and therefore slicing through the ingredient at a diagonal. The direction of the force may be away from you or towards you. Use it to slice soft ingredients like kidney, fish, squid, stalks of Chinese cabbage.



Push or Pull Slice - These two methods are essentially the same but push slicing is for slicing boiled crisp vegetables; pull slicing is for meats, chicken or duck. In either case the knife blade is perpendicular to the cutting board.



3. The "Chop"

- A type of cutting method used on meat with bones and other tough ingredients.

Vertical Chop - Aim the knife at a point on the ingredient and bring it down with force. Use for ham, salted pork.

Follow Chop - Cut into the ingredient with the knife. Do not withdraw the knife. Lift ingredient and knife together and drop both on the cutting board, applying force on the knife. Use for ingredients like trotters and pork shoulder.

Strike Chop - Make a shallow cut into the ingredient, leave the knife in position, hold the handle with one hand and strike the back of the knife with the other. Use for those ingredients which are small and round in shape and slippery like chicken's legs.

III. Shapes of cut ingredients

There are certain shapes which are standard in Chinese cooking: pieces, sections, strips, cubes, slices, shreds, and fine mince. The shape is decided by the character of the ingredient and the requirements of the cooking.

"Piece" - There are many kinds of "pieces", diamond, hexagonal, rectangular or wedge shaped. Cut them by first cutting the ingredient into broad strips or sections and then into smaller pieces as required.

"Slice" - Slices are thin, flat pieces of the ingredient. Cut them by first cutting the ingredient into sections as required by one dimension of the slices. Then slice the sections according to the desired thickness. The required size of a slice is often decided by the cooking method.

"Strip & Shred" - Strips and shreds are similar, one is thicker, the other is thinner. Cut the ingredient into wide slices. Then cut into strips and shreds. They should be three to four cm. long. There are three common methods of shredding ingredients: lay the slices one on top of another overlapping like the tiles on a roof and cut; pile the slices into a brick and cut; or roll the slices into a cylinder and cut.

"Diced & Cube"

"Grain & Mince" - Cubes are small diced pieces and are cut from strips. Grains are smaller than diced cubes and are cut from shreds. Mince is the ingredient cut finer than a grain. Grain and mince shapes are used mostly for seasoning and coloring or for making a gravy.

"Puree" - A puree is even finer and is cut by much chopping and pressing with the flat of the knife blade.

The Use of Ingredients

A dish is made up of one or more ingredients. The ingredients are usually categorized as "main" ingredients and "additional" ingredients. The main ingredient is the major ingredient in the dish, the additional ingredients serve as contrast to it.

The amount of each ingredient depends upon the character of the dish. Attention should be paid to:

I. Quantity

1. Bring out the main ingredient; it's color, aroma, flavor and form.
2. If there is no distinction between ingredients, if they are all equally important, then they should be mixed more or less in equal proportion.

II. Flavor

1. Bring out the flavor of the main ingredient. The additional ingredients should be lighter in flavor.
2. Bring out the flavor of the additional ingredients if the main ingredient itself is lighter in flavor. Heavily seasoned minor ingredients will complement or supplement the major.
3. Dilute the flavor of the main ingredient if the flavor of the main ingredients is too heavy.

III. Texture

1. The texture of the various ingredients can be similar. Ingredients may be crisp, brittle, tender, soft, hard, and chewy and so on. The texture should be matched nicely, crisp with crisp and soft with soft.
2. The textures of the ingredients can be dissimilar. Attention should here be paid to seasoning, the temperature of fire and the order of cooking so that all the ingredients retain their proper textures.

IV. Shape

Shape affects the appearance of the dish and the cooking itself. Usually the shape of the main ingredient is the most prominent. And in selecting dishes for a complete meal there should be a variety of shapes - slices, cubes, shreds etc, - to avoid monotony.

V. Color

Color will affect presentation of the dish, and its flavor. One color may be chosen for the dish and all the ingredients will then match. Alternatively, different colored ingredients may be chosen for contrast.

Time and Temperature in Cooking

There are a variety of ingredients in Chinese dishes and their qualities are quite different. But the proper control of time and temperature is the key to

success or failure. Technology has changed and we can now control both factors but the traditional coal burning stove permitted the following.

High Heat - The flame is high and steady; its color yellow-white. It is a bright and scorching heat. High heat is usually used for quick cooking, for crisp and tender foods. Different kinds of frying, steaming, instant boiling all call for a high heat.

Moderate Heat - The flame is lower, not as steady; its color yellow-red. It is not as bright as a high heat. Moderate heat can be used for braising, stewing, and boiling.

Low Heat - The flame is low and unsteady. It is blue-green in color or darker. Low heat is used for slow cooking allowing the flavors to penetrate through all the ingredients; for baking and simmering.

Slow Heat - The flame is low and gives very little heat. It is used for very slow cooking turning hard ingredients to soft ones. Slow heat is used for simmering, braising and stewing.

Electric or gas stoves can be adjusted to high, moderate and low heats. But, more attention must be paid to the temperature of the oil when cooking on them.

Seasoning

Seasoning in cooking, adding the proper seasoning to cooked foods will add flavor to the dish, eliminate fishy, gamey smells and cut the grease in rich foods, through complicated chemical and physical reactions. There are a variety of sauces and condiments of different character and function. Some condiments also contain valuable nutrients.

I. Commonly used sauces and condiments

Sesame oil is made from sesame roasted and ground. It is very fragrant and is an ideal oil for cold dishes and vegetarian foods. It can be mixed into fillings or added to cooked food.

Salt is one of the basics. Chinese cooking may call for coarse, fine, or refined salt.

Soy sauce is made from soybeans and salt. There are many kinds of soy sauce, light and dark. They add flavor and color to the dish.

Sweet brown sauce is made from fermented flour. It is sweet and is often used in fried or stir-fried dishes.

Brown paste is made from soybeans. It is often used in stewing, braising or is mixed into vegetable fillings.

Chili bean paste is made from chili peppers and broad beans. It is dark red and quite spicy. It can be used in braised fish, meat or chicken dishes or in fried foods.

Vinegar, the sour seasoning that removes fishy or gamey smells, cuts grease and softens bones. It is a must for fish and sparerib dishes.

Wine is most often, yellow rice wine or Shaoxing wine. It helps to eliminate fishy or gamey smells and is used in meat or fish dishes. Substitutes: sherry or wines.

Scallion has a strong pungent flavor which eliminates fishy and gamey smells. It improves the aroma of a food and also kills germs.

Ginger is strong, pungent and quite hot. It negates any fishy and gamey smells and is usually used in meat or seafood dishes.

Garlic is a strong condiment that eliminates fishy odors and kills germs. It's usually used in cold dishes and in choice seafood, kidney and liver dishes.

Pepper, fragrantly hot, removes fishy flavors and is usually used in seafood.

Mustard is hot with a slightly bitter flavor and is good for dressings on cold dishes.

Curry powder is slightly hot, and adds to the flavor of a dish. It's good with potatoes and meat dishes.

Five-spice powder is a mixture of cinnamon, star anise, fennel, licorice and clove. It eliminates fish odors and improves the flavor of food and is often used in meat dishes and for meat stuffing.

MSG (gourmet powder) is small granulated crystals which add to the flavor of stir-fried dishes or soups.

Sugar in itself makes a food sweeter. It also counter balances salt and is good for color.

II. Steps in seasoning

Before cooking, basic seasoning creates a basic flavor for, or cuts certain smells in the ingredient. This basic seasoning is done by mixing and stirring in salt, soy sauce, vinegar, gourmet powder, spices, cornstarch, cooking wine or sugar according to the recipe.

While cooking, final seasoning enhances the flavor of the foods. While the food is being cooked, the appropriate seasonings are added according to the recipe.

After cooking, supplementary seasoning adds a last dash to the dish. In certain cooking methods, such as deep-frying, instant boiling, steaming or pan boiling vegetables or salads, seasoning can not be added during the cooking. Seasoning after cooking can make up for a flavor deficiency.

III. Principle of Seasoning

Balance. You should know what is correct flavor of the dish. If it calls for several different spices or seasonings, make the leading flavor stand out.

The nature of the ingredients. Fresh foods should not be seasoned too highly or they will lose their original delicacy. Food that has a strong fishy or gamey smell should be highly seasoned to cut down or eliminate smells.

The seasons. People's tastes change with the season. They like light foods for the summer and heavier foods in the winter.

Gourmet powder (MSG). Gourmet powder is monosodium glutamate. It is made, primarily, from soybean or wheat. It absorbs some moisture in the air and dissolves easily in water. It has a delicious flavor of its own and is useful condiment. However, when dissolved in alkaline solution (soda or sodium bicarbonate), it loses its flavor and produces a bad gas. When heated at 150°C for an extended period of time, it changes chemically and becomes poisonous. You must be careful of the cooking method when using gourmet powder.

Batters and Thickening Agent

Batters are used to coat ingredients before cooking. They help the food retain freshness, flavor and moisture. They will also give the cooked food a crisp outside and a tender and soft inside. Batters help retain the original nutrients in food that an otherwise be lost in the cooking process. Finally, batters help the food retain shape where they might have broken up or shrunken under heat.

I. Making Batters

The primary ingredients in batters include egg, corn starch, wheat flour, rice flour, baking powder, baking soda or bread crumbs. The choice of ingredients depends upon the dish. The following are some commonly used batters:

1. **Egg white batter:** made of egg white, starch and salt used for foods that are fried, stir fried or deep fried. The food comes out a white color touched with red.

2. **Egg and cornstarch batter:** made of the whole egg, starch and salt

and used for foods that are deep fried or stir fried. The food comes out golden yellow.

3. Whipped egg white: The egg white is whipped, then cornstarch is added. This batter is used for foods that are deep fried. The food looks snow-white.

4. Water and cornstarch batter: made of cornstarch and water, it is used for foods that are deep fried or dry stir fried. The food comes out a purple red color touched with yellow.

5. Baking powder batter: Made of baking powder, flour and water, it is used for food which are deep fried and come out light in color.

6. Baking soda batter: Made of egg white, starch, baking soda, salt, sugar, MSG and water, it is for foods that are dry stir fried. They come out reddish in color.

7. Egg batter and flour or starch dredge: The food is first covered with a layer of cornstarch, then dipped in batter. The kind of coating is used for ingredients to be pan fried in a little oil. The food is cooked to a golden yellow color.

8. Egg batter and bread crumb dredge: The food is first covered with batter and then rolled in bread crumbs. This is for food which will be deep fried. The food should be cooked to a golden color.

9. Crisp thin batter: It is made of flour, bean curd, lard (or peanut oil) and water, fermented for three hours. It is mostly for foods that are deep fried. It comes out a golden yellow color.

II. Thickening Agents

A thin mixture of corn starch and water added to food shortly before it is done will thicken the sauce. The starch paste serves to:

1. Bring the spices and the ingredients together to heighten the flavors;

2. Make the surface of the food ingredients smooth and soft and make the colors bright. It improves the appearance of the dish.

3. Create a transparent sticky coating around the food keeping the heat in the food so it doesn't become cold so quickly.

4. In soupy dishes some heavier ingredients tend to sink to the bottom. The thickening agent makes the ingredients remain more evenly distributed in the soup.

There are two thickening pastes, thin and thick. Thick paste is further divided into two types: a thick coating paste, which sticks to the ingredients, leaving no liquid in the dish, and a fluid paste which thickens the gravy in a dish. Thin paste also falls into two categories: starch glaze, which is poured into the gravy left in the pot after the food is removed. This is then heated and poured over the food as a sauce; and finally, milky paste, the thinnest, which makes the gravy only slightly sticky when poured into the dish.

Cooking Methods

These are the way in which raw foods are heated. There are at least 50 distinct methods of cooking in Chinese cuisine. They fall roughly into nine categories: quick boiling and braising, simmering and stewing in a covered pot, roasting, quick frying and stir frying over a high heat, frying in oil, steaming and boiling, baking and smoking, candy floss, and pan boiling for dressed salads. One dish may require one or two or even more methods. Each will produce a different effect. Here are 30 commonly used methods in Chinese cooking. You should take into consideration the ingredients, your equipment and other conditions, learn these methods carefully, practice and use them with ease.

1. Quick boiling 'Cuan': This simple cooking method is often used in preparing soup dishes. Boil the water or broth over a high heat. Put in the ingredients and flavor it. Stop cooking as soon as the soup boils again. Don't thicken it and the vegetables will be crisp and fresh. (Example - Boiled Meat Balls)

2. Instant boiling 'Shuan': Dip thinly sliced ingredients into boiling water for a second or two, and then serve with a dip. This cooking method keeps the ingredients fresh and tender. The hot pot, a special pot unique to China, is the best way to do it. (Example - Mongolian Fire Pot - Rinsed Lamb)

3. Stewing 'Ao': Heat a little oil until it is hot, put in the ingredients (some scallions or ginger can be put in first). Stir for a short time, then add broth or water and seasonings. Simmer over a slow fire. The food will be soft and tender and it works for both dishes and soups. (Example - Stewed Cabbage)

4. Braising 'Hui': A method for cooking soupy dishes made of several different ingredients. Put a little oil in the pan and heat it until it is hot. Add the ingredients and stir, add broth and water, boil over quick fire without thickening the soup. Alternatively, heat a little oil in a pan, put in the spices then the broth and then the ingredients, cook them over slow fire, and finally thicken the soup with starch. Alternatively, prepare the soup first, then put in already deep fried or steamed ingredients, cook over slow fire and thicken the soup with starch. (Example - Stewed Tripe)

5. 'Ban' salads: This does not involve cooking but simply calls for cutting the food which can be eaten raw or cooked ingredients, and dressing it with seasonings. This method preserves nutrients in food and the dish is tasty and refreshing. (Example - Sweet & Sour Cucumber Salad)

6. Cooked Salads 'Qiang': Here the raw ingredients are parboiled or deep fried first, and then dressed with Sichuan peppercorn oil.

The difference between raw salads and cooked is whether the food is heated or not. In the raw salads the food is served raw and soy sauce, vinegar and sesame oil (three in one oil) are used. In cooked salads the food is heated and the Sichuan peppercorn oil is used. (Example - String Bean and Red Pepper Salad)

7. Pickle in salt 'Yan': Pickle the food with salt, or with salt and wine. Dishes are prepared this way have a subtle fragrance and are crisp. They can

balance out greasiness in other foods. (Example - Spicy Chinese Cabbage)

8. 'Jian' frying: A flat-bottomed pan is used; some oil, and a medium fire. Seasonings are added when food is half done. The food itself should have been made flat, seasoned and coated with a thick batter before frying. While frying, the pan should be turned from time to time so that the heat is evenly distributed.

9. 'Ta' frying: The ingredients are coated with batter and fried in a small amount of oil on both sides over a slow fire until done. They can be deep-fried in hot oil first and the 'Ta' fried. Seasoning and sauce are added during the frying. (Example - Fish Filets)

10. 'Tie' frying: This is basically the same as 'Jian' frying, but only one side fried. The food is not turned over, so that one side is golden brown and the other side is soft and tender.

11. 'Zha' deep frying: Food is fried in a large quantity of oil over a high heat. There are different variations of deep frying:

A) Neat deep-frying: The raw ingredients are not coated with batter or flour.

B) Dry deep-frying: Raw ingredients are coated with a dry flour.

C) Soft deep-frying: Raw ingredients are coated with batter.

D) Crisp deep-frying: Raw ingredients are boiled or steamed first and then deep-fried for crispness. (Example - Deep Fried Pork Tenderloin)

12. 'Liu' frying: This is a special technique which involves two stages: deep-frying, quick-boiling steaming or boiling the ingredient until it is done and then mixing condiments for a sauce. Then either:

A) Dark brown saute: Pour the sauce over the cooked foods and serve. (Example - Slippery Pork Slices)

B) Slippery saute: Stir-fry the raw ingredients and pour the sauce when they are half done, stirring thoroughly. (Example - Sauteed Pork Liver in Sauce)

C) Soft saute: Steam or boil the ingredients and then, while they are hot, add a thin and delicate sauce.

13) 'Chao' Stir Frying: Stir-fry the ingredients in a hot oil over a quick fire. This method is widely used and has many variations:

A) Pure Stir-frying: No batters are involved in the pre-cooking preparation. The ingredients are stir-fried and seasoned in the cooking. (Example - Stir Fried Shredded Pork)

B) "Twice cooked" stir-frying: One ingredient has previously been cooked and is here cut into smaller pieces and stir-fried with other ingredients and seasonings. (Example - Twice Cooked Pork)

C) Soft Stir-frying: The main additional ingredients are stir-fried separately and are then brought together with the addition of some sauce and a thickening agent and stir-fried again. (Example - Beef in Oyster Sauce)

In all these methods a stir-frying use a quick fire and cook for a short time.

14) 'Bao' Quick Frying: This method is much the same as stir-frying. The ingredients have been deep-fried or quick-boiled first. They are then stir-fried. The seasonings should be prepared before hand and the trick is to "seize the moment" and perform each step in quick succession. Variations include quick-frying in oil, with a thick sauce, with salt, and with green onions. (Example - Crackling Fried Tripe)

15) 'Peng' frying: This is one of the important cooking techniques and is always used together with deep-frying. You never put anything in sauce without deep-frying it first. In 'peng' frying, the ingredients are cut into small pieces and deep-fried first. Then taken out of the oil and a sauce added while the ingredients are hot, stir-fry for a short time and move the pan away from the fire and serve. The deep-fried food may be batter coated or not. (Example - Fried Prawns in Sauce)

16) 'Dun' stewing: There are two kinds of stewing, stewing in water and stewing out of water. Stewing out of water involves a double boiling technique where the cooking is done in a boiling water bath. (Example - Clear Simmered Soft-Shell Turtle)

Stewing in water is cooking the ingredients in water.

17) 'Men' Braising: The food must be first fried and then all ingredients are put in a tightly covered pot and simmered over a slow fire. (Example - Braised Chicken)

18) 'Lu' stewing in gravy: The gravy is made first, and the ingredients are then stewed in the gravy over a slow fire. (Example - Boiled Duck)

19) 'Jiang' Stewing: This method is much the same as 'Lu' stewing in gravy. But, the main ingredient used is pickled in salt, soy sauce or chili bean paste first. Then it is stewed in a gravy until it is done. The sauce can be thickened and is served with the dish. (Example - Stewed Pork Shoulder)

20) 'Shao' Stewing: This method is widely used. The meat is cut into small pieces. It is first fried, deep-fried or boiled or steamed until half done. Seasonings, soup or water is then added to it. It is brought to a boil and then simmered over a slow fire. This technique has many variations, but the most common is stewing in soy sauce where soy sauce, ginger, cooking wine and sugar are the primary seasonings. (Example - Red Cooked Pork)

21) 'Pa' stewing: This kind of stewing calls for the pot to be 'seasoned', first by cooking scallions or ginger in hot oil. The ingredients are then placed in the pot and simmered until done. (Example - Steamed Mutton)

22) Boiling: Boil the ingredients directly in water. This method is used when a little soup is desired. (Example - Creamed Cabbage)

23) Steaming: This method is widely used, not only for cooking, but for treating the raw ingredients and to keep foods warm after they have been cooked. There are two types of steaming, steaming in clear soup and steaming with rice flour and they are used depending on the food to be cooked. (Example - Steamed mandarin Fish)

24) Roasting: Ingredients are first pickled or processed and then roasted until done in an oven. There are two methods of roasting. One is to roast in a closed oven. The food is hung on a hook or on a spit, or placed on a tray in a closed oven. (Example - Roast Beijing Duck)

The other is to roast over an open fire. The ingredients is suspended over the fire and turned for even cooking.

25) Smoking: This is cooking with heat and smoke from a burning material (sawdust, tea leaves, cypress branches, bamboo leaves or granulated sugar). (Example - Smoked Chicken)

26) Mud baking: This is a unique cooking method. The ingredients, first pickled are then packed in lard and lotus leaves and covered with a thick coat of clay mud. Then it is baked in an open fire until done. The dish retains its original juices. (Example - Beggar's Chicken)

27) 'Wei' slow cooking: This is much the same as stewing. The difference is in the choice of ingredients. This method is used for tougher meats which must be cooked over slow fire for a long time to become tender. (Example - Stewed Five-Flavor Beef)

28) Candied floss: The main ingredient (a fruit, nuts or sweet potato) is deep-fried, steamed or boiled. The candied floss is made by dissolving white sugar in a little hot oil and stirring until it is golden brown then pouring it over the cooked fruit. The fruit must then be dipped piece by piece in cold water coming away from the dish with long thin strands of candy. This is used for desserts. (Example - Toffee Apples)

29) Sugar frosting: This is a technique for cold desserts. The food is first deep-fried and then coated with white sugar. Alternatively, dissolve sugar in boiling water or oil and dip the food into the solution. When it cools it will be coated with a layer of white sugar. (Example - Egg Pancakes)

30) Honey Syrup: For desserts, there are two methods of making honey syrup. One is to dissolve white sugar in a little hot oil over a high heat, add water or honey, put in the main ingredient and cook it until it is done. The syrup should be thickened by heating itself. This is very good for honey syrup bananas or Chinese yams which become soft very easily when cooked. (Example - Honey Yams)

Alternatively, steam the main ingredient with white sugar, rock sugar or honey until it is done. Drain off the syrup and thicken it by heating in a pan and pour it back on the ingredient. This method suits ingredients which take a longer time to become soft such as ham or lotus seeds.

Gravy Recipes

1. Guangzhou red gravy:

Boiling Water	2.5ltrs.
Soy Sauce	500ml.
Cooking Wine	250ml.
Rock Sugar	350gms.
Salt	35gms.
Aniseed	15gms.
Licorice Root	15gms.
Chinese Cinnamon	15gms.
Apple	15gms.
Ginger	7.5gms.
Sichuan Pepper	7.5gms.
Clove	7.5gms.

2. Guangzhou white gravy:

All the above leaving out the soy sauce and rock sugar. Increase quantity of salt to 125gms.

3. Jiangsu, Zhejiang, northern gravy:

Boiling Water	2.5ltrs.
Soy Sauce	500ml.
Salt	50gms.
White Sugar	500gms.
Cooking Wine	350ml.
Scallion	125gms.
Ginger	60gms.
Aniseed	35gms.
Chinese Cinnamon	100gms.

To cook: Put the spices in a gauze sack, tie it and put it into the pot. Then add the soy sauce, salt, sugar, cooking wine, scallions, ginger and other seasonings. (If red rice flour is called for, soak it twice in boiling water before putting it in the gauze sack). Heat over slow fire until it boils. It is done when it becomes fragrant (when the 'red' gravy becomes dark brown in color). To keep gravies, purify them by skimming off the grease, filtering out the dregs, heating it and storing it in the refrigerator. Gravies can be used again and again. The older the gravy, the more delicious it is.