

# Add Flavor to Your Menu - Try A Chinese Dinner

When you are planning your menu, think Chinese and whip up a fitting welcome to the Chinese New Year--the "Year of the Rabbit."

Food, of course, is the basic ingredient in any celebration and the Chinese New Year is no exception. A properly planned Chinese dinner includes at least one fowl, one fish, and one meat dish--complemented with

rice, fruits and vegetables, and nuts--perhaps almonds or walnuts.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, rice, pork, almonds, and fresh citrus are among the many foods that are in adequate or plentiful supply for March. Beef continues plentiful--that means there's more than enough to meet shopper's requirements. Depending on the situation in your local supermarket, it may also mean the price of beef is likely to be lower. In December, while the national average of grocery prices rose 1.2 percent, beef prices did trend lower.

But USDA also points out that seeking lower prices for food is only one way to be a thrifty homemaker. No matter what you are buying--poultry, beef, pork, fresh fruits and vegetables, or canned or frozen fruits and vegetables--it pays to know how to choose good quality food. Try these tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## Beef

Two things are important when you buy beef--the quality grade and the cut. Different cuts vary in tenderness. For any one cut the higher the U.S. Department of Agriculture grade, the more tender, juicy, and flavorful the meat will be. The meat is always inspected for wholesomeness before it is graded.

PRIME grade beef is the best and most expensive. Most cuts of this grade are very tender, juicy and flavorful. CHOICE grade beef is high quality--this is the grade sold in most stores. It is produced in such large amounts that it is often a very good buy. Choice beef will be quite tender and juicy and have a good flavor. GOOD grade beef is not as juicy and flavorful as the higher grades--it is somewhat more lean, but it is fairly tender.

## Poultry

Poultry is inspected for wholesomeness and graded for quality. You are likely to find the grade mark on the wrapper, or on a wing tag on chickens, ducks, and turkeys. Grade A birds have more meat and a better appearance than those of the lower grades. There are two lower grades, Grades B and C, but you will seldom see these grades printed on the poultry label.

The grade of the poultry is not a guide to how tender the

bird will be. That depends upon its age. Broiler and fryer chickens and ducklings are more tender than older birds. If the label carries the word "young" or words like "broiler" or "fryer," then you will know that these are young, tender birds. If it says Mature--Mature Duck, for example--then you will know that these are older birds which will have to be cooked with moist heat in order to be tender.

## Fruits and Vegetables

Good quality fresh fruits and vegetables look fresh. Don't buy fresh fruits or vegetables that have large bruises, cuts, or spots of decay, even if the price is low. When you trim off the bad part, you may not have enough left to make the purchase a bargain. Fresh fruits and vegetables are usually cheaper and of the best quality when they are in season.

## Vegetables

Most canned and frozen vegetables are packed and priced according to quality (grade) even if the grade isn't shown on the label. If a grade is not shown, let your taste be your guide. Try different brands until you find the one you like best.

Grade A or Fancy vegetables are tender, tasty and have the best flavor and color. Grade B or Extra Standard vegetables are slightly more mature than Grade A and have good flavor and color. Grade C or Standard vegetables are very nutritious but may not be as tender or as good-looking as Grades A and B. Top quality vegetables cost the most, but lower qualities are often good buys, particularly when used in dishes where appearance is not important.

## Fruits

As is the case with canned and frozen vegetables, most fruits are packed according to quality even if the grade is not shown on the label.

Grade A or Fancy fruits are delicious and full-flavored fruits that look best because of their good color, shape, and size. Grade B or Choice fruits have a very good flavor and color but are not quite as attractive as Grade A. Many canned fruits are Grade B quality. They are good for most uses. Grade C or Standard fruits are not as sweet as Grades A and B and the pieces may be broken or uneven.

## Pork

Pay close attention to the

pork you choose at the meat counter. The most important thing to look for is a high proportion of lean (choose pieces with as little fat as possible). Pork should, however, have at least a little marbling (flecks of fat in the lean). For best eating, choose fresh pork that is firm and grayish pink in color.

Here are a few imaginative recipe ideas.

## Oyster Sauce Beef

(Ho Yow Ngow Yuke)  
1 lb. flank steak, sliced into 2x1x1/4-inch pieces  
1/4 cup onion, diced into 1-inch pieces  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. sugar  
2 tbs. vegetable oil  
2 1/2 tbs. oyster sauce  
1 tsp. cornstarch  
1/4 cup water  
1 tbs. cornstarch, blended with 1 tbs. water to make paste

Place salt, sugar, and 1 tsp. cornstarch in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Coat beef with mixture. Add oyster sauce and marinate for 5 minutes. In a wok or skillet heat oil over high flame. Add beef and onions. Toss, cook at high heat 3 minutes. Add water and cornstarch paste. Toss and mix until gravy thickens and has coated the beef and onions. Serves 3.

NOTE: Oyster sauce is made from oysters and resembles soy sauce. It may be purchased at supermarkets or food specialty stores.

**Broccoli with Beef**  
(Ngow Yuke-Gai Lon)  
1 lb. broccoli

1/2 lb. chopped flank steak  
2 tbs. vegetable oil  
1 tsp. soy sauce  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/2 cup water or chicken stock  
1/2 tsp. sugar  
1 tbs. cornstarch, blended with 1 tbs. water to make paste

Wash broccoli and cut the flowerets off the stems. Peel off and discard stringy outsides of stems and then cut stems into 1-inch pieces. In a wok or skillet, heat oil and salt over high flame. Add chopped beef, broccoli (stems and flowerets), and soy sauce. Toss and mix all ingredients rapidly and thoroughly for 2 minutes. Add water (or chicken stock) and sugar. Cover and continue to cook at high heat for 5 minutes. Remove cover and add cornstarch paste. Toss and mix all ingredients rapidly for 2 minutes until thoroughly blended with cornstarch paste. Serves 4.

**Egg Flower Soup**  
(Don Fah Tong)  
6 cups chicken stock  
1 cup frozen peas  
1/2 cup diced canned mushrooms  
1/2 cup diced uncooked chicken  
2 eggs, beaten  
Salt

Place chicken stock in a covered pot and bring to a boil. Add peas, mushrooms and chicken. Add eggs and stir until eggs separate in shreds. Season to taste with salt. Serves 6.

**Sweet and Sour Pineapple Pork**  
(Baw Law Goo Lo Yuke)  
1 lb. lean pork, cut in 3/4-inch

cubes  
3 eggs, well-beaten  
1 cup flour  
1/2 tsp. salt  
vegetable oil (amount depends on depth of deep fryer)  
1 cup canned pineapple chunks, drained (reserve juice)  
1 medium green pepper, cut into 1/2-inch pieces  
1 tsp. soy sauce  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/4 cup catsup  
1/2 cup vinegar  
2 tbs. cornstarch, blended with 2 tbs. water

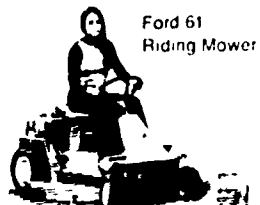
Combine flour and salt. Coat pork with beaten egg, then roll in dry mixture. Place vegetable oil in a deep frying pan and bring to a boil. Drop coated pork in fat and fry 6 to 8 minutes or until browned and done. Remove pork and drain on paper towel. Keep warm until ready to add to the sauce.

Place soy sauce, sugar, pineapple juice (one-third cup), catsup, and vinegar in a wok. Blend well and bring to a boil. Gradually add cornstarch paste. Boil on high heat, stirring continuously until sauce thickens. Add cooked pork, pineapple chunks, and sliced green pepper. Turn and mix rapidly for about 5 minutes or until all ingredients are very hot. Serves 3 to 4.

## SEDIMENT

Sediment is the prime mass pollutant of the world's waterways. Formed mainly of soil and mineral particles washed into streams by storms sediment is a serious pollutant in the U.S. It is estimated that some 4 billion tons of sediment are washed into bodies of water in the U.S. each year.

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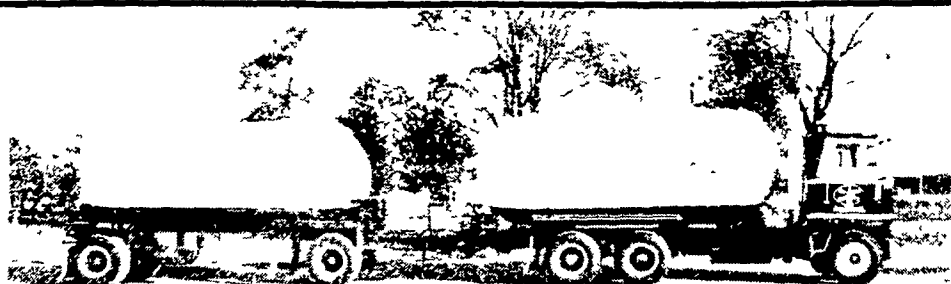
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