

Virtual

May 2021



Cookbook Club

May 3 Meeting Notes — Celebration of Chinese Cuisine

Participants: Gladys, Joan, JoEllen, Elissa, Judy, Iveta, Elsie, Sandy, Amanda

Gladys made Hot and Sour Soup, a recipe she found online at Maggie Zhu's website: <https://omnivorescookbook.com/recipes/authentic-hot-and-sour-soup/>

Gladys said she *loved* this dish. She used two kinds of dried mushrooms—shiitake and wood ear (which she obtained both from a producer and from the store), 1/4 cup of dried lily flowers (which she got from amazon.com. She has lots left over, so let her know if you would like to try them!), pork loin, 1/2 tablespoon of Shaoxing wine, white pepper powder (which is very fine; she did not use much), tofu, and eggs.

Gladys said this recipe was fun to play with. It made at least four large servings. She said it is definitely a recipe she will make again.

Gladys wondered if one can freeze tofu. A quick Google search revealed the following answers to this question. Once source (lifehacker.com) said,

“Freezing changes the texture of tofu drastically and almost magically: When ice crystals form, they create small holes in the tofu, making it far spongier, firmer, and chewier than it was before.” Another source (thekitchn.com) said, “Freezing tofu gives it a chewier texture in addition to increasing its ability to absorb marinades. If you like the smooth texture of tofu, then freezing isn't recommended.” Another (garlicdelight.com) said, “Pockets of water run throughout tofu. Freezing tofu causes the water trapped inside tofu to expand, which enlarges these pores. Once you thaw frozen tofu, you end up with a coarser tofu texture that contains bigger holes (it's as if Cheddar transformed into Swiss cheese).” It might make for an interesting experiment!



Gladys' Hot and Sour Soup

Judy prepared Baked Sweet and Sour Chicken, which she found online at Chungah Rhee's damndelicious.net website: <https://damndelicious.net/2014/01/18/baked-sweet-sour-chicken/>

Judy used chicken breasts cut into 1 inch squares. She made a mixture of corn starch, salt, pepper, and garlic powder. She made a sauce of sugar, cider vinegar, soy sauce, and garlic powder. Although the recipe called for 2 large eggs, Judy used 3 eggs, which she beat and into which she dipped the chicken. She cooked the chicken in a pan of hot oil until it was golden brown, then drained the chicken on a paper towel. She put it into a baking dish, poured the sauce over it, and baked it at 325°, turning it every 15 minutes, for 55 minutes.



The recipe suggested serving the chicken on a bed of rice, but Judy used a bed of Casarecce bronze cut pasta. (Bronze cut pasta has a rougher texture than regular pasta, so it is supposed to help the pasta hold the sauce better and have a better “bite”).

Judy's Baked Sweet and Sour Chicken while baking (left) and on the bed of pasta (right).

Judy said she would definitely make this dish again, but would make more sauce next time. It did not taste spicy at all. “The taste comes to life after you give it a chance,” she said.

Elissa made Mongolian Beef. She used a “copycat recipe” of PF Chang's that she found on spendwithpennies.com: <https://www.spendwithpennies.com/restaurant-style-mongolian-beef-easy-and-amazing/>

The recipe called for using a flank steak, which Elissa had never used before. Although she fried the steak before cutting it up and adding it to the sauce, she found it chewy and grainy to eat. She made the sauce using ginger, soy sauce, brown sugar, minced garlic, corn starch, green onions, and oil. She served it over fried rice.

This was Elissa's first time trying this recipe. She really liked the sauce. Four people (one of whom is under two years old), ate and enjoyed it. She will definitely cook it again, but next time, she will use a sandwich steak, a thinner cut sirloin steak.



Elissa's Mongolian Beef

Elsie, joining the group just before this meeting, did not get a chance to cook anything, but was attracted by the Chinese cuisine theme. She spent time in China and has recipes from the area in which she lived while there. She does not cook Chinese food at home as often as she thought she would after this period in China.

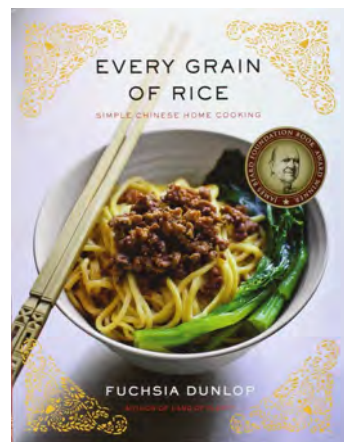
Elsie mentioned that lotus root looks like Swiss cheese and tastes like potato.



Elsie's picture of lotus roots.

Sandy got her recipe, Stir Fried Beef, Black Bean and Chili, from the book, *Every Grain of Rice* by Fuchsia Dunlop. She said the recipe was simple.

The steak she bought was already cut for stir fry, but she cut it more finely. She marinated it in a mixture of soy sauce, potato flour, and rice wine. (Sandy substituted the rice wine for the Shaoxing wine called for in the recipe; according to thewoksoflife.com, Shaoxing wine is rice wine from **Shaoxing**, a city in China's Zhejiang Province famous for **rice wine** production.) She stir fried the beef in hot oil, then added the 1/4 red and 1/4 green bell pepper, which she had cut into strips, then added the black bean sauce (from a bottle). Instead of Lao Gan Ma black bean sauce called for in the recipe, Sandy used simple Black Bean with Garlic sauce from Festival Foods.



Sandy says, “There are some changes I made to it which I'd recommend: since there are 2 kinds of soy sauce, I eliminated the addition of any salt; it is perfectly salty, in my opinion, with the soy sauces. There is an Asian market in Madison, but I ran out of time to go down there, and I found this recipe delicious, with the adjustments. The other thing I'd recommend is doubling the recipe. I frequently do that anyway because I enjoy cooking for others, but this recipe made just enough for a single serving, in my opinion.”



Sandy's Stir Fried Beef, Black Bean and Chili

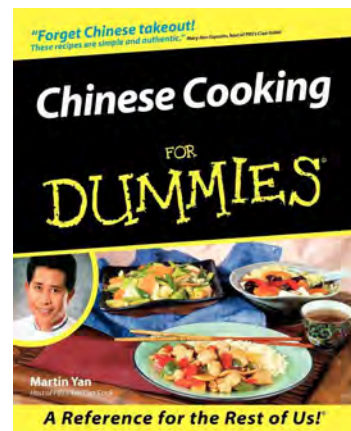
Sandy served this over basmati rice. She thought the dish was very good, although she might not make it again because “there are too many other recipes to try.” She loves hot and sour food.

Amanda (and her boyfriend) made Tangerine Beef. They used a recipe from *Chinese Cooking for Dummies* by Martin Yan. They found lots of recipes in this book that called for ingredients that were difficult to find in Baraboo.

This recipe called for dried tangerine peel, for which they substituted grapefruit peel. They also used Mandarin oranges and orange juice. The recipe calls for crystallized ginger and powdered ginger. They ended up putting in extra ginger. The recipe calls for soy sauce, garlic, chicken, and flank steak or tri tip, a triangular cut of beef cut from the bottom of the sirloin. They used generic stir fry beef from the meat department at Festival Foods, with a tenderizer and beef broth.

Amanda and her boyfriend really enjoyed this dish. They would cook it again. It was not too difficult, with mostly easy-to-find ingredients. It is supposed to serve 4 people, but her boyfriend scarfed most of it down. "All that is missing is the veggies," Amanda said.

Amanda's (and her boyfriend's)
Tangerine Beef



Iveta made Orange Chicken from a Ree Drummond (Pioneer Woman) recipe she found online: <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/ree-drummond/orange-chicken-2495688>

She mixed 4 egg whites and cornstarch, put the chicken into the mixture and let it sit. She fried the chicken in hot oil until it was golden, then let the pieces drain.

For the orange sauce Iveta mixed orange juice, soy sauce, rice vinegar, garlic, and cornstarch (Iveta omitted the red pepper flakes), and cooked it until it thickened. She made extra sauce. She served the chicken over rice, and drizzled it with the sauce. She sprinkled diced green onions and sesame seeds over the top to serve.

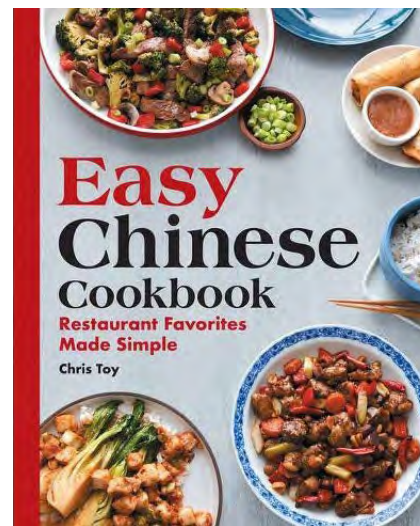


Iveta's Orange Chicken

Everybody in the family liked this dish except for her son, who only ate the rice.

JoEllen made Moo Goo Gai Pan and Pot Stickers from the book *Easy Chinese Cookbook* by Chris Toy. These are easy recipes, she said, as long as you prepare all the ingredients for cooking, and have your table set so you are ready to eat as soon as everything is cooked.

She made Moo Goo Gai Pan with chicken and mushrooms, bok choy, ginger, broccoli, carrots, and pea pods. The chicken did not need to be coated for this recipe. The entire process for cooking this dish was over in 10 minutes.



All the ingredients are ready before the cooking begins.



JoEllen's Moo Goo Gai Pan

The Pot Stickers recipe called for round wontons, but the only ones JoEllen could find were square. She fried them, but feels that next time they will turn out better in an air fryer to steam them. She put a pork mixture inside. The recipe made 48 of them. They were delicious, even if the ends got a little overcooked. She made Pot Stickers twice because the first time the food was cold by time they were ready to eat.

JoEllen said she would make these again “in a heartbeat.” “I think kids would like to make them.” She said she and a friend helped her mother make them.



JoEllen's friend Gwen helps JoEllen's mom make Pot Stickers.



JoEllen's Pot Stickers cooking.



Explore Mediterranean Cuisine for Our June Meeting

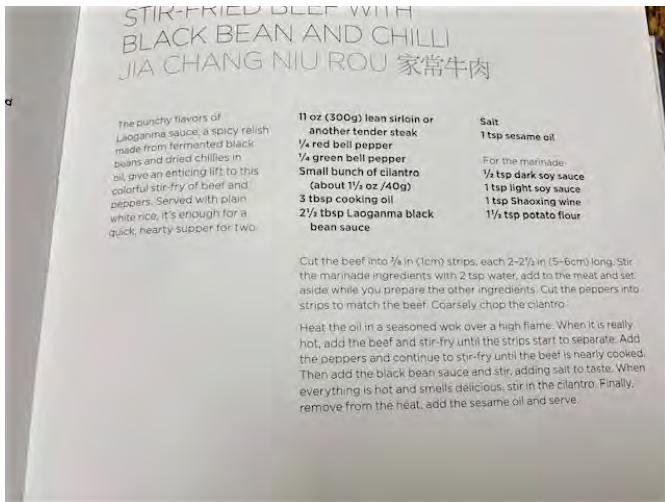
The Mediterranean Sea is encircled by Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco.

“Mediterranean cuisine” includes a great variety of traditional tastes and techniques, and opens the door to learning about the cultures of these European, African, and Middle Eastern nations. Explore the books on display near the Adult Services desk at the library and try cooking something new!

Our June Virtual Cookbook Club meeting is at 6 PM on Monday, June 3.

Remember that we love to see your photos of your cooking process and your finished dishes!

Recipes From Explorations



Sandy's Stir Fried Beef with Black Bean and Chilli



Sandy's Tomatoes Stuffed with Prosciutto and Cheese

Sandy missed our April meeting, but wanted to pass along the recipe she prepared. She said, “I think there was not ONE I didn't think sounded delicious, I printed them all out!! “

