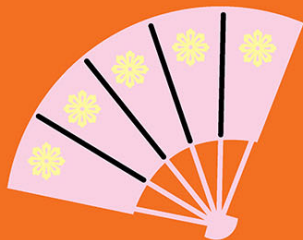


A DAY IN *HONG KONG*



A Cantonese
Cookbook



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GU LO YUK

SWEET AND SOUR PORK

From all-you-can eat food courts to full-service restaurants, sweet and sour pork is a popular choice. The key to this dish is, unsurprisingly, the perfect balance of sweetness and sourness, and the sauce should be just thick enough to coat all the ingredients, leaving the pork crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside.

SERVES 4

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) pork ribs, cut into 4 cm (1½ in) cubes
2 litres (2 quarts) canola oil (or other cooking oil)
cornflour (cornstarch), for coating
½ onion, diced
½ red bell pepper (capsicum), diced
½ green bell pepper (capsicum), diced
½ yellow bell pepper (capsicum), diced
2 garlic cloves, sliced
3 tablespoons shaoxing rice wine (see glossary)
375 ml (1½ cups) Sweet and sour sauce (page 183)
12–16 pieces diced tinned pineapple
steamed rice, to serve

Marinade

1 small egg
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
1 teaspoon caster (superfine) sugar
¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
1 tablespoon light soy sauce
1 tablespoon shaoxing rice wine (see glossary)
1 tablespoon cornflour (cornstarch)
1 tablespoon plain (all-purpose) flour
2 teaspoons vegetable oil

- 1 Rinse the pork and pat dry. This is important – if you don't dry the pork thoroughly, it will affect the crispness later on when you fry it.
- 2 To make the marinade, combine all the ingredients, except the oil, in a large glass or ceramic dish. Add the pork and turn to coat in the marinade. Leave for 1–2 minutes, then add the oil and mix well.
- 3 Pour the canola oil into a large wok or heavy-based saucepan over medium heat and bring it up to about 160°C (320°F) or until a cube of bread dropped in the oil browns in 30–35 seconds.
- 4 Meanwhile, lightly coat the pork pieces with cornflour, shaking off the excess.
- 5 Carefully lower the pork into the oil and fry, untouched, for 1 minute. You don't want to move it around, otherwise the flour coating might drop off. After a minute, gently stir the oil so the pieces loosen up naturally, then continue to fry for another 3 minutes. Remove the pork with a slotted spoon. Increase the heat to high and bring the oil temperature up to 190°C (375°F) or until a cube of bread dropped in the oil browns in 10 seconds. Return the pork to the oil and fry for another 30–60 seconds, until golden brown and very crispy. Remove the pork and pour off all but 1 tablespoon of the oil.
- 6 Reheat the oil over medium heat, add the onion and saute for 30 seconds, then add the bell peppers and cook for another 30 seconds. Add the garlic and stir-fry for another 30 seconds. Pour in the shaoxing wine and the sweet and sour sauce and bring to the boil. Add the pineapple and simmer for 10 seconds.
- 7 Add the fried pork to the sauce, then immediately remove from the heat and keep stirring. There should be just enough sauce to coat all the ingredients. Serve immediately – with rice of course!

XO SAUCE

MAKES 1.5 LITRES (1½ QUARTS)

50 g (1¾ oz) dried shrimp (see glossary)
200 g (7 oz) dried scallops (see glossary)
20 g (¾ oz) salted fish (see glossary)
600 ml (20½ fl oz) vegetable oil
250 g (9 oz) red shallots, thinly sliced
250 g (9 oz) garlic cloves, thinly sliced
30 g (1 oz) dried red chillies
100 g (3½ oz) Jinhua ham (see glossary), diced
50 g (1¾ oz) long red chillies, sliced
2 spring onions (scallions), white part only, sliced
30 g (1 oz) sweet bean paste (see glossary)
30 g (1 oz) caster (superfine) sugar
fine sea salt

Notes

The oil needs to be hot when you start adding the shallot and garlic. All the ingredients need to be fried, not confited.

It's important to add the ingredients in the order stated in the method and cook for the specified time, especially at the end. You don't want the sauce to be under or overcooked.

Keep stirring otherwise the ingredients will catch on the bottom of the wok and burn.

Named after a popular alcohol (extra old cognac), XO means deluxe. The sauce was created in Hong Kong in the 1980s, using luxury ingredients like dried scallop and Jinhua ham. This sauce is expensive, not only because of the ingredients used, but also the time and attention required to make it. As is often the case, when you put a lot of effort into something you are rewarded with a great result. XO sauce is no exception.

- 1 Preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F).
- 2 Soak the dried shrimp in 200 ml (7 fl oz) of water for 30 minutes. Drain the shrimp and transfer to a baking tray. Place in the oven for 10–15 minutes to dry out. Set aside.
- 3 Soak the dried scallop in 400 ml (13½ fl oz) of water for 30 minutes. Remove the scallop and reserve the soaking water. Break the scallop into threads. Pour the soaking water into a small saucepan and bring to a gentle simmer.
- 4 Soak the salted fish in 100 ml (3½ fl oz) of water for 30 minutes. Drain, then finely dice.
- 5 Heat the oil in a large wok over high heat to 180°C (350°F) or until a cube of bread dropped in the oil browns in 15 seconds. Add the scallop (be careful as the oil will bubble up) and fry for about 5 minutes or until crisp. Remove using a slotted spoon, then increase the heat to 200°C (400°F) or until a cube of bread browns in 5 seconds.
- 6 Add the shallot, closely followed by the garlic and fry just until lightly golden. Add the dried chillies and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes.
- 7 Add the shrimp and ham and fry for about 5 minutes, then add the fresh chilli and salted fish and fry for another 5 minutes, stirring regularly.
- 8 Add the spring onion, sweet bean paste, sugar, fried scallops and hot reserved scallop water, along with a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until fragrant, the water has evaporated and the ingredients are a deep red colour (almost like char siu). Remove from the heat and set aside to cool slightly
- 9 You can leave the sauce chunky or blend it to a smoother consistency – it's entirely up to you. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 1 month.

SWEET AND SOUR SAUCE

MAKES 1 LITRE (4 CUPS)

100 g (3½ oz) yellow rock sugar (see glossary)
200 g (7 oz) Chinese brown sugar (see glossary) or soft brown sugar
1 lemon, halved
500 ml (2 cups) rice wine vinegar
1 tablespoon fine sea salt
200 g (7 oz) ketchup
80 ml (⅓ cup) Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon dark soy sauce

- 1 Dissolve the rock sugar and brown sugar in 250 ml (1 cup) of water in a small bowl. Squeeze the lemon juice into the mixture and stir, making sure no granules of sugar remain. .
- 2 Pour the rice wine vinegar into a medium glass or enamelled cast-iron saucepan (the sauce is too acidic for a metal pan). Bring the vinegar to the boil, add the salt and mix until it has dissolved. Strain in the sugar and lemon water. Stir in the sauces. Bring the mixture to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and taste the sauce. It should be sweet and sour with a background savoury note. Adjust the flavour with sugar, vinegar and salt if needed.
- 3 Let the sauce cool, then store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks. Just make sure you use a clean, dry spoon or ladle to take the sauce out.



SA CHA BEEF NOODLES

In Hong Kong this dish is known as satay, but it's not like the Thai-style satay made with peanuts and turmeric. Hong Kong-style satay sauce (also called sa cha sauce) is dark brown in colour and less spicy. Though not a fancy dish, a bowl of this is one of the most popular things to order in a Hong Kong-style cafe.



SERVES 4

300 g (10½ oz) beef eye fillet (tenderloin) (or any cut for quick-cooking), cut into thin strips

100 g (½ cup) sa cha sauce (see Notes)

1 teaspoon caster (superfine) sugar

3 tablespoons canola oil (or other cooking oil)

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

1 red shallot, finely chopped

340 g (12 oz) instant noodles (see Notes)

sliced spring onion (scallion), to serve

toasted sesame seeds, to serve

Marinade

1 tablespoon light soy sauce

1 teaspoon caster (superfine) sugar

2 teaspoons cornflour (cornstarch)

1 tablespoon canola oil

1 To make the marinade, combine all the ingredients and 2 tablespoons of water in a bowl. Add the beef and turn to coat well, then set aside to marinate for 30 minutes.

2 In a small bowl, combine the sa cha sauce, sugar and 125 ml (½ cup) of water.

3 Heat a frying pan over high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil, then the beef and saute for 2 minutes or until almost cooked and just starting to brown. Transfer the beef to a bowl and set aside. Wipe out the pan and return to high heat. Heat the remaining oil, then add the garlic and shallot and saute for 30 seconds. Return the beef to the pan, followed by the sauce mixture. Reduce the heat to low and cook for about 2 minutes, until heated through and the beef has had time to absorb the flavour.

4 Meanwhile, cook the noodles according to the packet instructions. Drain.

5 Divide the noodles among serving bowls and top with the beef and sauce. Sprinkle with spring onion and sesame seeds, and serve.

Notes

Sa cha sauce is available in Asian grocery stores.

For a healthier version, use rice vermicelli instead of instant noodles.