

Stir-Fried Beef with Bell Pepper and Sugar Snap Peas

This restaurant-style beef stir-fry with bell pepper and sugar snap peas is quick to make and full of savory flavor from soy sauce, Shaoxing wine, oyster sauce, fish sauce, and toasted sesame oil. The beef stays tender and juicy, while the vegetables stay crisp and fresh.

INGREDIENTS

7 to 9 ounces (200 to 250 g) beef, thinly sliced or cut into strips
2 tablespoons soy sauce
½ teaspoon baking soda (bicarbonate of soda)
1 tablespoon cornstarch/corn flour
3 scallions
5 to 10 sugar snap peas (or other stir-fry vegetables)
1 bell pepper
A pinch of salt
A small pinch of MSG, optional
Freshly cooked basmati rice
Stir-Fry Sauce

Stir-Fry Sauce

INGREDIENTS

½ cup (120 ml) water
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 tablespoons Shaoxing rice wine
(or sherry)
2 teaspoons sugar
2 teaspoons oyster sauce
2 teaspoons fish sauce
2 teaspoons rice vinegar (or white wine vinegar)
1½ teaspoons toasted sesame oil
1½ teaspoons cornstarch

CHALLENGES AND TRICKS

At Chinese restaurants, stir-fried meat does not turn out as dry and dull as what we often make at home, because they use a velveting technique. Traditionally, egg whites were often used as part of this technique, but a small amount of baking soda can also help tenderize the beef. Cornstarch has also been shown to create a protective coating around the meat, helping it brown better and stay juicy, while also attracting sauce so the finished surface is clear, glossy, and beautiful.

Most of the Chinese or Asian sauces used for the stir-fry sauce can be found at large supermarket chains. Chinese Shaoxing rice wine may need to be found in a Chinese grocery store. You can also get all the other ingredients there, usually at lower prices than in supermarkets. Do not worry about the oyster sauce or fish sauce. They add depth and savory flavor, not a fishy taste.

Salt: soy sauce, fish sauce, oyster sauce, salt

Sweet: beef, sugar, Shaoxing rice wine/sherry, bell pepper (if red)

Sour: rice vinegar/white wine vinegar, Shaoxing rice wine/sherry

Bitter: bell pepper (if green)

Umami: beef, soy sauce, fish sauce, oyster sauce

Fat: beef, cooking oil, toasted sesame oil

PREPARATION

First, prepare the meat by cutting it into thin slices or strips.



Sprinkle ½ teaspoon baking soda over the meat, distributing it evenly.

Then add 2 tablespoons soy sauce and 1 tablespoon cornstarch.



Stir well, then refrigerate the meat.



Slice the scallions by cutting the white parts crosswise into thinner slices and the green parts into larger pieces.



Cut the bell pepper into short strips.



You can add other vegetables to the dish, such as sugar snap peas. I prepare them by simply trimming off the ends.

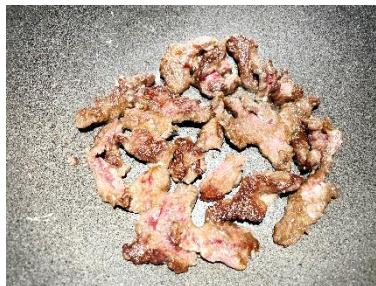


Now mix the sauce. Start with the water, then add the sauces, wine, sugar, oil, and vinegar. Add the cornstarch last. Whisk or stir well with a spoon so any lumps dissolve.



Start the rice. It usually needs to cook for 12 minutes, which lines up nicely with the time it takes to make the dish in a wok or a high-sided sauté pan.

Once the wok or pan is very hot with a cooking oil that can handle high heat, stir-fry the beef over high heat until it is nicely browned. Transfer the meat to a bowl.



Next, stir-fry the vegetables in a little more oil. When the vegetables are crisp-tender, add the sauce.



When the sauce thickens, return the beef and toss to coat. Serve over the freshly cooked basmati rice. Season to taste with salt and, if you like, a small pinch of MSG.





Photo: Stir-fried beef with bell pepper and sugar snap peas - an easy, flavorful Chinese-style dish.