

Cook #1

The Volcano

All About Wok Cooking

 **ASKO**

Inspired by Scandinavia





Wok

The ASKO brand has for very many years been synonymous with innovation, design, cooking technology and quality. These are important values which deliver wonderful products.

But it's not just the technology that we're interested in but, most all, the wishes and needs of our users: home cooks. During our research, we discovered that wok cooking is a popular method of cooking. This is hardly surprising as it's quick, easy and healthy. But we also noticed that most home cooks don't cook with their wok properly. In actual fact, wok dishes are usually kept simmering all the time on a moderate flame. Even though the flame is more or less meant to be in the pan.

ASKO embarked on a quest for the "power" of the flame, just like the professionals use. And you'll find it mainly in a good, hot core. We have used this knowledge to develop a unique product: the Fusion Volcano wok burner. This definitely provides the power to be able to stir-fry food

quickly over a high flame. This means that the art of proper wok cooking is now completely within the grasp of home cooks.

In this magazine, we will tell you the story behind wok cooking, get some top wok chefs to reveal their secrets, look for the best techniques to use, and provide the smartest tips and finest recipes. We will ask the designer for his views and investigate why wok cooking is so healthy. In a nutshell, we will uncover every aspect of wok cooking. This will provide you with more than enough inspiration to grab a wok and spatula and start cooking delicious meals.

Fredrik Lööf
Marketing Manager ASKO

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The wok has been synonymous with oriental cuisine for 2000 years already. The wok embarked on its journey of conquest around the world from China. During the early centuries, Southeast Asia was conquered and it has now also been in the Western world for about a hundred years. In the past, woks were used over a wooden fire, but nowadays the wood has been replaced by high-powered gas flames. But the basic principle remains the same.

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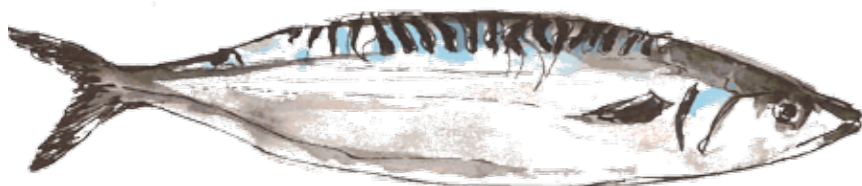
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According to the food guides, Madame Cheung in Hoorn is one of the best Asian restaurants in the Netherlands. What role does the wok play in a modern Asian restaurant? According to owner Robin Wu, all you need to cook is a chopper and a wok.





The stir-fry culture, then and now

Wok cooking around the globe

From ancient China to the modern kitchen, the wok has certainly come a long way. We take a look at the wok's roots, oriental cuisine and stir-fry cooking around the world.

On ships, in wok restaurants and food courts the flames leap inside the pan in the good, old-fashioned way



Food stalls at every corner of the street, the wafts of ginger, garlic and pepper floating around you, while cooks toss around vegetables in the wok over a high flame with deft movements acquired from years of practice. This is Chinese wok culture in a nutshell.

However, this is not really an everyday scene any more, at least not in Hong Kong. Regulations in the city have put an end to street food. Only the locals know where to find the wok stalls which suddenly pop up, but disappear just as quickly again as soon as the officials are in sight, leaving behind the unmistakable aroma of wok hei – the “breath of the wok”. Of course, there are other places in the city still offering top-class wok cooking. On ships, in wok restaurants and food courts the flames leap inside the pan in the good, old-fashioned way. But this is far removed from how it ever began: small and delicate, with few resources and a simple stove...

Prototype wok

The roots of wok cooking go back to China some two thousand years ago, during the time of the Han dynasty. Chinese cooking was characterised by shortages at that time.

In a country with little farmland and woodland, finding enough food and fuel presented a huge challenge. People

learnt how to obtain the maximum edible produce from nature and to prepare it in a tasty way using a minimum amount of fat and fuel. The norm was to cut up the vegetables and meat that were available into small pieces and quickly fry them at the same time in a round pan over a high flame.

This is how the wok came about (the Cantonese word for “cooking pot”), more or less out of necessity, along with stir-fry cooking. The first woks were not, of course, made of steel or cast iron like the ones we can find nowadays in Asian food stores. We're thinking more of a prototype: a simple, metal model based on the earthenware pots which were in use at the time of the Han dynasty and were later discovered in tombs. Some archaeological finds have included “stoves” with large, round holes with space for pans and pots with the distinctive round shape. In any case, the wok, in its earliest form, was simple, handy, multi-functional, suitable for “economical” cooking and easy to carry around. It was particularly handy if you imagine that people at that time moved around more than now, carrying all their belongings with them.



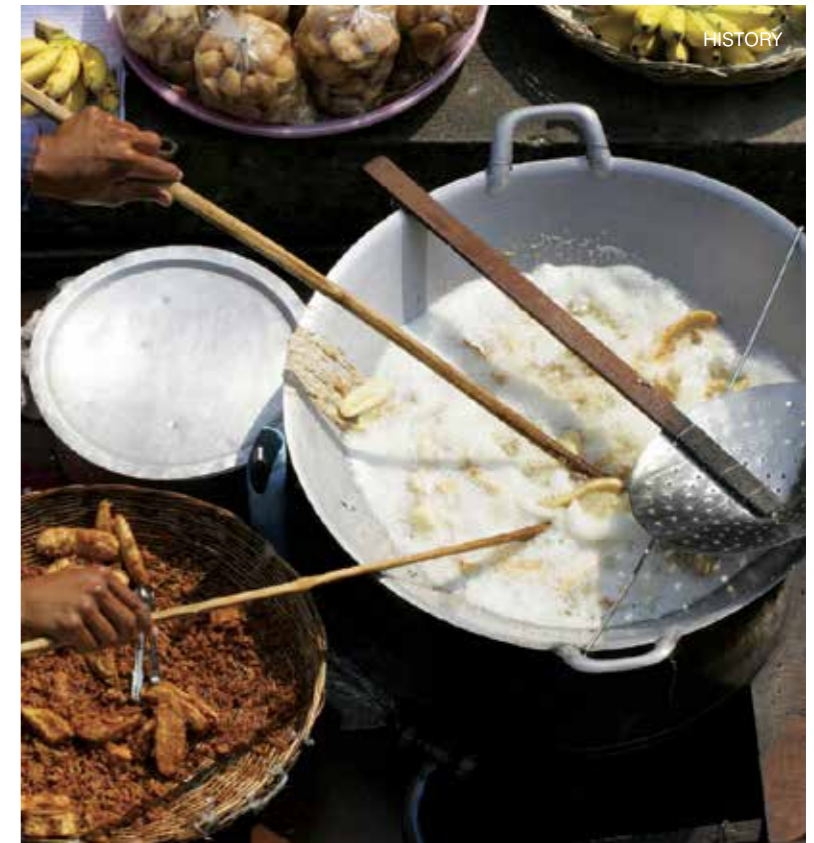
Indians use a large wok pan (kahari) on a brick or clay oven with a hole in it.

Global expansion

There is some speculation as to how and when exactly the use of the wok spread further a field. One thing for sure is that wok cooking had become fully established as a method of cooking in China. This also gave rise to a variety of wok models, such as the Cantonese wok (with a round bottom and one or two steel handles) and the Peking Wok (with a wooden handle and flattened bottom). Whether it was through nomads, fishermen, sailors or other travelling people and/or migrant workers, the use of the wok extended beyond China and became an essential utensil in kitchens almost everywhere in Asia. It's often the case that this is actually the only pan that people have in the house,

simply because you can virtually do everything with it: not just stir-fry but also deep-fry, roast, stew, steam, smoke etc. Indians use a large wok pan (kahari) on a brick or clay oven with a hole in it. This is handy for stewing curries and frying. In Indonesia people cook with a wadjan, which is a slightly flatter wok that is put on a wood or charcoal fire and is used to prepare curries, rice dishes and quick stir-fry dishes. Gradually, the cuisines in Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia have also been influenced by Chinese wok cooking. Even the Mongolian barbecue is related to wok cooking. They use a round cast-iron grill bearing a strong resemblance to a wok.

Gradually, the cuisines in Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia have also been influenced by Chinese wok cooking.



What is stir-fry cooking??

Stir-fry cooking involves quickly frying in a little bit of oil, over high heat, meat and/or fish and vegetables, while stirring/mixing/tossing the ingredients. The short cooking time and high temperature mean that the taste and nutrients of each ingredient are retained. If you do it really well, you will get that special aroma which will more or less remind you of a barbecue: wok hei.

In actual fact, every oriental culture uses a simple, spacious pan with sloping sides which can be used to prepare one-pan dishes over a high flame. This is what has made the wok a unique and essential element in oriental cuisine.

Faithful to the wok

Of course, it was inevitable that the wok would be introduced into Western culture. Chinese people settled everywhere and remained faithful to their wok. For instance, in America, the wok appeared around the 19th century with the arrival of Chinese immigrants to work, for instance, in the goldmines. There are also records available showing that Chinese woks were used on the sugar plantations in Hawaii.

Wok cooking is not unusual in Mexico, and in the Dominican Republic (the Chinese also went to the Caribbean) it is the most natural thing in the world to prepare a traditional prawn dish in a wok. And what about in Europe? We know that woks were used for cooking from the time when the Chinese set out for the UK, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands (from the 19th century to roughly the 1970s/1980s). People invariably made space in their luggage for one or more woks, intended to be used at home and in the many restaurants that they would open. This is how the majority of home cooks in the West have eventually come into contact with the wok.

Woktips



Woktips

- Make sure that you have all your ingredients ready so that you can work extremely quickly when the time comes. This means marinating the meat, finely cutting vegetables and having the spices ready to hand. Use oil that can tolerate a strong heat. Peanut oil is ideal, but soybean oil, rice oil, sunflower oil and maize oil are also suitable (olive oil is less suitable).
- Heat the dry wok up until it is very hot. Pour a couple of drops of water in it: if this produces small sizzling bubbles, this means that the pan is at the right temperature. Then add just a little oil. When this begins to smell slightly, it is hot enough.
- Make sure that the oil covers all the sides of the wok.
- Do things in the right order: add the “dry” spices first, then the protein-rich ingredients until the proteins start to sizzle, followed by the vegetables and finally, the wet spices.
- Don't put too much in the pan at once as this lowers the temperature and you will then be stewing the ingredients instead of stir-frying them.
- Possibly remove the meat/fish temporarily from the pan and then add it again at the end. This will ensure that it isn't overdone.



Heat up the wok, pour the oil in, add the ingredients in batches, stir them around with quick movements over high heat, and done.

The real wok

No matter how handy the latest wok pans with their non-stick layers may seem, a real wok pan made of steel or cast iron is best to use for cooking. They are available in Asian food stores. Woks with non-stick layers are not resistant enough to high temperatures. Unhealthy substances are emitted when the wok is extremely hot. Season the wok properly to avoid it getting encrusted.

Sizzling

What about now? We have now all embraced wok cooking because it is such a quick, healthy and easy way to prepare food. The basic principle of stir-frying is still the same. What we do still seems to reflect, by and large, what the master chefs of the Han dynasty did. They would heat up the wok, pour the oil in, add the ingredients in batches, stir them around with quick movements over high heat, and done.

But the type of pan which we use to do this (with a flat underside or a non-stick layer) and the dishes which we prepare in it have definitely been slightly westernised.

Of course, if you have a good cookbook, you can go a long way in preparing authentic Chinese wok dishes. Or you can choose the Western path where you use local ingredients to cook with.

Stir-fried kale or Brussels sprouts are not that bad at all. Then there is the halfway house: fusion. This involves the art of combining Western and oriental ingredients, aromas and structures with each other in a subtle manner. But, however you do it, do it with finesse. Look for the “breath” of the wok, listen to the musical sizzling in the pan and enjoy!

The hand of the master



Classic wok dishes may well be the tastiest.

They have already been prepared hundreds of times by hundreds of different chefs. And yet they taste slightly differently every time. What makes the difference? The choice of the best and freshest ingredients and the hand of a

master chef. The wok has been for centuries what gives oriental cuisine its special flavour. Scallops, chicken and prawns are traditional wok ingredients. These dishes show that traditional doesn't have to mean boring.

Spicy scallops
with baby bok choy



Black bean sauce is perhaps not so well known, but it has a wonderfully rich and earthy taste

Thai green chicken
curry with rice



Stir-fried prawns with a
fresh spicy marinade





Yangchow fried rice

You can find out more about the Fusion Volcano wok burner at

www.asko.com.au

Spicy scallops with baby bok choy

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Preparation time: approx. 30 minutes
Per serving: approx. 222 kcal, 18 g protein
9 g fat, 49 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- 12 scallops
- 2 tbsp chicken stock
- 1 tin of black beans
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- 1 tsp cornflour
- 2 tbsp peanut oil
- 1 tbsp ginger, finely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 4 baby bok choy, cleaned and finely chopped
- 1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into strips
- 1 spring onion, finely chopped

1 Clean the scallops thoroughly and pat them dry with kitchen towel.

2 Combine together in a bowl the stock, black beans, soy sauce and cornflour.

3 Heat a wok over high heat and add the oil to it. Add the ginger and garlic and stir them for around 1 minute.

4 Add the scallops and fry them for around 1 minute until they are a lovely brown colour. Remove the scallops from the wok.

5 Stir in the bok choy, pepper, spring onion and black bean mixture together and fry for around 1 minute in the wok.

6 Place the scallops on them and let them cook for around 1 minute.

Thai green chicken curry with rice

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 35 minutes
Per serving: approx. 452 kcal, 29 g protein
31 g fat, 12 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- 3 tbsp peanut oil
- 400 g chicken thighs, cut into pieces and sprinkled with a little salt
- 500 ml coconut milk

- 3 tbsp green curry paste
- 100 g bamboo shoots
- 100 g baby sweetcorn
- 150 g large mushrooms, cut into quarters
- Half a red pepper, cut into strips
- 50 g beansprouts
- Small handful of coriander and Thai basil, roughly chopped

1 Heat a wok over high heat and pour in the oil.

2 Sprinkle the chicken with a little salt and fry it in the hot oil for around 6 minutes.

3 Remove the chicken from the wok and pour in the coconut milk and add 5 tbsp of curry paste to the wok. Heat and keep stirring well.

4 Mix up the bamboo shoots, sweetcorn, mushrooms, pepper, beansprouts and chicken.

5 Bring steadily to the boil, stir in the spices and serve with rice.

Greene curry

■■■

- 6 green peppers, cleaned
- 2 stalks of lemon grass, roughly chopped
- 5 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped and a small handful of coriander roots, roughly chopped
- 2 cm of ginger or Thai ginger roots, grated
- 1 shallot, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp grated lime peel juice of 1 lime zest
- Half tbsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp coriander seeds

Make a lovely puree from all the ingredients using the blender or food processor. Keep this curry, covered in the fridge for a maximum of a week.

Stir-fried prawns with a fresh spicy marinade

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Preparation time: approx. 25 minutes + waiting time
Per serving: approx. 251 kcal, 19 g protein
17 g fat, 4 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- 1 red chilli pepper, deseeded and cut into rings

- small handful of parsley, finely chopped
- 4 tomatoes, deseeded and cut into chunks
- juice of 1 lime
- 4 tbsp peanut oil
- salt and pepper from the mill
- 12 large raw prawns, peeled and with veins removed
- 3 spring onions, cut into rings
- 4 skewers

1 Make a marinade using the chilli pepper, parsley, tomatoes, lime juice and 3 tbsp of peanut oil, adding a little freshly ground salt and pepper.

2 Cover the prawns carefully in the marinade and let them stand, covered, for around 1 hour. Remove the prawns from the marinade.

3 Heat 1 tbsp of peanut oil in the wok and fry the prawns for around 1 minute. Stir in the marinade through the prawns and let it heat up for around another minute.

4 Place the prawns on the skewers, serve the prawns on the plates and spoon the marinade over them. Garnish with the spring onion.

Yangchow fried rice

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Preparation time: approx. 20 minutes
Per serving: approx. 500 kcal, 18 g protein
9 g fat, 84 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

Preparation time: approx. 20 minutes
Per serving: approx. 500 kcal, 18 g protein
9 g fat, 84 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- 2 tbsp peanut oil
- 200 g prawns, peeled and with veins removed
- 400 g of boiled and cooled basmati rice
- 200 g of frozen peas
- 2 spring onions, finely chopped salt and pepper

1 Heat a wok over high heat and pour the oil in. Add the prawns and fry them for around 1 minute.

2 Mix the rice and peas in through the prawns and stir-fry everything for about another 2 minutes until the rice is fairly hot and the peas are cooked.

3 Stir in the spring onions and add salt and pepper for flavour.

The 5th taste: umami



In the Netherlands there is a chain of restaurants by the name of “umami”, otherwise known as the “fifth taste”. It is an essential member of the list comprising sweet, sour, salty and bitter. More than that, the very presence of umami adds the finishing touch to dishes.

If someone says that something tastes sour or is fairly salty, we understand straight away what they mean.

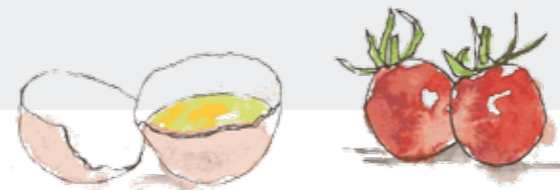
But umami? Umami means something like “tasty” or “wonderful” in Japanese. But nothing as subjective as “delicious”. However, it is just as easy to detect umami in a dish or ingredient, just in the same way as when something is sweet, sour, salty or bitter. Umami is specifically related to the presence of amino acids (what proteins are made up of) and the flavouring released by it: monosodium glutamate. Whether it is present and how much of it is present in a product is easy to measure. As a general rule, the more monoglutamate there is, the more umami there is and the more pleasant and tastier we find a product or dish.

Rich, wholesome and “creamy”
Umami was first described by Kikunae Ikeda in 1908. This Japanese chemist actually wanted to know where the strong taste of seaweed soup came from. He discovered that it was the natural amino acid glutamate which produced this rich, wholesome, creamy taste in the mouth and called it “umami”. Many oriental products contain umami: shiitake mushrooms, soy sauce, fish sauce, dried seaweed, various types of stock. This natural amino acid can also be found in a fairly large number of Western products, such as dairy products, beef, dried ham, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, Parmesan cheese, Roquefort cheese, peas and tomatoes. Umami is particularly abundant in fermented and matured products. This explains, for instance, why old cheese is more “umami” than young cheese, there is more

Cooking delicious food with the wok

Umami occurs in nature, for instance, in mackerel, tuna fish, salmon, oysters, asparagus, shiitake mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, peas, Chinese cabbage, carrot, beef, pork, duck, chicken, eggs and all kinds of fermented sauces and pastes from oriental cooking.

Each of them great products for wok cooking. A cup of green tea to round it off makes the umami experience complete!



umami in juicy red tomatoes than in unripe green ones, and why soy sauce has more umami than soybeans themselves.

Adding colour

This was quite a discovery by Mr Ikeda. In addition, he was the brains behind the development of monosodium glutamate (MSG) as an artificial flavouring. If something isn't umami, we can make it umami. Using MSG.

It is used a great deal in Asian cooking to add the finishing touch to a dish. In the West we add it mainly to snack foods. This is why it's also so difficult not to eat a whole bag of crisps, because they are usually umami!

However, anyone cooking fresh, wholesome and delicious meals doesn't need to jump through hoops and loops to

Honest and pure

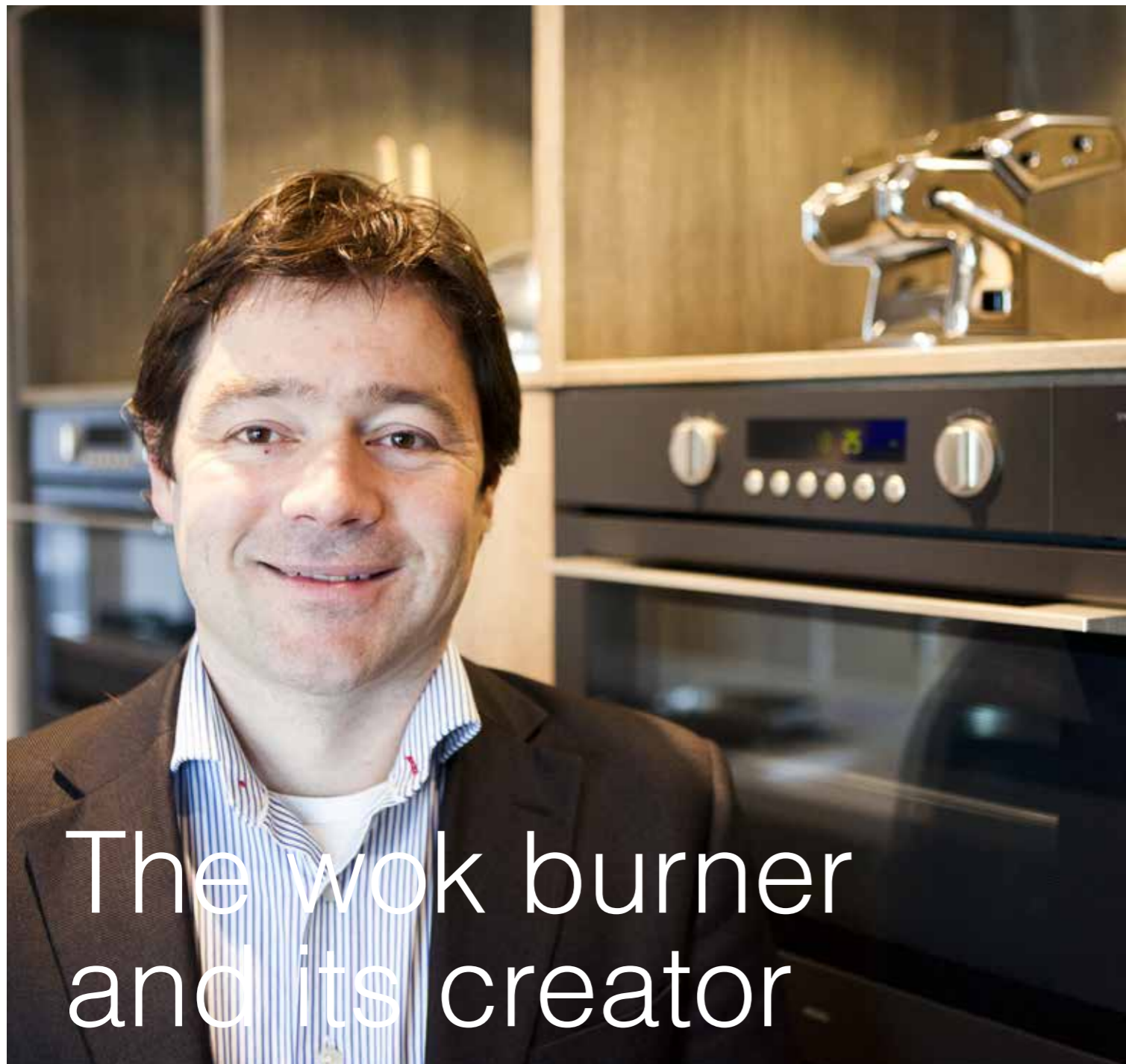
In the West umami is often described as the fifth taste. In the Far East they talk more about a “feeling in the mouth”. Umami is also synonymous with what is healthy, light, fresh, honest and pure.

Tip

Products rich in umami are a tasty, healthy alternative to cooking salt. A pinch of umami works wonders.

make dishes with umami. It's mainly a matter of thinking a bit beforehand – what ingredients are rich in protein – and of seeking a balance. Do you want to intensify the flavour of a stir-fry dish?

If you do, make sure, for instance, that you use a product rich in protein for starters, such as meat, poultry, fish and vegetables. Umami is released from these products during preparation. Then go for a flavouring like soy sauce, miso (a fermented mixture of soybeans, salt and grains), black bean paste, fish or oyster sauce or trassi (fermented shrimp paste). On their own, these products are not so delicious that you'd want to consume a lot of them, absolutely not. But, in combination with other ingredients, they give a better “definition” to the taste. Umami seems to bring out the colour in a dish.



The wok burner and its creator

The Fusion Volcano wok burner has a revolutionary shape, elegant design and, above all, is ideal for real wok cooking.

This latest product from ASKO has a “wow” factor. Or as Vincent Hofstee puts it: “It’s an example of technology that will leave people wanting more. We also never stuck so closely to the wishes of amateur cooks before.”

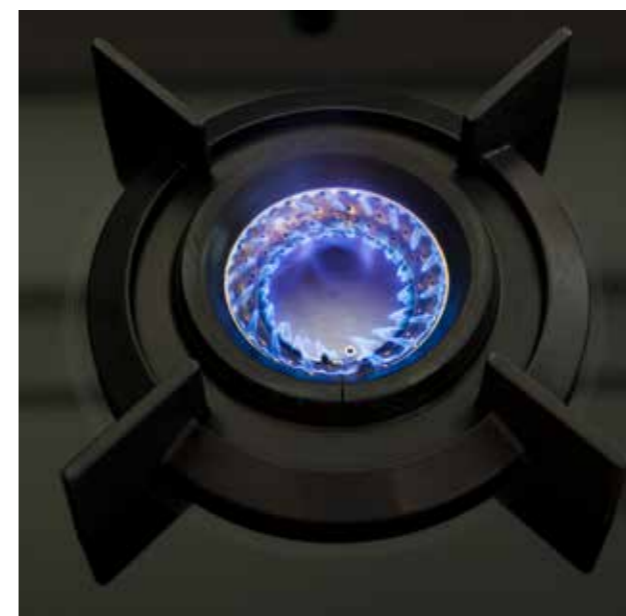
An introduction like this is still exciting, admits Vincent Hofstee, product manager at one of ASKO’s partner companies, halfway through the interview.

He actually lay awake now and then wondering whether other “gadget fans” like him would find the wok burner just as innovative. But, at the moment when the wok burner was demonstrated, something happened, in Vincent’s view.

ASKO presented the Fusion Volcano wok burner at the end of 2013. This product, on which three years of blood, sweat and tears were spent in its development, “set alight” the home exhibition and convincingly demonstrated that it does what it was made for: provide a completely central and concentrated source of heat. Just exactly what you need if you want to cook really well with a wok.

How does it happen? Do you just wake up one day with the idea for a new wok burner?

“No (laughing). It’s actually a bit more “structured” than that. This time, for once, we’ve adopted a totally different approach by starting from scratch with the user. Instead of conducting surveys to ask consumers about their wishes and needs, we invited them to come along to group discussions. We also instructed them to keep a sort of diary about their hob. The great thing about this was that the consumers responded from their own environment. This meant that ASKO was closer to what happens in reality. This fresh approach provided us with a huge number of insights. For instance, we learnt that maintaining hobs is often a pain in the neck or that people find it annoying shifting pans around on their cooker because a large ring does something different compared to a simmering ring. But we also found out that people enjoy wok cooking enormously.”





But as an experienced cooking brand, surely you already know how popular wok cooking is?

“Of course, we do. That’s our business. We follow the trends and know what’s going on. But, it’s a different story if you also see what these needs actually are.”

This is where the big puzzle begins: what is the perfect wok burner like?

“We deliberately didn’t want to adapt any of our existing wok burners, but wanted to start again, completely from scratch. So, we made a real journey of discovery. We spoke to professional chefs and visited various wok restaurants. We could see there the huge burners that are used, where they put their foot on the pedal to pump extra oxygen into the fire. This isn’t really suitable for using at home. But what we did notice was that a great deal of heat is required to cook the ingredients

through in a short period. This is the only way to retain the nutrients.”

So, the secret lies in a good flame?

“Definitely. It mustn’t just be strong and hot, but also, above all, it must be concentrated and remain under the pan. This is the most effective aspect. The problem with the older generation of multi-ring wok burners is that the outer ring is actually hotter than the core. The flame seems to leak out. These burners are actually more suited to large, flat pans and not to wok pans with round bottoms.”

It is quite a challenge getting the flame in the right place and keeping it there...

“A design agency helped us to develop the concept. I remember that they presented us with cross-sections of different pans in an illustration, showing how the flames lap around the bottom. Very illuminating. Within six months of carrying out the consumer research, we had an image of what it must be like and devised a concept. Let me assure you that this is very rapid progress for this sector. Subsequently, we came up with the idea in our own certified lab for the new design of wok burner to be converted to gas technology. I saw loads of prototypes come and go. The most difficult thing was getting the flame ports in the right place.”

Uhm, flame ports? Please explain.

“Without going into too much detail, the flame ports are the holes that the gas comes out from. With our focus on the power and core of the flame, we wanted as many of these ports as possible to be arranged in a conical internal ring. We had them arranged in a staggered alignment. But, this produced a

flame outlet which protruded too high above the hob, making it a little bit dangerous. Finally, they were drilled into the cone at an angle. Now the flame is powerful, hot, concentrated and nice and low.”

All done, with nothing more to do?

“Actually, because we feel that it’s important for the wok burner to be multifunctional, we have also added a simmering ring and an outer ring to it. The great thing is that the wok flame itself provides 3 kW, which operates very efficiently, but 6 kW is needed for the large flame in the outer ring. This means that you need to switch with the gas supply between a small amount of gas for simmering, a bit more for the wok flame and a huge amount for the outermost flames. This is where our engineer had to spend a great deal of time tinkering around. In any case, we took the design to the limits of what is possible.”

And I presume that it is all executed according to the highest quality standards?

“But, of course! We’re dealing with gas here, so everything must be completely sound. The conical shape - the volcano, as it were - is made from brass, a traditional metal. Brass has excellent heat resistance, not to mention that it gives the burner that distinctive, professional look.”

And now what are you most proud of?

“That it wasn’t all pie in the sky, but that it actually works. There have been positive reactions to the Fusion Volcano wok burner. People feel that it’s something special and, above all, “different”. What is that? I think it’s the concentrated, powerful flame. A good fire still instils a sort of primeval feeling.”

Wok ring

To ensure that you can use the wok safely, the Fusion Volcano wok burner comes with a wok ring. This makes it more stable when placing a round-based wok pan on it. This allows you to move the wok around freely and cook like a professional. The wok burner is also made up of three removable components which are easy to clean.



A Domino Volcano



“The flame is powerful, hot, concentrated and nice and low.”

Tradition and innovation



The wok is an infinitely versatile pan.

You can use it for almost every cooking method. These recipes will certainly let you see how true this is. From traditional stir-fried shredded beef to deep-fried and amazingly crispy

chicken. But there are also some delicious vegetable dishes described. Why not try stir-fried green beans. A touch of soy sauce and sesame oil gives them an exciting oriental touch!

Stir-fried shredded beef



The secret ingredient in this dish: Chinese five-spice powder. See page 59 to find out more about this.

Chicken with cashew nuts, surprisingly simple and delicious



Cashew chicken

Marinated crispy chicken



Green beans



Vegetable used in traditional French cuisine with a surprising oriental twist.

Stir-fried shredded beef

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Preparation time: approx. 15 minutes
Per serving: approx. 225 kcal, 26 g protein
10 g fat, 7 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- 400 g beef cut into thin strips
- 5 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tbsp five-spice powder
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- Half tbsp black pepper bunch of cherry tomatoes
- bunch of thyme
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp olive oil

1 Pre-heat the oven to 150°C. Mix the soy sauce, five-spice powder, brown sugar and black pepper and coat the strips of beef with it. Leave it to marinate for half an hour.

2 Place the cherry tomatoes, thyme, sugar and olive oil in an oven-proof bowl and place it in the oven for around 45 minutes.

3 Heat the wok over high heat and add 1 tbsp olive oil to it. Fry the beef strips quickly for around 1 minute, on every side.

4 Serve with rice and the tomatoes from the oven.

Cashew chicken

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 30 minutes
Per serving: approx. 298 kcal, 27 g protein
13 g fat, 13 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- For the marinade:
- 1 clove of garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- 1 tbsp cornflour
- 2 tbsp rice wine (alternatively, dry sherry)
- Salt

- 400 g chicken drumsticks, boneless and cut into chunks of approx. 1.5x1.5 cm
- 100 ml chicken stock
- 1 tbsp soy sauce

- 1 tbsp rice wine
- 1 tbsp cornflour
- 2 tbsp peanut oil
- 2 tbsp ginger, grated
- 200 g mange-touts, cleaned, cut lengthwise and cooked al dente
- 1 carrot, cut into thin strips
- 2 stalks of blanched celery, cut into strips
- 2 tbsp unsalted cashew nuts
- 1 spring onion, finely chopped

1 Mix the garlic, soy sauce, cornflour, rice wine and half a teaspoon of salt thoroughly and coat the chicken in it. Leave it to stand for around 30 minutes.

2 Combine together in another bowl the stock, soy sauce, rice wine and cornflour.

3 Heat a wok over high heat and add the peanut oil to it. Add the ginger and fry until you can start smelling its aroma.

4 Coat the chicken in the ginger, fry it on all sides until it is a lovely brown colour and let it cook for around another 2 minutes.

5 Mix the mange-touts, carrot, celery and cashew nuts through the chicken and stir-fry again for a short time.

6 Pour the stock mix over everything and let it cook through for around another minute.

7 Serve in a bowl or on a plate and garnish with the spring onion.

Marinated crispy chicken

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 20 minutes
Per serving: approx. 455 kcal, 25 g protein
35 g fat, 13 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- For the marinade:
- 4 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp five-spice powder
- Half tbsp sesame oil

- 400 g chicken thighs, boneless and cut into chunks
- 50 g cornflour
- 8 tbsp peanut oil
- 1 chilli pepper, deseeded and finely chopped
- 1 spring onion, finely chopped

1 Mix the ingredients for the marinade and mix the chicken through it. Preferably leave it to marinate overnight and stir it regularly.

2 Remove the chicken from the marinade, pat it dry and roll it in the cornflour.

3 Heat a wok over a high flame. Add the oil and fry the chicken for around 5 minutes, until all the sides are a lovely brown colour.

4 Sprinkle the chicken with the chilli pepper and spring onion.

Green beans

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 20 minutes
Per serving: approx. 181 kcal, 4 g protein
15 g fat, 5 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

- 1 tbsp peanut oil
- 1 clove of garlic, finely chopped
- 300 g green beans, cleaned, cut lengthwise and cooked al dente
- 1 tbsp soy sauce Dash of sesame oil
- 2 tbsp peanuts
- half a chilli pepper, deseeded and finely chopped

1 Heat the wok over a high flame and add the oil to it. Add the garlic and stir-fry it for around 1 minute.

2 Add the green beans, soy sauce, sesame oil, peanuts and chilli pepper. Mix them around and fry for around 30 seconds.

Healthy eating with a sizzling wok

Super-fresh ingredients, a glowing hot wok and lightning-speed preparation. If you follow these three golden rules, it will make the difference between you cooking a simple wok dish and a wok dish that sets your pan sizzling. If the wok is at exactly the right heat, the ingredients will constantly sizzle, just like tweeting baby birds. If you hear this sound, don't go looking under your kitchen window or in the extractor hood. Keep stirring your pan and make sure this sound doesn't stop.

Fresh ingredients

The three golden rules for wok cooking say it all: wok cooking is healthy. In Chinese cuisine mainly extremely fresh, unprocessed ingredients are used, preferably seasonal. They will be fresher, tastier and crunchier than, for instance, prepacked vegetables in plastic or a can. This is the key to stir-fried vegetables. Unlike in other countries, meat is not the most important component in the meal, but vegetables and spices. Lots of vegetables, a little protein and a minimum amount of fat are the ingredients in a typical Chinese meal.

Glowing hot

A wok reaches temperatures from 160°C to more than 230°C. Such high temperatures cook meat as soon as it hits the pan. This retains all the good juices and absorbs what little fat there is.

This also applies to fish and vegetables. If your wok has been seasoned (see p. 57), you just need a tiny bit of oil. You pour this oil in with a flowing, swirling motion along the edge of your wok. While the oil is sliding down along the edges, you quickly add your pre-cut ingredients.

Lightning-quick preparation

No cook is as well organised as a Chinese cook. This isn't because they are better organised by nature than people who don't cook with a wok, but because they can't be anything but. Given that the Chinese have already been using a wok to cook for two thousand years, it may well be the case that "order" is now part of their DNA.

Stir-fry method

The first step is to add the flavourings to the pan: ginger, chilli pepper, garlic. These give the oil some flavour. You stir-fry the meat in this. You don't cook everything at the same time because this will cool the wok down quickly. Once one portion of meat is cooked through, move it to the edge of the wok that is less hot and fry the next portion. This is followed by the vegetables.

If they need to cook for longer, such as carrots and broccoli, remove the meat from the pan for a short while. Add the vegetables which need to cook the longest first. Then add the leaf vegetables. Keep the food moving all the time to ensure nothing gets burnt and everything is cooked equally. If you have a sauce, pour it, last of all, into a gap in the middle of the wok.

Going back to the lightning-quick preparation, if you are going to cook with a wok, it is very important to set up properly. The cooking itself is done in a flash, but the preparation takes time.

Prepare the spice mixes first and put them in dishes. Chop up all the vegetables, meat and fish into small pieces of a similar size and also put them in dishes. Put them in the order they are to be used. Lay out an oven-glove, spatula and any other kitchen utensils. Is the worktop clean? Fire up!

No healthier method than steaming

We mainly use the wok for stir-frying.

This involves you using a little oil and the healthy juices and vitamins will be retained. If you deep-fry with the wok, only a small amount of oil will be absorbed. But deep-frying is still not really regarded as being healthy. Perhaps the healthiest cooking method is steaming. You don't use any fat and virtually all the vitamins, minerals and flavours will be retained. If you want to use the wok for steaming, fill the bottom with four centimetres of water or stock and place a bamboo or metal steam basket on top.

For instance, you can prepare in the steam baskets the traditional lunch snacks, dim sum. But you can also use them to steam almost all vegetables, rice, fish and white meat. Only red meat cannot be steamed.

Yet again, you can stir-fry that in a healthy manner with a chilli pepper, spring-onion and a dash of oyster sauce, in your wok of course.



Own sauce first

Cooking from packets is easy and may well be tasty. But it isn't anywhere near as tasty and healthy as preparing everything yourself. If you know which combinations of flavours are tasty, you can then mix up your own sauce. If you want to give your sauce a thicker consistency, just add some cornflour. Asian spices offer excellent ingredients to work with, and are (almost) always tasty!

Flavours which go well together

Ketjap manis, Garlic Ginger, Chilli pepper, Coriander, Soy sauce, Oyster sauce, Ginger Sugar, Spring onion, Rice wine, Soy sauce, Garlic Sesame oil, Spring onion.



Asian food stores

Asian food stores offer an exciting journey of discovery, full of new and unknown ingredients. We present below a couple of these sauces and vegetables to you. But this marks only the beginning of the adventure...

Peanut oil

Sunflower oil will still sometimes form a fatty layer on your food. Peanut oil contains considerably less fat, doesn't have such a strong aroma and has just a slightly more refined taste. This means that you can use it to prepare really

mild dressings and mayonnaise. There is also the fact that the oil extracted from peanuts, because of its higher still boiling point is even more suitable for wok cooking and deep-frying than other types of oil.



Paksoi, also known as bok choy, the perfect vegetable for the wok.

Ginger

This golden branched root, when used fresh, has a very distinctive sharp taste: fresh, fragrant and citrus-like. This is a taste which Westerners perhaps need to become a bit accustomed to. Fresh ginger is not only used in cooking, fried, deep-fried, used fresh and dried in hot dishes and sauces, but it is also very suitable for making a cup of tea. This root is also renowned for its soothing effect in the case of a sore throat, stomach ache and nausea.

Spring onion

In Asia you will often see this lovely scallion in the form of fresh little rings on the table so that you can spread them yourself over your noodle soup or curry dish. Spring onions add a mild, fresh flavour which reminds you a little bit of a leek or onion. If you want to steam the rings, do it quickly as spring onions quickly lose their flavour. Spring onions are also really good in salads, on top of meat dishes, egg and fish dishes.

Black beans

Unlike the South American black beans, which are mainly used in fillings, Chinese (fermented) black beans give dishes a strong, spicy, salty taste. You can find fermented black beans in most Asian food stores, with liquid in a can or in a bag, and dried in cardboard containers. Rinse them first a couple of times with cold water before using them and then chop them into rough pieces.

Sesame oil

A few drops of this fragrant oil will turn a full pan of noodles into a taste explosion. This Asian oil is pressed from peeled and roasted sesame seeds and has an intense nutty



Surprisingly tasty, fermented black beans.

flavour. Most Asian food stores sell both pure sesame oil and aromatic sesame oil. If you're using sesame oil with a hot dish, add it just at the end as it burns quickly. There is also cold-pressed, western sesame oil. This is actually suitable for frying with.

Bok choy

This type of cabbage has flexible, crunchy white stems and dark-green leaves, providing a pleasant neutral flavour. It is better known in the West as paksoi. It is the most widely eaten vegetable in China. The large bok choy is mostly steamed, boiled or stir-fried for a short time. You add the stems to the pan first and then the leaves only at the last minute.

The small type, known as baby bok choy, can be cooked in the wok whole, steamed or boiled. It is also delicious in soups and salads.

Soy sauce

Asians use soy sauce just like we use salt in the West. Chinese soy sauce is rather salty and is added, just like we add salt and pepper, right at the last minute, for flavour. A good soy sauce can be recognised from its label: 'Superior soy sauce' and 'Naturally brewed'. Japanese soy sauce is generally less salty than the Chinese version. There is also a dark soy sauce, with a more syrupy texture and less salty than the soy sauces just mentioned. In fact, it tastes slightly sweet with the addition of syrup. But it's still not as sweet as ketjap manis sauce. The darker soy sauce is mainly used to add some colour to hot dishes such as braised beef and stews.

Mandarin Palace



Authentic wok cooking in The Hague

At first glance, the Mandarin Palace, located in the Duinoord district of The Hague, looks like your normal, local Chinese restaurant. But real connoisseurs know better as this is one of the best-kept secrets in Chinese cuisine in the Netherlands.

Mai Lye and her husband Jason serve authentic Chinese cuisine in the Mandarin Palace.

You won't find here the Chinese-Indonesian fusion that

is usual in Dutch Chinese restaurants. Mai Lye originally comes from Shanghai and Jason from Hong Kong. Their cooking offers the best of both worlds. They are proud of the fact that they only serve fresh food. Even the dishes on the takeaway menu are only prepared to order. The kitchen is dominated by wok burners and pans. Not a microwave in sight. There is actually an oven but, according to Jason, it's only used for large groups.



Mai Lye:

"I can actually buy everything I need in the Netherlands to do my cooking – definitely for at least the last 15 years."

What is the most vital ingredient in your cooking?

Mai Lye pauses to think about that, but then states assertively: "Onions. There's a whole load of things I could mention, but every dish includes onions. Onions also have a particular function. If you add an onion to the wok, the temperature goes down just enough to prevent the subsequent ingredients added to the pan from burning. For instance, I can't stir-fry paksoi without onion. This gives the dish flavour and structure. But I remove it from the pan before serving the dish."

Is Chinese cooking possible without a wok?

Mai Lye laughs: "No, it's not possible. You can't use any other pan to prepare these dishes. The wok is a hugely versatile pan: you can use it for stir-frying, deep-frying, boiling, steaming and even smoking. In China the wok is often the only pan in the house. Along with the rice cooker, of course."



Mandarin Palace
Nicolaistraat 35
2517 SZ Den Haag
+ 31 (0)70 - 360 66 16

What do you need to be able to cook well with a wok?

Jason: "A lot of heat. And a seasoned wok (see p. 57). If your wok is properly seasoned, you virtually don't need to use any oil for stir-frying. Seasoning gives it a natural non-stick layer. A wok usually lasts a maximum of two years in our kitchen, then the pan's handle often cracks. But if you maintain your wok well at home, it will last for years."

What is the secret of the wok?

Mai Lye: "Thanks to the rapid preparation method – most dishes are ready in a couple of minutes – stir-frying is a very health cooking method. All the vitamins and nutrients are retained."

If your wok is properly seasoned, you virtually don't need to use any oil for stir-frying.



"Thanks to the rapid preparation method – most dishes are ready in a couple of minutes – stir-frying is a very health cooking method. All the vitamins and nutrients are retained."

Jason:

"We don't use any MSG in the food. All our flavours are 100% natural."



What do you mean by “wok hei”?

Jason: “This is the typical wok aroma. Eating involves all your senses, so the food must look good and taste delicious. Not only that, it must also smell good. The typical aroma of a glowing hot stir-fried dish is called ‘wok hei’.”
 Mai Lye adds: “Stir-frying is done over high heat in a glowing hot pan. That fire must get through to the food. Using

a good stir-fry technique, you can get flames in the pan. We add a special rice wine to the dishes. The alcohol adds the finishing touch to the dish and brings all the flavours together. The fire also produces the “wok hei”, that smell which includes all the aromas in the air. Going right up your nose.”

Cutting techniques

A good beginning is half the work. This is definitely true if you are going to stir-fry. Make sure that everything you need is ready, preferably set out in the correct order. Most

wok dishes are ready in a couple of minutes. Therefore, good cutting techniques are essential.



Sweet pepper

- 1 Cut the tops off the peppers. Cut the peppers in half lengthwise.
- 2 Remove the seeds and cut the half peppers into strips.
- 3 Then cut the strips into chunks.



Onion

- 1 Cut the onion in half through the root and remove the outer skin. Cut into the onion a couple of times vertically as far as the root, but don't cut it off.
- 2 Cut into the onion a couple of times horizontally as far as the root.
- 3 Turn the onion 90 degrees and chop it finely.



Prawns

- 1 Remove the head from the prawns using a gentle twisting motion.
- 2 Peel the shell off. Pull the last bit off simply by the tail.
- 3 Score the top of the prawn lengthwise to remove the dark vein. If you don't do this, you'll end up with sand in your food.



Chilli pepper

- 1 Cut the red chilli in half.
- 2 Remove the seeds. Note: only the seeds sting the most.
- 3 Chop the flesh finely. Wash your hands thoroughly afterwards and avoid touching your eyes.



Ginger

- 1 You can finely grate ginger, but it is also fine to cut it. Cut a piece of peeled ginger into thin slices.
- 2 Then cut the slices into thin strips.
- 3 Finally, shred the strips as finely as possible.



Beef

- 1 If you're going to cook beef in the wok, it is important to cut the meat diagonally along the grain to prevent it from getting tough.
- 2 You can clearly see in the photo that the grain runs in the same direction as the knife.
- 3 In this case, the meat is cut correctly, diagonally along the grain.

Accessories

It's not quite complete with just a wok. You also need to have accessories and gadgets. For instance, a board for chopping, or bowls to put the ingredients that you have already chopped up in. We looked for the coolest and most appealing gadgets, from a spatula to an oriental knife.



1. Chopping boards from Sage are made from an environmentally-friendly combination of wood pulp and resin. This has resulted in a smooth, non-porous chopping board which is resistant to deep cuts. But it doesn't cause any damage to your knives either. This chopping board is also heat-resistant and dishwasher-safe. It is also resistant to the formation of any bacteria. In a nutshell, this is a chopping board which will do you for life (27x40 cm). Cook&Co, €39.99
www.sagesurface.com

2. These solid wooden bowls are made in the Pampanga region in the northern Philippines. The workers work in a pleasant environment and receive a fair wage. If you visit the FAIRyGOOD fairtrade store, you can see the bowls in

every size and colour and order them: www.fairygood.nl.

3. A glowing hot wok and a plastic spatula don't often make a good combination. This spatula's blade is made of heat-resistant plastic, making it ideal for wok cooking. The handle is made of Cromargan, a stainless steel material. It is durable, retains its shape, is waterproof and dishwasher-safe. Kookpunt(.nl), €24.90
www.wmf.nl

4. If you use a fork or hand-press to squeeze your citrus fruit, the pips will often also end up in your juice. Joseph Joseph has designed a hand-press with a special catcher. This means that you can get a glass full of juice, without pips in it. Cook&Co, €9.99
www.joseph-joseph.nl



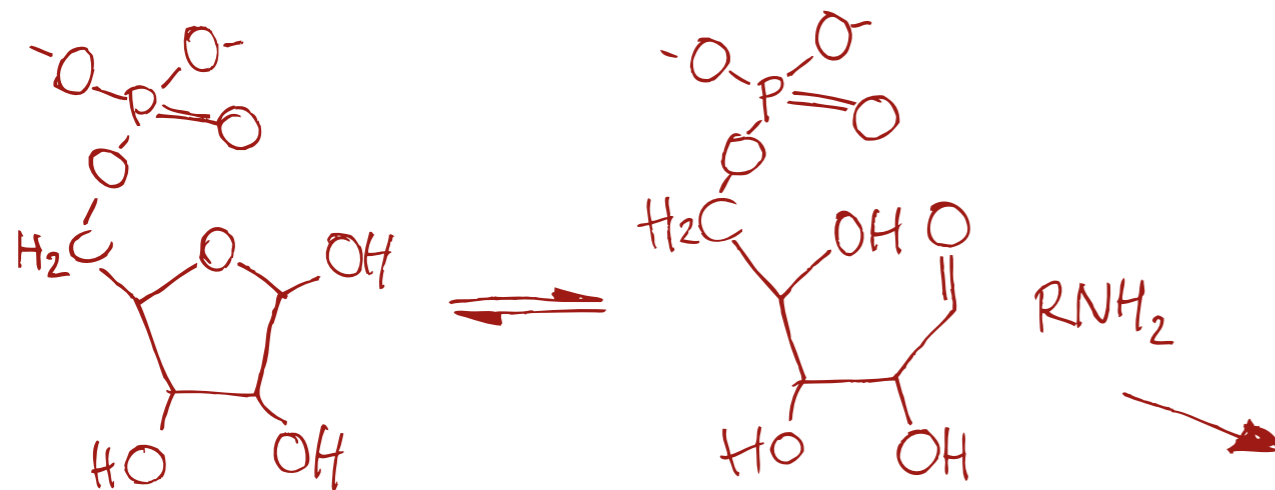
5. You can use kitchen tongs to arrange your plates beautifully and remove fish bones. But, since the Alessi Domenica tongs, designed by Elisa Giovannini, are made from stainless steel and black plastic, you can also use them to give your food a good stir in your wok. Just like the Chinese do with chopsticks. They are not dishwasher-safe, which means that you need to wash them by hand, along with your good knives and your wok! Kookwinkel Oldenhof, €22.00
www.alessi.com

6. Woks cook food quickly, which means that smooth preparation is extremely important. If you chop up everything beforehand, you need to have bowls available to put the ingredients in at the side. In the larger Asian

food stores, apart from finding wonderful food products, you will also often come across pans, steam baskets, chopsticks and lovely Chinese ceramic bowls. Available in every Asian food store, in every possible size.

7. It's a good thing if you feel that your knife is an extension of your arm. This Japanese knife is very expensive, but when you hold it in your hand, you will understand why. The blade has been forged from 32 layers of Damascus steel and is razor-sharp. The balanced weight and ergonomic design make this knife comfortable to hold. This smaller Santoku knife is intended for chopping vegetables, meat and fish. Kookpunt(.nl), €149.00

A bit of Maillard



Actual fact, every cook is secretly a bit of an alchemist. The most spectacular reactions take place literally right under your nose. The “tastiest” one is perhaps the Maillard reaction. This is the secret behind a brown crust and delicious aroma.

What do stock, a bread crust and fried beef have in common? Rich, deep aromas and a full, all-round flavour. It appears that around 120 aromatic molecules can be found on a perfectly cooked beef steak. It's no surprise then that most people are licking their fingers after eating a piece of meat like this. More so, than when eating greasy, stewed braising steak. It's precisely the Maillard reaction that makes the difference.

This is something that isn't that difficult or complicated to do over and over again. In fact, every amateur cook uses the principle behind the Maillard reaction to some degree every day, without knowing it.

This is precisely the reason why we let butter or oil get really hot in the pan, why, when making wok dishes, we stir-fry the meat first at a high temperature and then add the liquid, or why we like to marinate meat in sour mixtures or honey before baking it in the oven or putting it on the barbecue.

Extra cachet

In the Maillard reaction (named after the French doctor/chemist Louis Camille Maillard) everything revolves around

Maillard and caramelisation

Caramelisation and the Maillard reaction are often mixed up. Caramelisation is also a browning reaction, but there are no amino acids and proteins involved in it. Heating results in the sugar decomposing into various different molecules. This releases aromatic substances which are reminiscent of nuts, sherry and butter.

The Maillard reaction releases the same aromatic substances, as well as aromas such as flowers, onions and chocolate. The Maillard reaction then also produces a richer and more intense taste experience.

proteins (amino acids) and sugars (carbohydrates), preferably in combination with a little heat. Once the amino acids and carbohydrates are heated to temperatures above 120°C , they start to move. They dance around, interact, collide and enter into a reaction with each other. They form various new compounds together. And it is these new compounds that give us a brown colour and the additional aromas.

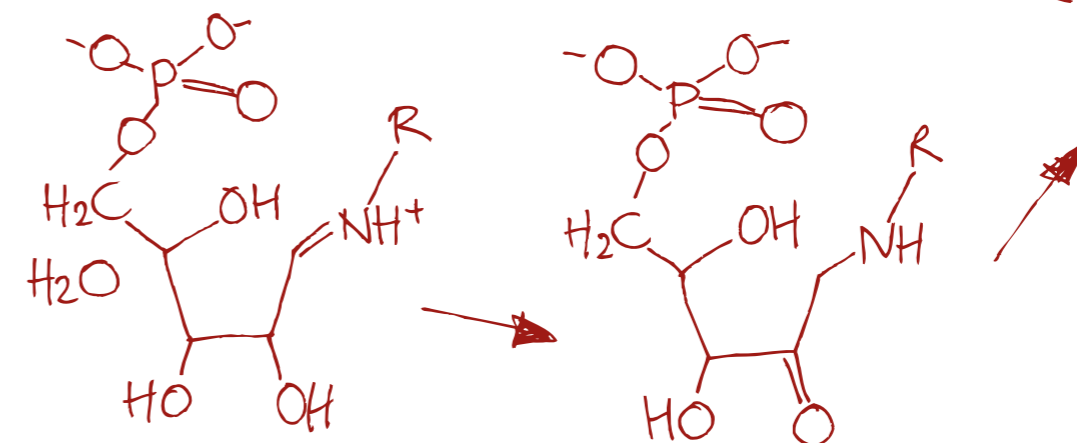
With a bit of luck, you'll be able to detect hints of leaves and flowers, chocolate, onions, earth and/or meat. Therefore, the Maillard reaction adds some extra cachet to a dish.

What you may well do is as a result of using this principle. Try, for instance, at the start of your preparation to keep everything as “dry” as possible, without any water. This means that boiling, steaming, braising and stewing are not ideal as the temperature stays too low. But roasting, baking, cooking au gratin and with a wok actually produce the desired effect. Always use some butter or oil, which will allow you to reach a higher temperature quickly. Make sure that all the water evaporates from the butter or oil, pat the meat completely dry and cook it at a high temperature. Any condiments and spices which you add during preparation will provide additional taste and aroma.

Baking, roasting, wok cooking

The funny thing is that not all Maillard reactions are the same. Small differences in the composition of a product, the circumstances, volume and temperature produce different aromas, tastes and colourings. This means that it is difficult to control the Maillard reaction precisely enough so that you smell “flowers” or it produces the smell of “burnt coffee”.

Another thing to try is to figure out where many amino acids/proteins and carbohydrates/sugars/starches are located, or

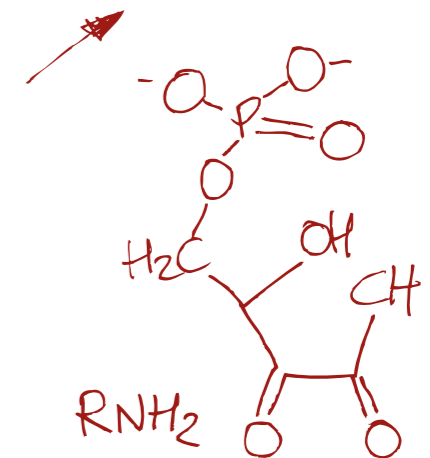


look for it in the combination of ingredients (sugar with milk or cream produces the typical butterscotch taste). Fish and meat always do well on this score. Vegetables, once again, do not. They have far too few proteins to nicely get the whole thing started. It is known that shellfish such as prawns, lobster and crab “react” already at lower temperatures. This is what produces these delicious aromas with a hint of nuts and/or popcorn. Even scallops get a brown crust quickly. Bon appetit!

Wok hei

“Wok hei” (the “breath” of the wok) means that the Maillard reaction has actually been achieved. If a dish has “wok hei”, the ingredients are perfectly browned as a result of being heated quickly at a high temperature, creating a rich and full range of aromas and tastes.

The secret of a rich taste experience.





Fire!

Chinese heat in your own kitchen

Large flames lick the pans. Within a couple of seconds a chef is using his glowing hot wok with a large flame. In the blink of an eye, your meal will be ready for you. Then the chef cleans his wok before the next order.

The gas burners on a Western cooker supply a very modest flame compared with Chinese wok burners. Your wok will never be hot enough on these. And if your wok isn't hot enough, the liquid won't evaporate, in which case you aren't stir-frying but boiling.

How hot is a flame?

The temperature in a flame can be many hundreds of degrees. A Western gas cooker doesn't reach this temperature. The strongest large burner with three rings will reach no more than around 200°C. The smallest burner will reach, at full capacity, just 160°C. Incidentally, the hottest part of the flame is just above the blue core.

Flames in the pan!

If you let a pan boil over on the cooker, the water will actually run over the side.

If the water reaches the flames, you will see them turn yellow. This happens because there is temporarily less oxygen during combustion. It is also possible that no water runs out of the pan, but there are just flames inside the pan. This may happen because there is fat at the edge of the pan which is burnt. The flames then seem to creep into the pan. It can also happen that your pan gets so hot that the oil or fat evaporates and catches fire.

To put out "flames in the pan", switch the gas off and throw a fire blanket over it or put a suitable lid on the pan, wearing an oven glove. Never attempt to extinguish the flames with water. This will cause a burst of flames. And never walk around holding the pan. There is very great chance of you sustaining burns doing this.

How many cubic metres of gas do we use in the Netherlands?

All Dutch households use a total of around 12 billion cubic metres (m³) of gas. That works out at an average of around 1,600m³ per household. With 1m³ of gas you can have three showers, one bath and boil a kettle six times. If you cook with a wok or steam instead of boiling, you can save 5m³ to 6m³ of gas per year.

Not just for oriental cuisine...

Stir-frying is a cooking method widely used in oriental cuisine. But why not in the West? We put this notion to the test and tried to prepare some typical Western dishes using the wok. This quick cooking method seemed surprisingly well suited to Mediterranean cuisine.

Lentils with garlic sausage



Penne with cheese and ham

You can even cook pasta in the wok before you make the sauce!



Marinated duck breast fillet with balsamic vinegar

EAST MEETS WEST



Cod fillet with lime sauce



90 cm 5 Burner with Volcano



You can find out more about the Fusion Volcano wok burner at:

www.asko.com.au

Lentils with garlic sausage

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 40 minutes
Per serving: approx. 647 kcal, 41 g protein
24 g fat, 53 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

2 tbsp peanut oil
3 spring onions, finely chopped
3 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
3 large carrots, cut into thin slices
100 ml white wine
400 g lentils
4 Turkish garlic sausages, cut into pieces
small handful of oregano and basil, roughly chopped
salt and pepper

1 Heat the wok over high heat and add the oil to it. Add the onion, garlic and carrot and fry for a short time.

2 Pour the wine in and let it boil off for around 6 minutes.

3 Cook the lentils according to the instructions on the packet.

4 Stir the lentils, garlic sausage and spices through the mixture in the wok and let it all heat through for another 2 minutes or so.

5 Add salt and pepper for flavour.

Penne with cheese and ham

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 30 minutes
Per serving: approx. 788 kcal, 35 g protein
41 g fat, 64 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

400 g penne
3 tbsp peanut oil
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
200 g cubes of smoked bacon
1 mozzarella, cut into blocks
100g grated Parmesan
small handful of basil, roughly chopped

1 Bring a large quantity of water to boil in the wok. Cook the penne according to the instruction on the pack until al dente. Drain the pasta well.

2 Dry the wok and heat it over a high flame. Add the peanut oil to the wok and stir-fry the garlic and bacon cubes for about 1 minute.

3 Add the penne to the wok. Mix the mozzarella and Parmesan through it, heat it well for a short time and serve on four plates. Garnish with the basil.

Marinated duck breast fillet with balsamic vinegar

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 25 minutes
Per serving: approx. 512 kcal, 22 g protein
40 g fat, 14 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

2 duck breast fillets, cut into strips
2 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tbsp light soy sauce
1 tbsp rice wine (alternatively, dry sherry)
2 tbsp brown sugar
1 tbsp cornflour
1 tbsp sesame oil
2 tbsp peanut oil
4 small spring onions, cut in half lengthwise and cut into 4 cm sections
1 tbsp ginger, finely chopped
1 chilli pepper, deseeded and finely chopped
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

1 Mix the dark soy sauce, light soy sauce, rice wine, brown sugar, cornflour and sesame oil together and dip the strips of duck in it. Leave it to marinate for around 30 minutes, remove the duck from the marinade and keep the marinade.

2 Heat a wok over high heat and add the peanut oil to it. Add the spring onions, ginger and chilli pepper and stir-fry them all for around 1 minute.

3 Stir in the duck and fry for a further minute. Stir in the marinade juice and the balsamic vinegar and heat.

Cod fillet with lime sauce

■■■

Preparation time: approx. 20 minutes
Per serving: approx. 282 kcal, 23 g protein
8 g fat, 28 g carbohydrates

Ingredients for 4 persons

500 g cod fillet cut into 8 pieces
Salt and pepper
2 tbsp cornflour
2 tbsp oil

For the sauce:

juice of 2 limes
300 ml vegetable stock
2 tbsp honey
2 tbsp light caster sugar
2 tbsp cornflour, dissolved in a little water

1 Sprinkle the pieces of cod with pepper and salt and roll them in the cornflour.

2 Heat the oil in a wok and fry the fish on both sides until they are a lovely brown colour. Let the fish cook for around 5 minutes on a low heat.

3 Add the lime juice, stock, honey and sugar to a pan and bring to the boil. Stir the cornflour paste through it and let it continue cooking for a short time.

4 Serve the fish with the sauce. Serve some rice or mange-touts from the wok with it.

The best wok



Peking wok

Voor een paar tientjes
koop je al een goede wok

Kantonese wok



A saucepan and a frying pan, a small gravy pan and a huge cooking pot. A grill pan, an asparagus pan, a pan for eggs, as well as a wok. An average Dutch household has at least five different types of pans in the kitchen. In China they often have just one. Is this because they're poor? No, they don't need any more than one.

You can use a wok to stir-fry, deep-fry, stew, steam, smoke, poach and boil. For more than two thousand years, in Chinese kitchens, the wok has been the most important cooking utensil. You won't find a frying pan here.

The Chinese-American cookbook writer Grace Young interviewed dozens of home cooks and professional chefs in her quest to find the wok's roots. Ironsmiths showed her how they make a wok. Cooks let her see how they achieve "wok hei", the ultimate wok aroma.

One of the cooks let Young see why he doesn't use a frying pan. He tosses the ingredients around the wok with a spatula. "I have more control using a wok," says the cook. The pieces of vegetables and meat which he pushes up against the sides fall back all the time on the bottom at the other side.

Back in the US, Young knows what makes a good wok. She has noticed that in the larger cook shops you will pay way over 100 euros for a "good" wok. On the other hand, you don't need to pay any more than 20 or 30 euros for the best wok. But where should you buy a wok then, and what do you need to look out for?

And how do you avoid having to buy a new one again in just a couple of weeks?

Which wok?

The best wok is a round wok made of carbon steel or the thinnest possible plate steel.

This steel conducts the heat very well, allowing the pan to reach a high temperature at lightning speed. And this is

what it's all about in wok cooking. But some cooks also prefer to use a cast-iron wok, such as the "wadjan".

This is mainly used in Indonesian cuisine. A wadjan is flatter, much heavier and heats up less quickly.

This makes this pan mainly ideal for simmering and stewing. The best-known types of wok are the Cantonese wok, with two metal handles, and the Peking wok, with a wooden handle.

Buying a wok

If you go into a large Asian food store, they often sell wok pans, spatulas, wok rings and other essentials. If these things aren't available in your local store, ask the owner where there is a suitable store selling these items. Look for a wok that's right for you. Preferably a wok without a non-stick layer. This is because it will burn off in next to no time with the great heat.

A new wok. What now?

Now begins the process of washing and seasoning the wok. This can take a little bit of time. When you buy a new wok, it always has a layer, whether visible or not, which you need to rub off. You do this with hot water, washing-up liquid and a hard scourer.

Dry the wok afterwards with kitchen towel. If it has a grey colour, then you're on the right track. Keep rubbing the pan until nothing more comes off it.

Step two of the process involves seasoning your wok. This means that you burn a natural non-stick layer into the pan. This will prevent your food sticking to the bottom and avoid rust.

There are different processes which can be used to season the wok. The basic method is suitable for any wok made of carbon steel or sheet steel. But if the natural non-stick layer happens to disappear, you can always repeat the process.

Basic method for seasoning

1. Open a window and turn the flame up high under the wok. It will start smoking within 5 seconds. Move the wok around over the flame for a minute to spread the heat properly all over. A blue or yellow ring will now form. Take the wok off the flame and let it cool down for 30 seconds.

2. Soak a generous piece of kitchen towel in oil and thoroughly grease the inside of the wok. Now turn a low flame under the wok. Turn it around for 30 seconds without letting the pan stop. Remove it from the flame.

3. Wipe the wok clean with a piece of kitchen towel. The paper may now still be a bit grey. Now repeat step 2.

4. Once the wok has cooled down, wash it with hot water and a soft sponge. Don't use any washing-up liquid. Heat it again for 1-2 minutes under a low flame. When the pan has cooled down, grease it again slightly with oil and a piece of kitchen towel.

Using your wok

After completing the process of washing and seasoning the wok, it is now ready for you to use. From this point on, always wash it with hot water and a soft sponge. Don't use any washing-up liquid and never put it in the dishwasher.



Asian food stores

Asian food stores offer an exciting journey of discovery, full of new and unknown ingredients. We present below a couple of sauces and vegetables to you. But this marks only the beginning of the adventure...

Bamboo shoots

Bamboo shoots can be compared to asparagus, not only because of the way in which they are picked, but also in terms of their taste. It is seldom possible to obtain fresh bamboo shoots in many places. But if you do manage it, remove the hard sheath leaves, bottoms and tops and cut them into slices or strips. If you buy them in a tin, always rinse them thoroughly. Bamboo soup is very popular in Asia, but you also find bamboo shoots often in curries, wok dishes and salads.

Coconut milk

Coconut milk is widely used for making curries, as well as for desserts such as coconut ice cream and coconut cake. If your curry seems to be on the spicy side, you can tone it down by adding some coconut milk. What is coconut milk exactly? If you mix the white flesh from a coconut with hot water and then squeeze it through cheesecloth, you will have coconut cream left. If you repeat this process using the coconut cream you got from the first time you squeezed it, then you'll get coconut milk after the second time you squeeze it.

Rice wine

Sushi or small cups of sake are probably what you first associate with rice wine. But this alcoholic beverage (±14%), made from fermented rice, is also an essential ingredient in Chinese cuisine. It is often used as a cooking wine and to add flavour to marinades. Most Chinese rice wines come from Shaoxing. Mirin is a good Japanese cooking wine, but is slightly sweeter. Dry sherry is also a good substitute for rice wine.

Oyster sauce

A Cantonese cook forgot about his oyster stock. It simmered and bubbled, and boiled into a thick, dark syrup. But he still tasted a drop of it. According to tradition, this is how oyster sauce came about around 1800.

Another few ingredients were added to increase its shelf-life and give it colour and texture. But the flavour was creamy, aromatic, slightly sweet, with a meaty rather than a fishy taste. You add this sauce at the last moment to stir-fry dishes containing vegetables, meat or fish.

Five-spice powder

This is a Chinese mixture of spices combining five basic flavours (sweet, salty, bitter, sour and sharp). The composition may vary, but the most common combination used is: star anise, fennel seeds, cloves, Chinese cinnamon and Szechuan pepper. Chinese cinnamon is a stronger version of ordinary cinnamon. Five-spice powder is mainly used for rubbing into pork and duck, after which they are fried or roasted. But use only a small amount as its taste becomes too intense very quickly.

Thai basil

Just as you would add fresh Italian basil to pasta dishes and pizza, you add Thai basil (cut into strips) at the last moment to curries, soups and wok dishes. We are familiar with three types: Thai "sweet" basil, which tastes strongly like aniseed and slightly like mint. The leaves of Thai "holy" basil are slightly hairy and have a very light taste. There is also lemon basil, which you will often taste with fish and salads.

Szechuan pepper

Pretty spicy cooking is typical of China's Szechuan province. This spice is named after this region. Szechuan pepper is not a real pepper, but is from a family of citrus fruit, giving it a slight lemon flavour. But it isn't comparable either in terms of taste as it has a slight numbing effect on the tongue. You'll often come across this pepper in fish dishes, but also in chicken, rabbit, veal, as well as sweet dishes.



Thai basil resembles mint and aniseed slightly.



There's really nothing to compare with Szechuan pepper.

A chopper and a wok



Modern Asian cuisine courtesy of Madame Cheung

In the view of Robin Wu from the restaurant Madame Cheung in Hoorn, the essence of oriental cuisine is quite simple: all you need is a chopper and a wok. The chefs

in his restaurant use a Chinese cooking chopper to cut and chop all their ingredients, while they use a wok to boil, steam, smoke and deep-fry all the dishes. Voilà!



A CHOPPER AND A WOK

Madame Cheung
Kleine Noord 53-55
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“Cooking is about transferring heat. The wok is perfect for this.”

From a young age, Robin Wu was always in his parents' Chinese restaurant. And he has never left the restaurant business. After finishing hotel college, he went off to Asia where he learnt the secrets of modern oriental cuisine in Beijing and Singapore. He returned to the Netherlands for love. His restaurant Madame Cheung is, in the view of many - including the Lekker and GaultMillau food guides - one of the best Asian restaurants in the country.

What makes the wok so versatile?

“I think it's because of the simplicity of the pan. Ultimately, a piece of metal is adequate for cooking. It's all about heat transfer. Nothing more, nothing less. A wok transfers the heat completely directly from the flame to the food. It's made of a thin piece of metal. This makes it suitable to use with almost all cooking methods.”

And what about the round shape? What does this add to it?

“A flat piece of metal can't be used as everything will fall off it. A wok has the simplest shape that you can imagine: round. The round shape means that all the ingredients always fall back into the middle of the pan where the heat is.”

So, wok cooking really is the simplest cooking method?

Wu laughs. “Yes, you can throw away your whole set of pans.” There are three basic techniques in oriental cooking: deep-frying, steaming and stir-frying. The wok is perfect for all three of them.”

What makes Madame Cheung stand out from other Asian restaurants?

“When I came back to the Netherlands from Singapore, I noticed that Chinese restaurants were still doing the same things as ever, which they had been doing for decades. I didn't want to do that. I had now seen how innovative Asian cuisine can be, and that's what I also wanted.”

How do you do this?

“I think that the key thing is that we're always looking for the best ingredients, even if they don't come from Asia. Our cooking methods are fairly traditional. The innovative aspect mainly lies in the use of ingredients, through exciting combinations and in the presentation. For instance, we make Thai fishcakes without fish, but using sweetbreads. This produces a very exciting dish. In Asia, they're not familiar with using sweetbreads in cooking.”



MADAME CHEUNG



"You can throw away your whole set of pans." A wok is sufficient."



“Above all, the ingredients are very important, definitely for the wok. The fresher, the better. Because the temperature in the wok is very high, all the juices and nutrients remain in the food. In fact, you can say that using fresh ingredients is the basis for oriental cooking. In Beijing I saw gas cookers where extra oxygen was added to the flames to create even more heat and intensity in the pan. This, combined with super-fresh ingredients, produces an amazing flavour.”

Is Asian cooking conceivable without a wok?
 “The pan that you use actually determines what kind of cooking you are going to go for. Cooking methods play a more decisive role in this than the ingredients you use. You can use as much soy sauce and ginger as you like in Western cooking, but if you’re not cooking in a wok, then it’s not Asian cooking you’re doing.”



In Beijing I saw gas cookers where the chefs were using extra oxygen to create even more heat and intensity in the pan."



"Fresh ingredients are the basis for oriental cooking."



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- 2 A+ ASKO Burners
- Easy Clean ceramic glass
- Ergonomic metal knobs
- No joining kit is required

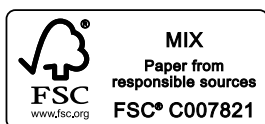


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