

# Sweet and sour beef whips up quickly, but keep that wok hot

Linda Gassenheimer  
Tribune News Service

Sweet and sour beef is a popular Chinese stir-fry dish. Here's a simple version that has great flavor and can be made in minutes. The sweet and sour sauce is light so it gently coats the beef and vegetables blending the flavors together, but not masking the taste of each ingredient.

The secret to wok cooking is to achieve a crunchy texture while making sure the food is cooked through. Make sure your wok or skillet is very hot before adding the ingredients. The oil should be smoking. Then add the first ingredient and let sit, without tossing for at least a minute. Repeat this process when adding the main ingredients. This allows the pan to regain its heat after adding the cold food.

## Helpful Hints

- To substitute white or red wine vinegar for rice wine vinegar, use 3 ounces vinegar and 1 ounce water.
- For easy stir-frying, place all of the prepared ingredients on a cutting board or plate in order of use. You won't have to look at the recipe once you start to cook.

## Countdown

- Make rice dish.
- Prepare Sweet and Sour Beef ingredients.
- Stir-fry beef dish.

## Shopping List

- To buy: 1 bottle rice wine vinegar, 1 package brown sugar, 1 small bottle reduced-sodium soy sauce, 1 container cornstarch, 1 bottle sesame oil, 3/4 pound grass-fed beef tenderloin, 1 red bell pepper, 1 small bok choy, 1 bunch scallions and 1 package microwaveable brown rice.
- Staples: salt and black peppercorns.

## SWEET AND SOUR BEEF

By Linda Gassenheimer

1/2 cup rice wine vinegar  
2 tablespoons brown sugar  
2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce

1 tablespoon cornstarch  
1 tablespoon sesame oil  
3/4 pound grass-fed beef tenderloin cut into 1-inch cubes  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 cup red bell pepper cut into 1-inch cubes (about 1 cup)  
2 cups sliced bok choy, leaves and stems

Mix vinegar, sugar, soy sauce and cornstarch together in a small bowl and set aside. Heat oil in a wok or nonstick skillet over high heat. When oil is smoking, add beef and stir-fry 3 minutes, turning after one minute. Sprinkle beef with salt and pepper to taste. Add red bell pepper and bok choy. Let stir-fry 2 minutes, turning after one minute. Move the ingredients to the sides of the wok and add the sauce in the center. Bring all of the ingredients into sauce and stir-fry until the sauce thickens, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve over the rice.  
Yield 2 servings.

*Per serving: 420 calories (38% from fat), 17.5 g fat (5.7 g saturated, 6.8 g monounsaturated), 84 mg cholesterol, 38.5 g protein, 24.1 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g fiber, 674 mg sodium.*

## RICE AND SCALLIONS

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

1 package microwave brown rice (1 1/2 cups cooked)  
2 teaspoons sesame oil  
1/4 cup sliced scallions  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Microwave rice according to package instructions. Measure 1 1/2 cups rice and reserve remaining rice for another time. Add oil, scallions and salt and pepper to taste. Toss well.  
Yield 2 servings.

*Per serving: 231 calories (23% from fat), 6 g fat (1 g saturated, 2.4 g monounsaturated), no cholesterol, 4.4 g protein, 39.9 g carbohydrates, 2.8 g fiber, 8 mg sodium.*

## SPRING

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2. Season broth to taste with salt (usually 1/2 teaspoon, but this depends on the base used). Add chicken breasts or thighs to simmering broth. Reduce heat to very low, cover the pan and cook 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the chicken sit in the broth for 10 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, prepare vegetables and optional add-ins.

4. Remove chicken from broth with tongs to a cutting board. Discard skin. Pull chicken away from bones in long shreds. (Broth and chicken can be refrigerated separately for up to 3 days.)

5. Just before serving, return broth to a simmer. Add 1 sliced zucchini, 1 cup peas, 1 diced tomato and optional 1/2 sliced jalapeno; cook 2 to 4 minutes (the longer time is for the frozen peas).

Step 6: Stir in 3 cups spinach and the shredded chicken; simmer 2 minutes. Stir in 2 sliced green onions, 1/4 cup chopped cilantro and 1 tablespoon chopped dill. Add any optional ingredients and sprinkle with lemon zest. Serve in deep, warmed bowls.

## OVERNIGHT BREAKFAST BOWL

Ready the next day

Preparation: 10 minutes + overnight chill time  
Makes 2 servings

Muesli cereal delivers a great blend of textures in these overnight bowls. Try a combination of frozen diced mango and blueberries here. Mixed berries or cherries would also taste delicious. You can skip the frozen fruit and serve the cereal topped with sliced banana and fresh berries.

1 cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt  
1/2 cup unsweetened coconut milk or skim milk  
1 tablespoon cane syrup, rice syrup, pure maple syrup, agave syrup or honey, to taste  
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
Pinch salt  
1/2 to 2/3 cup muesli cereal, such as Bob's Red Mill, or old-fashioned oats  
1 cup chopped fruit, such as frozen mixed fruit or mixed berries

1. Mix 1 cup yogurt, 1/2 cup milk, 1 tablespoon syrup, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla, 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon and a pinch of salt in a bowl until smooth. Fold in 1/2 to 2/3 cup muesli cereal and 1 cup chopped fruit.

2. Spoon mixture into 2 individual covered containers. Refrigerate covered overnight.

# Beautiful butter lettuce salad

Ligaya Figueras  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

"When I cook vegetables today, my goal is to showcase their natural flavors and qualities, so simplicity is key," writes chef Eric Ripert in his newly published cookbook, "Vegetable Simple."

Simple has certainly been a defining element in my manner of cooking in the past 13-plus months, but sometimes, those preparations don't produce results that are beautiful to behold. The vegetable dishes that Ripert shares from his repertoire are as artful as they are easy.

I was drawn to Butter Lettuce Salad because it calls for a pastry brush, used to paint the lettuce leaves with an herby vinaigrette. The notion of a lettuce head as canvas is a lovely reminder that cooking is a form of art, an expression of creativity.

In the headnote, Ripert remarks that "your guests will enjoy cutting into the lettuce head with a knife and fork, as they would a wedge salad." Mine certainly did.

The bright broccoli soup takes advantage of the entire plant, stems included. I served it warm, but one of my dinner guests, who took leftovers home that night, happily drank it cold for breakfast the next morning. Top it with croutons if you desire crunch and some color contrast.

## BUTTER LETTUCE SALAD

2 teaspoons aged sherry vinegar  
2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

Fine sea salt and freshly ground white pepper  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1 large head butter lettuce, washed and patted dry (it's important to clean the lettuce thoroughly of soil and sand), core trimmed but head left whole  
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh tarragon leaves  
2 teaspoons finely chopped chives

In a small bowl, combine the sherry vinegar, balsamic vinegar, and salt and white pepper to taste. Slowly whisk in the olive oil.

Season the lettuce lightly with salt and white pepper. Using a pastry brush, paint each lettuce leaf with the vinaigrette. Sprinkle with the herbs. Quarter and serve immediately, on chilled plates.

Serves 4.

*Per serving: 75 calories (88% calories from fat), 1 g protein, 2 g carbohydrates, trace fiber, 7 g total fat (1 g saturated), no cholesterol, 33 mg sodium.*

## SILKY BROCCOLI SOUP

Fine sea salt  
1 large or 2 small stalks



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