

# The Sandy Post Home & Garden

## Stir frying suggested for change of pace

For economy and a change of pace in menus, consider stir frying. A stir fried dish of vegetables with meat can be cooked in minutes. Stir fried meat or chicken is tender and the vegetables are tender-crisp.

"The closest style to stir frying in western cooking is sauteing," notes Marilyn Lunner, Clackamas County extension agent. "Yet, it is

not the same."

In stir frying, the food is kept in constant motion so that all parts of it come in contact with the hottest part of the pan and cook quickly and evenly. This is done by quickly and continually sliding a spoon, spatula or chop stick down between the food and the pan and turning the food over on itself with a digging-tossing and

scrambling motion.

A wok is an excellent vessel for stir frying because the sloping sides and rounded bottom help keep the food in motion.

"Not to worry if you don't have a wok, stir frying can be done in a skillet," says Velma Seat, Oregon State University extension food marketing specialist. Some cooks even feel that skillets are preferable to woks

when cooking over electric units because the heat is generated more evenly over the entire bottom of the skillet.

The hotter the wok or skillet, the better. It is almost impossible to burn the food if you work fast enough and stir-toss repeatedly.

In stir frying, a sauce is used consisting of oil, seasoning such as garlic

and fresh ginger; liquid such as water, wine or soy sauce (or combinations); and sometimes cornstarch for thickening.

"Stir fry dishes may consist of meat, chicken or seafood cut in small pieces and vegetables cut in similar size pieces," Seat explains. "The uniformity of pieces gives a nice appearance and lets the mixture cook evenly and quickly."

A key role in preparing food for stir frying is in the cutting. For thin and even slicing, use meat that is partially frozen and cut across the grain so that it will be tender.

Cutting vegetables diagonally (oblique cut-

ting) exposes the surface area of firm vegetables like carrots or zucchini. This means that the larger surface can be exposed to heating and flavoring.

For the energy conscious, stir frying may be just the cooking method, says Seat.

In preparing meat and vegetable dishes on top of a gas or electric range, you may end up using two or three burners for about 30 to 40 minutes. Stir frying uses high heat and initially requires more energy, but the cooking time averages about six minutes.

"By stir frying the same meat and vegetable dishes you can save about 50 per-

cent of energy when compared with conventional range top cooking," Seat notes.

Another economical aspect of stir fry cooking is

that you can use relatively small amounts of meat, chicken or fish. Stir fried food is truly a meat extender — one that most people enjoy.

## Mountain Delight recipe offered

by MARLA WAIBEL  
For The Post

To make the crust of a Mountain Delight dessert, add one cup of flour, one-half cup of chopped nuts and one-half cup of melted butter.

Mix in a 13x9 pan. Pat out on bottom only and bake in a 350 degree oven for 12 to 15 minutes. Crust should be slightly brown, then let cool.

For the first layer, combine and mix until creamy, one-eighth ounce package of cream cheese (at room temperature), one cup of cool whip (will need 12 oz. container), and one cup of powdered sugar. Chill for one hour.

The second layer calls for two packages of instant pistachio pudding. Follow the directions on the

package. Spread over the first layer and chill for one hour.

And for the third layer, spread the remaining

package of cool whip over the pistachio layer. Cool for one hour.

Enjoy.

## Inside plants benefit from sterile soil

Plants grown indoors, whether for indoor decoration or eventual transplant outdoors in the garden, stand a better chance of surviving if they are started in a clean soil.

"Houseplants and transplants both benefit from a pasteurized or sterilized potting soil," said Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University extension home gardening agent. "The sterilization process cleans the soil, killing any nematodes, weed seeds or harmful bacteria it may contain."

"Clean" potting soil can be made at home or purchased at garden and nursery stores. Purchasing commercial potting soils easier and may be safer, but many gardeners prefer to make their own.

A satisfactory homemade mix can be obtained by blending equal parts of sand, loam and peat moss. To sterilize the mix, moisten it to a state suitable for seed germination, place it in a shallow pan and bake at 175 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 to 45 minutes. Afterwards, turn off the heat, but wait until the oven cools before removing the soil.

"Don't overcook the soil or the beneficial bacteria it contains will be destroyed along with the bad," said McNeilan.

This home prepared potting soil works equally well for most houseplants or garden transplants. Any soil that has been sterilized and has the following characteristics will promote good plant growth.

1. The soil should contain a reasonable amount of nutrition or plant food.
2. The soil should be loose enough that both water and air can pass through readily and yet retain moisture.
3. Soils that contain a large amount of humus (organic matter) are best for most plants. These are more easily crumbled and readily worked.

## Grafting adds to fruit tree

Most delicious apple trees don't produce Jonathan apples, that is not unless the tree has undergone some tree surgery, more commonly known as grafting.

"Grafting is a handy way to grow an additional fruit variety without planting another tree," says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent.

"And you don't have to be a professional tree surgeon to graft fruit trees. Any home fruit tree owner can be successful at it."

The first step in grafting is to gather scion wood, the wood shoot that will be united to the already growing tree. The shoot should be cut from the whip-like growth on superior quality trees.

Cut scion wood during the dead of winter when the parent tree is dormant.

For most grafting, one-year-old wood is preferable to older wood. It should be of average vigor and well-hardened. Wood grown in sunlight is better than wood grown in shade. In addition, it should be free of insects, diseases and frost injury.

Wood that is one-fourth inch in diameter or about the size of a lead pencil works best. Larger or smaller wood can be used, but it's more difficult to handle and might not give good results, according to McNeilan.

Scion wood can range from eight to 18 inches long, or whatever length is easiest to store.

Whenever weather conditions cause tree sap to rise freely, grafting can begin. In most years, conditions are best for grafting in March or early April. However, if the conditions are right in February, grafting can be done then.



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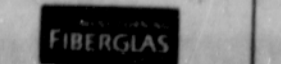


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