

SPONTANEOUS AND SIMPLE: WONTON STIR FRY WITH GARDEN GREENS

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

Spontaneity is the glue of creativity.

I recently found a bag of miniature chicken and cilantro wontons in the freezer. My wife, Laurie, and I were in the semi-annual process of cleaning it out.

The dumplings needed to be eaten. They would make for a quick and easy meal.

Meanwhile, our garden was acting like a harvest center, with lots of bok choy, cabbage, chard and amaranth to enjoy. Laurie came inside, bringing with her a good collection. I was inspired to make a wonton stir fry with a lot of garden greens, carrots, young Napa cabbage leaves and fresh fennel. I found a zucchini and a few lovely spears of asparagus still hidden in the refrigerator, then cooked off the dumplings. Voila, the freezer was thinning out.

Wonton stir fry with garden greens

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped ginger
- ¼ cup of minced fennel root
- ¼ cup safflower oil
- 16 ounces frozen wontons or 24 home-made dumplings

- Three chopped and par-boiled carrots, diagonally cut into small pieces
- One basket of greens: chard, bok choy, amaranth and young Napa cabbage leaves
- Six spears of asparagus, sliced diagonally into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup of sweet chili sauce
- ¼ cup of chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon of soy sauce
- Chive blossoms and fennel leaves for garnish

Preparation

Chop and gather small piles of veggies. In a large non-stick pan, round out this new recipe with sautéed garlic, ginger and chopped fennel root. Safflower oil works fine.

Par-boil the carrots and add the wontons to the pot at the last minute. Cook them until just soft but with the skins fully intact. Set aside.

Add the chopped veggies to the mixture, tossing the mixture a few times. Place a lid over the top and steam until the greens wilt. Toss in the carrots and wontons, a tablespoon of soy sauce, a splash of sweet chili sauce and the chicken stock. Marry everything together. Sprinkle chive blossoms and

chopped fennel on top. Serve immediately.

This is a shortcut recipe. It's easy enough to make homemade wontons using the round frozen pastries and a filling. Chicken or sausage are my favorites. Either works well with finely minced onion, cilantro and a bit of oyster sauce. I like to add chopped water chestnuts but there are many variations that one can use, any number without meat.

If the juices are too thin, add a tablespoon of cornstarch watered down with

water or stock. Stir into the preparation at the last minute and let thicken.

Sometimes I make a quick sauce by combining soy sauce, sugar, hot chili sauce, a bit of Mr. Yoshida's Original Sweet Teriyaki Marinade & Cooking Sauce and dried red chili flakes. Add two tablespoons of the first three ingredients, a ½ cup of Yoshida's and a teaspoon of the chili flakes. I prefer this to the sweet chili sauce.

We ate like kings and queens, all on leftovers and garden gems.



Ingredients from the author's garden helped make the meal.



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