



About the Author

Lee Geok Boi is a Straits Chinese with a life-long interest in all aspects of food but especially in cooking it. She combines her interest in cooking with travel, an interest that in 1992 literally took her around the world without flying. She was a food critic for several Singapore newspapers including *The Straits Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *New Nation*. She first began writing recipes for *Sunday Nation's* Table for One in the 1980s.

A graduate of the University of Singapore (now National University of Singapore), this freelance writer has also written books on Singapore's history. Her cookbooks include *Asian Soups, Stews and Curries*, *Asian One-Dish Meals*, *Classic Asian Rice* and *Classic Asian Salads*, all published by Marshall Cavendish.

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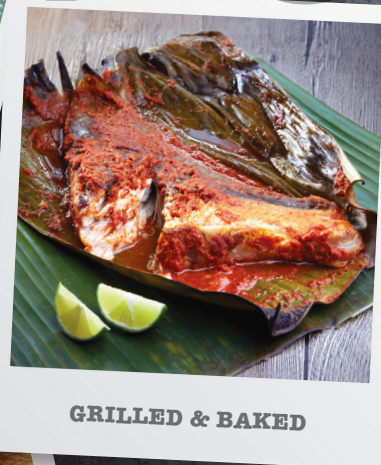
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Lee Geok Boi returns with another cookbook, this time gathering timeless Asian classics and modern favourites in this stunning compendium of seafood recipes that have been rigorously taste-tested in her little kitchen. With illustrated step-by-step instructions for cleaning and preparing seafood and a unique illustrated glossary for fresh and dried seafood, this book is a complete guide to making tasty seafood dishes whatever the occasion.



STIR-FRIED



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Cuisine

LEE GEOK BOI

Asian Seafood

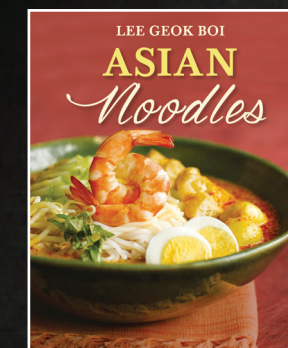


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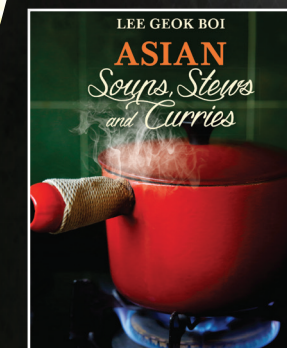
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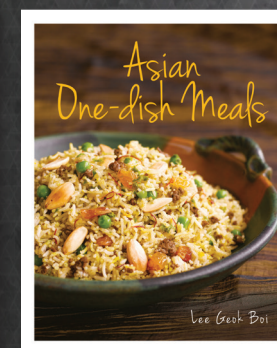
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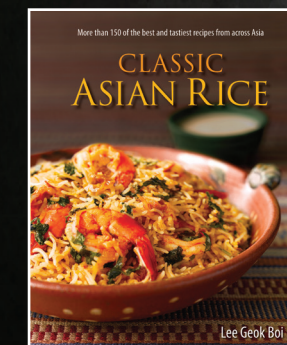
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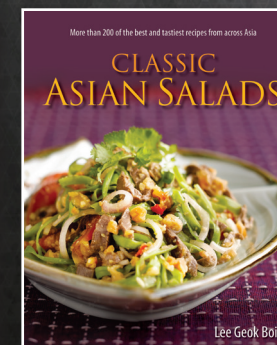
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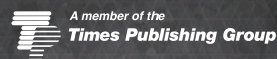


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To Tan Wang Joo who, as editor of *Sunday Nation*, asked me to do a cooking column with simple but tasty recipes and got me started documenting my family recipes. The column got me seriously studying the art of recipe writing as well as organising my cooking such that even non-cooks like her can put ingredients together into a tasty dish for the family. She still does not cook but thanks to her, in the years since Table For One, I have been told that others interested in learning how to prepare authentic and classic Asian dishes have found my cookbooks useful.

This book is also dedicated to my daughters Shakuntala and Savitri, son-in-law Tom, grandsons Arjuna and Rama. May they continue to find inspiration for many family meals from these recipes.

Contents

Introduction	6	Sambal Ikan Bilis	58	Straits Chinese Soy Sauce Prawns	96	Stir-fried Squid in Tamarind Sauce	
Basic Dips, Dressings and Spice Mixes	18	Squid in Salted Egg Sauce	59	Seafood Fritters	97	Indonesian-style	128
Steamed and Boiled	23	Grilled and Baked	61	Zucchini and Fish Fritters	97	Spicy Prawns with Lime	130
Steamed Prawns	24	Indonesian-style Grilled Fish	62	Prawn and Sweet Potato Fritters	97	Brinjals with Dried Shrimps	131
Steamed Crabs	24	Grilled Fish in Miso	63	Chinese-style Sweet-Sour Fish/Prawn Fritters	97	Sri Lankan Maldive Fish with Vegetables	132
Asian Seafood Salads	25	Grilled Fish in Banana Leaf	64	Filipino Shrimp Fritters	98	Turkish Squid in Onion Sauce	133
Steamed Mussels Thai-style	26	Grilled Stingray	66	Indian Fish Cutlets	100	Crabmeat Omelette	134
Singapore Fish Balls and Fish Cakes	28	West Asian Baked Fish with		Sri Lankan Prawn Cutlets	100	Minced Prawns and Doufu	135
Singapore Yong Tau Foo	30	Bell Pepper Dressing	68	Thai Fish Cutlets	100	Sambal Clams with Water Convolvulus	135
Japanese Anchovy Dashi	32	Syrian Baked Prawns	69	South Indian Prawn Fry	101	Clams in Coconut Milk Indonesian-style	136
Japanese-style Seaweed Soup	33	West Asian Prawns with Sumac	70	Jaffna Devilled Prawns	102	Indian-style Tamarind Prawns	137
Korean Seaweed Salad	33	Straits Chinese-style Grilled Fish		Straits Chinese Crab Cakes	104	Stir-fried Prawns with Herbs	138
Banana Agar-agar	34	with Stuffing	71	Burmese Fish Cakes	106	Chinese Stir-fried Scallops with Cashews	139
Vietnamese Sour Fish Soup	36	Straits Chinese Fried Stuffed Fish	71	Thai Fish Cakes	108	Thai-style Scallops with Vegetables	
Crab and Corn Soup	37	Lebanese Spicy Fish	72	Filipino Prawn and Pork Rolls	109	and Basil	140
Cambodian Fish Soup with Holy Basil	38	Seafood Fatoush	74	Shrimp Vaday	110	Clams in Garlic and Ginger Sauce	142
Braised Fish Head Soup Sichuan-style	40	Singapore Otak-otak	76	Korean Spring Onion and Seafood Pancakes	111	Fried Mung Bean Noodles with Crabmeat	144
Braised Fish Head Southern Chinese-style	41	Indonesian Crab Cakes	78	Mixed Seafood in Perilla Leaves	112	Fried Noodles in Seafood Sauce	145
Korean Seafood and Beef Rib Stew	42	Syrian Spicy Baked Fish Cakes	79	Vietnamese Seafood and		Cantonese-style Fish Porridge	146
Turkish Tuna Stew	44	Sardine Puffs	80	Spring Onion Fritters	114	Thai-style Rice Porridge	146
Korean Seafood and Beef Hot Pot	46	Bitter Gourd Stuffed with Prawns		Stir-Fried	117	Rice Cakes with Mixed Seafood Thai-style	148
Fish Head with Sea Cucumber in Claypot	47	Indian-style	81	Mustard Greens with Dried Anchovies	118	Dried Seafood Glossary	150
Indonesian Hot and Sour Fish Curry	48	Filipino Paella	82	Crispy Ikan Bilis with Peanuts	120	Fresh Seafood Glossary	152
Kerala Fish Curry with Drumstick	50	Gulf Prawns and Rice	84	Silver Fish, Peanuts and Potato Crisps	121	Glossary	154
Sardine Curry	51	Fried	87	Spicy Dried Shrimp Sandwich Filling	122	Bibliography	156
Goan Prawn Curry	52	Fried Fish with Various Sauces	88	Mum’s Sambal Hae Bee	124	Index	157
Prawns in Coconut Milk Indonesian-style	53	Lebanese Fried Fish with Tarator Sauce	94	Festive Shrimp Rolls	124	Weights and Measures	160
Prawn Molee	54	Garlic Prawns	96	Nonya Fish Floss	126		
Crabs in Coconut Milk Filipino-style	56						

Introduction

The sea has been Man’s source of sustenance and key agent of change since ancient times. The oceans linked continents, and voyages of discovery shaped the cultural and political maps of the world. South Americans are Portuguese and Spanish-speaking today because these voyages brought Portuguese and Spaniard colonisers to their shores. Seafaring Arab traders took Islam to South and South East Asia. In ancient West Asia, Phoenician traders on the shores of the Mediterranean, the ancestors of today’s Lebanese, carried not only trade goods such as olive oil to southern Europe but also the alphabet, the bedrock of European languages. The sea has always been an important source of wealth. One Phoenician trade good was a type of sea snail, the murex, that gave a natural purple dye known as Tyrian purple, a dye so precious that it was reserved for the robes of Roman emperors. This source of Phoenician prosperity was enshrined in the name for their land: “Phoenicia” means “Land of Purple”. For those fortunate enough to have proximity to the sea, the ocean’s bounty shaped their diets and cuisines profoundly. Seafood – defined as edibles harvested from the sea – is the staple protein in those parts of Asia with long coastlines and those countries made up of islands. Indonesia is the world’s largest nation-state made up of islands – some 17,600 of them. The Philippines consists of some 7,000 islands, and Japan is close behind with some 6,800 islands. India is a subcontinent with long coastlines, while Korea is a peninsula which is defined geographically as a body of land almost surrounded by water or jutting out into a body of water. Malaysia is made up of the Malay Peninsula and a large chunk of the island of Borneo. Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Korea and China all have coastlines of varying lengths. Singapore and Sri Lanka are islands. The various countries in West Asia (referred to by the Eurocentric as the “Middle East”) are surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Arabian Sea, Red

Sea, Caspian Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf. Then there are the rivers that run through some of the bigger countries with more land mass and their bounty of freshwater fish: Euphrates, Mekong, Indus, Huanghe, Yangtze, Brahmaputra, Ganges and Salween just to name a few.

Easy access to seafood has led to iconic flavours that we associate with various cuisines. The quintessential Indochinese flavouring of fish sauce is made from the plentiful harvest of anchovies. This pungent but flavourful seasoning is also common in the food of the Philippines, Myanmar and southern China where it is a specialty of the Teochews who were the traditional fishermen, many of whom engaged in the seafood trade. Originating from southern China, oyster sauce is a seafood flavouring essential in Chinese cooking. In fact, dried seafood such as scallops, shrimps and cuttlefish used in small amounts is a very southern Chinese way of expanding flavour at minimum cost. The Chinese demand for dried seafood from ancient times (and up till today) led to lucrative trade with the parts of Asia that could produce these trade goods. In South East Asia, shrimp paste or *belacan* (made with shrimps) is essential in the classic flavours of Malay, Indonesian and Straits Chinese curries and sambals. Further north in the island-nation of Japan, seafood looms large in the cuisine. Its basic stock, dashi, is made with seaweed and dried tuna. Sashimi is mostly raw seafood while sushi is rice rolled in nori sheets made from pressed seaweed. Classic Korean winter kimchi is traditionally fermented with a small amount of raw seafood. East Asian and South East Asian diets include a lot of dried and salted seafood to see the fishermen through those times when they cannot go out to sea. As parts of Asia still have poor access to refrigeration and refrigerated transport, the method of preserving by salting and drying prevails.

Refrigeration has made possible the consumption of fresh seafood in countries far inland from the ocean. Seafood is in demand for celebratory meals in part because of the expense and scarcity value. So huge has the demand for seafood grown that stocks of many popular species are under threat and the ones that get to market have become smaller, if at all. Even without being a fisheries expert, I can see that some popular types of fish that were common and cheap when I was growing up are less common, more expensive and come to market much smaller than before. This applies to shellfish too. In the 1980s when my family and I went camping with friends on one of the remote islands off the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, one of the delectables that the skin-divers amongst us pulled out of the reefs was the spiny lobster of a decent size. Today, none are to be found in those reefs given the increase in commercial and sport fishing in the area. (The area has since become a national marine park.)

Global demand for seafood has spawned factory ships with huge trawler nets and freezer holds to pack the bounty of the oceans for markets far inland from islands and coasts. Commercial fishing and production of seafood products have become huge industries for many coastal regions and seafood stocks do not replenish fast enough, particularly the more slow-growing varieties. Today, to meet global demand for seafood and seafood products, aquaculture – defined as the farming of saltwater and freshwater organisms intended for food – has become very important if seafood diversity and the ocean’s bounty are to be maintained. Aqua-farming in coastal waters and specially prepared inland ponds are the equivalent of agriculture on farms. Like agriculture, aqua-farming is the opposite of hunting and gathering which is what commercial fishing at sea is. Thus, this book on cooking seafood does not distinguish between saltwater and freshwater seafood even though “freshwater seafood” looks like an oxymoron. Today, more than half of the global

supply of seafood comes from aquaculture be it farms in ponds and tanks, inland or in coastal waters.

The increase in global demand for seafood, particularly fish, is sparked in part by scientific evidence and more awareness of the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids for heart health, brain development and general health. Oily fish, in particular wild fish, are plentiful in omega-3 fatty acids, which are now seen as very important nutrients. In general, seafood is a good protein with little saturated fat to speak of while having omega-3 fatty acids. Prawns, crabs and lobsters used to get bad press for being high in cholesterol but it has been found that there are both good and bad cholesterols (the cholesterol in seafood is mostly good cholesterol) and that it is important to keep the good cholesterol high to combat the bad cholesterol. At the same time, for healthy brain tissue, the body needs a certain amount of good fat. It is all about balance and moderation.

While consuming seafood has health benefits, it also carries some health risks. Allergies to certain types of seafood are not uncommon. This may be the rationale behind the traditional Chinese belief that prawns are not good for those recovering from an operation or some injury. Allergic reactions particularly to shellfish can range from mild to severe. The only way to find out if you are allergic is to eat it – cautiously. Start with a small piece of prawn or shrimp. If you tend to be allergic to many kinds of food, you may not want to even eat it. So one way to test is to either place a piece on your tongue or the underside of your wrist – and have ready your antihistamine. If you are not severely allergic, one way to help your body develop tolerance is to continue to eat small amounts regularly. Note that if you are allergic to seafood or a particular type of seafood, even consuming omega-3 supplements made from that particular seafood could set off allergic reactions. That was how I found out I was allergic to seal oil.

The impact of human activities on seafood is not simply in reducing supplies. Heavy metal contamination of seafood has increased in big fish such as tuna and swordfish because these big fish eat smaller fish and the heavy metal accumulates in their tissues. In 2014, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) issued an advisory cautioning pregnant and breastfeeding women to avoid four types of fish associated with high levels of mercury: tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico, shark, swordfish and king mackerel. They were also advised to limit consumption of white (albacore) tuna, which in many parts of Asia come canned, rather than as fresh fish. A 2011 human disaster that raised concerns about fish caught in the Pacific was the Fukushima reactor meltdown in Japan. This nuclear reactor is right on the coastline and there is some scary stuff online about radiation contamination. Seafood lovers may take comfort from this 2014 USFDA advisory: “To date, FDA has no evidence that radionuclides from the Fukushima incident are present in the US food supply at levels that would pose a public health concern. This is true for both FDA-regulated food products imported from Japan and US domestic food products, including seafood caught off the coast of the United States. Consequently, FDA is not advising consumers to alter their consumption of specific foods imported from Japan or domestically produced foods, including seafood.” What the agency said about the seafood supply of the US applies also to the seafood from Canada, which also has a Pacific coastline. Presumably, the same can also be said for seafood caught south of Fukushima such as in Vietnamese coastal waters and in the Philippines.

Nuclear disasters are actually of much less concern for seafood lovers than biological contaminants: viruses, bacteria and parasites. Freshwater and brackish water fish and shellfish have a higher rate of parasitical infection than ocean fish although studies have found that saltwater fish, and even deep-ocean fish, can harbour parasites too. The

good news is that these parasites are sensitive and the larvae are killed by freezing the fish to an internal temperature of -20°C (-4°F) for at least seven days. Commercially processed fish and frozen fish that you buy from the supermarket, whether wild-caught or farmed, usually meet these conditions. Home freezers are usually set to -17°C (0°F). Of concern are also bacterial and viral contaminants although such contaminants are killed by cooking the seafood right through to 63°C (145°F) for at least 15 seconds, and it usually takes more than 15 seconds to cook fish right through. There is a general Asian preference for cooking seafood lightly and in some instances even of eating it raw — think oysters and sashimi — and the reason is that overcooking toughens seafood, even fish. All of us seafood lovers would prefer to get our seafood from good and clean sources but sadly, this is not always possible. Unsafe sources may be why the once-popular blood cockles (*Tegillarca granosa*, *anadara granosa*) have mostly disappeared from wet markets in Singapore.

The ill effects of contaminated seafood range from mild to severe but the average healthy person will generally survive upset stomachs. As for those with compromised immune systems, health advisories usually recommend that such people eat only well-cooked seafood. In particular, freshwater fish should always be consumed well-cooked because the risk of bacterial, viral and parasitical contamination is higher in freshwater fish than in saltwater fish. The other health issue to keep in mind when consuming seafood is that prawns and squid are high enough in cholesterol to merit eating in moderation. Fortunately, most Asians eat prawns and squid as side dishes, so binge eating is probably occasional. Exercise common sense: source and prepare seafood properly, eat in moderation, and seafood should pose no issues except for those with allergies. Of all the proteins, seafood is regarded by many gourmets and gourmands as the tastiest.

TYPES OF SEAFOOD

There are basically two categories of seafood: fish and shellfish, with shellfish further divided into crustaceans and molluscs. Crustaceans are made up of crayfish, lobsters, prawns and crabs, while molluscs encompass the bivalves such as oysters, clams, cockles, mussels and scallops, the univalves such as abalone, whelks, limpets, conches, snails and periwinkles, as well as the cephalopods made up of octopus and cuttlefish, of which squid (*Teuthida*) is a sub-category. So you can say that squid is a type of cuttlefish but not all cuttlefish are squids. The Italian word “calamari” is increasingly being used for squid perhaps because it sounds more exotic. The Latin word *cephalopoda* means “head-footed” in Greek. Evolution has left octopus and cuttlefish without their shells but cuttlefish do have a hard plastic-like flat piece inside their tubular bodies known as the beak. The thickness of the beak depends on the size of the cuttlefish. All three cephalopods – octopus, cuttlefish and squid – have an ink sac that shoots out black ink as a protective mechanism. This ink is edible and produces a dish with a blackish sauce that has a vaguely iodine flavour. It’s not unpleasant.

Fish make up the largest category of seafood, with a wide range of flavours and textures. The texture of fish can be firm and dry like that of tuna; firm but also oily like that of cod; soft and somewhat oily like that of Toli shad or Chinese herring (*ikan terubok*); soft and melt-in-your-mouth like that of sole; or tender (but not melt-in-your-mouth) like that of white pomfret. Then there are the in-betweens such as some kinds of garoupa (also called groupers because they shoal) that may range from tender to firm of flesh. Note that the firmness of the flesh may vary according to where the flesh comes from. The belly is always tender and in large fish such as tuna and salmon, always the most expensive cut. The belly is where the most fish oil is to be found. It is prized in certain very bony fish and smaller fish such as wolf herring or *ikan terubok*

because the bones around the stomach are not only fewer but also larger and therefore easier to remove. The flavour of fish also varies from being very strong such as that of salmon or mild such as is that of sole or pomfret. Equally variable is the umami or sweetness. Freshly caught fish has better umami than frozen fish. This is why fishmongers in Singapore wet markets say that their fish has just been “chilled”, not frozen, why premium seafood restaurants prepare freshly killed fish, and Hong Kongers pay the premium for live fish. By “chilled”, the fishmongers mean that the fish has been packed under chipped ice. From my observations at the wholesale fish market in Jurong many years ago, if the fish is under sufficient chipped ice, it gets frozen. Umami is only partly linked to freshness. Some types of fish just have more flavour, and it is not necessarily linked to size either. Ribbonfish and *ikan selar kuning* for example, have better umami than *ikan selar* (Fresh Seafood Glossary, page 152). And yes, salt brings out the umami.

Differences in texture as well as the amount of bones and flavour, affect the choice of preparation. For example, a fish with a tender texture and superior umami such as wolf herring is enhanced when it is steamed, grilled or fried. That said, cooking with a lot of spices will not disguise any off-flavours from less than fresh seafood. If the fish is very bony such as wolf herring, cooking it with spices or a sauce is a waste of effort because the liquid gets in the way of picking out the bones, and the bones do get into the gravy too. There are preparations where the fish is first boned and the flesh made into fish paste. In more leisurely times, the very bony wolf herring was the fish of choice for making Penang laksa gravy because of its superior umami. Like for Nonya Sambal Lengkong, the fish had to be steamed first and then laboriously boned before the flaked fish was added to a fragrant spicy gravy. Keeping in mind the issue of bones, most fish that can be steamed or grilled can also be curried or made into a fish soup. However, I would

not curry fish like salmon or cod. That would really be a waste of already very flavourful fish.

South East Asian fishmongers sell numerous types of fish, especially small-medium size ones that are uncommon in colder climates. Just take a look at this website <http://www.talkaboutfish.com/sea-fish-species>. What a particular community considers a good eating fish depends on supply, familiarity and cooking preferences. Where once proximity to the sea and coastlines gave rise to the types of fish appearing in the markets, today freezing and refrigerated transportation ensure the supply. Thus, wet markets in Singapore have cod and salmon even though neither fish come from tropical waters. Because carriage is expensive, it's usually the more expensive fish that make it to markets at a distance from the fishermen. However, in an urban market like Singapore where the demand for all types of seafood is strong, the perennial favourites even when cheap do make it to local markets occasionally. Among the perennial tasty favourites are the small fish such as *ikan kuning*, *ikan kembong* (a type of mackerel) and leatherjackets all stripped and ready for the pot. While pricing is an indication of demand, it is not always a good indicator of flavour and some of these cheaper fish are very tasty. The recipes for fish in this book do not state the type of fish but rather whether it should be firm-fleshed or not, boneless or otherwise, whole or steaks. In the end, of course, you can make fish curry, soup or whatever with whatever fish you like or can get. Try out the recipes to arrive at combinations that work for you.

There is also a huge variety of shellfish, particularly molluscs that come in a variety of shapes, sizes, textures and flavours. Oysters are tender even when overcooked while abalone is chewy and almost rubbery but whose fantastic umami more than makes up for the chewiness. Fresh is best when it comes to certain molluscs such as clams and oysters which are sold live at a premium even far inland.

Clams and oysters when sold live, keep well under refrigeration for several days. (I have kept them alive for as long as a week in the chiller compartment.) Many of the seafoods freeze well: raw fish, squid, prawns and shrimps but crabs and lobsters must be cooked first, after which the shelled meat may be frozen. Because of refrigerated transport costs, live molluscs are much more expensive the further inland they go. Along the coasts and especially where they are being cultured, even oysters are cheap. In Miyajima, an island off the coast of Hiroshima in Japan, oysters are street food because the oyster beds around the island supply Japan with the bulk of its oysters. (The *ryokan* dinner I once had there had oyster in every dish!) Clams and mussels when cooked may be frozen and also keep well. Think frozen clam chowder.

This book refers to shrimps and to prawns. Shrimps are those no bigger than your littlest finger, while prawns are anything larger. Although often used interchangeably, shrimps and prawns are actually variant species of decapod crustaceans: prawns are in the sub-order *Dendrobranchiata* while shrimps are in the sub-order *Pleocyemata*, with the latter generally being smaller than the former. In the US, shrimps refer to prawns. There are different types of prawns and some are wild-caught, others cultivated. Some species have very firm almost crunchy textures (rather like lobster meat); others are tender yet firm. All should have good umami if fresh, and the meat should never be mushy or smell unpleasant as these are sure signs that the prawns are off. There are images online of the different types of shrimps and prawns with notes on flavour and texture as well. Generally, prawns freeze well, even defrosted prawns. However, you can tell if they have been refrozen several times by the amount of liquid they exude during cooking and by the texture which may turn out somewhat mushy. Commercially flash-frozen raw prawns in mainstream supermarkets are as good as fresh and are better than defrosted prawns in Asian stores.

PREPARING AND COOKING SEAFOOD
Choosing and Selecting Fish

Fresh is best when it comes to seafood. When shopping at supermarkets, look at the expiry dates. Where there are “chilled” cuts of fish, use your nose and your finger. Fish should not smell “fishy” but should have a clean sea smell. Sniff the fish through the plastic wrap and press the flesh with a finger. It should feel firm. The flesh should be shiny and clear although this is hard to check in supermarkets when the fish steak is wrapped in shiny plastic!

If buying whole fish, look at the eyes. They should look bright and gleaming and not be discoloured or milky. Do the finger test. The flesh should feel firm and your finger should not leave a dent in the flesh. In a wet market, lift the gill flaps to look at the colour of the gills. The brighter and less slimy-looking it is, the fresher it is. The last test is the smell. It should smell pleasantly of fish.

Cleaning Whole Fish

1. Have ready a couple of tablespoons of salt, preferably coarse salt, near the sink.
2. (Picture A) Start by trimming off the fins: dorsal, pelvic, anal and pectoral. Cut close to the body. Shorten the tail fin.
3. (Picture B) Lift the gill flaps and cut the bit that keeps the stomach attached to the head.
4. (Picture C) Cut the stomach open. Pull out the gills and stomach contents. Rub the inside of the stomach with some salt to remove the stomach lining. If not properly cleaned, the meat here can be slightly bitter. Rinse clean.
5. (Not shown) Using a fish scaler, scrape off the scales starting from the tail and moving up towards the head. Very fresh fish can be hard to scale.
6. (Picture D) Scoring the fish along the thickest parts helps to even out the cooking time.

7. Salt the fish before storing (either wrapped in a plastic bag or marinated for cooking) in the chiller compartment of the refrigerator.



Cleaning Fish Steaks and Fillets

Fish steaks require little cleaning but are usually sold with skin attached and may have bits of fins still attached. Trim off with kitchen scissors. Some fish fillets such as salmon come with skin and may still have some scales attached. Rub the back of a small knife or fish scaler against the skin to remove any scales. Scales tend to be left near the dorsal, pelvic, tail and head sections. Rinse clean and salt the fish before wrapping and storing in the chiller compartment.

Stuffing Whole Fish

1. Remove the gills and stomach contents via the gill flaps without cutting into the stomach. Rub the stomach generously with salt to clean it well.
2. Using a filleting knife, make a slit along the dorsal fin side of the fish (opposite the stomach) just above the backbone. Cut the slit right through to the now empty stomach area.
3. Turn the fish over and repeat on the other side, just above the backbone. The fish now has two cavities that open into the stomach cavity. Stuff both sides of the fish and the stomach cavity with the prepared stuffing (page 71).

Stuffing Fish Steaks

- 1. If fish steaks have a bone in the centre, make slits on either side of the bone and stuff the slits.
- 2. If the fish steaks have no bone in the centre, make a slit on one side of the fish taking care not to cut through the other side. Stuff the slits.
- 3. Obviously you can't put a lot of stuffing into slits. So spread some on the fish before baking or grilling.

Filleting Fish

To fillet fish, you need a filleting knife. This is a knife with a long thin blade. If you do not have a filleting knife, make sure that your knife is very sharp and that it has a point for inserting into the fish.

- 1. Ensure that the fish has been properly scaled.
- 2. Insert the tip of your knife into the flesh of the fish either nearest the tail or under the head as near to the backbone as you can.
- 3. With your knife pressed against the backbone, cut out the fillet cleanly. Take care not to shred the flesh with multiple cuts. (Save the fish scraps for making fish stock after filleting.)

Choosing and Cleaning Shellfish

In Singapore wet markets, clams, snails and smallish mussels are sold by weight and large mussels are sometimes sold by the piece. If you are allowed to pick and choose, select fairly equal sizes for presentation and even cooking. Before shellfish is cooked, they must be rinsed thoroughly in several changes of water and even brushed hard depending on the shellfish. Discard the ones that don't stay shut when you have rinsed them as well as those that don't open up when cooked. In both cases, those clams are already dead.

Cleaning Clams

Unless your fishmonger tells you that his clams are grit-free, you will need to de-sand clams. To do this,

rinse the clams clean, then pop them into a pot of boiling water. Cover the pot and return the water to the boil. As soon as the clams start opening up, turn off the heat. Swish the clams in the hot water and stop further cooking by removing the clams from the hot water. Any unopened clams may either be duds or not yet properly cooked. Return the unopened clams to the pot of hot water and bring the water back to the boil. Any clams that still don't open up are duds. Discard.

Leave what is now clam juice for at least 10 minutes to allow any grit to sink to the bottom of the pot. Carefully scoop out the top 90 per cent of the clam juice, leaving the sand at the bottom. Take care not to stir up the sand. Use the clam juice as part of the cooking liquid in place of water or stock. Or save it for a seafood soup or sauce. The clams are now cooked, so simply stir them into the prepared dish in the last minute or two of cooking.

Cleaning Mussels

Unlike clams, mussels have "beards" and even barnacles on their shell. The beard is easily pulled off and the barnacles may be scraped off or knocked off with a blunt knife. Brush and rinse clean. Mussels are sometimes sold with the beards already pulled out.

Handling and Choosing Crabs

Live crabs usually come with their claws tied up but do handle them with care as those claws are strong and getting pinched is very painful. Be aware that those claws can still pinch hard when the crab is supposedly dead. Remove the strings or rubber bands only when you are sure the crab is dead. In Singapore, mud crabs (the blackish variety with orange-tipped claws) are usually sold live. Flower crabs, also called blue crabs (the spotted ones) are never sold live because they do not survive for long out of the sea. (More on preparing flower crabs on page 13.)

Female crabs have a rounder abdominal apron (Picture A, left), compared to the more arrow head-

shaped apron of male crabs. Whether male or female, dead or alive, select crabs by weight. Heavier crabs have more meat. If going for the roe (and it is the season for egg-laying), pick female crabs.

Cleaning Live Crabs

- 1. Flip the crab over using a pair of tongs to reveal the abdominal apron. Insert the point of a sharp knife between the eyes and into the shell area below the eyes. Push the knife towards the centre of the apron. Leave the knife there till the crab stops wriggling. If you have hit the right spot, it will die fairly quickly. An alternative to stabbing the crabs is to stick them in the freezer for 30-40 minutes so that they die of cold. Do not over-freeze or the texture of the crabmeat will be affected.
- 2. Holding the crab with the tongs, brush the crab under running water. Scrub the legs and joints well. Take care not to prick yourself on the crab because crabs can carry bacteria and such pricks can become infected.
- 3. Picture A (crab on the left) shows the abdominal apron lifted up. Pull the apron and the carapace (upper shell) away from the body of the crab.
- 4. Picture B shows the carapace pulled out from the body, exposing the gills, the crab roe (the orange-coloured bits) and the tomalley (the greenish-yellow bits). Pull off the gills and brush the underneath clean of any dirt. There is more roe inside the carapace on either side of the eyes. Scrape the roe out with a small teaspoon.
- 5. Picture C shows the crab cleaned of the gills, revealing more of the roe.
- 6. Picture D shows the crab halved and the claws cracked. The roe and tomalley sometimes drop out during cleaning of the gill area. Keep the roe and tomalley for adding to the sauce.



Note on Tomalley

Both crabs and lobsters, whether male or female, have the greenish-yellowish tomalley in the middle. In lobsters, the tomalley is in the head. Crab tomalley is sometimes called crab fat, and lobster tomalley is called lobster liver or lobster fat. It is not waste matter which is easily distinguished by its black colour. In fact, most crabs don't seem to have waste matter in them. Tomalley is considered a delicacy although not everyone likes the slightly bitter flavour. It is creamy and makes a good addition to enrich the flavour of the sauce. When cleaning crab or lobster, remove the tomalley with a teaspoon and set aside with the roe for adding to the sauce during cooking. If the crab or lobster has been steamed, the tomalley may be scooped out and enjoyed right off or kept for flavouring another seafood dish. Cook the tomalley well and eat in moderation. Any toxins and pollutants in the crabs' habitat will accumulate in the tomalley.

Preparing Flower Crabs

Flower crabs (page 22) are never alive at the market or supermarket. As such, these pretty crabs with needle-sharp spikes should be steamed as soon as you get them back because the texture of the meat deteriorates fairly quickly to become soft and mushy. Keeping uncooked crabs in the refrigerator does not help to prevent the deterioration. (This also explains why live crabs should not be allowed

to die until just before you are ready to cook them. If you must store live crabs for a day or two and are not certain that they won't die on you – apparently crabs will die if stung in the eye by a mosquito – it is best to kill the crabs and steam them straightaway even if you plan to make chilli crabs out of them. The meat will stay in better shape than if the crabs died accidentally.)

Once steamed and cooked through, store in their shells. When ready to prepare your dish, treat as for live crabs and follow steps 3–6 under Cleaning Live Crabs (page 13).

Preparing Lobsters and Crayfish

Depending on where you get them, lobsters may be sold live, raw or cooked, complete with heads or just as tails where the bulk of the meat is. In Singapore, lobsters may be bought online and from seafood wholesalers. The typical lobsters sold in Singapore wet markets are the blue-coloured spiny lobsters (Fresh Seafood Glossary, page 153), and these are not sold live. However, seafood restaurants do keep their spiny lobsters alive in aerated tanks. Seafood wholesalers in Singapore source their seafood from around the world and will sell live lobsters. Unless you are serving lobster sashimi, lobsters are normally boiled and the meat shelled and cut up for the dish.

Unlike crabs, lobsters do not have to be scrubbed clean. A quick rinse will do. This is because lobsters are never muddy. The same goes for crayfish or crawfish, a freshwater relative of the lobster, which is also never muddy. Crayfish from wet markets are usually not sold live. Unlike crabs, the texture of lobster or crayfish meat does not deteriorate with storage. Lobsters and crayfish have the same body structure so the shelling process is similar.

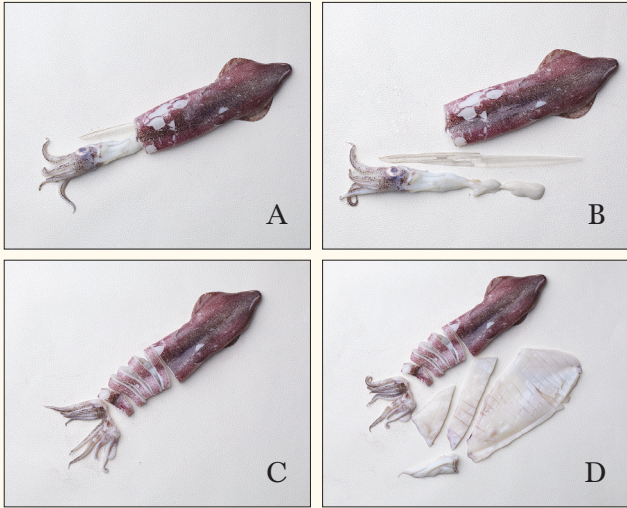
1. To shell lobster or crayfish, assuming it has been boiled, the first step is to remove the head. Holding the body firmly with one hand and the head with the other hand, twist the head off.

2. Split the head in half with kitchen scissors or a cleaver, scoop out the tomalley and keep it separate from the meat. (See Note on Tomalley, page 13). In a large lobster of at least 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz), the head itself will have a fair amount of meat as well as tomalley.
3. If the lobster is small, it may be halved with kitchen scissors as lobster shell is soft enough to be easily cut with scissors. Add lobster halves in their shell to the dish. (See image on cover.)
4. If the lobster is large and the meat is to be cut into medallions, cut the soft shell on the underside, then push the meat out through the cut.
5. If dealing with large Maine lobsters, the claws and swimmers (those little legs on the body of the lobster) have a lot of meat. Extract the meat with the help of seafood scissors which are long and thin with a kind of fork at one end to push out the meat. Otherwise, improvise with kitchen scissors.
6. Shelled lobster meat keeps well for at least a month in deep-freeze. Although the texture of lobster meat is firm and more like that of prawn than crabmeat, it can be cut up and substituted for crabmeat, for example, to make lobster cakes, lobster salad, lobster otak-otak or lobster omelette.

Cleaning Squid

Squid has an internal beak that is not edible and neither are the eyes or that little round “marble” between the eyes. Depending on the preparation and the cook, the ink sac may or may not have a use. The ink turns the dish black and imparts a faintly iodine flavour to the dish. Squid is covered with a thin mottled pink membrane which can be tough in a large squid. It may be pulled off during cleaning and discarded. Some cooks leave it alone though.

1. Picture A: Insert a finger into the tube and pull out the whole head together with the innards and the thin, clear plastic-like cartilage. Discard.
2. Picture B: Using a sharp knife, cut away the eye and ink sac. Discard the beak and the hard bead under the eyes. If the ink is wanted, take care not to break the ink sac. If the ink is not wanted and the sac breaks, rinse the ink off.
3. Picture C: Cut into rings. The longer tentacles may be halved. The pinkish membrane covering the body is easily pulled off if you want white squid rings.
4. Picture D: An alternative method is to split open the squid, score the flesh with a sharp knife in a criss-cross pattern, then cut into strips.

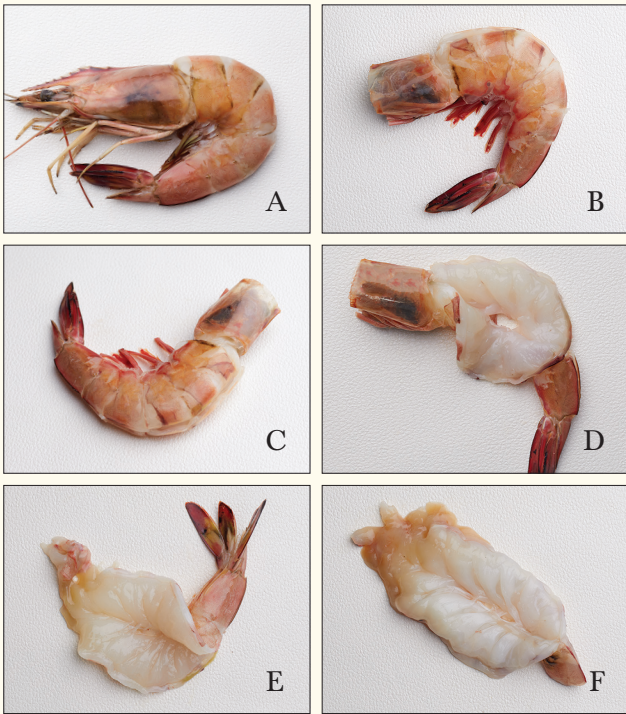


Cleaning Prawns

The part that most cooks take the trouble to clean out is the dirt track that runs from the head to the tail. This dirt track can be gritty to the bite and is best removed while the prawn is raw, a process called deveining. Some cooks stick the sharp point of a toothpick into the shell at the top of the prawn where the dirt track is and pull the dirt track out. However, it is a fiddly method as the dirt track can break. I prefer to use a small sharp knife to cut into

the shell to pull out the dirt track. If preferred, the prawn can be butterflied. This also allows the meat to be better seasoned.

- Picture A: Whole prawn.
- Picture B: Prawn with whiskers and sharp tips at the head cut off.
- Picture C: The dirt track taken out by cutting into the shell. Note the bit of dirt track near the tail in Picture D.
- Picture D: Prawn shelled with head and tail on.
- Picture E: Prawn shelled with only tail on.
- Picture F: Shelled prawn. Butterflied completely.



Note

- Keeping the shells on the prawns makes for juicier prawns.
- Leaving the tail on shelled prawns is an attractive presentation and also turns it into finger food. People instinctively pick up prawn fritters by the tail!
- Do not discard the shells and heads of prawns. Boil them in water to make prawn stock. Pour the cooled stock into an ice cube tray to freeze. Use the cubes as needed to flavour soups and stir-fries.

Cleaning Dried Seafood

Dried seafood must be cleaned to get rid of dust and grit, unwanted bits of shell or scales, and to reduce the salt content. With some dried seafood, soaking till soft is necessary so that it can be cut up or minced. What you have to do depends on the seafood and what you are going to do with it.

- When you want to clean small fish such as dried whitebait (silver fish), rinse the fish in a sieve and keep shaking the sieve under running water. Pat dry with paper towels and dry in the microwave oven before frying. Dried whitebait is usually fried till crispy so they are never soaked.
- Dried shrimps often have bits of shell. Soften the shrimps by soaking in water, then pick through to discard the bits of shell. Soaking reduces the saltiness but they should never be soaked until the flavour is bland. Soaking for 10–15 minutes should be sufficient.
- Salted fish needs to be soaked too, to reduce the salt content. For salted fish with skin, check that the fish has been scaled. Pat dry with paper towels and microwave for 1 minute wrapped in several layers of paper towels to absorb the moisture. Once softened, salted fish may also be thinly sliced for quick frying. Some types of salted fish will turn crispy if fried in thin slices.

- Dried seafood such as scallops, abalone or conch strips (Dried Seafood Glossary, page 151) need to be rinsed clean and softened in cold water. The soaking water should not be discarded but used in the stewing liquid. The softened seafood is then cut into smaller pieces for stewing. These very chewy seafood usually requires long stewing.

- Sea cucumber needs soaking till soft enough to cut into pieces – squares or rings depending on the size of the sea cucumber. The cut sea cucumber is then stewed with seasoning like ginger, garlic and soy sauces till soft and gelatinous.

- Dried seaweed usually requires rinsing before blanching unless it comes out of a sanitised packet. Some types of dried seaweed need soaking, not all. It also depends on what you are doing with it. For instance, in seaweed soup, the dried seaweed can be put straight into the stock after rinsing.

Note on the Recipes

- Where substitutions or mixing of seafoods would make another tasty dish or suit personal preferences better, they are indicated in the recipes. Look for the appropriate icons at the start of the recipes.
- When substituting fish, go with the final cooked texture as well as the amount of bones. Raw fish all have the same texture but this changes after cooking. Cooked fish texture can range from soft (white pomfret, sole and tilapia), firmish but flaky (black pomfret, toman and some types of catfish), sort of soft and layered (cod and threadfin), firm and flaky (tuna and mackerel), to firm and layered (tenggiri, tuna).
- The flavour of fish varies from mild (sole, pomfret and threadfin) to medium (cod) to strong (salmon). The flavour is not related

to the texture or size of the fish. Fish with mild flavours can be cooked any number of ways. Fish with stronger flavours need preparations that enhance the flavour.

- The recipes in this book recommend the type of fish to be used by the texture rather than by name although names do crop up and fish traditionally used in certain recipes have been named.
- Names for fish vary tremendously and, as few of us connect with scientific names, I have used them sparingly. More often, I have opted for common local names that are familiar to many Singaporeans and Malaysians.
- The shell is the only part of prawns that matter when making substitutions. Only thin-shelled shrimps and prawns should be used in recipes where the shells and heads are eaten, never the hard-shelled prawns.
- Serving portions in Asian meals differ from those in Western-style meals. The quantities suggested in these recipes are intended as part of a communal or family meal for four, with at least one other side dish of vegetables and with steamed rice or bread as the staple. Where it is a one-dish preparation such as a pilaf or noodle dish, the servings can be enlarged by adding a salad, soup or a snack-like dish such as fritters.
- There are numerous seafood classics in Asian cooking that do not appear in this cookbook because I did not want to repeat myself. Those seafood classics are to be found in my earlier cookbooks: *Asian Noodles*, *Classic Asian Salads*, *Asian Soups*, *Stews and Curries*, and *Classic Asian Rice*.



view Only Steamed and Boiled

Steaming and boiling are two of the oldest cooking methods and perfect for seafood. Boiling just calls for fire and a pot of water, and the water can even be what you scooped up from the sea. If you want to try that, be sure to dilute the seawater (say, one part sea water to three parts fresh water) or your food will turn out over-salted. (Lobsters bought online sometimes arrive with a packet of sea salt!) Simply bring the pot of water to the boil and drop in the seafood. If boiling lobster or crab, the pot must be large enough to contain the seafood properly. Steaming, on the other hand, requires raising the seafood above the boiling water. Improve with a low wire rack at the bottom of a wok with a dome lid. Our ancestors simply resorted to stones or pieces of heavy wood, even aromatic wood, in a pot of boiling water. The seafood went on top of the stones. Once at a beach camp, I tried this primitive stones-in-boiling-water method to steam something. It worked. If doing this, take care that the stones or wood have no toxic substances. Keep the boil slow and add more water if needed. Telling when seafood is cooked is easy. Crustaceans change colour, bivalves pop open, and fish turns opaque. If the fish is thick, stick a fork into its thickest part. If the fork slides in easily, the fish is done.

Boiling and steaming yields different results. Unlike steaming, boiling dilutes the juices into the water,

giving you stock. Curries, soups and stews are preparations where you want these juices in the water. Boiled seafood is anything but plain when you include fragrant spices and aromatic roots to give you a curry or sambal, as is done in South and South East Asia. Such boiled dishes are just right for the various Asian meal cultures where a staple like steamed rice or a type of bread is eaten with side dishes. Sometimes, these soups, stews and curries are all-in-one preparations that include vegetables and even the carbohydrates such as in rice soups and porridges. Root herbs such as lemongrass and galangal, shallots and garlic are not just flavourings but also thickeners.

A characteristic of seafood soups, stews and curries is the tang from a souring agent, lifting the flavour of the seafood. In South and South East Asia, this souring agent is usually tamarind juice, lime juice or vinegar. In East Asia, the souring agents could be sour plums or fermented vegetables such as kimchi and kimchi juice.

In West Asia, lemon juice is more common, as is yoghurt. Apart from souring agents, seafood flavours are greatly enhanced by the addition of chillies, fresh and dried, and in the case of Japanese food by wasabi. This section starts with simple steamed prawns and crabs and what to do with them.

Steamed Mussels Thai-style

For Review Only

This dish makes a great freshly-cooked starter even for a large crowd. It can be prepared ahead of time ready for steaming in minutes. If you steam in a Chinese bamboo steamer, the mussels may be served straight out of the steamer. After cleaning, the mussels can either be pried apart and the dressing spooned into the half-shell ready for steaming or the mussels first steamed lightly to open them up, and the dressing then spooned over the mussels. The dressing is more than enough for 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) of mussels. Combine the leftover dressing with another egg or two, add some chopped prawns or fish and steam or bake to get Thai-style *otak-otak*.

3 kaffir lime leaves, crushed
2 Tbsp coconut cream
1½ Tbsp fish sauce
2 eggs, beaten
A few basil leaves, finely shredded
800 g (1¾ lb) mussels, cleaned
Coriander (cilantro) leaves

SPICE PASTE

25 g (1 oz) shallots, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
4 slices lemongrass
1 Tbsp dried red chilli paste (page 20)
½ tsp shrimp paste (*belacan*)
2 coriander (cilantro) roots
60 ml (2 fl oz / ¼ cup) water
2 Tbsp vegetable oil

1. Prepare the spice paste. If pounding all the ingredients together, omit the water and pound till smooth. If blending all the ingredients together in a food processor, include water and process till smooth.
2. Pour the ground spice paste into a small pot and bring to the boil. Add the crushed kaffir lime leaves and simmer till the oil rises to the top. Stir in the coconut cream and fish sauce and simmer gently till the sauce thickens. Turn off heat. Discard the kaffir lime leaves. Set the spice paste aside to cool.
3. Take 4 Tbsp of the cooked and cooled spice paste and combine with the beaten eggs. Stir in the basil.
4. Prise mussels open and discard the empty half-shell. Place opened mussels in a steamer and spoon some dressing on top of each mussel. Steam for 1–2 minutes or till dressing is firm.
5. Garnish with coriander leaves. Serve immediately with steamed rice or as it is.



For Review Only Grilled and Baked

Many homes today have the convenience of a grill feature in ovens or stoves. Even microwave ovens can come with grill and bake features. If you do not have a grill, improvise. A flat heat distributor such as a cast iron Indian chatty pan or *tawa* (the kind that the *roti prata* man uses) over the gas jets works. Or even on an induction plate. If you are grilling something large or thick, cover the *tawa* with a domed lid to keep the heat in. A wire rack just above the *tawa* is optional but never just a wire rack over the gas jets. This particular improvisation creates a messy cleaning job from burnt seafood juices and burnt leaves, if leaves are used as wrappings.

In South East Asia where banana trees are everywhere, food for grilling is often wrapped in banana leaves. Today such leaves are frozen and exported to Asian supermarkets in countries where banana trees are uncommon. A South East Asian seafood classic that comes wrapped in banana or coconut leaves is spiced fish paste that may be baked, grilled or steamed.

Failing a supply of suitable leaves, there is always aluminium foil although leaves impart a flavour that foil does not have. The only nuisance with leaves or foil as a wrapping is that you can't tell whether the food is done without unwrapping. If the banana leaves are burnt and crispy, don't bother re-wrapping for more cooking time. Just place it in the microwave oven for a minute or two to finish cooking.

While grilling requires minimal equipment, baking calls for an oven. In West Asia, where the daily fare is freshly baked pita bread eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner, the neighbourhood ovens are on all day

long and it is not unusual for the neighbourhood baker to be asked to bake his neighbour's family dinner for them. (I saw this in Aleppo, Syria, before war descended on this beautiful ancient town.) With a good oven, baking and grilling are interchangeable although you should bake a rice dish rather than grill it. Baking cooks the rice better although it does dry out the seafood somewhat. Whether grilling or baking, check for doneness by the change of colour.

Banana Leaf Wrapping

Banana leaves are crunchy and tear easily unless first softened before it is used as a wrapper. If cutting a leaf from the banana tree in the backyard, the hard leaf stems must be cut away. Soften by blanching the leaves, a few pieces at a time, quickly in a pot of boiling water. Another method is to put the leaves in the sink and pour a large kettle of boiling water over the leaves. A third way is to hold pieces of leaf briefly over a gas flame to wither them but take care not to burn the leaves. Once softened, the leaves must always be wiped clean with damp paper towels before using them as wrappers.

To wrap fish for grilling, spread open a couple of layers of banana leaf and roll up the seafood in it. Fasten the open ends with toothpicks. If the food is fairly liquid, have the leaf in a large bowl, put in a spoonful or two of the soft seafood mixture, then lift up the two ends and fold inwards to form a neat bundle. Skewer the ends together with a sharp toothpick or bamboo skewer.

Grilled Fish in Banana Leaf

While any kind of fish, with or without scales, may be grilled and served with this delicious *sambal belacan* sauce, my all-time favourite grilled fish is *ikan terubok* (*Toli* shad, *lupea toli*) also known as Chinese herring or sablefish among other regional names. *Ikan terubok* is an oily fish with tender, very flavourful flesh and many bones. The fish used to come more than 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) in weight, and so it would be sold in halves. Sadly, this once-cheap fish is no longer cheap, now rarely seen in Singapore wet markets, and even when seen are smaller and no longer sold in halves. (It is apparently going to China where gourmands pay top dollar for it.) As luck would have it, a fishmonger in Singapore's Tekka Market was able to get me one for the photo shoot (Fresh Seafood Glossary, page 152). If the fish for grilling has large thick scales like *ikan terubok*, grill with its scales on to keep the flesh moist. Once cooked, the thick scales are very easily lifted off the fish. If the fish has been scaled, slash the thickest parts to even out the grilling time and prevent drying out of the thinner sections.

600–800 g (1 lb 5¹/₃ oz–1³/₄ lb)
Toli shad (*ikan terubok*), with scales

1 banana leaf for wrapping
(page 61)

CONDIMENT

Sambal belacan with shallots and dark soy sauce (page 18)

1. Wrap the fish in several layers of banana leaf and grill at 190°C (375°F) for about 40 minutes, 20 minutes on each side. The time depends on the thickness of the fish.
2. Unwrap, and using the tip of a blunt knife, ease the scales away from the flesh.
3. Serve hot with rice and the *sambal belacan* condiment.



For Review Only Fried

Seafood is unique and expensive enough that it easily becomes festive food in many cultures. Interestingly, these treats are often fried or deep-fried and comfort food in many parts of South East Asia is fried fish with a spicy condiment such as *sambal belacan* and lime juice eaten with hot steamed rice. Even without a condiment, lightly salted seafood fried in oil is so easy to prepare and yet has loads of intense flavour! The Japanese even make a meal of fried seafood at tempura restaurants. While some fried preparations here are ideal as cocktail food and snacks, all are equally tasty as side dishes with rice — especially when there is invariably a sauce or a condiment such as chilli sauce to spike up the fried seafood flavours. Because seafood in general should be cooked quickly, frying is an ideal cooking method. This could be shallow-frying in a pan with a centimetre or two of oil or deep-frying in a pot of oil. Fish in hot oil do spatter, some terribly (think salmon skin). So a spatter guard is a useful tool to reduce cleaning up and burns. Failing the availability of a splatter guard, always pat any seafood for frying, especially deep-frying, as dry as you can get it with paper towels to reduce hot oil platters and burns.

Whether shallow- or deep-frying, the oil should always be at the right temperature to form the crust quickly and, if deep-frying fritters, to prevent them from becoming oil-soaked. The simplest way to check if the temperature is right is to press the tips

of a pair of wooden chopsticks on the bottom of the pan or wok. If bubbles appear vigorously from the ends of the chopsticks, the oil is ready. Also, never lower the temperature of the oil by putting too much in and crowding the pan. Even when the oil is hot enough, do not turn fish until the crust has formed to prevent tender-fleshed fish from breaking up or from sticking to the pan if you are not using a non-stick pan.

While raw shrimps, fish, oysters and mussels may be mixed with other ingredients for frying up fritters, some fried seafood dishes need advance preparation: steamed crabs have to be shelled for crabmeat for crab cakes; and the fast way to get shelled clams is to lightly boil them so that they open up. Fried seafood need not just be eaten as a side dish or as a snack. Leftovers make delicious garnishing for noodle soups and toppings for salads. Re-crisp in an oven toaster.

Keeping Fritters Crisp

In humid environments such as Singapore's, deep-fried fritters turn limp very quickly as they cool. The easiest way to keep fritters crispy is to keep them warm in an oven turned on to 70°C (160°F). Grill cold leftovers at about 180°C (355°F) to crisp up leftovers or to brown them further if too pale. Small quantities may be toasted in an oven toaster.



Jaffna Devilled Prawns For Review Only

As in other parts of South and South East Asia, the word ‘devilled’ usually indicates a dish that is red in colour and spicy as well. Prawns may be substituted with fish slices or squid rings.

2 Tbsp vegetable oil

100 g (3½ oz) onion, sliced into rings

½ thumb-size piece ginger, finely shredded

1 Tbsp dried red chilli paste (page 20)/2 tsp red chilli powder

200 g (7 oz) tomatoes, cut into cubes

¾ tsp salt

2 tsp sugar

1 Tbsp vinegar

600 g (1 lb 5⅓ oz) prawns, shelled and deveined, with or without tails

1 green chilli, seeded and sliced into strips

2 sprigs curry leaves, crushed

1. Heat oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Fry the onion rings and ginger till the onion begins to soften. Add dried red chilli paste or chilli powder, stir well, then add tomatoes, salt, sugar and vinegar.
2. When tomato is soft, add the prawns, half the sliced green chilli and crushed curry leaves, and stir-fry till prawns change colour and are cooked. Stir in the remaining sliced green chilli.
3. Serve with steamed rice.



For Review Only Stir-fried

Stir-frying calls for a wok, a spatula and the minimum of oil. Stir-fried seafood, whether consisting of just one kind or a mix, often have vegetables, aromatic roots and herbs in them. As typical of most stir-fried dishes, the seafood and vegetables are usually cut up into fairly equal sizes so that the ingredients cook evenly. An essential step in stir-frying is timing the addition of ingredients to the wok so that all ingredients are cooked to the right textures and add their flavours to the finished dish. Often there is some water or stock added to bring together all the flavours in a light sauce that coats the bits and pieces, making the dish perfect for eating with rice. Stir-frying is quick cooking and is ideal for preparing seafood which is usually cooked quickly to retain its juiciness, tenderness and flavour. This, of course, does not apply to dried seafood such as dried shrimps where what you may want is crispness such as Crispy Ikan Bilis with Peanuts. In some cases, the slow stir-frying is paradoxically to dry out the seafood, as in Nonya Sambal Lengkong or the Spicy Dried Shrimp Sandwich Filling.

Looking at some of the recipes here, you might want to debate their placement in this section of stir-fries. For instance, why is Crispy Ikan Bilis with Peanuts or Crabmeat Omelette here and not in the Fried section? Crispy Ikan Bilis requires slow stir-frying while Crabmeat Omelette is made with ingredients that must be stir-fried first and

cooked to the right texture before the omelette can be made. To confuse matters a little more, to get the crabmeat for the omelette, you have to steam the crabs first! So, some of the recipes here, as elsewhere, do incorporate a mix of cooking methods: for example, you cannot make rice porridge without first boiling the rice. Having said all that, all the recipes do have the element of constantly turning over the food in the wok that characterises stir-frying. Thus, stir-frying requires space for turning over the ingredients and nothing beats a wok for stir-frying. What also characterises the recipes in this section is that all the ingredients for the dish must be cleaned, chopped, sliced, cut or whatever ahead and be ready at hand so that each ingredient is added at the right time. So the first rule in stir-frying is assembling the ingredients. Once you turn on the heat, there is no time to cut and slice as stir-frying is rapid cooking. The second is that the stir-frying should never be left to look after itself. If you really must step away from the stove even for a minute or two, turn off the heat. Stir-frying uses high heat, unless it is slow stir-frying to dry out the seafood as for Nonya Sambal Lengkong.

A note here on stir-frying shellfish in a non-stick wok: the shells are tough enough to scratch the surface of non-stick pans. So you might want to invest in a cast-iron or stainless steel wok for stir-frying clams and other shellfish?



Clams in Garlic and Ginger Sauce



For Review Only

This is another easy stir-fried dish with a superior flavour compared to the minimal effort needed to make the dish. Stir in some softened and steamed rice noodles and you get a very tasty one-dish meal. The clams can also be substituted with prawns, squid or fish slices. When cooking clams, do a taste test before adding soy sauce or salt as clams can be naturally salty.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) clams, de-sanded (page 12)

125 ml (4 fl oz / ½ cup) clam juice

2 Tbsp vegetable oil

6 thin slices ginger, finely shredded

3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 fresh red chilli, seeded and cut into strips (optional)

½ Tbsp fermented soybeans (*taucheo*), mashed

1 tsp–½ Tbsp light soy sauce + more as needed

A large bunch of chopped spring onions (scallions)

A large bunch of chopped coriander (cilantro)

1. After de-sanding the clams, set aside clam juice to make the sauce.
2. Heat oil in a wok over medium heat. Stir-fry the ginger, garlic, chilli strips and mashed *taucheo* till fragrant.
3. Stir in clams, light soy sauce and clam juice and bring to the boil. Adjust seasoning to taste with light soy sauce. Lastly, stir in chopped spring onions and coriander.
4. Serve clams hot as is or with steamed rice.

