

For Review Only

CHEN KENTARO

A DASH OF SZECHWAN



A Dash of Szechwan is a collection of more than 50 signature recipes from Chen Kentaro. Born to a family of celebrated chefs, he is the Executive Chef of *Shisen Hanten* by *Chen Kentaro*, which launched in Singapore in 2014. Since then, his restaurant has become one of the most garlanded Chinese restaurants in Singapore, having been awarded two Michelin stars for three consecutive years from 2016 to 2018.

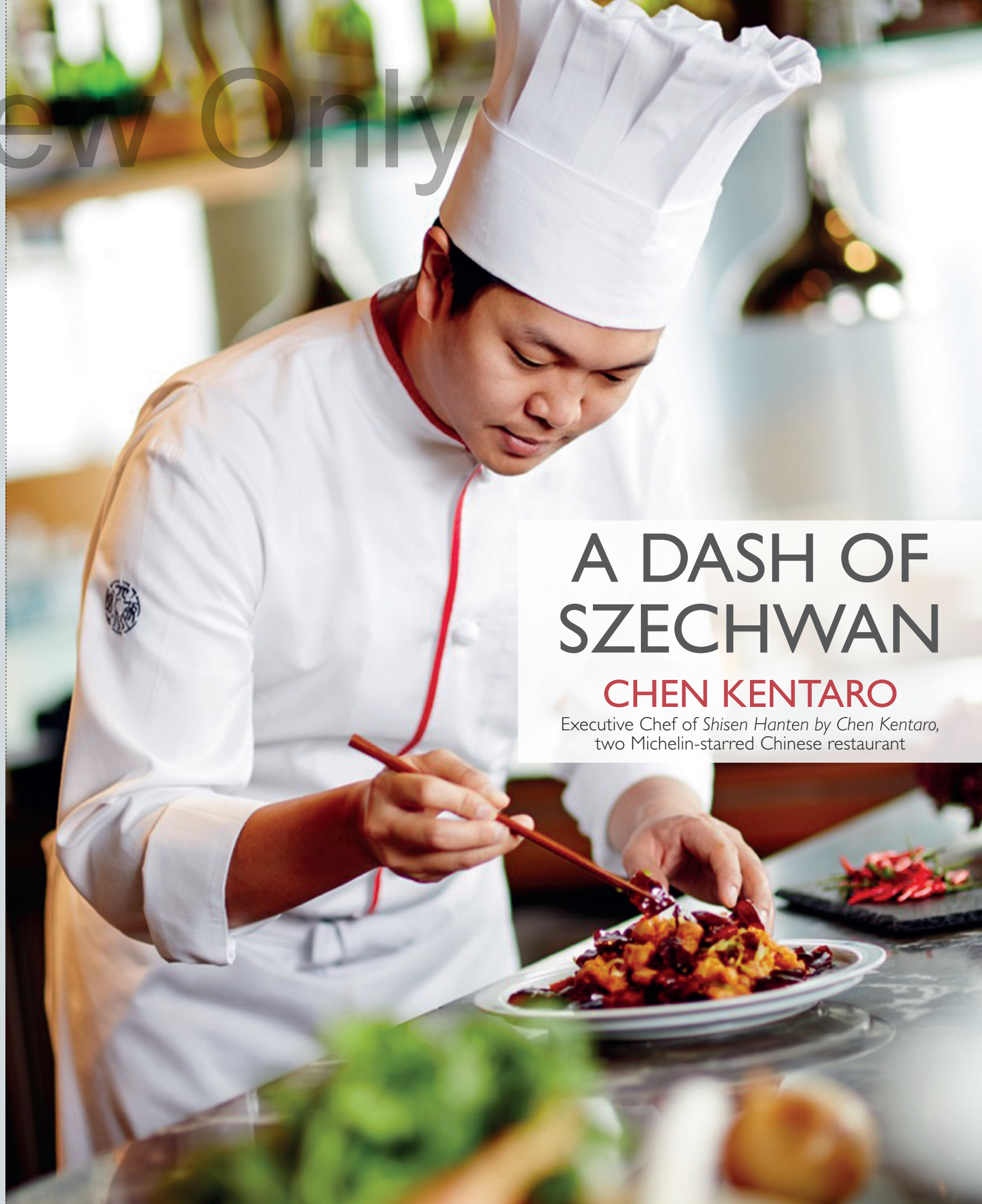
Szechwan cuisine is known for its bold, spicy and pungent flavours and Chef Kentaro has spent his life mastering the secrets and techniques of the cuisine. In this, his first and only cookbook in English, he showcases the very best of his beloved dishes and continues his family's passion for promoting a greater appreciation of Szechwan flavours, proving that creating award-winning food of the highest quality does not need to be complicated.

Discover dishes for all occasions, including hearty stocks, traditional Szechwan sauces, marinades and seasonings. Stunning food photography, step-by-step guides, chef notes and an illustrated glossary add further depth to the book, providing you with all you will need to replicate Chef Kentaro's signature style and bring the taste of fine dining home.

A DASH OF SZECHWAN

CHEN KENTARO

Executive Chef of *Shisen Hanten* by *Chen Kentaro*, two Michelin-starred Chinese restaurant



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Marshall Cavendish Cuisine

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BY CHEN KENTARO

 Marshall Cavendish
Cuisine

 四川飯店
SHISEN HANTEN
by CHEN KENTARO

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First edition published March 2018 (exclusively for Meritus International)

This second edition published September 2018

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Published on behalf of Meritus International by Marshall Cavendish Cuisine,
an imprint of Marshall Cavendish International (Asia)



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National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing in Publication Data

Name(s): Chen, Kentaro.

Title: A dash of Szechwan / by Chen Kentaro.

Description: Second edition. | Singapore : Marshall Cavendish Cuisine, 2018.

Identifier(s): OCN 1048617387 | ISBN 978-981-47-9482-4 (paperback)

Subject(s): LCSH: Cooking, Chinese--Sichuan style. | Cooking, Chinese.

Classification: DDC 641.595138--dc23

Photographer: Hongde Photography

Printed in Singapore

*I am blessed with extraordinary people in my life
whose guidance, encouragement, and support
enrich my journey beyond words:*

*my family,
who are my true inspiration
for all that I am and all that I do;*

*my amazing friends and colleagues,
at Shisen Hanten and
Mandarin Orchard Singapore;*

*Chef Yuki Sugaya,
who has had my back from the first day we met as
Shisen Hanten chefs in training all those years ago.*

*guests and diners,
who continue to embrace
Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro
with their esteemed patronage*

*—my immense love and gratitude to you all.
This book is for you.*

*My very special thanks to Shigeru Akashi and
Dr. Stephen Riady of OUE Limited,
and to each and every one
that helped make this book possible.*

*To Dad and Grandpa
—I can only hope I make you proud.*

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Foreword

Long before Chen Kentaro became the celebrated chef that he is, I first knew him as a young, bright-eyed boy who liked to follow his father around.

This was in the 1990s when Fuji Television's long-running cooking reality series, *Iron Chef*, was at the height of its popularity. On the show, I battled it out in the French cuisine category while Kentaro's father, Chen Kenichi, made his mark competing in the Chinese cuisine category.

Behind the scenes and beyond the fame, the show yielded for us, competing chefs, friendships that have endured over the years. It is through the bond Kenichi and I share that I have had a front row seat to his son's remarkable journey into becoming the culinary force that he is today.

Kentaro coming into his own is no mean feat. After all, he carries with him a legacy that was passed down by his father and his grandfather—both icons recognised for their contribution to the growth of Szechwan cuisine in Japan through the establishment of the Shisen Hanten chain.

While it stood to reason that Kentaro would choose to follow in the footsteps of his forebears, eyes were also on

him to step out from under their shadows. And so it was that a determined and charismatic Kentaro went about carving a niche for himself—and what a niche it is turning out to be! A Michelin-rated restaurant, no less, to add to the many feathers in his cap.

In the course of knowing him and working alongside each other on many occasions, I have come to admire the energy of his youth, the idealism of his dreams, and the heart behind the talent. I recognise Kentaro's thoughtful, affable personality as he celebrates his Szechwan lineage in the pages of this cookbook.

Most of the recipes start off with little personal stories, with stunning food photography and useful visuals that demonstrate the step-by-step preparation of more complex techniques. He carefully and very generously selected each of the recipes to share, no doubt in the hope of taking you through a discovery of the fascinating diversity of Szechwan cuisine.

More than a cookbook, this is a labour of love that is unmistakably Kentaro's.



Hiroyuki Sakai
March 2018

Chef Hiroyuki Sakai is the longest-reigning Iron Chef French. He was bestowed Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole by the French Republic in 2005, and in 2009 received the Gendai No Meikou, a prestigious national award honouring Japan's foremost artisans in various fields.

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Introduction

For as long as I can remember, I was surrounded by chefs in my family. Despite the gap between generations, food has always been the common thread that bound us. While some may say it was inevitable that I pursued the same career as my father and grandfather, it was a decision I made for myself very early on.

I knew for sure I would make it my mission to carry on the family legacy. To say that I looked up to them both is an understatement, because they personified in every way the kind of chef and mentor I aspired to be.

In my pursuit to specialise in Szechwan cuisine, I trained and worked in various Szechwan restaurants across Chengdu, the capital of China's Szechwan province. I am blessed to have had Szechwan master chefs, including my father, as mentors. Not only did they help me perfect my cooking techniques, but they also instilled in me the discipline and entrepreneurship I needed for the role I would eventually play at Shisen Hanten.



2014 marked a milestone for me and for the Shisen Hanten brand with the opening of Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro at the iconic Mandarin Orchard Singapore. I was feeling the pressure, so I had to keep reminding myself to focus on what I set out to do first and foremost—to promote a greater appreciation for Szechwan flavours among audiences in Singapore through my family's signature recipes.

Two years later, the restaurant was awarded two stars in the Michelin Guide Singapore 2016, and then again in 2017. No one was prouder than my father, and I could not have been happier to share the achievement with him and everyone who has been with me through every step.

In this, the first ever English translation of some of my recipes as well as time-honoured recipes of the Chen family, I take the opportunity to share with more people my love of Szechwan cooking. The book features 50 recipes, including Shisen Hanten signatures, across six categories. You will also find recipes for hearty stocks and traditional Szechwan sauces, marinades, and seasonings that you can use for a great variety of dishes.

I cannot wait for you to try your hand at these recipes and enjoy them with family and friends.



陳建太郎

Chen Kentaro

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APPETISERS & DIM SUM

15

蟹黄鹅肝汤

Foie Gras Chawanmushi with Crab Roe Soup

SERVES 4
PREPARATION TIME 30 minutes
COOKING TIME 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

FOIE GRAS CHAWANMUSHI

40 g foie gras
1 egg

SEASONING

200 ml chicken stock (page 139)
1 tsp Shaoxing rice wine
½ tsp oyster sauce
1 pinch salt
1 dash ground white pepper

CRAB ROE SOUP

1 tsp shallot oil
40 g crabmeat, shredded
10 g crab roe
20 g boiled bamboo shoot, finely sliced
30 g carrot, puréed
300 ml chicken stock (page 139)
100 ml pork stock (page 139)
1 pinch salt
1 dash ground white pepper
½ tsp sugar
1 tsp chicken seasoning powder
½ Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine
½ tsp Japanese soy sauce
1 tsp oyster sauce
2 Tbsp potato starch, mixed with a little water into a paste
1 tsp chicken oil (page 139)
1 tsp palm oil

Out of all my father's creations during his *Iron Chef* days, this dish stood out the most to me for its simplicity and bold flavours. When we were planning to open Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro in Singapore, I knew I had to include this dish on the menu. With a few tweaks, it quickly grew to become a signature in the restaurant.

METHOD

1. Prepare the foie gras *chawanmushi*. Combine the ingredients for the seasoning in a pot and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.
2. Place the foie gras, egg, and cooled seasoning into a food processor and blend well. Pass the egg mixture through a sieve and divide among 4 heatproof bowls.
3. Use a blow torch to remove any bubbles on the surface of the egg mixture, then cover the bowls with cling wrap.
4. Place the bowls in a steamer and steam for 8–10 minutes until the mixture is set.
5. Prepare the crab roe soup. Heat the shallot oil in a wok over medium heat. Lightly sauté all the remaining ingredients except for the potato starch paste, chicken oil, and palm oil. Bring the mixture to a simmer, then add the potato starch paste and stir to thicken the sauce. Add the chicken oil and palm oil and mix quickly.
6. Ladle the crab roe soup over the steamed foie gras *chawanmushi* and serve.



1. Use a blow torch to remove any bubbles on the surface of the egg mixture.
2. Place the bowls in a steamer and steam for 8–10 minutes until the mixture is set.
3. Ladle the crab roe soup over the steamed foie gras *chawanmushi*.

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1

Peel the eggplant and cut into 7–8-cm long sticks.



2

Roast the shishito peppers and green chillies in a dry pan.



3

Mince the roasted shishito peppers and green chillies.



4

Continue to mince until the mixture is pasty.

SERVES 3–4
PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes
COOKING TIME 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS

250 g Japanese eggplants
 70 g shishito peppers
 40 g green chillies
 2 century eggs, peeled
 1½ Tbsp peanut oil
 ½ tsp grated garlic

SEASONING

2 tsp Japanese soy sauce
 ½ tsp sugar
 ½ tsp oyster sauce
 2 tsp chicken seasoning powder
 ½ tsp Japanese rice vinegar
 ½ tsp sesame oil

Steamed Eggplant with Shishito Pepper and Green Chilli Paste

My version of the traditional green chilli paste incorporates shishito peppers and century eggs. While most people might find this combination unusual, I guarantee you will enjoy it once you've tried it.

METHOD

1. Peel the eggplants and cut into 7–8-cm long sticks. Place in a steamer and steam for 8 minutes. Set aside to cool.
2. In a dry pan over medium heat, roast the shishito peppers and green chillies until they are fragrant and slightly charred. Set aside to cool.
3. Mince the century eggs. Mince the roasted shishito peppers and green chillies.
4. Combine the minced century eggs with the minced shishito peppers and green chillies. Continue to mince until the mixture is pasty. Transfer to a bowl.
5. Heat the peanut oil over high heat until aromatic.
6. Add the heated peanut oil, grated garlic, and seasoning to the paste. Mix well.
7. Arrange the cooled eggplants on a serving plate and top with the paste. Serve.

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SOUPS, VEGETABLES & TOFU

41

连锅汤

Pork Belly and Daikon Soup

SERVES 8
PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes
COOKING TIME 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

600 ml chicken stock (page 139)
200 ml pork stock (page 139)
150 g pork belly
300 g daikon, cut into rectangular slices
4–5 red Szechwan peppercorns
2–3 Japanese leeks, white part
4–5 slices ginger, peeled
1 Tbsp sake
1 pinch salt
1 dash ground white pepper

SEASONING

1½ Tbsp chilli bean paste (*doubanjiang*)
2 Tbsp Japanese soy sauce
1½ Tbsp Japanese rice vinegar
1 Tbsp chicken stock (page 139)
1 Tbsp grated ginger
1 Tbsp sesame oil
1 Tbsp minced Japanese leek, white part

Contrary to popular belief, there are milder tasting soups in Szechwan cuisine beyond the classic hot and sour soup. Packed with nutrients and flavours, the pork belly and daikon soup is a simple yet remarkably tasty soup the whole family will enjoy.

METHOD

1. Combine both the stocks in a pot and bring to a boil. Add the pork, daikon, peppercorns, Japanese leek, and ginger, and boil for 20 minutes.
2. Remove the pork and cut into thin strips. Return the sliced pork to the pot. Season the stock with the sake, salt, and pepper.
3. Combine the ingredients for the seasoning in a bowl. Mix into the soup or serve on the side.



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SOUPS, VEGETABLES & TOFU

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四川酸辣汤

Szechwan Hot and Sour Soup

SERVES 3–4
PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes
COOKING TIME 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

15 g lean pork
10 g dried scallops, soaked to rehydrate
10 g dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked to rehydrate
5 g dried sea cucumber, soaked to rehydrate
5 g boiled bamboo shoot
20 g firm tofu
600 ml chicken stock (page 139)
5 g dried glass noodles, soaked to rehydrate
1 Tbsp sake
1 pinch salt
1½ Tbsp Japanese soy sauce
1 tsp ground white pepper
2 Tbsp potato starch, mixed with a little water into a paste
1 Tbsp beaten egg
1½ Tbsp Japanese rice vinegar
1 dash *lao you*

MARINADE

1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine
1 pinch salt
1 dash ground white pepper
1 dash Japanese soy sauce
1 Tbsp beaten egg
1 Tbsp potato starch
1 tsp cooking oil

Our adaptation of this classic Szechwan dish is more savoury from the use of Japanese soy sauce. You can opt for Chinese soy sauce if you prefer a slightly sweeter taste. Always keep in mind to add the vinegar to the pot last, so as to preserve the aroma which will otherwise be lost through heating.

METHOD

1. Cut the pork into thin strips and marinate with the rice wine, salt, pepper, and soy sauce. Add the beaten egg and mix well. Add the potato starch and mix again. Add the oil and mix a third time. Set aside.
2. Shred the rehydrated dried scallops. Slice the mushrooms, sea cucumber, bamboo shoot, and firm tofu into strips.
3. Place chicken stock in a pot. Add the glass noodles, and the shredded and sliced ingredients, except for the tofu, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and add the marinated pork, gently loosening it in the stock so it does not clump up.
4. Add the sake, salt, soy sauce, and pepper, followed by the tofu and stir.
5. Add the potato starch paste and simmer to thicken the soup.
6. Stir in the beaten egg and vinegar. Ladle into serving bowls and drizzle with *lao you*. Serve.





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MEAT & POULTRY

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青椒笋丝炒牛肉

SERVES 3–4
PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes
COOKING TIME 10 minutes

Stir-fried Beef with Green Capsicum and Bamboo Shoot



Marinate the beef.



Slice the capsicum and bamboo shoot into thin strips.



Combine the ingredients for the seasoning.



INGREDIENTS

80 g beef (round steak)
80 g green capsicum
20 g boiled bamboo shoot
As needed cooking oil
15 g Japanese leek, white part, chopped

MARINADE

1 pinch salt
1 dash ground white pepper
1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine
1 tsp Japanese soy sauce
1 beaten egg
1 Tbsp potato starch
1 Tbsp cooking oil

SEASONING

½ tsp sugar
1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine
1 Tbsp Japanese soy sauce
½ tsp oyster sauce
1 dash ground white pepper
1 Tbsp chicken stock (page 139)
1 Tbsp potato starch, mixed with a little water into a paste

Being able to successfully recreate this dish is a rite of passage for any Shisen Hanten chef in training. My dad could not emphasise enough the importance of mastering this particular dish because it covers a variety of preparation and cooking techniques. I can now fully appreciate where he was coming from. When executed properly, this dish brings a great sense of accomplishment to the chef.

METHOD

1. Slice the beef into thin strips. Add the marinade and mix well.
2. Slice the capsicum and bamboo shoot into thin strips.
3. Combine the ingredients for the seasoning and set aside.
4. Heat some oil in a wok to 120°C. Add the marinated beef and sauté, using the spatula to separate the strips.
5. Add the capsicum and bamboo shoot, and give it a quick stir.
6. Drain any excess oil from the wok. Add the Japanese leek, followed by the seasoning. Sauté briskly. Transfer to a serving dish.
7. Heat 1 Tbsp oil and drizzle it over the dish. Serve.

Glossary

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Fresh Ingredients



Bamboo shoot

This tender, young shoot of the bamboo plant has a crunchy texture and mild, sweet flavour. While it is available fresh, vacuum-sealed or canned, vacuum-sealed bamboo shoot is a convenient option, being already cleaned and precooked. Rinse well before use.



Courgette

Also known as zucchini, the courgette is part of the squash family. The most common variety is dark green in colour, but there is also a yellow variety that I like to use to add colour to dishes. Select firm, heavy fruit with shiny, blemish-free skin.



Daikon

The daikon resembles a carrot and is known as white carrot or white radish in Chinese. A member of the radish family, the daikon has a crisp texture and earthy flavour when raw, and becomes sweet and meltingly tender when cooked. Select roots that are firm with smooth, cream-coloured skin.

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Japanese cucumber

This long and slender variety of cucumber has dark green skin and very fine seeds. It is crisp and succulent, making it ideal for use in salads and tossed dishes. I used Japanese cucumber in the recipes in this book, but English cucumbers can be used as well.



Japanese eggplant

Japanese eggplant is long and slender with thin, deep purple skin and tender, cream-coloured flesh. When cooked, the flesh becomes soft and creamy, and simply steaming them brings out their sweetness. Select fruit that feel heavy and firm, with no soft or brown spots.



Japanese leek

There are many varieties of leek, and this is the most common variety used in Japanese cooking. The white part has a mild and sweet flavour and is used as an ingredient in dishes, while the green top is added when blanching to remove impurities from meat and poultry.



Japanese spring onion

Japanese spring onion is larger than regular spring onion, and has a more robust flavour. I add it to braised or stir-fried dishes for a touch of sweetness.



Lotus root

This underwater rhizome of the lotus plant is recognisable by its segments that are connected like a chain. When sliced in rounds, it reveals a pretty pattern created by its holes. Lotus root is a versatile ingredient that I use to add bite and sweetness to dishes. Select roots that are firm with no soft or brown spots. Scrub well and trim the ends before use.



Shishito peppers

These small finger-length peppers are green in colour with slightly wrinkly skin. They are mildly hot and can be used to add a sweet and spicy flavour to dishes.



Spring onion

The spring onion is from the same family as leek and has a flavour similar to leek. It is used mostly as a garnish to finish a dish, but can also be used for braises and stir-fries for added flavour.