



EASY
COMFORT
FOOD



BILL HO
@BILL8CAFE



Food made with simple ingredients can create wonderful memories, bring comfort and nourish at the same time. Yet, for a busy person or family, preparing food at home is no longer a simple everyday pleasure. *Easy Comfort Food* helps those with too little time on their hands dive back into the pleasure of easy homespun food. Chef Bill Ho uses uncomplicated techniques to prepare delicious snacks, soups and one-pot meals with ingredients easily found in today's kitchen. Accompanied by Bill's touching and funny food stories, as well as his beautiful illustrations, these recipes will inspire home cooks to create their own memories with comfort food.

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mc Marshall Cavendish
Cuisine



BILL HO

EASY COMFORT FOOD

Marshall Cavendish Cuisine

EASY COMFORT FOOD

ILLUSTRATED RECIPES
& STORIES OF HOME

Gourmand
Cookbook
Award
WINNER



BILL HO | @BILL8CAFE

For Review Only

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Published by Marshall Cavendish Cuisine
An imprint of Marshall Cavendish International



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National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing in Publication Data

Names: Ho, Bill.
Title: Easy comfort food : illustrated recipes & stories of home / Bill Ho @Bill8Cafe.
Description: Singapore : Marshall Cavendish Cuisine, [2020]
Identifiers: OCN 1128107399 | ISBN 978-981-48-6848-8 (paperback)
Subjects: LCSH: Quick and easy cooking. | LCGFT: Cookbooks.
Classification: DDC 641.555-dc23

Printed in Singapore



To Mum, Dad and the others who
have guided me through life.
These recipes are inspired by them and
each time I cook or eat these dishes, I think about
them and the memories we've shared.

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INTRODUCTION

This cookbook is a reflection of two of my passions: art and food.

As a kid I loved to draw and I aspired to be an artist. When I grew older and had to pick what to study at university, it was easy — I enrolled in a graphic design course. However, when I graduated, it was difficult to get a job related to graphic design or art.

In order to get by, I started work as a waiter in a Chinese restaurant. One day, when the kitchen was short of staff, I stepped in to help and discovered I enjoyed cooking very much. Long story short, I put on the apron and didn't look back. After working in many kitchens of different cuisines, I opened my own café.

All through the years of learning to be a chef and running a food business, I continued to paint and sketch. And I still do today, because drawing and cooking are two wonderful creative outlets.

I hope that through this cookbook, more people will share my love for them, especially cooking, which is often seen as something tedious and time-consuming these days. The recipes I share here have been tweaked to suit the modern busy home cook. You will find options for weeknight dinners, from one-dish meals to hearty soups and light yet filling salads.

Many of the recipes were inspired by what I had when I was growing up in a kampung in Malaysia. For me, making these dishes always brings back wonderful memories associated with them. I hope you'll try them and make your own memories sharing them with family and friends.

Bill Ho

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LIGHT BITES AND PARTY SNACKS

For Review Only

Home-style Char Siew

Also known as Cantonese roast barbecue pork, this is one of my favourite pork dishes. I love the smoky char on its edges! *Char siew* can be served with rice or wonton noodles, but you can also have it as a cold dish served with garlic chilli sauce. While working on the dishes for my café, I discovered that *char siew* goes well with red wine — it's East meets West at its best.

Makes about 800 g

- 800 g pork loin
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 2 tsp five-spice powder
- 1 tsp ground white pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp sugar
- 125 ml water
- 3 Tbsp oyster sauce
- 2 Tbsp tomato sauce
- 1 Tbsp sweet chilli sauce
- 2 Tbsp dark soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp Shaoxing wine

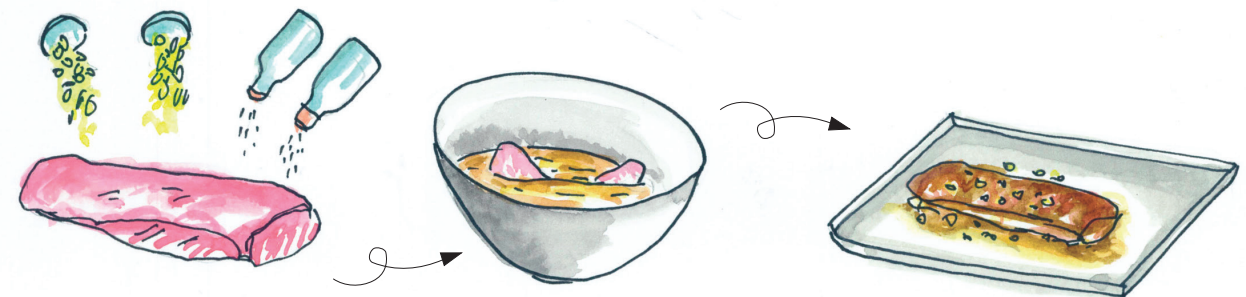
Place pork loin in a bowl. Add garlic, five-spice powder, pepper and salt to the bowl. Rub all over pork and set aside to marinate.

In a saucepan over low heat, combine sugar and water. Cook until sugar is melted and caramelised. Stir in all the sauces and Shaoxing wine. Cook for about 5 minutes until mixture is sticky and fragrant.

Pour sauce over pork, cover and leave to marinate overnight in the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 200°C. Prepare a roasting pan or rack.

Place pork in prepared pan and reserve marinade for glazing. Roast for 10 minutes, then brush pork with more marinade. Rotate pork a quarter turn in the pan and roast for another 10 minutes. Repeat glazing, rotating and roasting once more. The surface of the pork should be slightly charred at this point. Brush with more glaze and roast for a final 5 minutes.



Savoury Vegetarian Pancakes

For Review Only

When I was in India for a meditation retreat, I spent five days in a temple without my mobile phone and any communication to the world outside. I was served two vegetarian meals a day: the first at 6 a.m. and the second at 11 a.m. The first two days there were pretty rough, but then I got used to it. Of course, as I went for many hours without food from one day to the next, whatever I ate tasted pretty delicious! I particularly enjoyed a savoury pancake, so I made my own when I returned home.

Makes 6 pancakes

- 500 g all-purpose (plain) flour
- A pinch of sugar
- Salt as needed
- Water as needed
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 50 g carrot, peeled and diced
- 50 g shiitake mushrooms, diced
- 150 g chives, finely chopped

Place flour, sugar and a pinch of salt in a large mixing bowl and stir with a chopstick to combine. Gradually drizzle in 125 ml hot water, stirring continuously in one direction. The flour should clump together.

Gradually add 250 ml cold water, stirring continuously in one direction until a sticky dough forms and the flour is fully incorporated. You should be able to mould it into a ball.

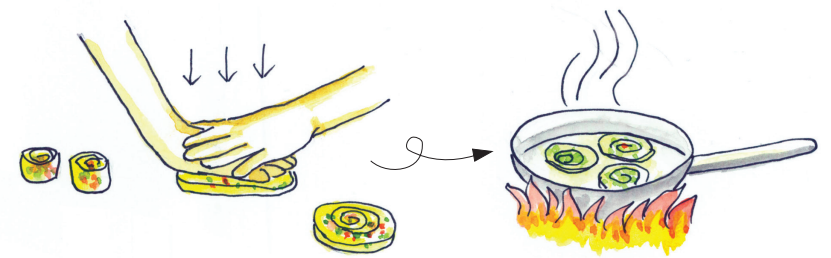
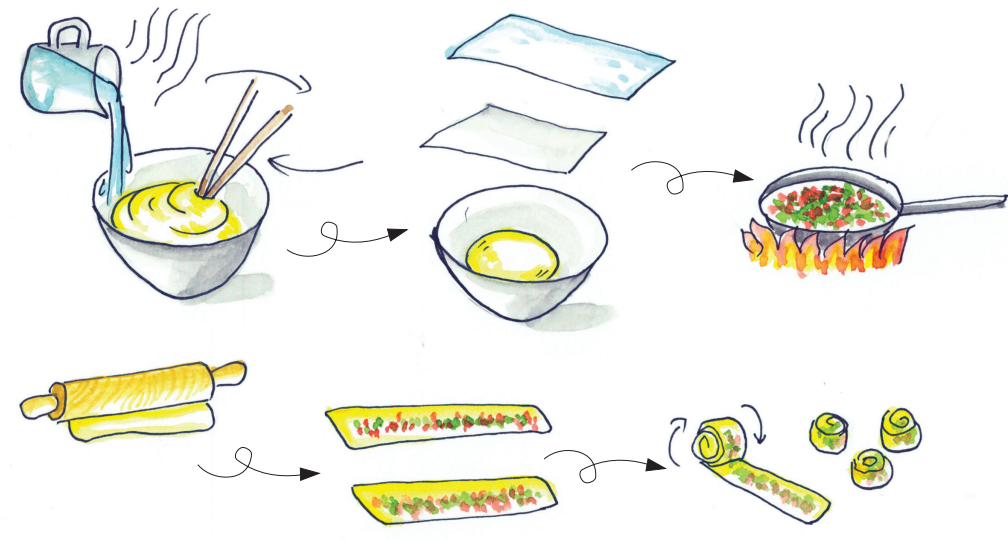
Lightly dust both hands with flour before kneading dough until it is smooth. Form dough into a ball, then cover bowl with a cloth followed by cling film. Leave to rest for 30 minutes.

In the meantime, heat 2 Tbsp oil in a frying pan and stir-fry carrot. Add mushrooms, followed by chives, then cook until chives are wilted. Season with salt to taste. Set side.

Divide dough into 6 equal portions. On a lightly dusted work surface, roll out a portion thinly into a rectangular strip. Spread 1/2 Tbsp vegetable filling on the strip and roll it up from one end to form a roll.

Flatten each roll to form a disc.

Heat 1 Tbsp oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Pan-fry each disc until golden brown on both sides.



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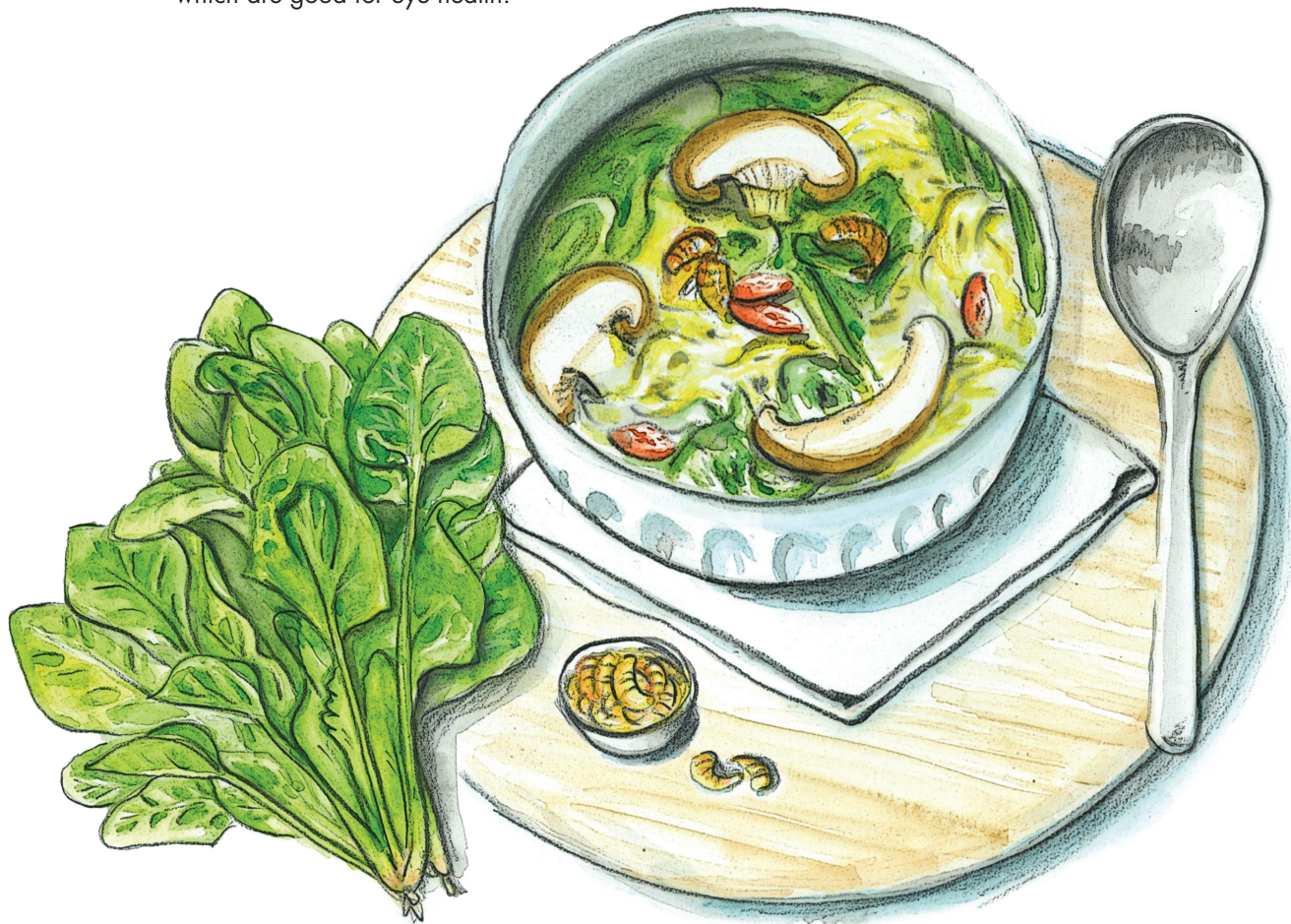
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SALADS AND SOUPS

For Review Only

Chinese Spinach and Egg Soup with Goji Berries

My mum used to cook this soup often for my siblings and I when we were young. She said that this soup would help us grow tall and strong, and have bright eyes so that we could study well. We didn't think much of it back then, but I later realised she was probably right. Both spinach and goji berries are full of vitamins A and C, which are good for eye health.



Makes 4-6 portions

- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 20 g garlic, peeled and smashed
- 20 g dried prawns
- 1.2 litres water or stock (chicken / pork / vegetable)
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 15 g goji berries (wolfberries)
- 200 g spinach
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp ground white pepper

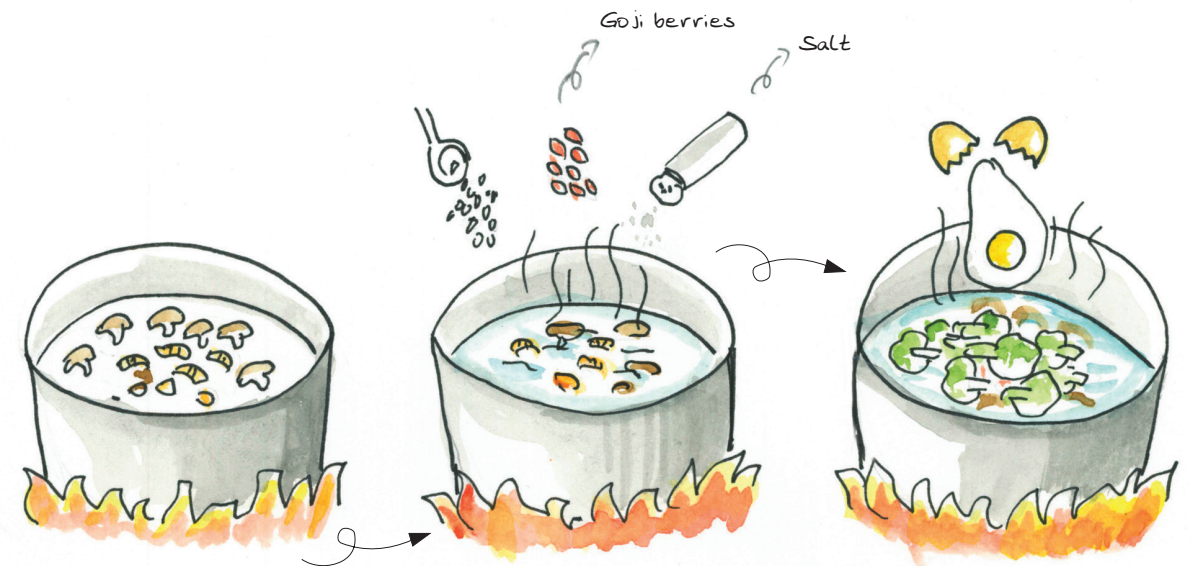
In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat and fry garlic and dried prawns until lightly browned and fragrant. Add stock and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15 minutes.

Adjust seasoning with salt and sugar.

Add goji berries and bring to a boil again. When soup is boiling, add spinach and cook until wilted, which should take no more than 5 minutes.

Adjust heat to low. Crack eggs one at a time into the soup. Do not stir the soup, so that the eggs are not broken up as they cook.

After 1 minute, when eggs are almost cooked, turn off the heat. Season soup with pepper and serve hot.



Shredded Chicken Salad with Asian Dressing

Makes 2 portions

- 150–180 g chicken breast
- 200 g salad greens of your choice, such as a mesclun mix or romaine lettuce
- 10 slices Japanese cucumber
- 10 cherry tomatoes
- 10 g sesame seeds

DRESSING

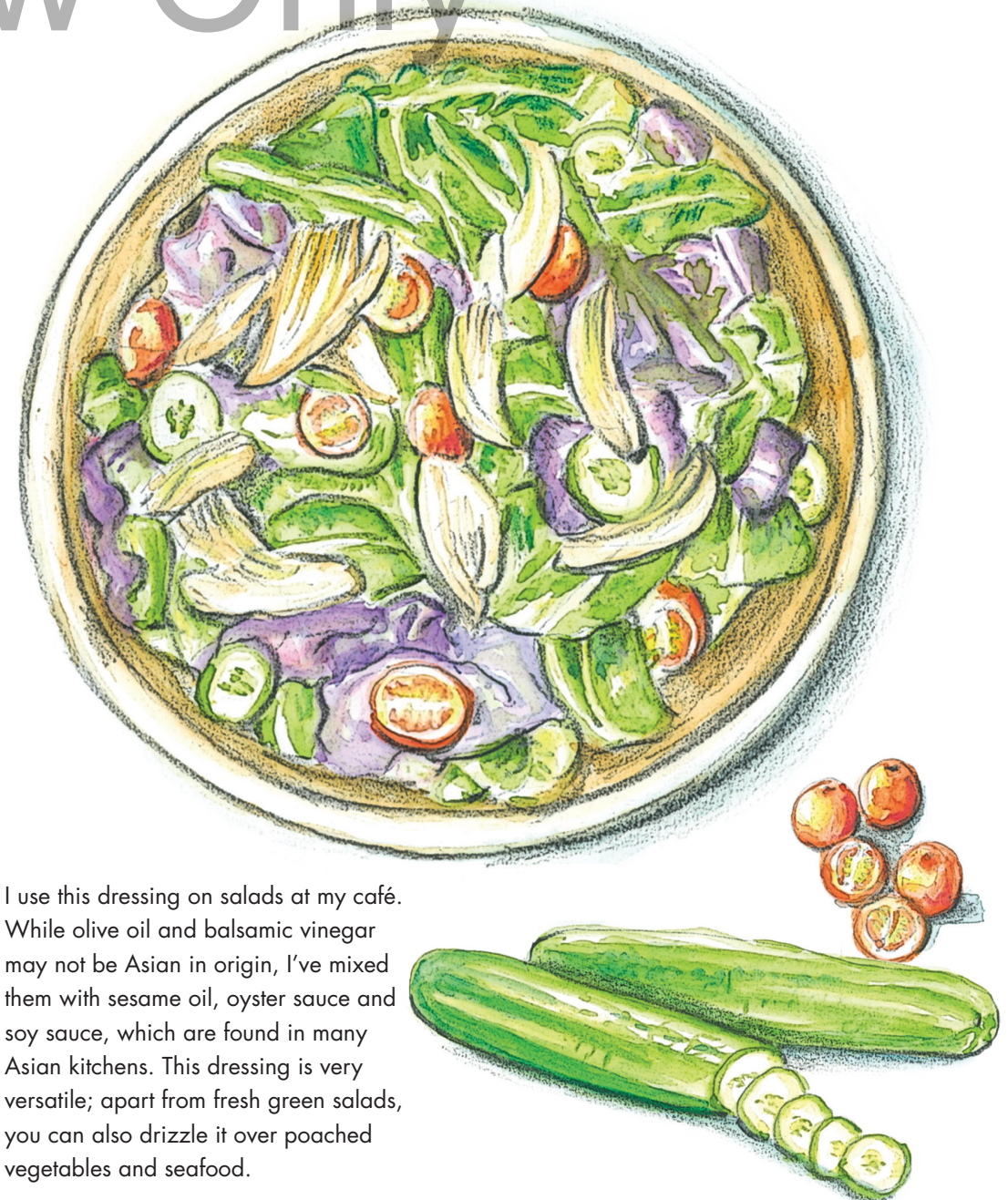
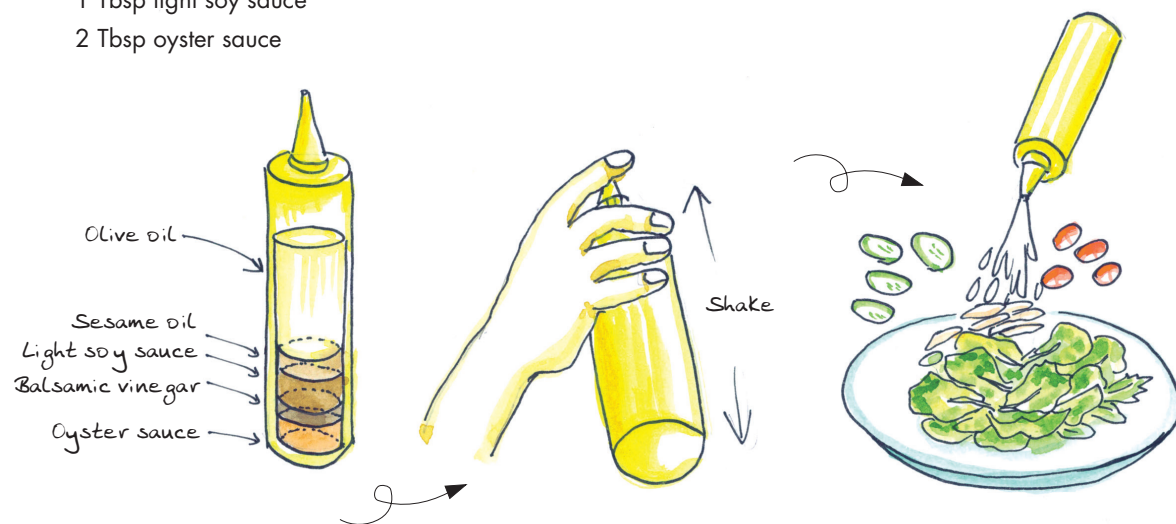
- 150 ml olive oil
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 4 tsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp light soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp oyster sauce

Prepare dressing. Place all ingredients in a squeeze bottle or vinaigrette bottle. Shake well to mix. Set aside until needed.

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add chicken and adjust heat to low. Simmer for 15 minutes before removing chicken and plunging in a bowl of cold water to cool. Drain and shred cooled chicken.

Divide salad greens, cucumber slices and cherry tomatoes between 2 bowls. Top with shredded chicken.

Pour sauce over salad and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serves as a side accompanying dishes such as roast spring chicken (page 91) or lemon and white wine baked fish (page 92).



I use this dressing on salads at my café. While olive oil and balsamic vinegar may not be Asian in origin, I've mixed them with sesame oil, oyster sauce and soy sauce, which are found in many Asian kitchens. This dressing is very versatile; apart from fresh green salads, you can also drizzle it over poached vegetables and seafood.

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EASY DISHES FOR A SMALL FAMILY

Lemon and White Wine Baked Fish

Makes 2-3 portions

2-3 fish fillets, about 400-500 g (sea bass or salmon works well for this recipe, but feel free to try other types of fish that you prefer)

1/2 lemon, cut into 6 slices

200-300 g asparagus, ends trimmed

120 ml white wine

150 ml cooking cream

6 cloves garlic, peeled and minced

10 g English parsley, chopped

A pinch of ground paprika

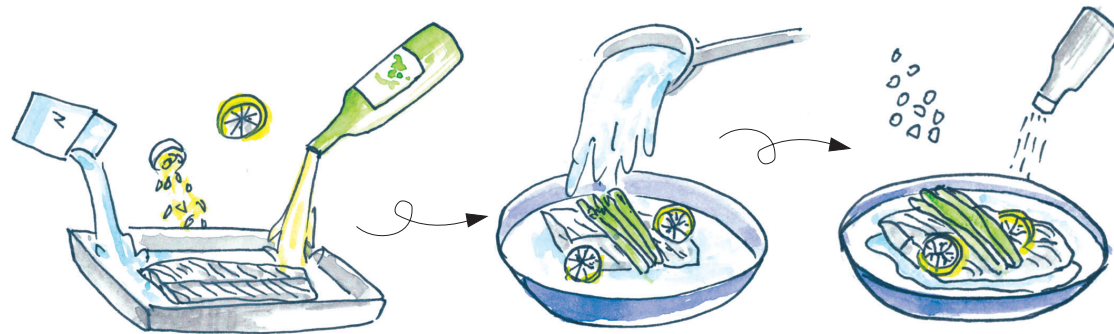
Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with aluminium foil.

Arrange fish fillets on prepared tray. Place lemon slices and asparagus around fillets, then pour wine and cream over. Top with minced garlic. Bake for 15 minutes.

You can also steam this in a rice cooker. Use aluminium foil to make a parcel for the fish, lemon, asparagus and seasoning. Prepare rice as you would normally. Add water to rice cooker pot, then place steaming rack over rice. Place foil parcel on rack and use the regular setting for cooking rice.

Transfer fish fillets to individual plates. Top with asparagus or serve it on the side.

Pour creamy cooking liquid into a saucepan over low heat. Simmer while adjusting seasoning to taste. Cover fish with sauce, then garnish with some parsley and paprika.



As a chef and restaurant owner, I like to cook for others, but when it comes to my own meals, I get lazy! On one of my off-days, I was dragging my feet to go out for dinner, yet I didn't want to order in because that would typically mean soggy or lukewarm food. I went to the kitchen and found some white wine and frozen fish fillets, so I threw them and some seasoning on a baking tray and put it in the oven. It turned out surprisingly well! Since then, I've always joked that the name of this dish should really be "Lazy Baked Fish".



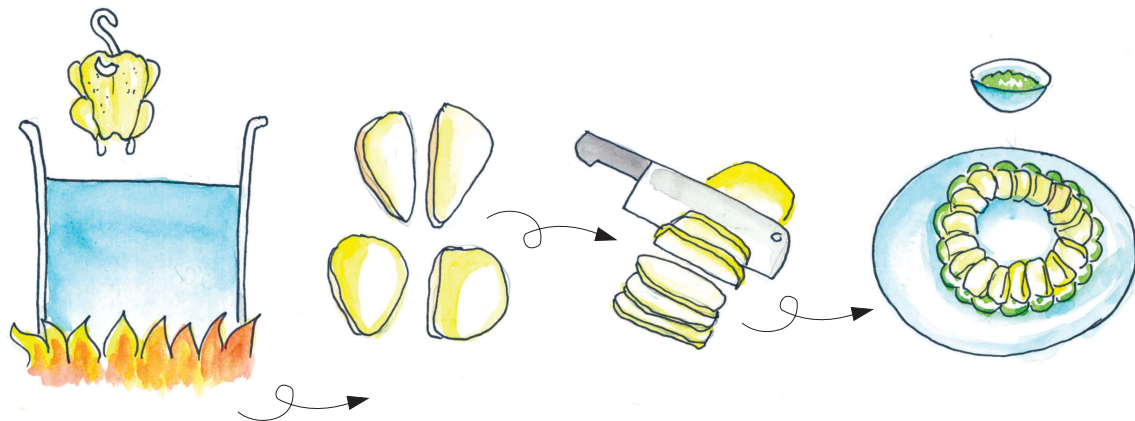
Samsui Chicken

Makes 2–3 portions

- 1 whole chicken, about 900 g–1 kg, washed and cleaned
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed
- 4 slices peeled ginger
- 2 Tbsp Shaoxing wine
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 1 cucumber, sliced
- 1 head iceberg lettuce, leaves separated

GINGER SAUCE

- 400 ml olive oil
- 50 g garlic, peeled and minced
- 50 g ginger, peeled and minced
- 4 tsp salt
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp oyster sauce
- 100 g spring onion, chopped
- 100 g coriander, stems removed, chopped



Fill a large pot halfway with water (enough to submerge chicken later) and bring to a boil. Add garlic, ginger, Shaoxing wine, sesame oil and salt.

Holding the chicken by its neck, lower it into the boiling water briefly, then lift it up. Do this twice more before submerging chicken entirely in the water. Adjust heat to low, cover pot and leave to simmer for 30–40 minutes.

Pierce chicken thigh with a chopstick to check if it's cooked through. The chopstick should pierce the meat easily and there should be no blood. Remove chicken and place in a bowl of iced water immediately to stop the cooking.

Prepare ginger sauce. Heat oil in a frying pan over low heat. Fry garlic and ginger until fragrant, then add salt, sugar and oyster sauce, followed by spring onion and coriander. Stir to combine and remove from heat.

To carve the chicken, chop off its neck, wings and thighs. Carefully detach the breast meat from the bones in 2 halves. Make a small cut at the end of each thigh and detach the meat from the bones. Chop breast and thigh meat into bite-sized pieces. Arrange on a serving plate, garnish with cucumber slices and serve with lettuce leaves.

To eat, place a piece of chicken on top of a lettuce leaf and spoon sauce over. Bon appétit!

When I was a child, I looked forward to every Chinese New Year, particularly the night before it because my mum would cook a sumptuous meal for reunion dinner. This dish was always on our table for reunion dinner, as well as those of our neighbours, and I loved it the most. Back then, I didn't know its name and origin, but now that I do, it makes sense. Many families in my village were Hakka, and this dish was apparently made by Hakka Samsui women (who worked as labourers and wore distinctive red headgear).





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bill Ho's life as a chef began by accident. He studied graphic design at Saito University College in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, but was waiting tables at a Chinese restaurant in Kuala Lumpur, working his way up from waiter to manager. One day, when the kitchen was short on staff, he picked up an apron to lend a hand, and discovered that cooking delicious food for customers was something he enjoyed. Since then, he has trained and worked as a chef in bars and restaurants, including the Royal Copenhagen Tea Lounge in Singapore.

Armed with several years of experience in the food industry, and a passion for creating fusion fare, Bill opened Eight Café and Bar in 2008. He continues to develop dishes for its menu and lends a personal touch to the café's décor with his sketches and paintings. Connect with Bill on Instagram @Bill8Cafe, where he shares about food and art at his café.

Preview Only

