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ASK AUNT DAISY

Chinese Cooking



CHINESE dishes are not only tasty, satisfying, and nutritious, but also economical. A pound of steak, cooked with vegetables in the Chinese way, makes a good meal for four people. There is no straining off of any liquid, so that all the juices and mineral values are retained and nothing is wasted. Evidently the Chinese people have always known, by instinct, what our nutrition authorities are learning through scientific research—that a short cooking period in a small amount of liquid, with none of that liquid discarded, is the ideal method for cooking. A balanced combination of meat and vegetables, cooked in this way, and bound together with a flavoursome and delicious sauce, is the basic idea in Chinese cooking. If we prefer to cook our meat in our own favourite way, we may still use the Chinese method for the vegetables. Lately, we have had most interesting cooking demonstrations by two Chinese ladies from Sydney; and although these cooks used only the vegetarian proteins instead of meat, they taught the whole method very convincingly and clearly. Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill were visited by them, and readers of *The Listener* may be glad of further recipes.

Chinese Rice

Nearly every Chinese dish is served with boiled rice, and here is their way of cooking it—quite simple! Wash the rice first, in several changes of water, stirring vigorously, until the water poured off each time is quite clear and not white or milky-looking, showing that all the excess starch is removed. Then

put it into a saucepan (one with a thick base is best) and cover with water to one inch above the surface of the rice (or the depth of the first finger-joint). The water may be hot or cold. Bring to the boil, then turn down the heat very low and steam the rice for 15 minutes. The saucepan-lid must fit tightly and should not be lifted, to prevent loss of steam. An asbestos mat under a thin saucepan is sometimes a good idea if the heat cannot be controlled to very low. The water is all absorbed in this steaming process, and the rice is fluffy and white with the grains dry and separate, and not mushy.

Ingredients

These recipes use ingredients easily obtained here, often from Indian or Chinese shops or health food shops. Soy sauce, vegetable fat, peanut oil are available; but if you are far from a shop, you may use either meat-extract or marmite mixed with boiling water where soy sauce is specified. Garlic is used as a flavouring—in very small quantities, chopped finely, and crushed. Used thus it has no unpleasant results. Green (or root) ginger is used in the same way. For bouillon use good stock or beef or chicken cubes dissolved in boiling water or vegetable water.

Fried Rice

Four cups cooked rice, 1 cup cooked peas (frozen peas are available), 2 tablespoons vegetable fat or oil, 1 teaspoon each of crushed green ginger and garlic, 1/2 cup diced onions, 1 cup diced celery, 1 cup diced carrots, 2 cups of diced cooked meat, ham or nutmeat, salt as desired. First fry the garlic and ginger for 2 or 3 minutes in half the fat or oil, then add the onions, celery and carrots. Braise for 3 or 4 minutes, then add nearly a cup of water, put on the lid, and steam for 5 minutes. Meantime heat the other half of the fat or oil, and when very hot, add the rice. Prevent it from sticking by stirring and turning, and when uniformly heated, add it to the steamed vegetables with the cooked peas (which may be omitted if necessary) and the diced meat. Serve very hot. This is really a complete meal, very satisfying, and you won't need to make a pudding. Just have some raw fruit.

Garnish for Fried Rice

A kind of omelette is generally made to garnish the fried rice. Beat (only a little) an egg with a tablespoon of water. Our Chinese ladies beat it in a pyrex piedish. Heat a dessert-spoon of fat in a frying-pan and pour it in. Cook gently over low heat,



(C) Punch

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