



Food & fortune

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR THE CHINESE CHOOSE DISHES THAT ARE SYMBOLIC OF PROSPERITY, LONGEVITY AND A FRESH START. SO TUCK IN!

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What February needs is something to liven things up, to add a splash of colour and a bit of energy to the dog-end of winter. Lucky then that we can

adopt the vibrant annual celebration of Chinese New Year* (In 2016 it falls on 8 February and marks the start of the Year of the Monkey). Jenny Linford always takes time to celebrate it: "I spent part of my childhood living in Singapore and my memories from that time revolve around food: from eating satay, freshly cooked over charcoal, to family outings with my cousins to dine on tasty Hainanese chicken rice.

Chinese New Year is huge in Singapore. As a child, I loved collecting the 'ang pow' (envelopes of money) given to me by family and friends, as is traditional, and feeling very rich! Though I live in London, I still mark the day by cooking a Chinese-inspired meal for family and friends. Bringing together loved ones to feast and talk is always meaningful – and convivial." »



* 'Xīnnián Hǎo' (New Year Goodness) is the most common Chinese New Year greeting. In Mandarin it is pronounced 'sshin-nyen haoww'. In Cantonese it is 'sen-nin haow'.



Auspicious
delicious - borrow
Chinese New Year
to cheer up
February with a
full-on feast for
friends



Crispy wontons - little deep-fried parcels full of delicious ingredients - are almost as much fun to make as they are to eat



Crispy fried prawn wontons

A CRUNCHY COATING GIVES WAY TO PLUMP PRAWNS WITH A KICK OF CHILLI

Serves 6

200g cooked peeled prawns
slice root ginger (½cm thick), peeled and finely chopped
½ tsp sesame oil
pinch of salt
50g sliced canned water chestnuts, drained and finely chopped
18 wonton wrappers*
oil for deep-frying
For the dipping sauce
2 tbsp dark soy sauce
¼ red chilli (the seed-free tail end), finely chopped

1 In a food processor, blend the prawns, ginger, sesame oil and salt to a paste. Mix in the chopped water chestnuts.

2 Place a teaspoon of the prawn mixture in the centre of a wonton wrapper and lightly brush the edges with cold water, then fold the wrapper over the filling. Press the edges together firmly to seal.

3 Repeat the process, making 18 wontons in all.

4 Heat the oil in a saucepan until very hot. Deep-fry the filled wontons in batches, taking care not to overcrowd the pan (they puff up and expand), and turning them over to ensure they cook on both sides.

5 Once they are golden-brown on both sides, remove with a slotted spoon and drain on kitchen paper.

6 Keep warm in a low oven and serve as soon as possible with the dipping sauce, made by mixing together the soy sauce and red chilli.



* Packets of wonton wrappers can be found in Chinese supermarkets or bought online. Any leftover wrappers can be frozen.

MENU

**Crispy fried prawn
wontons**

*

Steamed sea bass

**Braised belly pork
Stir-fried noodles with
vegetables**

**Chinese broccoli with
oyster sauce
Plain rice**

*

Orange jelly



Super noodles, studded with jewels of stir-fried veg that bring warmth and colour to the table

Stir-fried noodles with vegetables

DELICATE NOODLES
CONTRAST WITH
CRUNCHY VEG IN
THIS CLASSIC DISH

Serves 6

250g rice vermicelli
2 tbsp oil
**2 spring onions, chopped, separated
into white and green parts**
1cm root ginger, finely chopped
½ red pepper, chopped
½ yellow pepper, chopped
**100g baby sweetcorn, halved
lengthways, then chopped**

100g sugar snap peas, chopped
50g water chestnut slices, chopped
2-3 handfuls of bean sprouts
2-3 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tsp sesame oil

1 Bring a large pan of water to the boil. Remove from heat and add the noodles, immersing them for 1-2 mins until they soften but retain texture.
2 Drain at once in a colander and run under cold water to cool them down as quickly as possible.
3 Heat a wok until very hot. Add in the oil and heat through.
4 Add the white spring onion and ginger and stir fry for 30 seconds.
5 Add the veg and stir fry for 2-3 mins. Add the noodles and mix well.
6 Add soy sauce and sesame oil and stir fry the noodles for 1-2 mins. Serve. »



Fresh, zingy flavours mean even a feast of a meal like this doesn't sit too heavy



Steamed sea bass

STEAMING PRESERVES THE FISH'S DELICATE FLAVOUR. JUST ADD A SIMPLE GARNISH

Serves 6

1 whole sea bass, gutted, but head left on (approx. 700g)

½ tsp salt

2-3 spring onions, cut into 2.5cm-long shreds

thumb-size piece of root ginger, peeled and shredded

3 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil

2 tbsp soy sauce

- 1 Using a sharp knife, cut three slashes in each side of the sea bass to help the heat penetrate it.
- 2 Place the fish on a rimmed plate, then put the plate on a trivet or base in a large wok, surrounded with boiling water, ensuring that the plate remains above the water.
- 3 Cover the wok with a lid or use a large sheet of silver foil (making sure the foil doesn't touch the fish itself) and steam* for around 10 mins until the fish is cooked through.
- 4 Sprinkle the salt, then the shredded spring onions and ginger, over the sea bass. Heat the oil in a little pan until very hot and pour over the fish, then pour over the soy sauce. Serve at once.

* Steaming is a traditional Chinese method of cooking fish, preserving its delicate flavour. You can also bake it if you prefer: wrap the fish in oiled foil, place on an ovenproof dish and bake in an oven preheated to 200C/Fan 180/400F for 25 mins, then unwrap and season as per the recipe.





We're all about that bass... A whole steamed fish is a fabulous centrepiece for your table

A homely stew with a kick is always a welcome sight. Fluffy rice will mop up the juices nicely



Braised belly pork

A HEARTY STEW OF TENDER PORK AND GREEN VEGGIES, TOPPED WITH STARS

Serves 6

1kg belly pork, skin on, boned, cut into 2.5cm chunks

1 tbsp oil

1 onion, peeled and chopped

2 leeks, trimmed and chopped

2.5cm piece of root ginger, peeled and sliced

2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped

2 star anise

1 tsp Chinese five-spice powder

3 tbsp Chinese rice wine or

Amontillado sherry

1 tbsp tomato purée

600ml chicken stock, preferably fresh

1 tbsp dark soy sauce

1 tsp sugar

salt, to taste

chopped green spring onion, to garnish

1 Heat a large, heavy frying pan. Put in the belly pork, skin side down, and cook over a medium heat for 5-10 mins until the skin crisps and browns, then turn over and fry briefly until the flesh whitens.

2 Heat the oil in a large casserole dish. Fry the onion, leeks, ginger and garlic, stirring to prevent browning, until softened.

3 Add the fried pork belly and star anise to the casserole dish and sprinkle over the five-spice powder, mixing well. Add the rice wine and fry, stirring for 2-3 mins.

4 Mix in the tomato purée and add the stock, soy sauce and sugar. Bring to the boil, cover, reduce the heat and simmer for 30 mins. Season to taste with salt.

5 Uncover and simmer for 30 mins to reduce the liquid, stirring now and then. Cover, cool and chill until required, then heat through thoroughly. Garnish with chopped green spring onion and serve. »

THREE GREAT WINES* TO GO WITH CHINESE FOOD

DOMAINE DE PETIT COTEAU VOUVRAY 2014, £16

Match with: Braised pork

Style: This zesty white from the Loire Valley has a mouth-watering citrus tang, with hints of lime and green pear. It will refresh the taste buds in between mouthfuls of rich belly pork.



GITTON PÈRE & FILS 'LES HERSES' SANCERRE 2014, £16

Match with: Sea bass

Style: Sea bass is a delicate fish, so you need a white wine that will elevate, but not mask, its flavour. White Sancerre is light-bodied but aromatic, with notes of gooseberry and green melon.



CAVE ORSCHWILLER PINOT GRIS ALSACE 2014, £13

Match with: Prawn wontons

Style: This fruity white wine has a crisp acidity to cut through the starchy dumpling wrapper, while a hint of sweetness goes well with the juicy prawns.



* Wines recommended by Borough Wines (boroughwines.co.uk), which works with small and independent producers worldwide to offer a unique selection of international wine, spirits and beers, available to buy through its website and eight shops in London and Hastings.

Chinese broccoli with oyster sauce

A SIMPLE, TASTY WAY OF SERVING CHINESE GREEN VEGETABLES

Serves 6

450g Chinese broccoli or purple-sprouting broccoli
1 tbsp oil
2 tbsp oyster sauce

1 Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil. Add the Chinese broccoli and cook for 1-2 mins until just tender. Drain thoroughly.

2 Place on a warm serving plate and pour over the oil and oyster sauce. Serve.



There's something sublimely comforting about a bowl of steamed rice

Plain rice

YOU CAN'T HAVE A CHINESE FEAST WITHOUT RICE, AND PLAIN IS BEST

Serves 6

400g long grain rice
salt

1 Rinse the rice in cold water a few times to wash out excess starch, then drain.

2 Place the rice in a heavy-based saucepan. Add enough cold water to cover the rice by 2cm, then season with salt.

3 Bring to the boil, then immediately reduce the heat, cover and cook gently for 10-15 mins until all the water has been absorbed by the rice and it is soft and fluffy.





Darling clementines.
A refreshing way to
end your banquet

Orange jelly

A NON-TRADITIONAL
BUT REFRESHING
DESSERT TO ROUND
OFF THE MEAL

Serves 6

2 tbsp sugar

600ml orange juice

5 leaves of gelatine

2 tangerines or clementines, peeled

and separated into segments

evaporated milk, to serve

1 Stir the sugar into the orange juice until dissolved.

2 Soak the gelatine leaves in cold water for 4-5 mins to soften. Remove from the water and lightly squeeze out some of the excess moisture, then put in a saucepan and heat gently, stirring until melted. Remove from direct heat and stir in the orange juice, mixing together well.

3 Place the tangerine segments in a serving bowl. Through a sieve, pour in the orange juice mixture; the fruit will float to the surface.

4 Cool, cover and chill until set; this should take around 6 hours, or you can chill overnight. **S**

Auspicious food

In Chinese culture, many of the foods traditionally served at Chinese New Year are symbolic, eaten to bring good fortune in the year ahead. Some are featured in our Gathering menu. Red, too, is a lucky colour, hence its use on the traditional ang pow envelopes.*

A whole fish symbolises prosperity.

Uncut noodles symbolise longevity.

Dumplings are considered lucky, with their shape associated with prosperity.

Oranges and tangerines - with their cheerful bright orange colour - are symbolic of gold and also good luck.

Beansprouts indicate a good start to the New Year.

Chinese garlic chives symbolise longevity.

A whole chicken symbolises completeness.

Bamboo shoots mean a new start.



*If you are born in the Year of the Monkey (1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004) then 2016 is an auspicious year for you. 'Monkeys' are witty, intelligent and have a magnetic personality, apparently.