



Stir-fry Guide

1. Choose Ingredients

This is the fun part. You can make any kind of stir-fry you like, tailored to your taste buds. There's no wrong combo! You can even use what's leftover in your fridge or freezer. Have you ever wondered what to do with the few stalks of celery about to go limp, or the bunch of spinach that is about to wilt? You don't have to wonder anymore, because you can toss them into a stir-fry with your favorite protein and not worry about wasting food.

The main ingredients to a stir-fry are:

Proteins – chicken, beef, pork, seafood, tofu, tempeh, seitan

Aromatics – garlic, green onions, shallots, ginger

Vegetables – anything goes for this category

2. Prep Ingredients

Stir-fries consist of cooking over high heat, which helps maintain the ingredients' flavors, as well as keep the color and texture of the foods. Because of this quick cooking, it's best to have everything prepped and chopped and ready to go. Once you have this step ready, all you have to do is toss the ingredients into the wok, and you won't have to worry about ingredients getting burned.

Have your ingredients prepped into prep bowls, so that they can be easily tossed into the wok. You can also chop everything in advance to cut down on time when you start prepping!

If you're using meat, make sure to slice against the grain and tenderize with a fork first. This simple step will cut the tough fibers in the meat and allow for maximum flavor absorption.

COOKING TIP:

Chop the ingredients in small or thin pieces. This helps them cook quickly, especially ingredients that take a longer time to cook, like carrots.



3. Make Stir-Fry Sauce

Sauces add flavor to any dish, so it's important to not leave this step out. Just like your ingredients, make your sauce before you start cooking to make sure that it gets added in at the right time without your veggies and meat getting overcooked.

A stir-fry sauce is made with basic ingredients that you most likely have in your pantry – soy sauce, rice vinegar, brown sugar, and cornstarch.

To make the sauce, you can either mix all the sauce ingredients together in a bowl, or shake it up in a jar. Just remember to give the sauce another stir or shake before adding it to the wok, so that the cornstarch does not settle to the bottom.

COOKING TIP:

Cornstarch helps thicken the sauce of a stir-fry, which will then coat each piece of veggie and protein. For the cornstarch to dissolve properly, it must be mixed with *lukewarm* or *cold* liquids.

4. Stir-Fry

Cook your proteins and vegetables separately, since they have different cooking times. Start off with your wok on medium-high heat and cook your protein until golden. It doesn't have to be cooked all the way, since you'll be adding it back into the wok in the end for a final toss. Remove from the wok.

If you plan on using aromatics, add them next until fragrant. Then add your veggies until tender but still crunchy.

Once your veggies are near done, add the protein back in, toss together, and then make a donut by pushing all the ingredients to the sides of the wok, leaving an empty hole in the middle.

Give your stir-fry sauce a stir or a shake and then pour the sauce into the hole. The heat will activate the cornstarch, which acts as a thickener, and the sauce will start to darken and bubble. That's when you know your stir-fry is about done. Toss everything together until every piece is coated with the now-thick sauce, and you've got your stir-fry!

COOKING TIP :

Take your wok off the heat before the veggies are fully done cooking. They'll continue to cook in the wok as you finish the dish.



5. Finish the Dish

This step might seem unnecessary, but it makes a huge difference. We like to finish a dish with a squeeze of lemon or lime juice to really bring out all the flavors.

Taste your food to see if it needs more lemon or lime juice, or even just a bit of salt.

6. Garnish Your Stir-Fry

Garnishes can add a new flavor component to a dish, so don't write them off as just something to make the dish look pretty! Add a bit of sharpness with freshly chopped green onions, some freshness with minced cilantro, or some crunch with toasted peanuts or cashews. If you like a little kick, top with your favorite hot sauce.

Try out some of the delicious stir-fry combinations below:

Easy weeknight stir-fry

Ingredients: Pork, onions, carrots, celery, brown mushrooms

Sauce: basic stir-fry sauce recipe, finish with lemon juice and hot sauce

Sweet and sour cashew tofu

Ingredients: Tofu, bell peppers, broccoli, Chinese eggplant

Sauce: sweet and sour sauce recipe, finish with lemon juice and green onions

Kung pao chicken

Ingredients: chicken, carrots, celery, snow peas, baby corn

Sauce: basic stir-fry sauce recipe, finish with lemon juice, hot sauce, and peanuts

Basic stir-fry sauce recipe:

½ cup soy sauce

2 ½ tablespoons honey

1 teaspoon granulated garlic

Whisk together and consider adding cornstarch mixed with water to create a thicker sauce.

Adapted from: <http://www.cooksmarts.com/articles/guide-to-stir-frying/>