

Some Simple Chinese Family Recipes

Shanghai cuisine (上海菜) or Hu Cai (沪菜)

refines various cuisines of the surrounding provinces, but has a reputation of heavy use of sugar and oil. The unique “Red Cooking” (*Hong Shao* 红烧) is a popular way of preparing meats and certain vegetables like bamboo shoots, which effuses the food with a taste that is not so sweet but rather savory.



Most well-known Shanghai dishes include Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs (*Tang Cu Xiao Pai* 糖醋小排), The Lion's Head Meatball (*Shi Zi Tou* 狮子头), Shanghai Rice Cake (*Chao Nian Gao* 炒年糕), Shanghai Stir-Fry Noodles (*Shanghai Chao Mian* 上海炒面) and Nanxiang Soup Dumpling (*Nanxiang Xiao Long* 南翔小笼). Other delicacies like Thousand-year egg (*Pi Dan* 皮蛋) and Stinky Tofu (*Chou Dou Fu* 臭豆腐) don't necessarily have a great reputation but they have been part of Chinese' favorite food for years and they are so exotic that Survivor: China used them for competition.

Here I introduce three very simple Shanghainese recipes with only vegetables and eggs, nothing is more authentic than the stuff coming out of my mom's kitchen in Shanghai and wherever I go, I can always find the ingredients that remind me of Mom's home cooking.

Cynthia

Chinese Cooking Essentials

Cooking Wine (绍兴酒)

Green Onion & Ginger (葱姜)

Soy Sauce (酱油)

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Tomato and Egg

Fan Qie Chao Dan 蕃茄炒蛋



A pinch of sugar right before serving adds wonderful flavor to this dish

Tomato and Egg: using 1:1 ratio for tomato and egg, put tomatoes in boiling water for 15 seconds and peel off the skin, cut into wedges. Beat eggs in a bowl, add in salt and very small amount of cooking wine. Heat up oil in a wok till smoke rises and fry eggs, remove when it just turns solid, set aside. Add in more oil in the wok, heat it up and sauté tomato, mix in eggs, season with salt, pinch of sugar and add chopped green onion and serve.

Bok Choy and Mushroom: Add oil in the work, heat it up till smoke arises. Add minced garlic and salt, before garlic turns brown, add in sliced mushroom and bok choy, cook until the juice from the vegetables almost dry out, add in a little bit sugar and chicken concentrate (optional) before serving. Make sure the oil is very hot, it will give bok choy a special smoky flavor.

Braised Eggplant

Cut Chinese Eggplant (long and skinny ones) into inch-long chunks, then slice them diagonally. Heat plenty of oil in the clay pot on medium heat, add in minced garlic, Satay Sauce (沙茶酱), soy sauce and chopped onions, sauté for 10 minutes. Add in eggplant, pine nuts, ground meat (optional) and soaked rice sticks (米粉) or any vegetables, firm tofu, etc. Add water to cover half of the eggplants, cover with a lid and braised for 30 minutes on low heat. Cool before handling and serving.

Chinese recipes don't have precise measurements, so experience plays a big part in cooking in China!



Tomato and Egg

Fan Qie Chao Dan 蕃茄炒蛋

- Sauté tomato and eggs separately
- Add green pepper and red chili if you want it to be spicy



Bok Choy and Mushroom

Qing Cai Mo Gu 青菜蘑菇

- Of all kinds of bok choy, I like the pit of the Shanghai Bok Choy the most
- Use fresh Shiitake mushroom for best results



Braised Eggplant

Qie Zi Bao 茄子煲

- Clay pot works the best for slow cooking like this one
- Firm tofu, vegetables, cabbage make great variations

Use olive oil for healthier cooking but note that its smoke point is lower than vegetable oil so it might set off the smoke detector real fast!

