

Show #68. Chinese New Year

GRILLED BEEF and SHRIMP SKEWERS

To make your cocktail party more participatory, have your guests grill their own skewers. A hibachi is even more user-friendly than a grill, since the ends of the skewers hang out over the edge, eliminating the need for tongs. If you're cooking everything yourself, it's easiest to use a large grill or a broiler (see cooks' note, below) and serve the skewers in batches.

4 large garlic cloves
2 teaspoons salt
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

For skewers

1 lb sirloin steak (1 inch thick), trimmed of excess fat
1 1/4 lb medium shrimp in shell (31 to 35 per lb; about 40), peeled and deveined
Special equipment: about 100 (6-inch) wooden skewers, soaked in water 1 hour

Make marinade:

Mince garlic and mash to a paste with salt using a large heavy knife. Transfer to a small bowl and whisk in lemon juice and pepper, then add oil in a stream, whisking until emulsified. Divide marinade among 4 (1- to 2-quart) bowls.

Prepare skewers:

Cut steak into 20 to 25 (1/4-inch-thick) slices (about 4 inches long and 1 inch wide), then toss with marinade in one of bowls and thread each slice lengthwise onto a skewer.

Toss shrimp with marinade in another bowl, then thread 2 shrimp onto each of 20 to 25 skewers.

Prepare grill for cooking over hot charcoal (high heat for gas); see "Grilling Procedure," below.

Grill skewers in batches on lightly oiled grill rack, covered only if using a gas grill, turning over once with tongs, until beef is medium-rare, about 3 minutes total; chicken is just cooked through, about 3 minutes; shrimp is just cooked through, about 2 minutes; and mushrooms are tender, about 4 minutes.

Cooks' notes:

. Skewers can be threaded up to 2 hours ahead and chilled separately, covered with plastic wrap.
. To broil skewers, preheat broiler and oil rack of a broiler pan. Put 1 batch of skewers in 1 layer on rack and broil 2 to 3 inches from heat, turning over once, until beef is medium-rare, about 3 minutes total; shrimp is just cooked through, about 2 minutes

Grilling Procedure

If using a charcoal grill, open vents on bottom of grill, then light charcoal. When charcoal turns grayish white (about 15 minutes from lighting), hold your hand 5 inches above grill rack to determine heat for charcoal as follows:

Hot: When you can hold your hand there for 1 to 2 seconds

Medium-hot: 3 to 4 seconds

Low: 5 to 6 seconds

If using a gas grill, preheat burners on high, covered, 10 minutes, then, if necessary, reduce to heat specified in recipe.

Makes 80 to 100 small skewers.

Snow peas & Bean Sprouts Salad

Toss snow peas and bean sprouts w/ seasoned rice vinegar, tossing w/ your choice of crushed nuts (we used 1/2 cashews). Serve at the start of the meal.

FRIED RICE WITH PEPPERS, ONIONS AND SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS

1 1/2 cups water
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup long-grain white rice

2 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 large eggs, beaten to blend

8 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms, stems removed, caps sliced
1 large red or yellow bell pepper, thinly sliced
2 teaspoons minced peeled fresh ginger
2 green onions, chopped
1 tablespoon (or more) soy sauce

Using day-old rice is best because fresh rice is too absorbent; take-out is great.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in medium nonstick skillet (or wok) over medium heat. Add eggs. Cook without stirring until eggs are set and bottom is brown, lifting edge of eggs occasionally to let uncooked portion run underneath, about 3 minutes. Turn out egg pancake. Cut in half, then cut crosswise into thin strips.

Heat 1 1/2 tablespoons oil in same skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms; Sauté 4 minutes. Add pepper and ginger; Sauté 3 minutes. Add rice, egg strips, onions and 1 tablespoon soy sauce; toss. Season with salt and pepper. Serve, passing more soy sauce, if desired.

PORK POT STICKERS

For dough

In the refrigerator section of the grocery store, buy square won ton wrappers.

For filling

1/4 lb ground pork (1 cup)
1 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon Asian sesame oil
1 tablespoon minced peeled fresh ginger
1 teaspoon Chinese sweet bean paste or use sweet bean & garlic sauce from the jar
2 cups finely chopped yellow or green garlic chives (6 oz)

About 1/3 cup milk to use in the margins of the won ton wrappers to “glue” closed

Panfrying

1 tablespoon peanut oil
1/3 cup warm water

Mix together ground pork, soy sauce, oil, ginger, and bean paste in a medium bowl, then stir in chives.

Form the dumplings

Keep the won ton wrappers cold until the last minute. Using two fingers of each hand, dip generously into a small bowl of the milk. Touching the edges of the wrapper w/ the milk, you will be creating the “glue” to keep the filling from spilling out or leaking from the dumpling.

Taking a small amount of filling, place it near one corner of the wrapper, but not on the milk. Bring up the opposite corner up to form a triangle and gently press the won ton wrapper to close tightly forming a triangle. For a variation on a theme, you can place the filling in the center of the won ton paper and bring up each corner and pinch the tops closed, creating a little package.

It is important to make all your won tons and THEN heat the oil in the skillet.

Fry the dumplings:

Heat oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over moderate heat until hot, then remove from heat and arrange dumplings in a tight circular pattern standing up in oil (they should touch one another). Cook, uncovered, over moderate heat until oil sizzles, then drizzle warm water (1/3 cup) over pot stickers and cook, covered, until bottoms are browned, 8 to 10 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons more water if skillet looks dry before bottoms are browned.

Carefully remove w/ tongs and make a nice presentation on the plate.

Fill small dishes w/ Chinese mustard, sweet & sour sauce, and ketchup for dipping.

CHICKEN IN LETTUCE LEAVES

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 tablespoon finely chopped peeled fresh ginger
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 scallions, chopped (1/4 cup)
2 skinless boneless chicken breast halves (about 1 lb total), cut into 1/2-inch pieces
1 (8-oz) can sliced water chestnuts, rinsed and coarsely chopped
1/4 cup bottled hoisin sauce (preferably Lee Kum Kee, House of Tsang, or Koon Chun brand)
1 1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon rice vinegar (not seasoned)
1/2 cup pine nuts (2 1/2 oz)
12 large red- or green-leaf lettuce leaves

Heat a wok or a 12-inch heavy skillet (not nonstick) over moderately high heat until just smoking, then add oil. Add ginger, salt, and 2 tablespoons scallions and stir-fry until ginger is fragrant, about 45 seconds. Add chicken and stir-fry until just cooked through, about 2 minutes. Add water chestnuts, hoisin sauce, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, and pine nuts and stir-fry until heated through, about 1 minute. Transfer to a bowl and sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons scallions.

Have guests serve themselves by spooning chicken mixture into lettuce leaves and wrapping leaves around filling to enclose.

It is important to cut the chicken as tiny as possible.

Pineapple with Freshly Shaved Coconut

½ fresh coconut

rubbed w/ fresh lime

shaved onto freshly sliced pineapple chunks.

Serve on a mountain of crushed ice