



Feeding The Muse

**Recipes For Authors
Recipes By Authors**

Edited By Leona R Wisoker

THE NECESSARY LEGAL STUFF

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Editor: Leona R Wisoker

Typeset: Leona R Wisoker

First Edition Published 2018

Published in the United States

For more information address The Scribbling Lion, LLC:

The Scribbling Lion, LLC
P.O. Box 353
Lightfoot, VA 23090
<http://www.thescribblinglion.com>

Ordering Information:

Available in ebook format only at this time.

ISBN:

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DEDICATION

For all the people out there who have to cook for, alongside, or clean up after anyone creative.

For all the people who had the patience to teach us how to feed ourselves in the first place.

For our fans, who keep us eager to work with whatever tools our Muses hand us on any particular day.

And most of all, to our various Muses, without whom we'd have nothing to eat, on so many levels.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This cookbook could never have happened without the patience, generosity, creativity, support, and love of so, so many people. Of special note are the contributors: Allen L Wold, Jonah Knight, Gail Z Martin, Elektra Hammond, Danny Birt, Steven Savage, Edward R Morris, Leona R Wisoker, and Malcolm Gin. Danielle Ackley McPhail was kind enough to brainstorm the title, and Steven Savage donated the cover art. All were fabulously patient at all stages of this project! Thank you, one and all, for being a part of this world, and of our lives.

Every one of the contributors, of course, drew on an enormous legacy handed along by family, friends, and various random encounters with unique and exhilarating meals. A hearty bow of gratitude is due there as well.

Now then. In most cookbooks, every recipe is written out with strict formatting consistency. Well ... this is a cookbook for and by writers, and each person was told explicitly to let their personality shine through in their entry. In other words, this is not a conventional, tidily organized cookbook. Some entries are long. Some are short. Some are detailed, others offer a more casual approach. The formatting wanders all over the place: one might have lists of ingredients and steps to follow, while the next chapter presents a paragraph by paragraph ramble through not only the recipe, but a personal story of its creation.

Regardless, all of the recipes are fun to read, offering intriguing glimpses into a variety of cultures and traditions. I'm quite sure that several of the recipes in this book will send you searching through your cabinets to see if you have the ingredients — and taking a fast trip to the store if not!

[From Offstage: *AHEM*]

Ah. Yes. That's my Muse, currently lounging in the corner chair impatiently, rolling zer eyes at me, wanting me to make zer that chicken soup ze loves so much. Ze promises, absolutely swears, that I'll be back to work on that mothballed manuscript after ze gets a bowlful of broth. So I'll back reluctantly away from this foreword and head for the kitchen.

I leave you with a sincere hope that the contents of this cookbook will please both yourself and your Muses, and with an invitation to follow all the contributors on your favorite social media platform. Please do ask us questions about the recipes, and send us pictures and comments as you accomplish each one!

Now go forth and discover meals to excite your palate and coax your own Muse into motion!

FOREWORD

by Gail Z. Martin

Food plays a big role in writing, both in the lives we create for our characters, and in our own lives as authors. I don't think you can have a novel without talking about food at some point, and I know you can't create a book without feeding both the author and the muse!

Nutritionists and psychologists caution against connecting emotionally with food, but as I pointed out, there's a reason it was the "Last Supper" instead of the "Last Aerobics Class." Food is emotionally, personally and culturally significant. It is as much what defines who we are as the language we speak, the beliefs we hold, and the rituals to which we subscribe. Our foods reflect our upbringing, how much money we have, what region we hail from, who we find kinship with. Expats and immigrants will go out of their way and pay extra for comfort foods from back home. Recipes are treasured heirlooms handed down through generations, and nostalgic foods are intrinsic parts of our holidays and life passages.

It's far more than mere sustenance, although food also sustains us. When there is no choice, and we must eat to live, then anything will do. But when we have a choice, well, then we match our food to our mood, our location, our situation, our companions. Food is how we celebrate, how we grieve, how we console ourselves and acknowledge life passages.

As an author, I know that food is as much a way to convey information about a character as his/her clothing, way of speaking, birthplace, or status. We can say volumes about a character's personal history and emotional state by talking about their food cravings or aversions. As readers, we can bond with a fictional character who wants to binge the same favorite food on a bad day.

Food is part of storytelling. Whether it's a banquet at a royal wedding or a hurried meal on the lam, food tells us so much about the setting, the environment, the choices or lack thereof. I'd argue that you can convey the socio-economics and politics of a kingdom through a single banquet scene, showing the types of foods served, who is present, and how the situation is managed. Is the food grown locally and seasonal, or exotic and imported? Is there plenty or is it scarce? Are some foods reserved only for people of certain classes, or forbidden to some groups? Who is served first and last? Who does the serving? What are the rituals around food preparation and eating? How bad is a faux pas during a meal and who is likely to make one?

Experts tell us that smell is one of the longest-lasting memories, and food generates smells, good and bad. Think back to childhood, or to key moments in your life, and you'll probably remember a food and a smell.

Food matters to the writer, too. I couldn't function without coffee. It fuels my writer brain. For others, it's tea or hot chocolate. Writers congregate and do business in the bar because most of us are introverts and a little alcohol sets us at ease with all...those... people. During the creative process, we may enjoy taking a break to prepare a meal, or live on take-out during the final editing crunch. There are books of mine that when I re-read them, I have a very strong image of what I was eating at the time I wrote a particular scene.

So here's to Feeding the Muse! May the recipes and insights in this book bring you joy and sustain you in body and spirit!

SYMBOLS KEY



COFFEE & ECLECTICA



NO COOKING INVOLVED



STOVETOP RECIPE



OVEN REQUIRED



SUPER EASY PREP



ELECTRIC KETTLE

MALCOLM GIN

HAPA HOME COOKING

Here's the full menu for this chapter:

- Wok Hei Lettuce with Chopped Salted Chiles
- Mustard Green Soup with "Old Shoe Leather"
- Steamed Salt Fish with Pork
- Five Spice Chicken Hearts with Garlic Chives

Here, I describe a somewhat exotic Chinese menu and meal that I love for comfort and a taste of home, and that I make for myself when I need the right kind of solace. To me, feeling at home and comfortable sometimes includes wok hei. And pungent ingredients and flavors. And pork and chicken. And spicy, salty goodness. I hope you'll encounter something new to you in each of these dishes, be it wok hei, or my father's "old shoe leather", or chicken hearts. Of course you can substitute, but I hope you won't.

I'm half Chinese, but entirely too well assimilated into mainstream US culture, so it's only recently that I've discovered my talents at "wok hei" stir frying. Wok hei is the art of applying as much heat as possible to vegetables when stir frying -- if you do it right, the vegetables are cooked, but still crisp. Some folks reckon that the living chi from the plant somehow remains in a really perfectly cooked wok hei stir fry.

As a side note, given that you're a writer or fannish, I will assume you know how to do Google or other research. If I don't provide a link for something you want to know about, I hope you'll have enough information to do a good search just from context.

So let's talk about recipes. These recipes include a good wok hei stir fry with a pre-made condiment that you can make at home and put up, a good way to cook a very cheap part of a chicken, a classic Cantonese use for salt-preserved fish, and a very pleasant and invigorating soup.

If you're a foodie, I'm sure you've heard a lot about woks. Cook's Illustrated seems to think that in the US we can't have good woks, which is kind of breathtakingly ethnocentric, but I have good news: Cook's isn't the only game in town -- maybe try [Serious Eats](#) instead; they have [a good guide](#) for using a flat bottom wok to cook with Chinese style high heat on an electric range. ("[Can I Stir-Fry With An Electric Burner?](#)", February 2013 post)

My advice is: get a wok ring and a round-bottomed wok. Get a proper wok spatula (look for the terms "shovel", "spatula", and "wok chuan" when searching. I recommend looking on [The Wok Shop](#)). See if you can put your wok basically right on top of your (gas) burner -- give it a little air gap but not much. If you don't have a gas stove, maybe consider an outdoor propane

wok burner, or a portable butane gas burner. If you can only cook on an electric stove, it is indeed possible, and I strongly recommend giving it a try.



Chopped Salted Chiles

(Inspiration from [Fuschia Dunlop's Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook](#) and also from commentary and posting from the [Tigers & Strawberries](#) blog. ("Homemade Hunan Salted Chilies", August 2007 post).

First, let's discuss wok hei stir fried lettuce with the condiment I mentioned earlier: chopped salted chiles. Set up your equipment so you can easily clean up by dumping everything in the dishwasher or wash with hot, soapy water. Steel yourself not to rub your eyes or your face. You can even wear goggles!

Get a pound of red hot chiles. When you select the chiles, select some spicier than your usual. I recommend a few serranos or red Korean chiles. You can use a mix of peppers you like, just make sure that some of them are genuinely spicy. You're going to make a lactic acid fermentation of these chiles. Like kimchi, but for chiles. After the fermentation is done, you can freeze them and they'll basically hold forever.

You can make this easier by doing some *mise en place*: make sure your salt is measured out and your container is prepped before you start cutting the chiles. Because this is a fermentation, make sure all your equipment is thoroughly cleaned or sanitized.

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking: 0 minutes

Makes: 1 pint of chopped, salted, fermented chiles

Equipment:

- Disposable gloves
- Sanitized pint mason jar and lid
- Cutting board
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- Canning funnel (optional)
- Goggles (optional)

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of spicy chiles, all one kind or a mix - your choice
- 1/4 cup of kosher salt

Steps:

1. Wash and sort through your chiles, discarding any that show signs of spoilage or mold. Dry thoroughly.
2. Put on your gloves, get out that knife and cutting board, and chop the peppers to about the size of peas - uniformity is not important.
3. Discard stems. Keep the seeds and pith. We want this thing spicy.
4. Mix the chiles in a clean mixing bowl with 3 Tablespoons of the salt.
5. Put the chiles in the jar. Top with the rest of the salt. Screw the top on the jar - finger tight.
6. Clean up - make sure to throw away your gloves and thoroughly wash chile-contaminated tools and equipment.
7. Now let the mixture ferment. During the first week, keep it on the counter and open the jar a crack every couple of days to release any pent up gas. Afterwards, store in a cool dark cupboard for 2 weeks, and keep it closed. After this 3 week total ferment, you should store it in the fridge or freezer.

If you keep it in the freezer it'll keep for a very long time. Because of the high salt content, the chiles may never freeze hard. If you keep it in the fridge, it will last a few months. I've known Chinese aunts and grandmothers to keep this on the counter, but they use it every day and use it up in a couple of weeks at most. Also, be aware that the mixture may show activity and bubbles even in the freezer. If it gets moldy, throw it away, but food safety has to be up to you and the FDA.

You can now use these to great effect in your wok hei lettuce!



Wok Hei Lettuce

This is a speciality in nearby restaurants, including [Peony Seafood Restaurant](#) in Oakland Chinatown. I reverse engineered it so I could make it at home, though Grace Young wrote about the technique in [Breath of a Wok](#) too. Like many Chinese recipes, this can be liberally modified to your own ends, tastes, and style, but I'll try to provide a reference point from which you can move forward. This version is Sichuan-inspired. Grace Young's is more Cantonese - garlicky but not spicy, and it doesn't use chopped salted chiles.

Wok hei stir frying is carried out at the highest heat you can get out of your stove, campfire, grill, charcoal stove, or whatever you have. Because it's so hot, everything cooks very quickly. The technique requires mise en place, where sauces and ingredients are already measured out and all you have to do is dump them into the wok while you're maniacally stirring with the other hand. Go for it, and don't be afraid of the heat.

Preparation: 10 minutes

Cooking: 2 - 5 minutes

Makes: 4 side servings, 2 main dish servings

Equipment:

- Wok
- Wok spatula
- Flame concentrator (optional)

Ingredients:

- 1 Tablespoon neutral, high smoke point cooking oil (canola/rapeseed, avocado, etc.)
- 1 teaspoon of salted chiles, minced
- 1 clove of garlic and/or 1/2 inch of ginger, crushed, minced, sliced, or chopped (optional)
- 1 large head of lettuce, washed, but not completely dry, cut or torn into 1 to 2 inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1/2 Tablespoon light soy or Tamari soy sauce
- 1 Tablespoon sherry or Chinese rice wine
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil

Steps:

1. Turn your burner all the way up. Slap your wok on there and let it get really hot. If you have a vent, turn it up high. If not, maybe do this recipe outside. It can get smoky.
2. Add the neutral oil, the chopped salted chiles, and, if you have them, ginger and garlic. Let these aromatics fry up a little in the oil. Don't stick your face in there - the aerosolized oils can really sting your eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. When you feel like the aromatics are sufficiently fried up, after 1 or 2 minutes, dump all the lettuce on top and start stirring the heck out of everything. You need to get a lot of motion in there. The idea is to expose the lettuce to the heat and cook it, but don't cook it limp, so keep everything moving in the wok.
4. When the lettuce just starts to change appearance (it should go from looking entirely raw to darkening a little where the oil and heat hit it -- sometimes with good wok hei, it gets *greener*), add the fish sauce, soy, and sherry to the mix. Hear the sizzle and keep stirring like a demon. You want to give the sauces another 30 seconds or so, enough to mingle, cook, and mellow.
5. Finally, turn the heat off, add the sesame oil, toss a little more, taste, and serve.

If you like, serve on steamed rice. The lettuce should be slightly wilted, but, if anything, more vividly green than it went in. The texture on a bite is ever so slightly soft, but also still crispy. Don't worry if you don't get it quite right the first time. It's a difficult technique, but well worth getting right.

OLD SHOE LEATHER

"Old shoe leather" was my father's name for dried, preserved tangerine peel, and this was one of my father's favorite recipes for enjoying the flavors of the peel: acid, citrus, and funky. The fat in the pork broth transmits the flavors well and the mustard greens are in a great position to contrast while simultaneously harmonizing with the rest of the dish.

Aside from the technical accomplishment of brewing a clear, unboiled broth from the pork (which hinges on your willingness to be patient and on having an oven-safe stock pot), the dish is relatively simple and serves primarily as a comfort food, and taste of home with the slightly sharp and complex taste of the dried, preserved tangerine peels.

My father would cook this slowly over a day or two, focusing first on making the clear broth and concentrating it, and then moving on to carefully assembling small, tidy bowls of soup with the perfect amount and placement of mustard greens and small pork slices, a drip of soy sauce or sesame oil. It's a pleasant, rich broth, a warming cup or bowl, with just a tiny kick from that fermented peel. (I recommend removing the tangerine peel from the bowl before serving - or at least warn your guests not to chew the peel.)

First, you start by making a clear stock.

Clear Pork Stock

(This recipe inspired by my own research and experimentation, and guides from both the [Red Cook](#) site and Gloria Bley Miller's [The Thousand Recipe Chinese Cookbook](#).)



The way to make a clear stock is to simmer, NEVER boil, a good amount of trimmed bones with some basic flavorings. Never salt a stock. Leave it to future you to salt and season it later. This particular stock starts with a significant amount of ginger and a moderate amount of scallions. But that's it. If you taste it while starting it on the stove, be aware that it will taste very hot with ginger. But after you finish it in the oven, the ginger fire will have mellowed to become tangy and flavorful.

If you get bones with some meat on them, you may pick the meat off after you make the stock. This meat will taste bland until you salt it, so if you eat it, be sure to add salt.

If you have never made stock, I strongly recommend it. It's such a good skill to have, and it's so fortifying in a mind/body/soul and self-sufficiency sort of way that it really is worth any fussiness it feels like you're going through. Another benefit is that stock freezes and thaws very well so if you make more than you want to use immediately, assuming you have room in your

freezer, you can make a present for future you and pack up a few cups for later use.

If you're using this broth for the mustard green soup below, reserve enough stock at the clear stage, at step 5 in this recipe. For that recipe, your broth should be clear.

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking: 3 - 16 hours

Makes: 4 - 6 cups of stock, depending on concentration

Equipment:

- Oven safe stock pot and lid that fit your oven
- Kitchen thermometer (optional)
- Large shallow spoon for skimming
- Aluminum foil (optional)
- Fine strainer
- Tongs
- Freezer-safe containers (optional)

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds raw pork bones (trimmed or not, whatever you can get)
- 8 cups cold water
- 4 scallions, washed and trimmed, and cut to 2 inch segments
- 2 inches of unpeeled ginger root, in 1/4 inch slices

Steps:

1. Set oven to 200 F.
2. Start with the stockpot on your stove. Put the pork bones, scallions, ginger root, and cold water in it. Heat on high until the water simmers. As soon as it's simmering, turn the burner all the way down and keep the broth at a low simmer.
3. Skim the particles and scum every few minutes. Do this until the scum stops floating to the top (you may still get tiny bubbles, but scum will reduce significantly), around 20 to 30 minutes. Discard the skimming liquid.
4. Cover the pot with aluminum foil or a lid. Put it in the oven for at least 3 hours (see below).
5. Taste the stock. At the end of 3 hours, the liquid will be very clear. Everything in it will look cooked. The ginger taste may still be pretty hot. If you want to stop here, your broth later will be light and subtle. If you want a stronger taste in the stock, keep going. Remove the pieces of ginger with tongs. Put the pot back in the oven and go to bed.
6. Let the oven run overnight.
7. After 8 - 12 more hours, the broth will still be pretty clear but will be more brown. Taste -- to get a good idea of the final flavors, add a tiny sprinkle of

salt to your tasting spoon. By this point, "hot" ginger flavors should be greatly diminished.

8. If you want a thicker, more gelatinous broth, keep cooking it throughout the day. You can take the cover off to slowly concentrate the broth. By now, even if you're being very careful with temperature and never boiling it, the broth will start getting a little cloudy.
9. Whenever you decide to take the broth out of the pot and pack it up for storage or use, first pull the large pieces out of the pot with tongs, then give the remaining liquid some kind of filtering, though a metal sieve or even through a coffee filter (coffee filters are great for clear broth but slow and finicky to use). Let the stock cool to room temperature on the counter in a jar or Tupperware, label it, and put it in the fridge or freezer for later use.

You can make the stock well ahead of time. Stocks usually keep well in the freezer as long as you give them a little room in the container to expand during freezing. We often defrost and use year old frozen stock. But for a delicate soup like this mustard green soup, consider using newly made stock, at least once, so you know what it's like.



Mustard Green Soup with "Old Shoe Leather"

Tangerine peel has a sort of deep, citrus-oil astringent, almost peppery quality to it. Beware that some varieties are sweetened, usually with cane sugar. These are not ideal variations for this recipe, but if you soak the peel multiple times, you can reduce the sweetness and it'll do. If you can't get it at a local store, you can actually make it yourself.

Here's [a guide](#) on that. ("How To Make Dried Tangerine Peel", May 2017 post on [The Woks of Life](#))

If you do get it from a store, it may not be orange colored, but brown/black. That's okay too. Finally, if you don't want to bother tracking down dried tangerine peel, you can substitute a dash of pepper, or ground Sichuan peppercorns.

Note that mustard greens are also known as mustard cabbage. If you can't get it, any slightly bitter green will do, including yau choy, bok choy, and maybe even spinach or chard.

This recipe should be rich, and tasty, but may not necessarily be filling by itself.

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking: 20 minutes

Makes: 3 or 4 main dish servings

Equipment:

- Saucepan

Ingredients:

- 1/4 pound lean pork
- 1/2 pound mustard greens
- 6 cups clear pork stock
- Salt (at most 1 teaspoon)
- Sugar (optional - at most 1/2 teaspoon)
- 1 dried, preserved tangerine peel, or substitute a dash of pepper or ground Sichuan peppercorn
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce

Steps:

1. Boil some water and soak the dried tangerine peel in the water. If it's sweetened, do this a few times, changing the water each time, to diminish the sweetness.
2. Cut pork into matchsticks or slivers. If you lightly freeze it, you may be able to cut it finer, but be sure it's completely thawed when you start cooking it in the soup.
3. Wash and cut up mustard greens into 1 inch pieces.
4. Heat stock in a saucepan. Add tangerine peel. Bring to simmer. Don't boil it, or you'll undo all the work you put into the clear stock.
5. Add pork to stock and stir to separate the pieces, then leave it alone. Any more jostling than strictly required risks making the soup cloudy. Cook for 2 - 3 minutes.
6. Add mustard greens. Cook for 3-5 more minutes. You're looking for the greens to fully turn a brighter green color while simmering.
7. Add salt, sugar, and soy sauce to taste. Do taste it while cooking the cabbage if you aren't sure of your proportions.
8. Serve. Each serving should have a little pork and a little greens. Remember to take out the tangerine peel.

A WORD ABOUT WATER CHESNUTS AND SALT FISH

Many Asian foods suffer terribly for being canned. I think water chestnuts are the most injured by canning. What, fresh, is a delicately sweet, crunchy experience, akin to a sweetly milky and, if possible, more crisp jicama, becomes a bland, crunchy, and slightly metallic experience from the can. Many cooks and food writers familiar with the injustice of canned water chestnuts recommend avoiding them altogether, to the point of making an entirely different dish rather than using canned. Others just recommend substituting with fresh jicama if you can obtain that more easily. If you can find water chestnuts fresh, give each one a hard squeeze and take only those that won't yield. For more information and opinions, Serious Eats

published [an article](#) about it in 2016, which also shows how to peel the fresh water chestnut. ("Fresh Water Chestnuts Are A Thing, And They're Amazing", June 2016 post)

Here also is [a guide](#) to obtaining the right kind of salted, fermented fish or "salt fish". ("Chinese Dried And Preserved Ingredients", page on The Woks Of Life)

One important tip I have about the salt fish is that because it's not presoaked in this recipe, it's quite tough and difficult to cut into slices for the recipe. Be sure to use a durable, stable cutting board and a sturdy knife, preferably a butchering cleaver (one that is strong, sharp, and thick). You will have to lean into cutting this thing, so make sure you're braced and not surprised by the difficulty of the cut. Also, don't cave to the temptation of whacking away at the fish. Apply steady, heavy, rocking pressure with a knife or cleaver to cut through it, bones and all, into a cross-wise cut, and make each piece about 1/4" thick. Yes, you're cutting right through the backbone as part of the cut.

Keep in mind that salted, fermented fish is, firmly, an acquired taste, as are fresh water chestnuts.

This next recipe was one of my father's favorites, and despite its pungency, he got me to love it by the age of 12. Once you get comfortable with the strong smell of the steamed salted fish (this is a dish that you may want to cook outside or under a hood with good ventilation), the flavors the fermented salt-preserved fish cultivates, steam-cooked, both in itself and in the pork patty it cooks on top of, are sublime but salty, umami, mild, and lovely. This is among the class of dishes called "rice sending", with powerful tastes and flavors, where small portions can (especially if you're not financially well off) flavor and encourage big bites of rice with small bites of the dish.



Steamed Salt Fish with Pork

(Inspired by the basic recipe in Gloria Bley Miller's [The Thousand Recipe Chinese Cookbook](#), [The Woks of Life](#) blog, and my own and my father's recipes and research.)

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking: 20 - 30 minutes

Makes: 3 or 4 main dish servings, more if serving over rice

Equipment:

- Steamer
- Flat plate that fits steamer
- Plate gripper or steamer rack that fits your plate (optional but very helpful)

Ingredients:

- 1 pound fatty ground pork
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon dark soy sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 scallion stalk, minced
- 1/4 pound fresh shiitake mushrooms, or 3 dried, soaked, rinsed and drained, then minced
- 1/2 cup fresh water chestnuts, minced, or substitute an equal amount of jicama
- four to six 1/4" slices of salt fish

Steps:

1. Thoroughly mix ground pork, cornstarch, and soy sauce.
2. Mince the other ingredients. Add everything except the salt fish to pork mixture and mix thoroughly.
3. Prepare a steamer and select a plate that fits inside. If you have a rack to help lift it, place that too. Start the water heating.
4. If possible, form and fit your entire mixture in the plate, no thicker than 3/4". It can reach all the way to the rim; the patty will cook down and get smaller during steaming. If that's not possible, make two mini-patties on two separate plates, possibly on two levels of your steamer.
5. Arrange the slices of salt fish on top of the patty/patties.
6. Steam for 20 to 30 minutes. You can use a probe thermometer (internal temperature should be higher than 165 F) or check the patty for internal pinkness (you want no pink left).
7. When taking the plate out of the steamer for serving, try to preserve the juices that will have accumulated in the plate. These are extra yummy on rice when you serve.
8. Serve in wedges, on top of rice if desired. If the diner wishes, include a salt fish slice, but warn them of possible bones, and even scales.



Five Spice Chicken

The two exotic ingredients here are chicken hearts and garlic chives. Of course you can substitute more familiar parts of the chicken, or even other meats. Hearts in most animals are lean, but chicken hearts can be fattier, at least on the outside, if the chicken was raised richly.

To prepare chicken hearts specifically, slice them almost in half, making further cuts part-way through the flattened heart to make it flatter without cutting it entirely apart. If you don't like the blood (which becomes a kind of

jelly inside the heart), you can remove or rinse it out while butterflying it. You can also take this opportunity to trim the fat off the outside, but remember that fat carries and enhances flavor. You can also substitute other meats or parts of chicken into this dish - just experiment and add some fat if your meat selection makes it all too lean. My father preferred dark meat, but this will work with white, and a little extra cooking oil.

It might also be pretty good with frozen and pressed tofu. Freezing can make already firm tofu firmer without pre-cooking it. Freezing it also makes it more porous and more able to absorb the flavors of the marinade.

If you can find them, garlic chives are flat-bladed and long, about 12 to 18 inches, with very short white bottoms (where the flat-blades are gathered) almost like tall, skinny blades of grass. To use, you trim the white off and finely chop the blades. If you can't find them, use the green parts of green onions, or even other alliums, like shallot or more conventional chives.

Preparation: 20 minutes

Marinade: 20 minutes to a few hours

Cooking: 20 - 30 minutes

Makes: 2 or 3 main dish servings per pound of meat

Equipment:

- Saucepan with cover
- Stirring implement

Ingredients:

For each pound of meat, mix in a bowl large enough to hold all the meat:

- 1 teaspoon five spice powder
- 1 clove of garlic, minced/crushed
- 1 inch of fresh ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon of sesame oil
- 2 Tablespoons of dry sherry (if you use cooking sherry, it'll be salty, so you may wish to cut down the amount of soy sauce to compensate)
- 2 Tablespoons of soy sauce
- (optional) drizzle of hot (sesame or other) oil, to taste
- (optional) 1 Tablespoon of minced green onion/chives (these do taste different, so experiment)

Steps:

1. Mix all five spice marinade ingredients, powder, garlic, ginger, sesame oil, sherry, soy, and, optionally, hot oil together in the bowl. Add in meat. Toss thoroughly (I use my hands).

2. Refrigerate and marinate the meat for at least 20 minutes. Overnight is okay, but the flavor may be too strong if you do marinate overnight. Experiment to find out what's to your taste.
3. To cook: Put marinated meat into a large, lidded frying pan, or, if your pan is not large enough, cook it in batches. Make sure to cook the meat in a proportional amount of marinade.
4. Cover and heat (medium to high). This is very flexible, but the aim is to steam the mixture in its own juices for a while, then take the cover off and simmer until the juices reduce. If the juices reduce too far, add water. You don't want to cook the sauce dry; always cook in some liquid. Cook the meat this way until it's done. If it's hearts, just keep stirring. If it's chicken thighs or larger pieces like pork chops, be sure to turn them every few minutes.
5. My dad and I traditionally sliced off a piece or took a piece of the cooking meats out of the cooking pan to slice it up, taste it and otherwise fuss it to determine doneness, but a meat thermometer should work for most things, although I'm pretty sure hearts are too small. Make sure there's no pinkness remaining in the meat, but try not to overcook it. If you use a meat thermometer, look for a temperature of 165 F.
6. Serve on rice, with extra sauce to flavor the rice.

MALCOLM GIN BIO

Malcolm Gin is trans (masculine pronouns are acceptable, along with any other you choose to use), intersex, and non binary. He's a feminist, or feminist accomplice, for life. And he's half-Chinese, and a Taoist philosopher. Malcolm is a spiritual, methodical, ex-scientist. He speaks and writes about social justice activism in gender, gender equality, racial equity, disability equity and access, age equity and access, elder care, cooking, general and specific geekery, and philosophy (a non-exhaustive list). He's also a technical communicator, and has a Women's Studies Minor with a Bachelor's of Science degree from George Mason University.

He recently concluded a year-long fellowship with 27 other fellows, interrogating Equity in the Arts at the [Yerba Buena Center for the Arts](#) in San Francisco. As part of the fellows' offerings, he recorded some of his thoughts about the fellowship in the Radio Free Equity [podcast with Chelsea Wills](#).

He also recorded a [podcast with Tim Yang](#) on Race Invaders. (Episode 33: Being an SJW the Generation X Way", October 2017) Malcolm is available as a guest on other interesting podcasts, and is also running a [podcasting production Wiki](#) for collecting experience, advice, and knowledge on creating podcasts, for beginners and experts alike. (Pod.malcolmgin.com)

Malcolm keeps a [blog](#) on WordPress ("Malcolm's Geek Blog", malcolmgin.com/geekblog) He also maintains an extremely modest [Patreon page](#). His family, food, and research Wiki, which includes many recipes and family favorites, can be found [here](#). (Food.malcolmgin.com)

He's trying to reboot his technical career in data analytics, and technical strategy, and is also working on several books, not least of which is a cookbook for geeks and cooking enthusiasts, written in collaboration with his partner, who is a professional chef and chef-instructor at a local community college.

Malcolm also writes: always trying to, but rarely succeeding in, getting at the root of things.

AFTERWORD

By Edward Morris

Muses come in many forms, difficult to pin down except in the ways I am attempting. Personally, as well as person-to-person, Muses see the idea right in front of them walking around, and communicate it to the pair of hands and mind and heart that can best put the thing to life. Some Muses are adept at the trades which they catalyze, and some just...see.

A Muse walks up to someone writing, or painting, and looks over their shoulder and says, "Business or Pleasure?" knowing all the while that it is both, just wanting to hear the maker gush about their baby. "What are you working on now?" is the first question we ask. And we really want to know.

And we hotwire. "You know, that reminds me of my homie who [does X similar thing in his garage on nights off] Maybe you two should talk?" The next thing you know, there is a synthesized new project that wouldn't have otherwise happened. Feminist writers talking to Bizarro writers. Modernists learning from Surrealists. Starry-eyed kids sitting at the feet of old heads from the Seventies...and vice versa. Truly.

The old saying, "Those who Can't...Teach," is a dire oversimplification. Those who don't always have time to. Those who always wanted to but time got late while they were doing other things. Those who once Did, but retired from the trade. Or, like me, Those who eat, sleep and breathe what they Do.

Muses are born and made. Sometimes, the young Muse's reach exceeds their grasp, and they are called to account for what they inspire. But this is part of our evolution. We Muses have poor impulse-control. Some Things Just Seem FUN.

Early Muse formation is a combination of precociousness, innate abilities in many areas...and an eye. William Burroughs called it "the writer's all-seeing eye," though it applies to all creators, and pointed out that it is perfectly visible and readily apparent from a very early age. A true Muse is the one who tells their siblings, "Now [draw this / write about this / sing this /make this.] Make This."

A true Muse has no one creator to which they are held in some kind of thrall. Muses in practice will meet an artist, a writer, a DJ, a poet...and get them to talk about their work. A true Muse really listens, and makes the creator feel like the center of the Universe when they speak with them.

And then the creator says... "You know, I might just go home and dig that [project] back out. I just might." And the Muse just smiles, and waits for the subsequent phone call. "HEY, YOU'RE NOT GONNA BELIEVE..." "You finished it." "How did you--" "It's my job." Or some variation thereof.

A true Muse sees the inside and outside of the Creator, and is their conduit to Life just as much as the middle world that all creators tread with one foot daily. A true Muse brings the last bit of the project to their Creator's office without being asked. A true Muse learns ASL or writes notes rather than interrupting the creative process they have engendered when their Daedalus is in mid-flight.

We can build lifelong relationships with our Muses, great friendships, even a wild fling or two... but if the Muse cannot stand the creator as an actual person, the lopsidedness grows into a tangled web. If you become romantically involved with your Muse, just remember that the greater the tempest, the bigger the torch it extinguishes with all its cataracts and hurricanoes. Real love revolving around Muse-hood tends to involve two Muses getting together. Otherwise it gets lopsided and falls over from the inertia.

To be someone's Muse, you cannot just love their work... but must accept the whole person at all levels. You don't have to date them, or be in love with them... but you have to love their work. You have to understand them, and how they work, enough to improve the machine and make the thing you want to see. The thing that is nothing like your idea of it, the thing that is the physical manifestation of what poet Skip Fox called 'our more furious self.' Muses reflect that, to a creator, and drive creators to be the beauty that they see. The beauty that lets them out, and teaches them to remember how to sing.

In closing, to be a Muse is a two-way process. Those of us who love to inspire others need those of like kind to inspire us. Just like teaching. Any teaching process is reciprocal and builds others after its kind, which in turn effect the originals. The first and most important step is to be so enthralled by what one does that one cannot help but teach. After that, the process comes to you.

WHAT... Is A Scribbling Lion?

SHORT ANSWER

We love books. So we read books, and because we're crazy, we set up a bookstore to sell our favorites.

A MORE PRECISE, BUT LONGER, ANSWER

As [Leona's own writing career](#) has unfolded over the years, she's noticed a pattern of up-and-coming creative types having to arrange/beg shared table space at conventions, usually on a consignment basis. While consignment and/or shared tables make perfect sense from a business standpoint, the other folks involved usually haven't read your work and thus have no real handle or interest in marketing it. The only way to sell, then, is to be *at* the table every spare moment ... and lord-of-light, a ligature of increasingly desperate authors clustered around a single sales table is a terrifying sight by Sunday afternoon!

There's always hand-selling, but that involves dragging books all over the convention with you. Not ideal, embarrassing at times, and a significant source of back strain.

There has to be a better way, says Leona, and came up with The Scribbling Lion. We (meaning Leona and whoever she can rope in as volunteers) sell a steadily rotating selection of fantastic work, via both conventions and online venues. We support talented authors at the conventions we attend; sometimes, that means helping them learn how to sell their work. Other times, it means taking their work on consignment for the event. Sometimes they help us run the table. It's a flexible system!

One thing we do our level best to avoid is stocking the same inventory as another vendor at any given event. So if it's on our table, it won't be found anywhere else in the dealer's room!

Take a look at our Amazon page [here](#).

Explore our [web site](#).

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Sign up for The Irregular Update, (form is on both [The Scribbling Lion](#) front page and [Leona R Wisoker's web site](#)) which focuses on exciting new books and related information, and which comes out whenever we get around to it.

