



Howard Hillman's Great Peasant Dishes of the world

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hillmanwonders.com

Cha Chiang Mien

China

It originated as a peasant dish. Today, it is a popular national specialty.

Pronunciation:

chah chung min

Part 1 Recipe

■ Ingredients

Servings: 4

- **Ground lean pork**
300 grams or 2/3 pound
- **Sesame oil**
30 milliliters or 2 tablespoons
- **Oriental dried egg noodles**
300 grams or 2/3 pound
- **Peanut (or other veg.) oil**
30 milliliters or 2 tablespoons
- **Coarsely minced garlic**
5 milliliters or 1 teaspoon
- **Thickly sliced scallions**
3 tablespoons
- **Fresh ginger**
Coarsely minced
50 milliliters or 3 tablespoons
- **Fermented black beans**
Minced
15 milliliters or 1 tablespoon
- **Soy sauce**
20 milliliters or 4 teaspoons
- **Rice (or wine) vinegar**
30 milliliters or 2 tablespoons
- **Unseasoned chicken stock**
6 centiliters or 1/4 cup

■ Steps

- 1** Bring the pork to room temperature. Bring 1 liter or 4 quarts of water and the sesame oil to a rolling boil in a 1 1/2 liter or 6 quart pot over high heat.
- 2** Add the egg noodles to the boiling water and cook them for 3 minutes, or according to package directions. Drain the noodles and transfer them to a warm bowl of sufficient size to accommodate the tossing task described in step 7. Cover bowl and reserve for step 7.
- 3** Heat the peanut oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- 4** Add the pork and stir-fry the preparation for 3 minutes, breaking up the lumps as you cook the meat.
- 5** Add the garlic, scallions, ginger, and black beans, and stir-fry the ingredients for 1 minute.
- 6** Pour the soy sauce, vinegar, and chicken stock into the meat mixture. Cook it for 3 minutes, stirring frequently.
- 7** Spoon the pork sauce over the noodles. Toss the ingredients before transferring them to individual bowls or plates, and serve immediately.

Part 2

Cooking tips

■ Pointers

- **Cooking oil** - If you don't have sesame oil, substitute vegetable oil. Some type of oil is essential, because it helps keep the noodles from sticking together as they cook and as they sit in the serving bowl.
- **Cooking time** - Do not overcook the noodles in step 2 or they will become mushy.
- **Tossing** - When stir-frying in steps 4 and 5, constantly toss the ingredients in the oil in the bottom of the wok.
- **Black beans** - Black bean sauce may be substituted for the black beans if it is not overly seasoned.

■ Serving suggestions

- **Nonsummer** - Cha Chiang Mien is an ideal one-dish quick lunch for a nonsummer day.
- **Accompaniment** - Serve the noodles with a hot clear soup.
- **Conclusion** - End the meal with fresh fruit followed by tea.

■ Variations

- **Vegetables** - Add to your preparation one or more of the following vegetables, cut into julienne strips: bamboo shoots, carrots or cucumbers.
- **Chili oil** - Substitute it for the sesame oil.

Part 3
Travelog

This recipe for cha chiang mien, egg noodles with stir-fried pork, is one of the culinary treasures I brought back with me from China. I happened upon it through one of those chains of events that often lead a traveler from one pleasant experience to another.

During my stay in Hangzhou, I took a side trip to the gently rolling hills in the countryside to visit the Lung Ching (Dragon Well) tea plantation. The journey was something of a pilgrimage for me, because Dragon Well has long been my favorite green tea.

A worker guide gave me a morning's tour of the plantation, showing me how the tea is grown, harvested, and processed. When she discovered how much I appreciated Dragon Well tea, she covertly slipped me a small packet of the commune's very best tea, the number one tea out of sixteen possible grades. She advised me to take a half hour's ride to Running Tiger Spring. There, she explained, I could ask the attendant at the teahouse to brew this choice Dragon Well tea in water that has such high density and surface tension it seems to defy gravity. As I later saw with my own eyes, you can pour the famous Running Tiger Spring water into a glass to a level of about one third of an inch above the rim before it starts to overflow.

Next to my table at the teahouse sat an English-speaking resident of Hangzhou with whom I shared my once-in-a-lifetime pot of tea. We struck up a conversation and quickly discovered that we were both interested in Chinese gastronomy. When I told him of my interest in peasant cooking,

he invited me to his house to try cha chiang mien, prepared by his cook, who came from a peasant family. "Yes," I responded without hesitation, and that evening I was in possession of the recipe for this informal yet tempting dish.

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