

Cooking with Chef Coreen Guo of Ivy Wok Transcript

Please find the simplified transcript below of our cooking demonstration with Chef Coreen. We have only included the cooking demo part where we had some technical issues.

Coreen: We're going to put some hot water in here [wok] first.

YCA: We're making the fish or the shrimp first?

Coreen: The fish. The steamed fish. Water in the wok first. Hot water.

Coreen: And now putting in the stand [or plate or foil ring] to make sure the plate and fish doesn't touch the water. Then we are going to chop some ginger into slices. The ginger is already washed. We are going to throw this ginger away later, so we don't have to take off the ginger skin. So that the fish is not going to be too fishy. And cover it. And we are going to let it steam for 7-8 minutes. 7-8 minutes and it will be done.

YCA: Does that fit all sizes?

Coreen: No, 7-8 minutes is this size one. I will teach a simple way to test if it is cooked or not.

Coreen: So now we are going to wait 7-8 minutes. While we are waiting, we are going to start marinating the shrimp. As you can see the shrimp, we used the scissors to cut away the eyes and the whiskers. So right now we are going to put some sherry, some sesame oil, pepper.

YCA: Is that white pepper.

Coreen: Yes, white pepper. And some salt and sugar. And then we are going to mix it.

YCA: You left the shells on right.

Coreen: Yes. For Chinese New Year we always want to have the head and the tail on. Okay after you marinate it then we will toss with some cornstarch to make it crisp. Just coat the shrimp so that you see that it is covered.

YCA: How many shrimp should we use?

Coreen: It depends on how many guests you are inviting or have in your family. It all depends. Sometimes a pound, or two pounds. All depends on how many guests. I like to have 18 pieces but I'm going to give this away so I'm cooking more.

YCA: Can you tell people why 18 is a good number?

Coreen: Because for Chinese New Year, 18 in Cantonese means you will be guaranteed prosperous.

YCA: How do you decide to peel the shrimp before or after?

Coreen: We leave the shell on because it is going to be crispy. With taking the shell off it is going to be very dry and the texture is not going to be good and drier.

YCA: So how long should that sit?

Coreen: About 8-10 minutes. Usually I don't wait though. It doesn't matter because when you fry it and with the salt and pepper and onions it still tastes good.

YCA: Okay we can look at some of the set up here in the kitchen. These are some of the biggest woks I've ever seen.

Coreen: Usually we use this one for the chicken broth. Today we are using it just for hot water to steam the fish and then we will put in the chicken bones later to make the chicken soup.

Coreen: Okay, to see whether the fish is going to be cooked in 7-8 minutes. All you need to is take a chopstick and poke it see if the fish is done. [a chopstick should easily be able to pierce the thickest part of the fish.] To see if it is done, always poke it on the thickest part. We take the chopstick and poke the fish and it came out clean so we know it is cooked. Okay, so this fish is cooked. So now we just out this tray here and then I will show you a special Cantonese style of how we do the sauce. Now we go to this wok here and turn on the fire. The reason why we cooked the fish in the big wok is because we have no space in the wok here. So if you have a bigger cover at home you do not need the big wok. Once we get our wok heated up, we are going to put in some oil. Vegetable oil. So now we are going to drain out the juices from the fish.

YCA: Do we save that?

Coreen: No need to save it. Now we are going to dispose of the ginger slices.

Coreen: You can use a spoon to scrape the skin away but because my cleaver is very sharp so I can use it to get rid of the skin. So right now we are going to slice it thinly and then do it this way.

YCA: So we are basically making little sticks right?

Coreen: Yup. So now we are going to put it on the fish. We put the ginger first. Okay I'm going to show you some easy steps how to cut the scallion. You just need a couple scallions. Scallions have already been washed and now cut off the end. Then whichever size you want and then cut the entire scallion. Then you just thinly slice it. Which I have already precut it. So, then you put it on top of the fish.

Coreen: Okay now while I was doing the ginger and scallion, I already heated the wok. It has to be hot. Make sure there is no grease in the wok while it is heating up and you will be safe. Make sure you don't walk away when you put in the oil or you will get burned or have fire. Okay this is vegetable oil. Just because we have this in the restaurant. So if someone has other kinds of oil, it is okay. All you need to do is pour in some oil and still let it cook but do not run away because you'll get a fire. Wait for the oil to be hot. I'll show you a way to know how hot the oil is. Then we will splash the oil on the fish so it makes the fish taste good and have a better texture.

Coreen: You can see the smoke coming up now. Take the chopstick. See the bubbles. You can see the bubbles coming up so you know the oil is hot. When you are splashing the oil on your fish, make sure your spoon is completely dry so that you don't get burned. Now it's off the fire and we are going to splash the oil on the fish. Okay, don't worry it is not going to be oily. Now we are going to throw the excess oil away. The oil is giving the fish a smoother texture. This is just a simple way of cooking. Then after that you put some soy sauce over it. And that's it.

YCA: 15 minutes and Instagram worthy dinner. Eat up.

Coreen: Now we move on to the shrimp. We can use the same oil. Turn on the fire. We are frying the shrimp so we will need some extra oil. They can use any oil to fry. We just always use vegetable oil in the restaurant. So right now this is the way you can cook at home with the wok and stove. We only used the bigger steamer for the fish because I didn't have a big enough lid.

YCA: Do you have any tips for washing the wok?

Coreen: We use the steel wool to scrub because ours are stainless steel. But at home, use the same sponge but it's not metal. It's more like rubber so you can scrub it and not strip the wok. So don't use metal on a home wok.

Coreen: Okay same thing. Use the chopstick and see the bubble [testing in multiple areas of the wok for all around temperatures].

YCA: Can you put all of the shrimp in at once or in batches?

Coreen: It depends on how much shrimp. So as long as the shrimps are covered, keep adding. The reason I didn't pour the whole thing is the extra cornstarch will make a mess in the oil. Never ever use a metal in your wok because you will ruin your wok. Something wooden or rubber but the rubber has to be silicon. Chopsticks would be good to use.

YCA: These cook really quickly right?

Coreen: Yeah, when they are almost done, we will do another round so they will be more crispy.

YCA: So we are essentially double frying them?

Coreen: Yes, so we have a restaurant spider to take out the shrimp.

YCA: What would someone use at home to take them out?

Coreen: Just can use a sieve or a plate but make sure it has no water on it or the oil will pop and you can be burned.

YCA: So, you can tell the shrimp are done when they are bright pink like this?

Coreen: No, it's when they curl. Like this.

YCA: So when it curls it is done.

Coreen: So we are going to heat up the oil again for our second fry. I am going to take the extra flour away.

YCA: I don't have that at home what could I use instead.

Coreen: If you do not have that, just take a container with a sieve on top and pour the oil in the container then back in the wok. So this time it is really fast so the oil must be really hot. The first round is cooking. The second round is more about crisping. Just have everything have a quick coating and then take them out of the hot oil so the shrimp are not over cooked. You can hear how crispy they are. So we turn the fire down and now we are going to cut some onions.

YCA: Is that just a yellow onion?

Coreen: Yeah, any kind of onion that you like. In half. Slice it. One more round. So you always hold the knife at slant so you get to the top then you cut it straight down and all the slices are the same size.

Coreen: Okay now, come back here and using this for the onions and it will smell so good because of the shrimp. Always stir fry the onions here so that it will have the shrimp smell and flavor and be so much better. Okay clean the oil again.

YCA: How hot do we get the oil?

Coreen: Only one shot so it's like the second round [of the shrimp]. We don't want to over cook them but we aren't frying them. Just trying to cook them not make them crunchy. Okay at home get a container to pour your oil out and drain them.

YCA: It's like draining pasta so people at home can drain like draining pasta.

Coreen: Okay use the same wok but not going to wash it but if we do that we have to wait for the wok to heat up again. We are cooking this way to save time. So we will use a paper towel to wipe it off.

YCA: So are we just getting all the stuff from the frying out?

Coreen: Yes. Now we turn the fire on again and we are going to add salt and pepper in here.

YCA: White pepper again?

Coreen: Yup, just a little bit.

YCA: If people only have black pepper is that fine?

Coreen: That's fine. You can see that there is some burning in there now so you can throw in your onions and then your shrimp. Then you can just toss it.

YCA: If I can't toss it, can I just mix it up with chopsticks?

Coreen: Yes, you can also just mix it around with chopsticks. And the leftover of this scallion here, we'll chop into little dices. Throw it in for some color. Okay, done.