

Kung Pao Shrimp

By Maris Callahan

Did you know that it's quite easy to make your own Kung Pao? The name refers to a cooking technique from the Sichuan province of China, but there are a number of regional adaptations that vary slightly from one another.

For example, in Sichuan, the dish features the Sichuan peppercorn, a mild red pepper; while in Malaysia, Kung Pao is served with cashew nuts instead of peanuts. In America, Kung Pao is often overly salty, greasy, and too sweet. To keep those added calories, fat grams, and unwanted flavors off your plate, take Kung Pao shrimp back to its roots with a little spice and the savory flavor you crave from your favorite Asian dish.



Ingredients

Serves 4

2 tbsp stock (use chicken, fish, or vegetable — whatever you have on hand)
2 tbsp mirin
2 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tbsp sugar
1 tsp salt
2 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp cornstarch
2 tbsp water
2 tbsp grapeseed oil
1 lb shrimp, peeled and deveined
5 dried red chilies, whole optional — omit if you like a milder flavor
2 dried red chilies, crushed
¼ cup roasted peanuts
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tbsp green onion, chopped
2 tbsp ginger, freshly grated
Steamed jasmine rice

Directions

Step 1: To make the sauce, combine the stock, mirin, dark soy sauce, sugar, salt, and sesame oil. Set aside for later use. In another small bowl, mix the cornstarch and water. Set aside.

• **Step 2:** Heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat and add the grapeseed oil. Make sure the pan is nice and hot before you add the oil; this will help create a nice hot surface to sauté.

• **Step 3:** Sauté the shrimp, stirring occasionally for 2–3 minutes. Be careful not to overcook at this point; you'll want to cook until they are no longer opaque and lightly caramelized.

• **Step 4:** Add the chilies, peanuts, garlic, scallion, and ginger. Stir thoroughly until garlic and ginger are aromatic, for about 1 minute.

• **Step 5:** Stir cornstarch mixture to make sure that it's completely dissolved and well combined. Add sauce and cornstarch mixture to the sauté pan and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally to evenly distribute. Stir this for about 5 minutes, or until shrimp is evenly coated with sauce.

• **Step 6:** Serve over your favorite rice. Jasmine rice is great with this dish, as its long fluffy grains do a nice job absorbing some of the heat from the sauce, but if you like a different variety, you can substitute your favorite.