

January | **Szechwan pepper-salt**

From *China Moon Cookbook*, by Barbara Tropp

¼ cup Szechwan peppercorns, any thorns or twigs removed
½ cup kosher salt

Combine peppercorns and salt in a heavy skillet and toast over moderate heat, stirring, until the salt turns off-white, about 5 minutes. Adjust the heat so the peppercorns do not burn, but expect them to smoke.

What salt and pepper are to a Western cook, roasted Szechwan pepper-salt is to a Chinese cook. A little bit goes a long way, and for that little bit, there is no substitute. Once made, Szechwan pepper-salt should be stored in an airtight container away from light and heat.

February | **Roasted potatoes with rosemary**

From Taste of Home website

1 ¾ pounds small red potatoes, quartered
1 small onion, quartered
¼ cup olive oil
1-½ teaspoons dried rosemary, crushed
2 garlic cloves, minced
¼ teaspoon garlic salt

In a bowl, combine the potatoes, onion, oil, rosemary, garlic and garlic salt; toss to coat. Transfer to a foil-lined 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake, uncovered, at 425 degrees F for 25-30 minutes or until potatoes are tender and browned.



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March | **Sesame ginger salad dressing**

Modified version of a recipe from allrecipes.com

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup sesame seeds
- 1/4 cup minced fresh ginger root
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

In a small bowl, whisk together the oil, honey, vinegar, sesame seeds, ginger, garlic, sesame oil and red pepper flakes. Serve as salad dressing.

This dressing goes great over a fresh green salad with red bell peppers, almonds, sliced red onion, shredded carrot, pea pods, mandarin orange slices and edamame beans. Add cooked shredded chicken for a heartier meal.

April | **Caribbean jerk grilled shrimp**

Recipe from *Cook's Country* magazine, June–July 2007

- 1-1/2 pounds extra-large (21-25) shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped

Marinade:

- 1 habanero chile, seeded and chopped
- 1/4 cup pineapple juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon white wine vinegar
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Process or blend all marinade ingredients until smooth. Reserve 2 tablespoons, and transfer remaining marinade to a medium bowl. Pat shrimp dry with paper towels and butterfly. Add to bowl with marinade and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, or up to 1 hour. On a gas grill, heat all burners on high for 15 minutes. Scrape cooking grate clean. Meanwhile, thread marinated shrimp on skewers. Sprinkle one side of shrimp with sugar. Grill shrimp, sugared side down, with lid down, until lightly charred, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn all burners off, flip skewers, close lid, and cook until other side of shrimp is no longer translucent, 1 to 2 minutes. Using tongs, slide shrimp into medium bowl and toss with reserved marinade. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

An excellent dish for both cold and warm weather. The shrimp goes great with coconut rice.



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May | **Vanilla butter cookies**

Recipe from The Vanilla Queen blog

8 ounces unsalted butter
1 cup sugar
4 large egg yolks, beaten
2 tablespoons pure Tahitian vanilla extract or 1/2 teaspoon finely ground vanilla bean
2-1/4 cups unbleached flour
3/4 teaspoon baking powder
Pinch of salt

In a large bowl, cream the butter with the sugar until light and fluffy. Add the beaten yolks and vanilla and beat thoroughly. Sift flour, baking powder and salt together. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the butter mixture, blending well after each addition. Form the dough into a ball, wrap in wax paper and refrigerate overnight, or place in freezer for about 30 minutes. Use non-stick pans or line pans with parchment paper. Spray lightly with baking oil. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place dough between 2 pieces of wax paper and roll to a thickness of slightly less than 1/4 inch. Using a cutter, stencil, or inverted glass, cut cookies and transfer to baking sheets. Bake for about 12 minutes or until cookies begin to brown. Place pans on cooling racks for about 5 minutes, then carefully remove cookies. Allow cookies to cool thoroughly before serving. Place cookies in an air-tight tin or jar until ready to serve.

While it isn't necessary to use Tahitian vanilla extract, its unique flavor is definitely showcased in this cookie.

June | **Thai basil chicken fried rice**

Recipe from *Thai Food Tonight*, by Dim Geefay

4 cups cooked jasmine rice or long grain rice, cooled
6 big cloves garlic, crushed
2 to 4 Thai red and green chili peppers or 1 to 2 Serrano peppers, minced
1/4 cup cooking oil
1 to 1 1/2 lbs chicken meat (cut into bite sizes)
3 tbs oyster sauce
2 tbs fish sauce
1 tsp sugar
1 medium size red bell pepper (julienne)
2 cups fresh sweet basil leaves
1 cucumber (cut into bite sizes)
1/2 cup cilantro sprigs for garnish

Heat the oil in a deep pan or wok over high heat, until oil starts to smoke. Add crushed garlic and chili peppers, stir quickly (don't let them burn). Immediately add sliced chicken meat, and stir. Add oyster sauce, fish sauce, and sugar. Stir until the chicken is cooked through. Add rice, and stir quickly until sauces are blended with rice (a couple of minutes). Stir in red bell peppers and keep stirring for few seconds. Off heat, add basil leaves. Garnish with sliced cucumbers and cilantro sprigs. Serve Immediately.

This is a fairly easy recipe to dabble into Thai cooking. The result is a delicious meal, especially when paired with chicken or beef satay and peanut sauce.



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August | **Asian summer rolls with sweet chile dipping sauce**

Recipe from *Food 911*, by Tyler Florence

3 ounces Vietnamese cooked cellophane noodles
2 cups bean sprouts
2 carrots, julienned
1 large beet, julienned
1 fresh red chile, cut in circles
2 handfuls fresh cilantro, hand-torn
3/4 cup chopped unsalted peanuts
2 teaspoons dark sesame oil
1 lime, juiced
Sea salt
20 (8-inch) round rice paper wrappers
40 mint leaves

Put the cellophane noodles, vegetables, cilantro and peanuts in a large bowl; toss with sesame oil and lime juice to give the filling some flavor; season with salt and pepper. Pour 3 cups of hot, not boiling water in a large shallow bowl. One at a time, immerse the rice paper wrappers in the hot water for 10 seconds to soften, then place on a slightly damp towel. The rice paper is very delicate, don't soak them any longer or they will break apart. Keep them covered while you work to prevent them from drying out and curling. To form the rolls, lay a rice paper wrapper on a flat surface. Grab a small amount of the cellophane and vegetable mixture and lay it across the bottom third. Use less filling than you think you should, if you overstuff the wrapper it will tear. Carefully fold the bottom of the wrapper up to cover the filling. Fold in the left and right sides, then tuck and roll it over once. Lay 2 mint leaves on top, then tuck and roll it over to close the whole thing up like a tight cigar. The mint leaves should show through the transparent rice paper. Arrange the finished rolls on a platter and cover with a damp towel.

Sweet Chili Dipping Sauce:

1/4 cup rice wine vinegar
2 tablespoons fish sauce
1/4 cup hot water
2 tablespoons sugar
1 lime, juiced
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 teaspoon red chili paste, such as sambal

In a blender, puree the rice wine vinegar, fish sauce, hot water, sugar, lime juice, garlic, and chili paste until combined. Pour into a small bowl and serve with the summer rolls.



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July | **Bacon-wrapped, stuffed jalapeños**

Modified version of a recipe from Recipezaar.com

12-24 large jalapeno peppers (as large as possible)
16 ounces cream cheese, room temp.
4 large garlic cloves, minced
1/4 cup finely chopped sun-dried tomato
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro
1/2 teaspoon coarse sea salt (to taste)
1 lb bacon
toothpicks, soaked for about 15 minutes in water

Mix cream cheese, garlic, sundried tomatoes, cilantro and salt until well blended. You can now set the mixture aside or even freeze for up to a couple of months in a freezer bag. You'll want to wear some kitchen gloves for this step! Slice the jalapeños lengthwise, being careful not to slice them in half. Then slice at the top along the width of the pepper just about a quarter inch below the base of the stem until you cut through the core, again being careful not to cut completely through the pepper (This step will probably take some practice). Now you need to decide whether you want to keep the seed webbing for those that like it really hot, or remove them for a lot less heat. I like to do about half and half so that you can please everyone. Anyway, if removing the seeds, gently remove the core using a paring knife by spreading the pepper carefully, you may need to shake some of the remaining seeds out. Separate the strips of bacon and cook in the microwave for about 5 minutes on high, just enough to give it a head start. Then pat dry with paper towels. Just to soak up some of the grease. Set it aside to cool. Fill either a pastry bag or just a freezer bag (cutting one corner out), and pipe some of the filling into each pepper until full but still able to almost close the pepper. Wrap each pepper with a strip of bacon then use two or three toothpicks to secure the pepper closed. Place the jalapeños on a medium heat grill and cook until the bacon is crisp. you'll need to turn frequently to heat them evenly. you may even want to use foil to prevent the mess. I find that by cooking the bacon a little first and not over filling that you'll get minimal mess however. Let them sit for about 5 to 10 minutes and serve them up! Don't forget which ones have the seeds!

October | **Thai peanut sauce**

Recipe from *Good Eats*, by Alton Brown

1/4 cup chicken stock
3 ounces unsweetened coconut milk
1 ounce lime juice
1 ounce soy sauce
1 tablespoon fish sauce or 2 to 3 anchovies, ground
1 tablespoon hot sauce
2 tablespoons chopped garlic
1 tablespoon chopped ginger
1 1/2 cups creamy peanut butter
1/4 cup chopped cilantro

In a food processor, puree the chicken stock, coconut milk, lime juice, soy sauce, fish sauce, hot sauce, chopped garlic, and ginger. Add the peanut butter and pulse to combine. Fold in the cilantro and keep refrigerated until ready to serve. Bring sauce to room temperature before serving.

Thai peanut sauce goes great with chicken or beef satay, shrimp, as salad dressing, and as a dipping sauce.



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September | **Roasted garlic bulbs and garlic mashed potatoes**

Adapted from *The Roasted Vegetable*, by Andrea Chesman

- 1 head garlic
- 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

Preheat the oven to 425F. Remove the outer papery covering of the garlic. Slice off the top of the head so most of the cloves are exposed. Place on a square of aluminum foil for easy cleanup, or select the smallest baking dish you have. Drizzle the oil over the cloves. Fold the foil over the head to completely enclose it, or cover the baking dish with foil. Roast for about 45 minutes, until the garlic is completely soft and lightly browned. To serve, separate the head into individual cloves. Allow your guest to squeeze out the softened garlic as needed. Or squeeze out the cloves into a small serving dish. If you have leftovers, squeeze out the pulp into a small dish, cover with olive oil, and store, tightly covered, in the refrigerator for up to one month.

Of course, you'll want to roast more than one head of garlic!

Garlic mashed potatoes

Recipe from *Good Eats*, by Alton Brown

- 3 1/2 pounds russet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 16 fluid ounces (2 cups) half-and-half
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 6 ounces grated Parmesan

Peel and dice potatoes, making sure all are relatively the same size. Place in a large saucepan, add the salt, and cover with water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and then reduce heat to maintain a rolling boil. Cook until potatoes fall apart when poked with a fork. Heat the half-and-half and the garlic in a medium saucepan over medium heat until simmering. Remove from heat and set aside. Remove the potatoes from the heat and drain off the water. Mash and add the garlic-cream mixture and Parmesan; stir to combine. Let stand for 5 minutes so that mixture thickens and then serve.



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November | **Pork Chile Verde**

Modified recipe from Meathenge blog

- 4 pounds pork shoulder, cubed into 1" pieces
- 1 large white onions
- 6 large cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon cumin more or less
- 4 medium poblano or Anaheim chiles
- 1 Jalapeño or chipotle
- 2 Quarts chicken broth or enough to mostly fill your dutch oven
- 2 - 3 pounds fresh tomatillos, husks removed

Char the skins of your poblanos on a grill or other open flame. Once blackened, toss in to a paper sack for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, take the husks off the tomatillos and wash. Pat them dry and stick in roaster pan. Broil until just beginning to blacken, about 5 minutes. Add a 1 tablespoon of oil to a large hot skillet and brown the pork in batches. Add the minced garlic to the end of the meat's cooking cycle, set aside. Saute the chopped onions until just barely brown and add to meat. Check tomatillos, when collapsed and blackened a bit add them to your resting meat or whiz in a blender if you only have a few hours to simmer. Remember to pour in the juices from the roasting pan. Remove chiles from bag, and use a butter knife to scrape off the blackened skin, then slice in to 1/2" pieces. Combine meat, roasted chiles, tomatillos, hot chile, cumin, and enough broth to cover ingredients in a dutch oven or slow cooker. Simmer for 3 to 5 hours, stirring occasionally.

Chile verde is great by itself in a bowl with some sour cream and cilantro, or smothering your favorite burrito.

December | **Pho Bo** **(Vietnamese beef noodle soup)**

Recipe adapted from *The World of Street Food* by Troth Wells

- 1-1/2 lbs beef brisket, point cut
- 2 quarts water
- 1-inch piece of ginger, sliced
- 3 whole star anise
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 Tbsp fish sauce
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 lb flank steak
- 2 cups pad Thai rice noodles
- 2-3 scallions, finely sliced
- 2 limes, cut into wedges
- 1/2 cup nuoc cham, for dipping (1 part lime juice; 1 part fish sauce; 1 part sugar; 2 parts water)

Garnishes:

- 1 cup fresh mung bean sprouts
- 1/2 cup fresh spearmint leaves
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves, torn into large shreds

To a large stockpot, add the brisket and water. Bring to a boil, then add the ginger, star anise, cloves and cinnamon. Reduce heat to simmer, partially cover the pot, and cook for 1-1/2 to 2 hours, until the meat is quite tender. Remove the meat and set aside to cool.

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Skim the top of the beef stock, then strain the stock into a large bowl, and return it to the stockpot. Add the fish sauce, salt and black pepper to taste, stir, and set on the stove on lowest heat. When the meat is cool enough to handle, slice thinly, and set aside. In the meantime, place the flank steak in the freezer. In another pot, bring 3 quarts of water to a boil. Blanch the rice noodles for 2-3 minutes to soften. Drain, and divide among 6 or 8 individual bowls. Top with some of the sliced cooked brisket.

Remove the flank steak from the freezer (it should be cold, but not frozen solid), and slice into paper-thin slices. Bring the beef stock to a boil, and fill each soup bowl. Divide the flank steak among the individual soup bowls. Sprinkle with chopped scallions, and add a squeeze of lime. Pass the platter with garnishes, so each diner can add his or her own herbs to the soup. Place nuoc cham in small bowls for dipping the meat.



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