



食

PREVIEW

Jia!

汕 头

THE FOOD OF SWATOW

— and —

THE TEOCHEW DIASPORA

潮 州

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For my Teoswa family,

near and far,

known and unknown.

PREVIEW

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Introduction

This was supposed to be a book about the food of a place that no one has heard of. But it's turned into a story about a shape-shifting cuisine that has spread around the world, going by many names in many languages. In my family, we call it Teoswa.

And in the Teoswa language,

the most important word is: *Jia!*

You're probably thinking you've never heard of Teoswa food, but chances are you've already tried it, unknowingly. How can that be?

Rob: *So where is Teoswa?*

Diana: Teoswa is a region in southern China, centered around the twin cities of Teochew (潮州) and Swatow (汕头); when you combine the first characters of those two cities, you get Teo & Swa — aka Teoswa (潮头). Historically, Teochew has been the more important city, so often the culture — and the food and the language — is known as Teochew culture, especially as it spread outside of China. To this day, much of the diaspora in Southeast Asia uses the term “Teochew,” even if their family roots are technically in Swatow. But Swatow is the larger and faster growing city, so the term “Teoswa” recognizes that.

Admittedly, “Teoswa” is not widely known outside of the area, as the very names “Teochew” and “Swatow” are only used in the local language. Mandarin speakers know the area better as Chaoshan, a combination of Chaozhou and Shantou, while Cantonese speakers know it as Chiusan, a combination of Chiuchow and Santow, and the situation only gets more complicated outside of China.

The Teoswa geographic and cultural region also includes Jieyang, another rapidly growing city. To be honest, I have no idea why it drew the short stick when it came to naming the region, but Chaoshan/Teoswa ended up being the accepted nomenclature, even though the most famous Teoswa *taucheo* bean sauces are produced in the Puning region of Jieyang.

What's your personal connection to Teoswa?

My dad was born there, in Swatow — he's a native, and my entire extended family on his side lives there to this day, a

tight-knit family scattered all around the city. Actually, I lived there in my grandparents' house for a year when I three while my parents worked to build a new life for us in America. And while we all waited for word on when — and if — I could join them, alternate plans were laid. If I were to stay in Teoswa, I would be adopted into my younger uncle's family, and I would have to learn the local language, which I had stubbornly refused to speak in my year of limbo. But after a year, I flew to America to join them, in rural Oregon, then Maryland, then New Jersey.



Early record of the author in her natural state: in sweatpants, clutching food.

But you never did end up learning the Teoswa language...



Fresh off the boat and hunting pigeons.

No, I learned English instead! My parents and I were reunited in January 1993, when I touched down on American soil at San Francisco International Airport. So I assimilated into American instead of Teoswa culture — haltingly at first in Oregon, where my dad was finishing school, and where my 4-year-old self was astounded at all the bountiful, *free* squab flying around. My parents always laugh when they recount how I chased after pigeons in my first few weeks in the US, yelling in Mandarin, “Catch the birds and eat!”

Then, assimilation came much more rapidly in Maryland when we moved there for my dad's first job after commencement, then pretty much completely once we settled in New Jersey, where my sister, Lisa, and I spent most of our childhoods.

So it'd be correct to call you a Jersey girl?

I do have a deep, abiding love of red sauce Italian.

Growing up in America, did you know anyone else who had roots in Swatow or Teochew?

Well, I only knew of two other families in America with roots in Swatow, and they lived on the west coast. Most of my parents' friends on the east coast, who became surrogate aunts and uncles in the way that frequently happens in immigrant communities, were from many corners of China, but never Teoswa.

So you really had the perception that Teoswa was a place that nobody ever left?

Absolutely. Part of the reason I wanted to write this book was to explore my dad's heritage, because I felt like I knew so little about his family and their culture. By nature, he's not a man of many words, and as I tried to become more of an "American" kid, I had shed the few memories and firsthand knowledge I'd had, along with my pride of being from another culture. Unlike my mom — whose family had lived in multiple parts of China, and whose own parents could fluidly switch between multiple dialects — my dad comes from a clan that's been rooted in this small corner of China for centuries. And to someone who grew up feeling rather rootless, there was something very alluring about the certainty of their identity and how deep it ran.

I also thought the cuisine was relatively unknown outside of southern China, and completely unrepresented in America. I

wasn't far off on the latter — there are only a handful of truly Teoswa restaurants in the US, and one of them (San Francisco's Teo) was opened by one of those two Teoswa family friends I knew, in order to fill that void.

But you had no idea at all about the far-flung Teoswa diaspora?

No idea at all — which still floors me. I simply never knew that I was part of a global expatriate community, part of the *gaginang* (自己人) — that's a Teoswa word that translates to “our own people.” Of course, there were so many clues hiding in plain sight, in so many of my favorite foods from all across Southeast Asia, and even America.

Your dad never mentioned anything?

My dad is a very work-oriented engineer and I think, like a lot of immigrant dads, he just didn't think about it all that much, even though it turns out he'd been casually chatting with Vietnamese restaurant workers in Teoswa for my whole childhood.

OK, but before we get to that story, let's talk about what makes Teoswa food so special.

Well, Teoswa food tastes a little different from place to place, because just like the Teoswa people — despite sometimes claiming to be the preservers of unadulterated Tang dynasty culture — the cuisine has adapted to survive and thrive in new environments. Even the tradition-bound branch of the Teoswa family tree that has remained in China is open to incorporating outside influences. An extremely popular mini-chain of restaurants in the region these days churns out Teoswa-inflected variations on Northern Chinese classics. And some of the unique flavors of the cuisine comes from a back-and-forth culinary dialogue, unspooled over centuries, between *gaginang* in China and overseas Teoswa workers who would periodically return to the mainland from Southeast Asia with



Above: scenes from a market in Swatow



Tea in my uncle's home

new ingredients in tow.

But at its core, Teoswa cuisine emphasizes sourcing excellent ingredients, then letting their natural flavors shine and harmonize in thoughtful combinations — not unlike the philosophy behind Californian cuisine here in the US.

Given its ocean-hugging location, seafood is understandably a cornerstone of the Teoswa diet. When you walk through the wet markets of Teoswa, you'll see species of sea life you probably couldn't even dream up. And everyone seems to be born with strong opinions on how to maximize the deliciousness of any given critter — even horseshoe crab! The Teoswa people are one of the few on Earth who have figured out a way to make the living fossils palatable.

That's not to downplay the importance of other foods, though. Teoswa's beef meatballs, braised fowl, rice noodles, and inventive uses of vegetables are famous within China. And as in the rest of the country, variety is highly prized at the table. When you sit down for a homecooked meal in Teoswa, you can count on a soup; a few steamed, braised, or stir-fried dishes; perhaps a few pickles or preserves; and always *muay*, Teoswa rice porridge. Then, you finish with dessert — an actual dessert and not just sliced fruit, as the Teoswa are known to have a sweet tooth. But there are *lots* of ways to eat throughout the day, not just at sit-down meals. In between eating, there are always thimble-sized cups of strong *kung fu* tea to either aid in digestion or stimulate the appetite for the next snack or meal. As the Ma family remarks so eloquently in the cookbook *Don't Lick the Chopsticks* (page 123), "Tea is to the Swatownese as whiskey is to the Irish and wine to the French."

Typical Teoswa Ingredients

Beyond the basic Chinese pantry, Teoswa cooking relies on some other core elements, including many preserved ingredients that pack a concentrated punch. By no means are the following ingredients restricted to usage in the Teoswa region, but they are important building blocks of flavor that together differentiate Teoswa regional cuisine.

I've included the Chinese characters for ingredients that may require some sleuthing to track down at your local Asian store. If you are lucky enough to have access to a Southeast Asian grocery store, you may have better luck finding some of the more esoteric items there than at a typical Chinese supermarket. If that's not an option, you can order most of these online as well.



Soybean sauce/*taucheo*/*tauco* (豆瓣酱):

The city of Puning, which flanks Swatow to the southwest, produces a famous version of fermented soybean sauce that adds umami to stir-fried and steamed dishes. While authentic Puning-produced jars of the sauce are hard to come by in the US, the Thai brand Healthy Boy offers a version that is well-rounded and not too sweet, like some of the other options on the shelves. You may also find the Indonesian-Chinese variant, *tauco*. (Note: *taucheo* is not the bean sauce *doubanjiang*, which is Sichuanese, spicy, and made with broad beans.)

Salted plum (酸梅子): Though called a plum, 梅子 are more closely related to apricots. Plucked and brined before they're ripe, they're used as a tart counterpoint to steamed fish (pages 112–115) and pork ribs (page 144), or as the foundation of a refreshing bubbly drink (page 179). If you can't find jarred Chinese salted plums in the sauce aisle (I use Koon Chun brand), look for the Japanese version, umezuke.



Chinese olives (橄欖): *Canarium album*, a tropical and subtropical fruit savored by the Teoswa people, is unrelated to the far more common Mediterranean olive. When it's in season, people chew on fresh, raw Chinese olives to stimulate appetite, ease nausea, and stay alert. It's also dried and sweetened into a popular snack. In the US, I've yet to find the fresh fruit anywhere, but have come across jars of brined Chinese olives, much like preserved Mediterranean *Olea europaea*. Chopped up, Chinese olives pair wonderfully with pork in a stir-fry (page 146).



Olive vegetable (橄欖菜): Olive vegetable is really mustard greens cooked down with Chinese olives into a murky, savory relish. Though it doesn't look like much, it's an umami powerhouse. It frequently accompanies *muay* and “helps the rice go down” — so no surprise, it also gives fried rice a delicious boost (page 78). You may also find it listed as preserved olive vegetable / olive with mustard greens / cabbage with olive / etc.

Satay/shacha sauce (沙茶醬): Not the peanut butter-based dip we enjoy with Southeast Asian meat skewers, Teoswa satay is darker, oilier, and funkier thanks to dried seafood, chilis, and shallots. According to one origin story, overseas Teoswa returning home brought Indonesian satay sauce, which was then adapted to suit local tastes. The most popular brand of satay sauce in stores is Bull Head (of Taiwan), which labels its silver cans “BBQ Sauce.” As this misnomer might suggest, satay sauce is often served alongside meats, especially beef. Some Teoswa and Vietnamese restaurants concoct their own proprietary blends that you might be able to purchase. In grocery stores, I’ve checked the ingredients on some jars labeled “Teochew sate” to discover that they are, instead, just chili oil made with chilies, garlic, oil, and salt. So when in doubt, make sure you see some form of seafood in the ingredients list.



Chili oil (辣椒油): With nearly infinite varieties, feel free to seek out your perfect match. Your local store may stock garlicky “Chiu Chow Chili Oil,” which pairs well with many dishes in this



book and is quite spicy. Some jars labeled as Teochew Sate may actually be garlic-infused chili oil, not the seafood-infused satay sauce I reference in my recipes. Another option is the widely available (and milder) chili oil made by the popular Laoganma (Old Godmother) brand.

Vinegar-based chili sauce (辣椒酱): This sauce is an essential condiment for the table, especially next to noodle dishes. Sambal oelek is a fine option, but why pass up a chance to add more garlic to your food? Huy Fong Foods was founded by a Teochew-Vietnamese refugee in California, David Tran. Perhaps you've heard of his company's blockbuster sauce, Sriracha? They also make a chunkier garlic-infused hot sauce that is widely available.

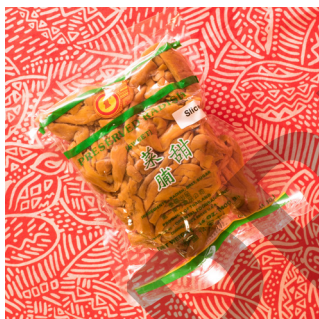


Fish sauce (鱼露): In the US, fish sauce is most commonly associated with Vietnamese and Thai cuisines, but it is frequently used in Teoswa as well, a rarity in China. My aunts will often use fish sauce in lieu of salt while stir-frying, saying it provides a more interesting and multidimensional flavor than salt. (And they actually prefer sweeter Thai brands over the local varieties produced in Teoswa.) I have a soft spot for Red Boat, which makes a balanced sauce with no additives. Its availability is spotty at Asian supermarkets, but you can easily order it online or usually find it at Whole Foods.

Preserved mustard greens (酸菜): Sweet, salty, sour, and crunchy, preserved mustard greens balance the richness of fatty pork (page 148) and buttery pompano (page 114). Many varieties of preserved mustard greens exist. For recipes in this book, use the version that is mostly thick stems (few leaves), usually presented in brine in a plastic vacuum-sealed package. It may be in the refrigerated section. Some brands are much saltier than others, so make sure to taste test a piece before using. It should be a bit saltier than you'd want to eat on its own, but if it tastes like a salt lick, let it soak in water while you prepare your other ingredients.



Preserved radish (菜脯): A great source of umami, preserved radish gets folded into omelets (page 166), sprinkled over porridge, and added to simmering savory stocks (page 83). It may come whole, sliced into strips, or minced. Depending on where you are, you may have access to both the “sweet” and “salty” varieties. The sweet version is more versatile, but if you can only find the salty version, no problem — just give it a quick rinse to eliminate excess salt before using.



Mung beans (绿豆): Finding peeled *whole* mung beans (the traditional choice for the Teoswa mung bean *popiah* on (page 61) is rather difficult in American stores, but peeled split mung beans are widely available and cook up more quickly. These legumes are also frequently incorporated into sweets and desserts. A long soak isn't required prior to cooking, but make sure to pick through and rinse thoroughly.



White pepper (白胡椒): White pepper is used more frequently than black pepper in Teoswa dishes. A shaker of ground white pepper is common to find at the table, as a dash or two will liven up a bowl of porridge or soup. Palmfuls of whole white peppercorns contribute a unique flavor to *bak kut teh*, that beloved Teochew-Singaporean pork rib soup (page 141). Compared to black pepper, white pepper is a bit funkier and sharper, although toasting the peppercorns ahead of time helps to tame some of the intensity. Whole Foods will usually stock small (and pricey) packets of whole white peppercorns; for the amounts required in *bak kut teh*, check your Chinese or Vietnamese grocery stores or order online.



Five-spice powder (五香粉): Yup, this powder contains five different spices...but which five? I like a version that incorporates fennel, star anise, ginger, cinnamon, and cloves. Other common blends may swap in Sichuan peppercorn, coriander, cardamom, or a whole range of other spices. You can easily find at least one version in supermarkets, or you can tailor your own blend to your tastes. This seasoning is crucial for making mung bean *popiah* (page 61) and duck noodle soup (page 88).



Thickening starch (sweet potato/corn/tapioca): Sweet potato starch is the traditional binding agent for chewy oyster omelets (page 108) and potato cake (page 63). It may be a little hard to track down, so order online or substitute with tapioca starch or cornstarch, which achieve similar textures.

Fresh rice noodles (*kway teow*): If you live in an area with a sizable Asian population, you might be able to purchase fresh unrefrigerated rice noodles at a grocery store or at a tofu/noodle specialty shop. It's best if you purchase the noodles the same day that you intend to cook them, as they harden when refrigerated and become terribly difficult to separate. (If you do find yourself in this situation, let the noodles soften in a big bowl of warm water, or microwave the entire mass for a minute or so, until the noodles are pliable. Some breakage is inevitable; don't beat yourself up over it.)



Popiah wrappers: While not quite the same as the freshly made version, the wheat-based spring roll wrappers in the freezer aisle of your Asian supermarket are a decent substitute. Defrost these in your fridge the night before you need them. For the *popiah* in this book, I call for 7.5" square wrappers.

Taro: This starchy corm tastes like a creamier, nuttier, and denser version of potato and is versatile in both sweet and savory dishes. Pick one that feels relatively light for its size and that is free of blemishes. Use gloves to peel it before cooking, as handling taro in its raw state can cause some itchiness!

Chinese celery: Chinese celery is more intensely flavored than Western celery, and the leaves are used in addition to the stalks. The stalks are often sold with a fair amount of trapped grit, so



make sure to wash thoroughly! (I trim the ends, cut the long stalks into sections, and swish the stalks and leaves in a large bowl of water at least twice.) Western celery is a perfectly fine substitution; just increase the amount used.

Shallots: Sweeter than onions, shallots fry up into a delicious topping for nearly everything. Frying produces another universally adaptable ingredient, shallot oil, which is especially tasty when paired with blanched leafy greens (page 170).

Galangal: This larger cousin of ginger has a citrusy, piney scent that pairs beautifully with beef. It lends its unique flavor to *lo bee* and is an essential component of beef hotpot and beef noodles in Swatow. Technically, lesser galangal — or “sand ginger” — is the type that proliferates in southern China, but it’s extremely

difficult to find in the US. Greater galangal, the kind used to flavor many Southeast Asian dishes, is much more common. While it has a slightly different, milder flavor than sand ginger, it works well as a substitute for the dishes in this book. Well-stocked Asian grocery stores should carry it fresh; otherwise, check the frozen section. Watch your fingers when cutting or grating — it has a tough, woody texture.

Lard: Lard is a key component of many traditional Teoswa recipes and imparts an aroma and mouthfeel that is hard to replicate. (For those concerned about health effects, I say moderation is key — as with most things in life.) Track down the best quality pork fat you can. That means pasture-raised, non-hydrogenated, and preservative-free. Try your local butcher or order a tub online. Or, you can dice some pork fat (leaf lard from around the kidneys is best) and render it with some water over a low flame yourself. If lard is absolutely not an option, substitute with vegetable oil.

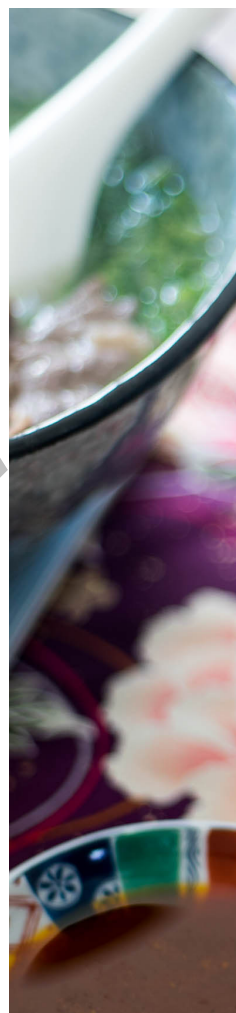
PREVIEW

Swatow Beef Kway Teow Soup

Like the vast majority of Chinese cooks, those in Teoswa love pork and cook with it as their default meat. But there are some notable exceptions. Teoswa hotpot, now wildly popular throughout the Middle Kingdom, is a thoroughly bovine affair. The meal is a celebration of the entire cow, from the muscle cuts, to the offal, and even to the cartilage and fat (the best, most flavorful fat is said to come from the chest).

Teoswa diners are extremely picky about the beef that goes into their hotpot. Utmost freshness is required — no dry aging or flash-freezing allowed. Just-slaughtered cattle arrive in hotpot restaurants in the morning, are broken down into individual cuts in view of the dining room, and then thinly sliced to order for hungry patrons. The soup used for Teoswa hotpot is a clean-tasting beef bone broth that — as with most hotpots — develops more flavor as more beef is cooked in it throughout the meal. But beef hotpot is not just a meal. It's an indulgent event that requires a substantial time commitment for maximum enjoyment.

What about a beefy counterpart for quick, everyday sustenance? Specialists in beef *kway teow* (rice noodle) soup provide a popular solution. Everyone from students to office workers to neighborhood elders stop by the shops lining the Swatow streets for bowls of satisfying, comforting *kway teow* soup topped with thin slices of beef and bouncy beef balls. As with beef hotpot, a clean, straightforward broth — made from raw, unroasted bones, unlike most Western beef broths — is key.





This broth can be made in advance; the noodles and toppings then come together very quickly when it's time to eat. Let the broth simmer away on the stove when you have a free afternoon. Chill it overnight, then scrape off the top layer of fat the next day. At this point, you can freeze some broth for later, or use it all right away. A last-minute addition of grated galangal adds a spicy, piney fragrance; a scattering of chopped Chinese celery lends some freshness and crunch.

Serves 4

3 lbs	meaty beef bones*
2 lbs	fresh rice noodles
2 tsp +	salt
2 tsp	galangal, grated†
½ cup	Chinese celery, minced
a few leaves	romaine lettuce, chopped
8	Asian beef balls
½ lb	lean beef, thinly sliced ‡
spoonful	satay sauce

* For best results, combine bones like beef shin or knuckles with meatier cuts, such as bone-in short rib.

† Can substitute ginger if galangal is not available.

‡ Pre-sliced beef for hotpot or sukiyaki is perfect for this.

- 1** Bring a pot of water to a boil. Blanch meaty beef bones for 10 minutes to remove impurities. Discard water and rinse beef. Return to pot and add enough water to cover. Bring to a boil again, then reduce heat to low and simmer for 6 hours. Remove from heat and refrigerate at least overnight and up to 3 days.
- 2** Scrape congealed fat off top of broth. Return broth to stove and bring to a boil with 2 tsp salt. Meanwhile, bring another pot of plain water to a boil. Separate fresh rice noodles gently with your hands. Cook separated noodles in boiling water for a minute, then drain and divide between 4 bowls. Top with Chinese celery and romaine lettuce.
- 3** Once broth boils, add beef balls, reduce heat to medium, and cook for 5 minutes. Add thinly sliced beef to the pot and turn off heat. Taste soup and add more salt if needed. Divide beef balls, beef slices, and broth between bowls. Add a dab of grated galangal to each bowl. Serve with satay sauce for the beef slices.



Char Kway Teow

Char kway teow, translated literally, is just “stir-fried rice noodles.” In Teoswa, it’s a dish prepared much like a lardier version of the Cantonese chow fun you can find in even the smallest American towns. A Teoswa chef will fry fresh rice noodles with vegetables, seafood, and/or meat with some restrained seasonings in a searing hot, lard-slicked wok. In Southeast Asia, however, *char kway teow* transformed into an entirely different beast. According to some stories, this evolved as a delicious, belly-filling way for merchants to use up their unsold wares at the end of a market day. Today, the “old-school” versions you’ll find in Singapore and Malaysia include flat rice noodles, round egg noodles, cockles, Chinese sausage, shrimp, fish cake, bean sprouts, garlic chives, egg, and — if you’re lucky — not just lard, but also crispy fried cubes of pork fat, all tossed with chili paste and dark and light soy sauces.

Reader, I took my first bite of this magic combination at a crowded hawker center, surrounded by Singaporean office workers on their lunch breaks. Time slowed, the sweltering tropical heat subsided, and I entered a noodle-induced bliss. Nothing existed except for me and the plate of noodles handed over by the wizened hawker stall uncle, who had perfected his noodle-frying ballet over decades of practice. It was then that I discovered serenity is best delivered on a pink plastic plate.

Anyway, more “modern” versions omit the lard in the name of health. Don’t be fooled! *Char kway teow* minus some pork fat still isn’t health food. When you do indulge in this plate of heaven on earth, I say go for the full (exponentially more delicious, lard-infused) monty. If you can’t immediately hop a plane to

Singapore or Penang, your best bet for trying the old-school version is to cook it up in your own kitchen. Sure, our puny home ranges may not crank hot enough to achieve the smoky *wok hei* made possible by an industrial burner, but the regrettable scarcity of Indo-Malay-Singaporean eateries across most of the US means your version just might be the most flavorful option for thousands of miles around.



Serves 4 (in deceptively small but filling portions)

- 8 oz** shrimp
- ½ tsp** salt
- ⅛ tsp** baking soda
- 4 tbsp** lard
- 5 cloves** garlic, minced
- 4 oz** fish cake,* sliced ¼" thick
- 2** lap cheong, sliced ¼" thick on a bias
- 12 oz** flat rice noodles, separated
- 4 oz** round yellow noodles
- 2** eggs
- 12** Manila clams or New Zealand cockles (optional)
- 4 oz** garlic chives, cut into 2" segments
- 4 oz** bean sprouts

Sauce

- 4 tbsp** dark soy sauce
- 1 tbsp** light soy sauce
- 2 tbsp** chili sauce
- 2 tsp** fish sauce
- 3 tbsp** water

* Look for the fried surimi kind that looks like a flat, brown, oblong pancake.

- 1 Toss shrimp with salt and baking soda and set aside to marinate. Mix together all sauce ingredients and set aside.
- 2 To maintain a searing hot temperature in the wok, fry the *char kway teow* in two batches. Heat a wok over high heat and add 1.5 tbsp lard. Add half the minced garlic and stir-fry for 15 seconds. Add half of the marinated shrimp and stir-fry for a minute, then remove to a plate, leaving the lard in the wok.
- 3 Add sliced fish cake and lap cheong to wok and fry for 30 seconds. Add noodles and sauce mixture, and stir-fry to coat everything evenly. Once thoroughly seasoned, let everything sear undisturbed for a minute. Stir-fry to mix it up, then repeat the searing/stir-frying process 2 or 3 more times until you see some caramelization.
- 4 Push everything to one side of the wok. In the cleared half, add ½ tbsp lard and crack one egg. Let it fry until half-set, then scramble and mix with rest of wok contents. If using clams, add half to the wok and stir-fry until they just begin to open. Add half of chives and bean sprouts, and the reserved par-cooked shrimp back into the wok and stir-fry for another two minutes. Remove to serving plate.
- 5 Repeat steps 2-4 with the remaining ingredients. Serve with lime wedges or halved calamansi.

Satay Bolognese

Satay aka *sate* aka *shacha* is an enchanting accompaniment to Teoswa dishes, with precise origins as murky as the “sand tea” sauce itself (page 38). The sauce’s deep savoriness and common pairing with beef made me wonder how it would fare in pasta Bolognese, one of the world’s great comfort foods. Turns out the two harmonize extremely well. The resulting sauce looks and initially tastes like a typical ragù Bolognese, but then you feel a slight tingle on your tongue from the chilis and Sichuan pepper, and the hints of coconut and dried shrimp in the satay beckon your mind to warmer climes.

I recommend trying this first with fresh flat rice noodles: the lightness of the slippery rice noodles are a lovely contrast to the substantial ragù, and the flurry of fresh herbs to finish helps balance the sauce’s deeper flavors. It also recalls the “dry” version of **Swatow Beef Kway Teow Soup** I would order in China: beef and rice noodles dressed in satay sauce, with clear broth on the side. But of course, feel free to substitute with other noodles (or even rice) depending on your mood.



Serves 4 with leftover ragù

2 tbsp	oil	1 tbsp	Shaoxing rice wine
3	medium shallots, minced	1 tbsp	fish sauce
3 cloves	garlic, minced	A handful	Thai or sweet basil
4 stalks	Chinese celery, diced	28 oz can	whole tomatoes
1	carrot, diced	2 lb	fresh rice noodles
3 tbsp +	satay sauce	½ cup	cilantro, chopped
1 lb	ground beef	½ cup	basil, chiffonade
1 tsp	salt	¼ cup	mint, chiffonade
few dashes	white pepper		

- 1** Heat oil in large Dutch oven or stockpot over medium heat. Add shallots and garlic, and sauté until shallots are translucent. Add celery and carrot, and sauté a few minutes until they begin to soften. Mix in 3 tbsp satay sauce.
- 2** Turn heat up to medium-high and add ground beef. Allow the beef to sear for a minute. Add salt and a few dashes of white pepper. Sauté until beef is almost cooked through.
- 3** Add Shaoxing rice wine, fish sauce, and basil leaves, stirring to incorporate. Add tomatoes and gently mash them in the pan. Reduce heat to low and let simmer for at least 45 minutes, lid ajar, stirring occasionally.
- 4** Shortly before serving, bring a separate pot of water to boil. Gently separate fresh rice noodles and cook for a minute. Drain and divide noodles between bowls. For dried noodles, follow cooking instructions on package.
- 5** Taste bolognese sauce and add additional salt, pepper, fish sauce, or satay to taste. Serve noodles with a ladle of sauce on top. Garnish with cilantro, basil, and mint.

Salted Plum Steamed Fish

My family in Swatow prepares this using a fresh fish and just a few pantry staples as part of a quick meal. My aunts take advantage of young ginger's delicate flavor when it's available at their market, and I do the same when I can find it in Los Angeles. However, the standard mature ginger available at any supermarket is a perfectly acceptable substitute. You can use any white-fleshed fish for this flexible recipe, although I generally like pomfret, sea bass, and snapper the best. Compared to the no-holds-barred version of **Fully Loaded Steamed Pomfret** (page 114), this preparation is restrained and unfussy, but always reliably delicious.



Serves 4 with other dishes

2" piece	ginger (use young ginger if available)
1 leaf	preserved mustard greens, rinsed
1.5 lb	whole fish, gutted and cleaned
3	salted plums, pitted and chopped
½ tsp	fish sauce
1 tbsp	Shaoxing rice wine
¼ cup	cilantro, chopped

- 1** Bring water to boil in a steamer. Thinly slice half the ginger and finely julienne the other half. Mince the preserved mustard green leaf.
- 2** Make two deep cuts, at about a 30° angle, on both sides of the fish. Place a slice of ginger and piece of salted plum in each of the cuts and in the cavity. Place remaining ginger slices, half of remaining salted plum, and half of preserved mustard greens on a plate. Lay fish on top. Top with slivered ginger and the rest of the salted plum and preserved mustard greens. Drizzle with fish sauce and rice wine.
- 3** Steam for about 10 minutes or until internal temperature reaches 145° F at the thickest part. Turn off heat. Top with julienned ginger and cilantro. Serve immediately.

Gai Lan with Fried Shallots



Gai lan, also known as Chinese broccoli, is a cultivar of the *Brassica oleracea* species that also includes kale, Brussels sprouts, and collard greens. As a popular Cantonese dim sum option, these emerald stalks are blanched and drizzled with oyster sauce to add umami and to tame a slight bitterness. At Teoswa establishments, fried shallots are added because — well, because they improve pretty much everything. Combined with shallot-infused oil and a touch of thinned oyster sauce here, they transform a vegetable side into a delicious main attraction.

Serves 3-4 with other dishes

1 lb	gai lan
3 tbsp	oil
2	medium shallots, thinly sliced
12 cups + 1 tbsp	water
1.5 tbsp	salt
1 tbsp	oyster sauce

- 1** Trim the ends off the gai lan and peel any tough larger stems. Discard any yellow or blemished leaves.
- 2** Heat wok over medium-high heat, then add oil and shallots. Reduce heat to low and fry shallots until crisp and golden, around 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 3** Meanwhile, bring a pot of 12 cups water and 1.5 tbsp salt to a boil. Add gai lan and return to a boil. Blanch for about 3 minutes, until leaves turn bright green. Turn off heat and drain gai lan well in a colander.
- 4** Once shallots are fried, drain them on a paper towel, reserving the oil. Mix the shallot oil with oyster sauce and water in a small bowl. Arrange gai lan on a plate and drizzle with sauce mixture. Top with the fried shallots and serve.

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