



An Easy Dinner To Share With Friends

Looking for a fun dinner party theme? These recipes and ideas will help you put together a quick and easy gathering. The pork in the Mapo Tofu honors the recently ushered in Year of the Pig. Symbolism plays a big role in Chinese food and culture. Broccoli is said to bring parents long lives and the lychee in the martini represents a strong family tree. Sweets like the egg custard stand for a sweet life and the yellow color symbolizes celebration and luck.

Mapo Tofu

- 1 Tbsp sesame oil (others can be substituted)
- 1 Tbsp black bean garlic sauce
- 1 tsp red chili paste with garlic
- 1/4 – 1/2 lb ground pork (ground beef or turkey can be substituted)
- 1 pkg tofu (firm recommended)
- 1/4 c chopped green onions
- 1/2 tsp Sansho Powder

Ed. Note: This is a quick and simple recipe but there are many versions. If you're in a hurry or want to try Mapo Tofu before you buy the ingredients, you can even buy a boxed ready-made sauce package where you simply add meat and tofu. You should be able to find the sauces in your grocery Asian food section or local Asian market.

Cut tofu into 1/2" squares and set aside. Fry the pork in the sesame oil. The meat can be omitted for a vegetarian version. Break up the meat as it cooks. Drain the meat.

Add the bean sauce, chili paste and Sansho powder. Simmer 2 minutes, stirring. Add the tofu and gently stir into the sauce. Simmer 5 – 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tofu is heated through. Garnish with green onions and serve with steamed white rice.

Stir Fried Broccoli

- 1.5 lbs broccoli
- 2-3 Tbsp peanut or vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp ginger, minced
- 1/2 c chicken-flavored stock
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp dry sherry or rice wine
- 2 tsp cornstarch
- 1/2 tsp sesame oil

Blanch broccoli pieces in boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain, run under cool water to stop cooking and pat dry. Mix chicken stock, dry sherry, soy sauce and set aside.

Heat oil in pan over medium high heat. Add garlic and ginger. Stir for a 30 seconds. Add broccoli and stir fry for 2-3 minutes. Do not overcook.

Combine prepared sauce and cornstarch. Add to hot wok items. Stir in quickly and turn heat down to low. Cook for another 3 minutes. Remove from heat, add sesame oil and serve..

Personalize your dinner party with quick and easy place cards.



Create this fun, take-out place card in minutes. Start with a small Chinese take-out container. They can be found at many craft, paper and Asian specialty stores.

Begin by tucking the front flap inside the box. Fold a piece of paper cut to fit the width of the front and embellish with odds and ends in your craft box. Using pinking shears, cut two pieces of complimentary fabric 4x the area of the top of your container. Tuck in the fabric and fill the container with Chinese candies. Write your guests name on the paper and slip the unembellished side in between the fabric and box. Your guests will have a fun and tasty souvenir of the time they enjoyed with you.



Egg Custard

Pastry

2 c flour
1/4 tsp salt
1/8 c confectioners' sugar
10 Tbsp butter, diced
1 egg
2 - 4 Tbsp cold water

Custard

3 eggs
6 Tbsp sugar
1 1/2 c evaporated milk
1/4 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 tsp salt

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix flour, salt and confectioners' sugar. Add butter and cut in until it resembles coarse crumbs. Combine the egg and water and beat lightly. Stir the egg mixture into the flour mixture until a soft dough is formed. Wrap with plastic and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Divide the dough into two pieces. Roll each to 1/8" thickness and cut into circles 1/2" larger than the size of your tart pan. Press dough into lightly greased tart pans or a muffin tin.

Combine the eggs and the remaining ingredients. Beat until smooth. Strain the mixture and pour into the tart shells.

Bake for 20 – 30 minutes until the pastry is golden brown and filling sets. Remove and cool.

Lychee Martini

(2 servings)

6 ounces premium vodka
1 ounce lychee juice
2 lychee

Shake the vodka, lychee juice and ice in a martini shaker for 10-15 seconds. Strain and pour into martini glasses. Garnish with a lychee and enjoy!