

Spiced Chinese Cabbage (Chinese Leaves)

Unlike the more familiar green and red cabbage, Chinese cabbage ('Chinese leaves') also known as Peking cabbage has a sweet flavour which is delicate, rather like lettuce. Cooking is needed to make it palatable, and because it is so light, it calls for a robust sauce. I like to serve it with this spicy sauce. For a variation you might substitute curry powder for the chilli.

Serves 2-4

750 g (1½ lb) Chinese cabbage (Chinese leaves)
1 tablespoon groundnut or vegetable oil
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, finely chopped
1½ tablespoons garlic, finely chopped
2 dried red chilli, split in half
1½ tablespoons Shaoxing rice wine or dry sherry
1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
1 teaspoon light soy sauce
2 teaspoons chilli bean sauce
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 teaspoons sugar
50 ml (2 fl oz) vegetarian stock or water
1 tablespoon sesame oil

Separate the Chinese cabbage (Chinese leaves) and wash the leaves well. Cut them into 2.5 cm (1 inch) strips.

Heat a wok or large frying-pan over high heat until it is hot. Add the oil, and when it is very hot and slightly smoking, add the ginger, garlic and chilli. Stir-fry them for a few seconds. Now add the cabbage (Chinese leaves) and stir-fry a few seconds and then add the Shaoxing rice wine or dry sherry, soy sauces, chilli bean sauce, pepper, sugar, stock or water. Turn the heat down and simmer 8 minutes until the cabbage are tender. At this point, you can, if you wish, remove the dried chillies. Just before you serve it, add the sesame oil and stir it in well. Serve at once.