

Pop quiz: This type of dish typically contains fresh vegetables, can be prepared as a one-pot dish and brings a considerable amount of flexibility to a school nutrition operation's lunch menu. What meal offers all of these benefits? The answer: Stir-fry.

While many people are just becoming acquainted with the tremendous versatility and endless flavor options of stir-fry meals, the concept originated long, long ago. According to Grace Young, author of *Stir-Frying to the Sky's Edge: The Ultimate Guide to Mastery, with Authentic Recipes and Stories*, stir-fry may have made its first appearance in China as early as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). This quick cooking style is said to have been invented out of necessity to conserve fuel, which was expensive and scarce.

It took some time for stir-fry to find its way to these shores. Cantonese immigrants who worked on the American railroads during the mid-1800s are credited with bringing the cuisine to this country. Still, despite its relatively recent introduction to American tastebuds, stir-fry has become a popular and delicious meal option enjoyed by people of all ages, including children, which means it just might make an effective addition to your school menu—if you're not offering it already. And if your operation already *does* have students going crazy for these fresh and filling combina-

tions? Never fear, there's still something of value for *you* in this article, too—an exploration of the techniques employed in the stir-fry method, along with some historical and cultural reflections.

Talking the Talk

But before we get too far into the history of stir-fry and how to incorporate it into your school nutrition operation, let's talk a bit about terminology. First, it's important to know that in addition to being a type of cuisine, *stir-fry* also is an instruction in recipe preparation, referring to the process of stirring ingredients while frying them. Next, let's clarify the difference between *sauté* and *stir-fry*. The *sauté* technique involves cooking food over very high heat in a small amount of fat (specifically, clarified butter or oil, or a combination of both). For a true *sauté*, clarified butter is used instead of plain butter, because clarified butter can withstand the high heat. A *sauté* pan—generally cast iron—conducts heat quickly and efficiently; a large skillet also can be used.

EAST MEETS WEST SWEET & SOUR STIR-FRY

YIELD: 50 servings

PER SERVING*: 438 cal., 24 g pro., 69 g carb., 3 g fiber, 7 g fat, 1 g sat. fat, 42 mg chol., 821 mg sod.

INGREDIENTS

Rice, uncooked—3 lbs.
Pear slices, canned—10 lbs.
Cider vinegar—1 qt.
Tomato paste—½ cup
Soy sauce—½ cup

Brown sugar—1 cup
Ginger, powdered—1 tsp. (optional)
Vegetable oil—¾ cup
Chicken or turkey breasts, ½-in. strips—8 lbs.
Garlic powder—4 tsps.
Salt—4 tsps.

Pepper, ground—2 tsps.
Green beans, cut, canned—3 qts.
Cornstarch—3 Tbsps.
Water—6 Tbsps.
Tortillas, 8-in.*—50

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the rice as the package directs. Keep warm. Drain the pears; reserve the liquid. Drain the green beans. Set all aside.
2. In a saucepan, mix the reserved pear liquid, cider vinegar, tomato paste, soy sauce, brown sugar and ginger. Simmer until the sauce mixture has thickened slightly; reserve.
3. In a large wok or skillet, heat the oil until hot. Add the turkey or chicken, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Reduce the heat to medium and cook the mixture thoroughly, stirring frequently. Stir in the beans, pears and reserved sauce.* Simmer just until heated through.
4. In a separate bowl, mix the cornstarch and water together. Add to the wok/skillet and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened.* Remove from heat.
5. For each serving: Portion ¾ cup of the turkey/chicken-pear mixture over ½ cup of cooked rice and serve, wrap-style, in one tortilla.*

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: Pacific Northwest Canned Pear Service, www.eatcannedpears.com

*Notes: The tortilla wraps can be substituted with large lettuce leaves; the nutrient analysis provided above includes the 8-in. tortilla. Six cups of a prepared sweet-and-sour sauce may be used instead of adding the reserved sauce in Step 3 and the cornstarch mixture in Step 4.

Wok This Way

Cause a stir in your cafeteria by serving up the freshness and variety of stir-fry-inspired dishes.

BY CECILY WALTERS

BEEF STIR-FRY

YIELD: 10 servings*

SAUCE INGREDIENTS

Cornstarch—2 Tbsps.	Garlic, fresh—1 tsp.
Water—2 Tbsps.	Black pepper—¼ tsp.
Soy sauce, low-sodium—2 Tbsps.	Salt—¼ tsp.
Ginger, ground—⅛ tsp.	Beef soup stock—1 ½ cups

STIR-FRY INGREDIENTS

Carrots, raw—2 ½ cups	Cooking oil—5 Tbsps.
Onion, raw—½ cup	Beef loin/steak, boneless, cubed—2 lbs.
Broccoli florets, raw—¾ cup	

DIRECTIONS

1. Mince the garlic. Peel, trim and split the carrots lengthwise, slicing them on a bias ¼-in. thick. Julienne the onion and cut the broccoli into medium-small florets (about the size that will sit in a tablespoon). Set all aside.
2. To prepare the sauce: Dissolve the cornstarch in the water and soy sauce. Add the ginger, garlic and pepper. Set aside.
3. Add the salt to the beef stock and heat the stock to a boil. Slowly stir in the cornstarch mixture. Return to a simmer. Cook for 3-5 minutes, until thickened. Remove from heat and set aside.
4. To prepare the stir-fry: In a pan, sauté the carrots in 2 Tbsps. of cooking oil for 4 minutes. Add the onions and cook for 1 minute. Add the broccoli and cook for 2 more minutes. Remove from direct heat and transfer the mixture to a bowl and keep warm.
5. Sauté the beef cubes in 3 Tbsps. of cooking oil in a pan. Add the vegetable mixture to the beef in the pan. Add the sauce mixture, mixing to coat the beef and vegetables.
6. For each serving: Portion ¾ cup of the stir-fry mixture over steamed brown rice, if desired.

Recipe: Annette Derouin, SNS, foodservice director, Willmar (Minn.) Public Schools Food & Nutrition Services, for University of Minnesota Farm to School Extension, www.extension.umn.edu/farm-to-school

*Note: If this recipe passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation and conduct a nutrient analysis.

Stir-fry, on the other hand, is performed on a wok, although a tilt skillet may be a more practical piece of equipment for school nutrition operations (more on this later). While sautéing does not require any sauce or liquid be added to the food while cooking, an oil or a sauce of some type *should* be added when cooking vegetables stir-fry-style. There actually are two ways to prepare this cuisine: *chao* and *bao*.

The *chao* technique calls for a minimum amount of oil, which is added to a

pre-heated wok or skillet. Then, just before the oil smokes, the cook adds fragrant ingredients, such as garlic, ginger and scallions, which are heated quickly before the main ingredients—meat or vegetables—are added. The primary rule to follow is that the ingredients that take longer to cook be added *first*. When the meat begins to change color, then the cook adds sauces and spices and tosses the dish. When it comes to tossing the dish, it's crucial to keep the ingredients in motion so that they are uniformly cooked

and not burned. (In fact, writes Young, the term *stir-fry* is something of a misnomer in this style, as *chao* incorporates more of a tossing motion than the circular motion typically associated with the word *stir*.)

In the *bao* technique, also known as flash fry, the wok or skillet is heated until it has a dull red glow. At this point, the cook adds the oil, seasoning and meat in quick succession with no pauses. The food is tossed around rapidly as ingredients are added.



Kitchen Wisdom says . . . Try This!

KITCHEN WISDOM SAYS . . .

- This recipe was tasty and easy to prepare.
- We used cooked pot roast in place of beef loin/steak.
- The meat texture is better when shredded or in strips instead of cubed. Also, additional vegetables would not only enhance the taste, but would help merchandise the dish. We would eliminate the salt and season the dish with a salt-free seasoning or fresh herbs.
- For service, we would modify it by adding double, possibly triple, the vegetables.
- We would serve this over brown rice to meet the grain component of the meal pattern.
- If you wish to add more sauce to go with the rice, change the ratios for the sauce ingredients to 2 cups of beef stock, 2 ½ Tbsps. of cornstarch and 2 ½ Tbsps. of water.
- If you wish to make the amount of broccoli more equivalent to the amount of carrots, increase the amount of broccoli to 1 ¼ cups. You also may choose to add 1 ¼ cups of julienned celery.
- Batch cooking will be necessary because of the broccoli.
- Skip the ginger if this is not a flavor enjoyed by your students or stocked in your kitchen.



Wisdom
says ... Try This!

STIR-FRIED VEGETABLES AND RICE

YIELD: 12 servings*

VEGETABLE INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Vegetable oil—2 Tbsps. | Carrots—2 cups |
| Onions, sweet—2 cups | Edamame beans, frozen, thawed—2 cups |
| Ginger, fresh—3 Tbsps. | Baby corn, canned—2 cups |
| Garlic—1 Tbsp. | Water chestnuts, sliced, canned—2 cups |
| Mushrooms—3 qts. | Snow peas, fresh—3 cups |
| Bell pepper, red—2 cups | Sesame oil, dark—2 Tbsps. |

RICE INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Rice, cooked, long-grain or parboiled*—3 qts. | Sesame seeds— $\frac{1}{4}$ cup |
| Scallions—2 cups | Soy sauce, reduced-sodium—3 Tbsps. |
| | Black pepper, ground—1 tsp. |

DIRECTIONS

1. Julienne the onions, red pepper and carrots. Mince the ginger and garlic. Slice the mushrooms $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. thick. Drain and rinse the corn and water chestnuts. Trim the snow peas. Thinly slice the scallions. Toast the sesame seeds. Set all aside.
2. To prepare the vegetables: Heat the oil in a large wok or slant-sided skillet over high heat. Add the onions and sauté for 1 minute. Stir in the ginger and garlic and continue cooking for another minute. Add the mushrooms and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring often, until the mushrooms are softened and they give off no more liquid. Stir in the peppers and carrots and cook for 1 minute.
3. Stir in the edamame beans and sauté for 1 minute. Mix in the corn and water chestnuts and continue to cook for 1-2 minutes, or until hot.
4. Just before serving, stir in the snow peas and stir-fry for 1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes until the peas are heated through completely but still crisp and bright green. Drizzle the vegetable stir-fry with the sesame oil to serve. Adjust the seasonings. Keep warm.
5. To prepare the rice: In a bowl, mix the hot rice, scallions, sesame seeds, soy sauce and black pepper. Adjust the seasonings. Keep warm.
6. For each portion, serve 1 cup of the hot rice topped with 1 cup of the stir-fried vegetables.

Recipe: USA Rice Federation, www.menurice.com

*Notes: If this recipe passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation and conduct a nutrient analysis. You may want to try substituting a U.S. aromatic rice in this recipe.

KITCHEN WISDOM SAYS . . .

- Because of the cost of edamame, we would lower the amount used, possibly cutting it in half.
- Depending on how your school nutrition operation is structuring menus to meet the new meal pattern requirements, it may be necessary to increase the recipe's yield and reduce the portion size. For example, increasing the yield to 48 servings and reducing the portion size of the vegetables to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup would allow a student to select another vegetable for his or her meal.
- Depending on student acceptability, green peppers and/or red peppers can be added to the recipe.



Cultural Comforts

In addition to the two fundamental techniques used for stir-frying, various cultures have their own traditional ways of preparing this type of dish. For example, *pad Thai*, a signature dish in Thailand, incorporates stir-fried seafood (alternately, many restaurants in America serve *pad Thai* with chicken), vegetables, scrambled egg and noodles and is finished with a tangy sauce. A popular Korean stir-fry dish is *oyi namul*, or stir-fried cucumbers. This particular meal is an example of *kimchi*, a traditional dish made of vegetables with a variety of seasonings, which is Korea's national meal. Aside from

cucumbers, other main vegetable ingredients used in *kimchi* can include napa cabbage, radishes, scallions and beyond.

Stirring It up at School

Following a growing commercial foodservice trend for Asian-inspired dishes, school nutrition operations should consider incorporating stir-fry into their menus. You—and your students—just might be surprised at the great variety of benefits such a dish provides.

At Oak Park and River Forest (Ill.) High School, Director of Food and Nutrition Services Micheline Piekarski, SNS, offers three stir-fry dishes: beef and

broccoli, vegetable and chicken. The mixtures are served over brown rice and can be ordered a la carte or as a meal. The most popular, reports Piekarski, is the vegetable option.

What makes stir-fry a success among students in Piekarski's school and across the country? Familiarity, says Coleen Donnelly, corporate chef for the K-12 segment for Indian Harvest, who volunteers at Oceana High School in Pacifica, Calif., as part of the Chefs Move to Schools initiative. "I've heard kids say things like, 'I've had this before' and 'This tastes like something my mom makes'

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PHILIPPINE ADOBO-STYLE PORK STIR-FRY

YIELD: 22 servings*
PER SERVING: 270 cal., 25 g pro., 20 g carb., 3 g fiber, 11 g fat, 2 g sat. fat, 65 mg chol., 670 mg sod.

INGREDIENTS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Soy sauce, low-sodium—14 ozs. or 1 ¾ cups | Hot pepper sauce—1–2 tsps. | Pineapple chunks—6 lbs. + 12 ozs. or 1 #10 can |
| Vinegar, red wine—14 ozs. or 1 ¾ cups | Pork tenderloin—5 lbs. | Onions, green—3 ozs. or 1 ½ cups |
| Vegetable oil—6 ozs. or ¾ cup | Zucchini—3 lbs. or 2 qts. | Thyme, fresh—optional garnish |
| Garlic—1 ½ ozs. or 3 Tbsps. | Bell peppers, red or green—1 lbs. + 4 ozs. or 1 qt. + 1 cup | |
| Bay leaves—15 | Mushrooms—1 lb. or 1 qt. + 1 cup | |
| Black pepper, ground—2 Tbsps. | | |

DIRECTIONS

1. Finely chop the garlic. Cut the pork tenderloin into 1-in. pieces. Slice the zucchini. Chop the red or green bell peppers. Slice the mushrooms. Drain the pineapple chunks. Slice the onions. Set all aside.
2. Combine the soy sauce, vinegar, ½ cup of the vegetable oil, garlic, bay leaves, black pepper and hot pepper sauce in a bowl. Set aside.
3. Combine the pork with 2 cups of the reserved soy sauce mixture. Cover; refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4. Heat the remaining ¼ cup of oil in a large skillet. Drain the pork and discard the marinade, then add the pork to the skillet. Stir-fry until the pork is cooked; remove from pan.
5. Add the zucchini, peppers and mushrooms to the skillet. Stir-fry until tender crisp.
6. Remove the bay leaves from the reserved soy sauce mixture and add to the skillet, along with the pineapple chunks, green onions and pork. Heat through.
7. For each portion, serve 1 ½ cups of the mixture over rice or noodles or plain. Garnish with fresh thyme, if desired.

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: Dole Food Company, Inc., www.dole.com

*Note: If this recipe passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation.

POTATO STIR-FRY

YIELD: 24 servings*

SAUCE INGREDIENTS

- Hoisin sauce—4 cups
 Soy sauce—2 cups

STIR-FRY INGREDIENTS

- Asian sesame oil—½ cup
 Garlic—¼ cup
 Ginger—¼ cup

Onions, red—8 cups

- Carrots—6 cups
 Celery—6 cups
 Bell pepper, red—8 cups

Sugar snap peas—6 cups

- Bok choy*—12 cups
 Mushrooms—8 cups
 Russet potatoes—12



DIRECTIONS

1. Chop the garlic and onions. Slice the onions and mushrooms. Thinly slice the carrots on a bias and blanch. Thinly slice the celery on a bias. Julienne the bell pepper. Blanch the sugar snap peas. Cut the bok choy into 1-in. pieces. Peel the potatoes, cut into eight wedges each and blanch until just tender. Set all aside.
2. To prepare the sauce: Whisk together the hoisin sauce and soy sauce until blended. Set aside.
3. To prepare the stir-fry: For each portion, heat 1 tsp. of the sesame oil over medium-high heat. Add ½ tsp. of garlic and ½ tsp. of ginger; sauté for 30 seconds; do not let the garlic or ginger brown. Add ⅓ cup of onions, ¼ cup of carrots and ¼ cup of celery; sauté for 1 minute. Add ⅓ cup of bok choy, ⅓ cup of mushrooms, four wedges of potato and ¼ cup of stir-fry sauce. Mix well; cover and simmer until the bok choy is wilted and the vegetables are hot.

Photo & recipe: Everton Clarke, Marriott International, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., Healthy category winner in U.S. Potato Board 2005 Potato Menu Innovation Recipe Contest, www.uspotatoes.com

*Notes: If this recipe passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation and conduct a nutrient analysis. Broccoli or asparagus may be substituted for the bok choy.

SUNRISE STIR-FRY

YIELD: 50 servings

PER SERVING (for Grades K-8)*: 221 cal., 18 g pro., 21 g carb., 2 g fiber, 7 g fat, 2 g sat. fat, 59 mg chol., 622 mg sod., 2 mg iron, 78 mg ca.

PER SERVING (for Grades 9-12)*: 304 cal., 20 g pro., 39 g carb., 3 g fiber, 8 g fat, 2 g sat. fat, 59 mg chol., 622 mg sod., 3 mg iron, 78 mg ca.



INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Rice blend, whole-grain*—
7 cups or 3 lbs.* | Egg whites, liquid, pasteurized—4 ½ cups |
| Breakfast sausage, chicken or
turkey—6 ¼ lbs. | Cheese, pepper Jack or cheddar—
optional garnish |
| Bell pepper, red—10 cups or 4 lbs. | Soy sauce, low-sodium or hot sauce—
optional garnish |

DIRECTIONS

1. Dice the red bell pepper and set aside. Cook the rice according to the package directions on a stovetop or in a steamer, oven or kettle. Approximately 14 cups of water should be used to cook 3 lbs. of rice.
2. Sauté the sausage in a pan with a nonstick spray until cooked through. Heat to 165°F or higher for at least 145 seconds. Hold hot for service at 135°F or higher.
3. Sauté or steam the diced bell peppers in a pan, using a nonstick spray until cooked. Heat to 165°F or higher for at least 145 seconds. Hold hot for service at 135°F or higher.
4. Sauté the egg whites in a pan with a nonstick spray until cooked. Heat to 165°F or higher for at least 145 seconds. Hold hot for service at 135°F or higher.
5. For each serving: Portion the rice* with a #8 scoop (½ cup) for Grades K-8 and a #4 scoop (1 cup) for Grades 9-12. Portion the sausage on top of the rice with a #16 scoop (¼ cup). Portion the egg whites with a #30 scoop (1 oz.). Portion the bell peppers with a #16 scoop (¼ cup).
6. Garnish each serving with pepper Jack or cheddar cheese and serve accompanied by low-sodium soy sauce or hot sauce.

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: MARS Foodservices, www.marsfoodservices.com

*Notes: UNCLE BEN's Wild Red Whole Grain Blend may be used for this recipe. Increase the amount of rice to 14 cups or 6 lbs. for Grades 9-12. The optional cheese and soy sauce/hot sauce garnishes are not included in the nutrient analyses provided above.

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when they try my fried rice recipe," she notes. As a result, most schools don't need to conduct a great deal of marketing when menuing stir-fry dishes because "Whenever kids are already familiar with something, it is an easy sell." This cuisine's "brightly colored vegetables and sense of freshness also are both really good selling points with kids," asserts Donnelly.

Stir-fry can be an attractive menu option to *prepare*, as well, providing a foundation for flexibility and creativity in

meeting new federal nutrition standards. Staff can use the vegetables and/or proteins that they have on hand or that are in season, Donnelly says. In addition, not to be overlooked, according to Donnelly, is the fact that "when stir-fry is paired with a whole grain, a stir-fry dish can cover three meal components: grain, protein, vegetable." Health advocates also point to the fact that the short cooking time for stir-fry dishes means that vegetables retain more of their nutrients.

Preparing Your Stir-fry Creation

Chef Bruno Wehren, consulting chef for Barilla America, stresses the importance of having all of your ingredients ready before beginning to prepare your stir-fry recipe. "That means the onions and garlic chopped, veggies sliced, sauces made and proteins marinated. If you're doing a noodle stir-fry, par-cook your pasta half-way and have it ready, too," he details.

Wehren also advises that the stir-fry elements be cooked as close to serving time as possible. "Stir-fry is meant to be a fresh cuisine, with the vegetables crisp, not soft and soggy," he notes. Once you're ready to begin cooking, turn up the heat on your tilt skillet as hot as possible. Add some vegetable oil, and add the ingredients one at a time. Start with the aromatics like onions and garlic, then add the protein and veggies. Once each ingredient is cooked, push it to a corner of the skillet and add the next; take advantage of the surface area provided by the skillet.

When you cook the protein, slide it to the side when it's about halfway to three-quarters cooked; it will finish cooking while the vegetables have their turn. After you add the sauce, toss all the ingredients together and mix in some chicken or vegetable stock with cornstarch to thicken it. "As soon as it gets hot, it will bind up the sauce and give the entire dish that glossy look that makes stir-fry so attractive," Wehren reveals, adding, "Once again, the most important thing is to have everything ready, so you keep it moving."

Don't have a wok in your prep kitchen? Don't despair. When you need to prep hundreds of meals in a short amount of time, a wok isn't going to be very helpful anyway. "The beauty of these dishes is that



STIR-FRY FAJITA CHICKEN, SQUASH AND CORN

YIELD: 100 servings

PER SERVING: 396 cal., 20 g pro., 59 g carb., 7 g fiber, 10 g fat, 2 g sat. fat, 62 mg chol., 574 mg sod., 2 mg iron, 58 mg ca.

INGREDIENTS

Water—1 gal. + 1 qt.

Rice, brown, long-grain, regular, dry—12 lbs. or 1 gal. + 3 ½ qts.

Garlic, granulated—1 Tbsp. + 1 tsp.

Seasoning blend, chili-lime flavor, salt-free—½ cup + 1 ⅓ Tbsps.

Cilantro, fresh—1 cup

Canola oil—2 cups

Onions, fresh—4 lbs. or 3 qts. + ½ cup

Fajita chicken strips, cooked, frozen, thawed—16 lbs. or 4 gals.

Butternut squash, fresh—16 lbs. or 3 gals. + 1 qt.

Bell peppers, red, fresh—4 lbs. or 3 qts.

Corn, frozen, thawed—8 lbs. or 1 gal. + 1 ½ qts.

Chilies, green, canned—4 lbs. or 2 qts. (2 #10 cans)

Tomatoes, low-sodium, canned—4 lbs. + 8 ozs. or 2 qts. + 1 cup (1 #10 can)

Black pepper, ground—2 Tbsps. + 2 tsps.

Cumin, ground—¼ cup

Garlic powder—2 Tbsps. + 2 tsps.

DIRECTIONS

1. Chop the cilantro. Dice the onions. Peel and cube the squash into ½-in. pieces. Dice the red peppers into ½-in. pieces. Drain the corn. Dice the chilies and tomatoes. Set all aside.

2. Boil the water.

3. Place 3 lbs. of the brown rice in each of four 12x20x2 ½-in. steamtable pans. Pour the water (3 qts. per steamtable pan) over the rice. Stir. Cover the pans tightly.

4. Bake the rice at 350°F for 40 minutes in a conventional oven or at 325°F for 40 minutes in a convection oven. Remove from the oven and let stand covered for 5 minutes.

5. Sprinkle the brown rice with the granulated garlic and half of the salt-free chili-lime seasoning, reserving the other half. Mix well. Fold in the cilantro. Hold at 135°F or higher.

6. Heat the oil in a roasting pan or square head pan (20 ⅞ x 17 ⅜ x 7-in.) on top of the stove. Sauté the onions for 2-3 minutes.

7. Add the chicken, squash and remaining salt-free seasoning. Stir-fry over high heat for 10 minutes or until the squash is tender.

8. Add the red peppers, corn, green chilies, tomatoes, black pepper, cumin and garlic powder. Continue to stir-fry over medium-high heat for no more than 7 minutes to maintain the crunchiness of the vegetables. Do not overcook.

9. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 2 minutes. Heat to 165°F or higher for at least 15 seconds.

10. Hold for hot service at 135°F or higher. For each serving: Portion a 6-oz. spoodle (¾ cup) of the stir-fry mixture over a #8 scoop (½ cup) of the brown rice.

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: Cathy Getz, foodservice director, Kayenta (Ariz.) Unified School District; Chef Paul Gray, head cook, Anasazi Inn; Samantha J. Interpreter, RD, LT USPHS RDF-5; and Mike Williams, second-place winners in the 2011 Recipes for Healthy Kids Recipe Contest, sponsored by Let's Move! in association with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, <http://tinyurl.com/8sstvk5>

they can be made in several different ways, depending on the equipment at hand,” asserts Donnelly. Stir-fry-inspired dishes can be heated in a hot oven on sheet pans, she explains. “The vegetables are tossed with a little oil, ginger, garlic and soy sauce and roasted until crisp tender, then tossed with a cooked protein and served with rice.” Alternately, stir-fries can be prepared as a one-pot dish, details Donnelly. All of the ingredients—raw rice, vegetables, protein, seasonings and hot stock—can be baked in a covered steamtable pan and then warmed.

Schools that *want* to use a more traditional approach that is closer to the original technique could consider a tilt skillet—used by Oak Park and River Forest High School’s Micheline Piekarski—or even a griddle. When using a tilt skillet or griddle, the different ingredients should be cooked in the order of length of cook time, Donnelly advises.

Besides adding stir-fry to the main menu line, you could opt to offer these dishes as part of a made-to-order bar. If this serving method strikes your fancy, take a page from Donnelly’s book by

offering students a couple of choices of rice or grains as a base, plus a variety of stir-fried vegetables and a protein of choice, as well as some different sauce options. Among the sauces you might offer are Thai curry, teriyaki and Indian curry, Donnelly notes. Not only will this type of made-to-order station inject fun into the lunchtime experience for students and cafeteria team members alike, “The student has control over a reimbursable meal, [and] the dish is assembled out of components that are already prepared, [giving] the feel of a restaurant experience,” Donnelly states.

Causing a Stir

Ready to give stir-fry a try in your own operation? Serving stir-fry will keep you in good company with the broader food scene, as most trend-watchers don't envision this cuisine waning in popularity anytime soon. "The flexibility and variation stir-fries offer keep them a fresh concept," says Donnelly. At the school nutrition level, as operators continue to get more creative, "stir-fries will remain a go-to menu option," she believes. Author Grace Young agrees, noting that stir-fries work extremely well as a way to fuse a

local cuisine and culture (think Asian, Spanish and beyond), a concept that's great for incorporating classroom lessons into the cafeteria! **SN**

Cecily Walters is managing editor of School Nutrition. **Chris Walters**, a freelance writer in Arlington, Va., also contributed to this article.

In addition to the variety of stir-fry recipes featured through this article, be sure to check out exclusive online-only stir-fry options that incorporate turkey, as well as broccoli and peanut butter. Also featured online are tips for caring for a wok. Visit www.schoolnutrition.org/snmagazinebonuscontent.

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION, 2011
School Nutrition, (Pub. #0483-8880)
Date of Filing: November 1, 2012

Frequency of Issues: 11 times a year; June/July is a combined issue.

Annual subscription price: \$90 for non-members; \$2 for members.

Mailing Address: 120 Waterfront Street, Suite 300, National Harbor, MD 20745-1142

Publisher: Frank DiPasquale, 120 Waterfront Street, Suite 300, National Harbor, MD 20745-1142. **Editor:** Patricia L. Fitzgerald, 120 Waterfront Street, Suite 300, National Harbor, MD 20745-1142. **Owner:** School Nutrition Association; no other owners.

Average net press run during preceding year: 51,592. Actual net press run of issue published nearest to filing date: 51,290. Average dealer sales during preceding year: 0. Actual dealer sales of issue published nearest to filing date: 0. Average paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions during preceding year: 0. Actual paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions of issue published nearest to filing date: 0. Average paid in-county subscriptions during preceding year: 0. Actual paid in-county subscriptions of issue published nearest to filing date: 0. Average other classes mailed through the USPS during preceding year: 0. Actual other classes mailed through the USPS of issue published nearest to filing date: 0. Average total paid/requested circulation during preceding year: 51,290. Actual total paid/requested circulation of issue published nearest to filing date: 50,101. Average free distribution during preceding year: 0. Actual free distribution of issue published nearest to filing date: 0. Average total distribution during preceding year: 51,290. Actual total distribution of issue published nearest to filing date: 51,290. Average number of copies not distributed during preceding year: 302. Actual number of copies not distributed of issue published nearest to filing date: 1,302. Average total copies during preceding year: 51,592. Actual total copies of issue published nearest to filing date: 51,403. Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 100%; Actual no. copies of single issues published nearest to filing date: 100%.