



From the Food Bank Kitchen

Veggie Stir Fry 101

Summer brings along more choices of fresh vegetables at stores, Farmer's Markets and home gardens. Eating plain, steamed solo vegetables can get boring. Why not try fixing a vegetable sauté (stir-fry) with as many colors as you can? This can be prepared as a side dish, or as a one-dish dinner which includes a variety of veggies plus a protein source, served over whole grains. You can use a store-bought or homemade sauce, or just a couple of herbs instead. Kids may enjoy helping to cut up the veggies (and taste some raw along the way). There are many possible combinations, but the basic idea is to choose a **PROTEIN**, the **VEGETABLES** you want to use, a **SEASONING OR SAUCE**, and a **WHOLE GRAIN**. Here are some suggestions:

PROTEIN — Chicken or turkey breast, beef, or pork cut into 2 inch pieces, shrimp, tofu or tempeh (soy based proteins), or seitan (wheat-based protein). Ground beef, pork or turkey or cut up pieces of veggie burgers could also be used.

GRAINS — Brown rice, quinoa, whole grain pasta, millet, bulgur, barley, and regular or Israeli style couscous are all nutritious and delicious. It is best to cook the grains ahead of time. Three cups of raw grain should make 6 portions.

VEGGIES — Any combination can be used. Use whatever is available. Good choices include onions, scallions, carrots, garlic, ginger, broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini or summer squash, sugar snap peas, eggplant, peppers (green, red, orange, or yellow), mushrooms, celery, and green beans. For Chinese style you could try Bok choy, Chinese cabbage, water chestnuts, bamboo shoots, canned baby corn, and black mushrooms.

VEGGIE PREP TIPS — Plan on 2 cups of cut, raw veggies per serving; many vegetables shrink from water loss during cooking. Cut into uniform bite-sized pieces so they cook evenly and quickly, and retain color and crispness. Separate into 3 groups: 1) onions, garlic and ginger 2) harder, longer-cooking types like carrots, celery, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, and 3) softer, quick-cookers: zucchini, summer squash, peppers, mushrooms.* (See below). If using spinach or other greens, add last. This separation method allows each vegetable no more than “Just Enough Time”, preventing mushiness.

SAUCE - Many sauces are available pre-made at the food store, such as chili garlic, black bean, sweet & sour, Hoisin, or soy or tamari sauce. Beware, as many of these are high in sodium. A combo of onion, garlic and fresh grated ginger works too, as does a combination of dried herbs (like basil & oregano, dill & tarragon, or thyme & marjoram). Many easy recipes are available on-line to make a homemade sauce. Try this TAMARI-GINGER sauce recipe: Whisk together ½ cup lower-sodium tamari or soy sauce, ½ c water, 1 Tbsp Chinese rice wine or apple cider vinegar, 1 Tbsp grated ginger, ½ c minced scallions, 1 clove crushed garlic, 2 tsp sesame oil, and optional 2 tsp dark vinegar and/or 2 tsp sugar. Let stand 15 minutes. For a thicker sauce, combine about 4 Tbsp sauce with 2 Tbsp cornstarch to make a paste and stir in to the sauté toward the end.

SUGGESTED COMBOS: 1. CHILI GARLIC PORK — pork + onion + bell pepper + chili garlic sauce + scallion garnish 2. BLACK BEAN CHICKEN — chicken + zucchini + eggplant + black bean sauce 3. VEGGIE FEAST — tofu + eggplant + zucchini + carrots + broccoli + Hoisin sauce, and 4. BROCCOLI BEEF — beef + broccoli + bell pepper + oyster sauce + water chestnuts.

Stir-Fry Basics

Using a heavy skillet or wok, heat a small amount of peanut, olive or canola oil. Add your protein and cook until it changes color and is completely cooked, moving it constantly with a wooden spoon or spatula to ensure even cooking. Remove from pan and set aside. Next, add more oil and add onions, and if desired thinly sliced ginger and garlic. Sauté until onions are soft. Then add Group 2 veggies (see above*) and sauté until tender. Then add Group 3. Keep heat at medium. Stir as you sauté, keeping things moving. A perfectly stir-fried vegetable is fork tender with a little crunch. Return the protein to the pan with the veggies. Stir in your sauce, with added cornstarch to thicken if desired. Cook for another 1 to 2 minutes. Serve over grains on each plate or bowl, and garnish if desired with chopped peanuts, sliced scallions, or cilantro. Enjoy!

Source: Mollie Katzen Moosewood Cookbook and Zinczenko & Goulding Cook This, Not That