

container are also included.) The cooking chamber doesn't have a removable liner, although it has a nonstick coating. To clean the interior and the drainage pipe it's necessary to first pour soapy water, then rinse water into the chamber and

allow them to run through, a process we found time-consuming. We'd prefer to be able to remove a liner, pour out the oil, and wash the liner in the sink. There's a small window in top of the fryer, but we found that it steams up so it gives limited visibility

into the doings inside. In the back of the unit there's a chamber to hold the cord. The Rotofryer is a good example of a deluxe unit that performs well but still only fries 1 pound of fish fillets or 2 pounds of potatoes at a time.

## WOKS

WOKS ARE THE BASIC, all-purpose utensils of Chinese cookery. In recent years they have become staples in the American home kitchen, either the traditional round-bottom style that has been in existence since Chinese cuisine developed or in one of the many modern variations, including flat-bottom woks and stir-fry pans. The traditional wok was designed for the Chinese open brazier-stove. To fit over the heat source, it has a round bottom and good width, to prevent it from falling through the hole into the fire. The pan slopes to the rim so heat at the bottom can radiate evenly to the sides, but also because the shape enables ingredients to fall to the center, where the heat is concentrated. Most traditional woks have two side handles.

For use in most American kitchens, with their flat surface burners, a classic, round-bottom wok may not be stable and should only be used on gas ranges together with a metal ring that mimics the Chinese brazier and supports the wok. On electric stoves the coil touches only a small portion of the metal and can barely provide adequate heat for stir-frying. Thus the flat-bottom wok was developed. Another modern change in the traditional wok is the handle. Americans are accustomed to stovetop cookware with one long handle, rather than two loops, so many flat-bottom woks and stir-fry pans come with a single long handle, or a long handle with a helper handle for added stability and ease of handling.

The Chinese make good use of a wok. In addition to stir-frying foods (which is a technique that's more like sautéing than frying because the food is constantly kept moving), they steam, braise, deep-fry, and stew ingredients inside the pan. Again, American habits are

different, and for the most part we prefer to limit the wok to stir-frying and deep-frying. That is why the smaller stir-fry pans were created.

Stir-frying involves cooking small pieces of food quickly over high heat. A good wok or stir-fry pan must be made of conductive materials. In fact, most traditional woks are made from carbon steel. You may also see traditional woks made of cast iron and enameled iron. Although it may seem counterintuitive to apply a nonstick coating to a pan that is designed for high-heat cooking, some nonstick woks are available to help reduce the amount of fat needed. To be at all serviceable, the underlying pan must be made of a heavy, efficient, heat-conductive metal. Also, when using a nonstick wok never preheat it as you would a wok made of carbon steel. Heating it empty will permanently damage the nonstick coating. To cook in a nonstick wok, you should begin with a cold pan and cold oil, then heat. A few dealers may offer copper woks; these are beautiful and do a wonderful job transmitting heat for stir-fried foods, but they are hardly necessary when other, much less expensive metals can do the job well.

Stir-fry pans, a modern cookware term for any rounded woklike pan meant for cooking cut-up ingredients over high heat, are typically smaller than traditional woks. Carbon steel is still the best metal to use. Stir-fry pans made of aluminum and anodized aluminum are available, but do not give you the same amount of control over the heat as a pan made from carbon steel will. Uncoated carbon-steel and iron woks must be seasoned well and dried thoroughly after being washed, to prevent rusting. Other metals don't require special treatment.

Anything that walks, swims, crawls, or flies with its back to heaven is edible.

—EILEEN YIN-FEI LO,  
*The Chinese Kitchen*

## 9.45 ALLIED METAL ROUND-BOTTOM WOK SET



This is a traditional wok, with a rounded bottom and two steel side handles, intended for use only on gas burners. (Not enough of the pan's surface would touch an electric burner, so heat would be inadequate.) A metal

ring, which stabilizes the pan and focuses the heat on its bottom, is included, as is a large aluminum cover. The wok is made of cold, rolled steel, which heats very quickly. The smooth, rounded shape helps heat spread evenly throughout the pan. Seasoning is recommended; the pan must also be dried very thoroughly after washing to prevent rust deposits. When properly used for stir-frying, a quick rinse in hot water and a scrub with a brush are all that should be needed. The 14" wok is a good size for most families; however, the set is also available in 12" and 16" sizes.

## 9.46 JOYCE CHEN PRO CHEF CARBON-STEEL WOK



This 14" wok heats quickly and exceptionally well. It is very roomy; use it for family-size stir-fries as well as for steaming (place the bamboo steamer inside), braising, and deep-frying. The metal can rust, however, so be sure to dry it thoroughly and keep it well seasoned. Though traditional Asian woks have

## LEMON CHICKEN: THE AUTHENTIC VERSION

4 servings

This version uses oil to cook the chicken briefly, until the flesh is succulent and velvety; hence the term *velvety*. You can use water instead of oil.

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 egg white
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 cup peanut oil or 2 cups water (see variation)

## SAUCE

- ½ cup homemade chicken stock or reduced-salt canned broth
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons Shaoxing rice wine or dry sherry
- 1 tablespoon finely sliced garlic
- 2 dried and crushed red chillies
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch blended with 1 teaspoon water

Cut the chicken breasts into 1½" cubes. Mix the chicken with the egg white, salt, and cornstarch in a bowl and refrigerate for about 20 minutes.

Heat a wok until it is very hot and swirl in the oil. When the oil is very hot, remove the wok from the heat and immediately add the chicken pieces, stirring vigorously to keep them from sticking. As soon as the chicken pieces turn white, in about 2 minutes, quickly drain the chicken and all of the oil in a stainless steel colander set in a bowl. Discard the oil.

Mix together in a saucepan all the ingredients for the sauce except the cornstarch mixture, and bring it to a simmer.

Slowly drizzle in the cornstarch mixture, stirring all the while. When the sauce has slightly thickened, toss in the chicken, coating well with the sauce. Turn onto a platter and serve at once.

## VARIATION

If you choose to use water instead of oil, bring it to a boil in a saucepan. Remove the saucepan from the heat and immediately add the chicken pieces, stirring vigorously to keep them from sticking. When the chicken pieces turn white, in about 2 minutes, quickly drain the chicken and all of the water in a stainless steel colander set in a bowl. Discard the water.

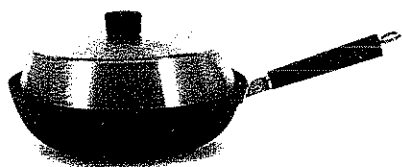
round bottoms and two short handles, this one, with its flat bottom and long handle, may be more familiar in concept to American home cooks. The flat bottom can be used on either gas or electric cooktops and makes it more stable than the classic round-bottom pan. There is a small helper handle opposite the long handle, making the pan more manageable. The handles are made of phenolic, which keeps them cool.

9.47 CALPHALON  
PROFESSIONAL HARD-  
ANODIZED STIR-FRY PAN



This snug little pan is 10" wide and 3" deep, just enough for a bunch of cut-up broccoli florets or spinach or a single order of stir-fried chicken and peanuts. It gets hot quickly, spreading heat evenly for perfect results. It's easy to maneuver this pan, too; it has a well-designed handle that's riveted to the pan and covered with cool-touch phenolic. The bottom is flat, making it useful on any cooktop. Calphalon anodized aluminum is termed *stick resistant*, which means you must use some cooking fat, but you can reduce the amounts called for in recipes.

9.48 JOYCE CHEN PEKING PAN



This pan is the original stir-fry pan invented by Joyce Chen in the late sixties and the company's signature product. Although it is not your tra-



SZECHUAN MAN

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ditional Asian wok, nevertheless it's a great pan for several reasons. The tri-ply metal (carbon steel between two thin layers of aluminum) takes in heat and spreads it well. The cooking surface is arc-sprayed with molten stainless steel—a process known as Excalibur—which helps create a reinforced nonstick surface; it cuts down minimally on heat but makes the pan very easy to use and clean. The outside of the pan has a regular nonstick coating. The pan's bowl-shaped center is deep and capacious; ingredients fall easily from side to bottom. For versatility, the bottom is flat, so you can use it on any type of cooktop. It has one long metal-and-phenolic handle and comes with a large aluminum domelid for use when steaming foods, particularly firm vegetables like broccoli or cauliflower. The company produces several sizes of Peking pans: 8", 9½", 12", and 14"; dome lids are available separately.

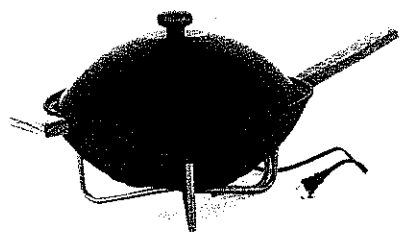
9.49 ALL-CLAD LTD  
STIR-FRY PAN



This compact pan has a 2-quart capacity, spacious enough for a meal of beef with broccoli or fried rice for four. The pan's core is aluminum, so it heats well; the interior cooking surface is stainless steel, which means that ingredients will not interact with the pan; and the exterior is dark anodized aluminum that will not scratch, chip, or peel. The bottom is flat; you can use it no matter what kind of stove you have. There is one long hollowed handle that stays relatively cool, plus a helper handle on the opposite side. It is available in nonstick in the company's Stainless

Steel and LTD lines, and without the nonstick finish in the Master Chef and Cop-R-Chef lines as well.

9.50 MAXIM HIGH  
PERFORMANCE ELECTRIC WOK



We are not particularly fond of electric woks. They may hold heat well (this one has 1,600 watts and an accurate thermostat), but you will find that it is difficult to control the heat, and the pan doesn't cool down quickly enough when needed. Nevertheless, if you insist on an electric wok, this one from Maxim comes somewhat close to the real thing. It holds 6½ quarts, so you can cook big meals inside, and you can use the pan to deep-fry, steam, and braise

foods as well as stir-fry them. The surface is nonstick, making it easy to clean. It looks attractive, too, with a gray matte finish on a sleek tubular stainless steel base, so it might be a good choice when you have casual company and want to serve right from the pot. It could even go on a buffet table. The wok comes with several additional cooking implements: steamer rack; wooden spoon; spatula; a high, domed aluminum lid; and recipe booklet.

## SAUCEPANS

THE SAUCEPAN IS THE WORKHORSE of the kitchen. We use it to make haute cuisine classics like hollandaise and béchamel, but also to cook more rustic fare like tomato sauce and oatmeal. We use a saucepan to put together a few tablespoonfuls of roux, and we reach for the same kind, if not the same size, of pan to cook spaghetti sauce or soup. Because saucepans perform so many different functions, your *batterie de cuisine* should contain several of them in a variety of sizes and materials so that the proper pan can be used for a given quantity of food and the right material will match the needs of the recipe being prepared.

Classic saucepans have straight sides that meet the bottom at right angles. However, there are also a variety of specialty saucepans that have flared sides. This shape, often called a Windsor pan, enhances evaporation; it is a good choice for reducing sauces.

Sauciers are engineered somewhat differently. Not so much a tool for sauce reduction but for convenience, these pans have wider bottoms that are suitable for browning foods before adding liquids for stews and soups. The rounded shape of a saucier makes it easier to stir ingredients (such as the flour mixtures in puddings or gravy or the grains of risotto) that often become stuck in the corners of straight-sided saucepans.

In recent years, Americans have discovered the French *sauteuse evasée*—the *fait-tout* pan. *Fait-tout* means “does everything,” and that is precisely what a *fait-tout* pan does—everything. It is a large, flared saucepan with a bottom wide enough for sautéed dishes or pot roast, deep enough for soup or plenty of sauce,

and with rounded sides that facilitate preparations such as pudding, risotto, and polenta. Some manufacturers call them “chef’s pans”; others name them “multi-function” pans. Whatever their designation, they are so versatile that home cooks would be served well by owning more than one.

### A Buying Strategy

Like sauté pans, saucepans must be made of good heat-conducting materials to perform even the most mundane functions. You may wish to have an expensive copper pot for the occasional fine sauce that requires perfect temperature nuance. More reasonably priced pans suffice for everything else. We also counsel you to use nonstick saucepans for certain dishes, such as oatmeal, rice, and other foods that can stick to the pan and make it difficult to clean—these do not require the heat sensitivity that a sophisticated sauce might.

### Metals for Saucepans

**COPPER** Nothing compares to copper’s heat responsiveness, which makes it our first choice for sauce making, even though it is expensive. Copper cookware is always lined because copper molecules, which are poisonous, can leach into the food. Tin linings are traditional, though they can wear out or buckle and must be refinished from time to time. Stainless steel linings diminish conductivity somewhat but are more practical.

**ALUMINUM** Aluminum conducts heat nearly as well