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## Beef Stir-Fry with Bell Peppers and Black Pepper Sauce

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

We discovered that in order to produce a stir-fry with velvety, tender beef normally only found in Chinese restaurants, we needed to choose the right cut of meat and treat it correctly. Flank steak, cut across the grain into bite-size pieces, delivered great beef flavor and a moderate chew. Then, our combination of meat tenderizing techniques—soaking the meat briefly in a mild baking soda solution and adding some cornstarch to the marinade before flash searing it in a very hot pan—finished the job of delivering supertender, restaurant-quality beef stir-fry.

### Serves 4

The vegetables and aromatics can be prepared while the beef is marinating. Serve with steamed white rice.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1**    tablespoon plus 1/4 cup water
- 1/4**    teaspoon baking soda
- 1**    pound flank steak, trimmed, cut into 2- to 2 1/2-inch strips with grain, each strip cut crosswise against grain into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 3**    tablespoons soy sauce
- 3**    tablespoons dry sherry or Chinese rice wine
- 3**    teaspoons cornstarch
- 2 1/2**    teaspoons packed light brown sugar
- 1**    tablespoon oyster sauce
- 2**    teaspoons rice vinegar
- 1 1/2**    teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 2**    teaspoons coarsely ground pepper
- 3**    tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1**    red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch-wide strips
- 1**    green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch-wide strips
- 6**    scallions, white parts sliced thin on bias, green parts cut into 2-inch pieces
- 3**    garlic cloves, minced
- 1**    tablespoon grated fresh ginger

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine 1 tablespoon water and baking soda in medium bowl. Add beef and toss to coat. Let sit at room temperature for 5 minutes.
2. Whisk 1 tablespoon soy sauce, 1 tablespoon sherry, 1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch, and 1/2 teaspoon sugar together in small bowl. Add soy sauce mixture to beef, stir to coat, and let sit at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes.

3. Whisk remaining ¼ cup water, remaining 2 tablespoons soy sauce, remaining 2 tablespoons sherry, remaining 1½ teaspoons cornstarch, remaining 2 teaspoons sugar, oyster sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, and pepper together in second bowl.
4. Heat 2 teaspoons vegetable oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over high heat until just smoking. Add half of beef in single layer. Cook without stirring for 1 minute. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until spotty brown on both sides, about 1 minute longer. Transfer to bowl. Repeat with remaining beef and 2 teaspoons vegetable oil.
5. Return skillet to high heat, add 2 teaspoons vegetable oil, and heat until beginning to smoke. Add bell peppers and scallion greens and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are spotty brown and crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Transfer vegetables to bowl with beef.
6. Return now-empty skillet to medium-high heat and add remaining 4 teaspoons vegetable oil, scallion whites, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Return beef and vegetables to skillet and stir to combine.
7. Whisk sauce to recombine. Add to skillet and cook, stirring constantly, until sauce has thickened, about 30 seconds. Serve immediately.

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## TECHNIQUE

### TECHNIQUE: CUTTING FLANK STEAK FOR STIR-FRY

Cut steak with grain into 2- to 2 1/2 -inch strips, then cut each strip crosswise against grain into 1/4-inch-thick slices.

## TECHNIQUE

### VELVETY BEEF, WITHOUT VELVETING

The ultratender texture of the stir-fried beef served in Chinese restaurants comes from a classic technique known as velveting, which involves coating the meat and blanching it in a pot of oil before stir-frying even takes place. We looked for a more streamlined way to protect and tenderize the meat.

**TRADITIONAL VELVETING:** Marinate in cornstarch and egg white; blanch in oil to set coating



**RESULTS:** Good but messy and time-consuming

**TEST 1:** Keep cornstarch and egg white; skip blanching in oil



**RESULTS:** Curdled mess

**TEST 2:** Keep cornstarch; omit egg white



**RESULTS:** Silky but not tender enough

**TEST 3:** Keep cornstarch; add baking soda



**RESULTS:** Extra-supple meat and less fuss

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## TECHNIQUE

### STIR-FRY FUNDAMENTALS

No matter what you're stir-frying, follow these guidelines to ensure success.

**Be ready for quick cooking: Prep ingredients in advance.**

**For even browning, use a nonstick skillet, not a wok.**

**Limit stirring so meat and vegetables can develop color.**

**Sear in batches so meat doesn't steam.**

**Add aromatics last to preserve flavor and avoid scorching.**