



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Family Matters

Improving Health Together

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Quick and Easy Stir-Fry Meals

By Glenda Wentworth, Family & Consumer Science Specialist, Eagle County

Want a quick, easy and healthy meal that you can fix in less than 30 minutes? A stir-fry meal is a great way to prepare a quick and tasty meal. It can be easy on the budget as well. Stir-fries are a great way of adding flavor and variety into an overall healthy eating plan. They do not need any special equipment, just a nonstick pan, or electric skillet is required.



Healthy Cooking

Stir-frying is a healthful cooking technique because you just add a small amount of fat. You could even skip the fat and use broth. This method is also a way to get your family eating more colorful vegetables. Eating a diet rich in vegetables provides many health benefits and nutrients that are vital for the body. Vegetables are low in calories and high in fiber. Vegetables are an important source of many vitamins and minerals. Additionally, they can reduce the risk of some diseases and certain types of cancer.

Customize & Reduce Food Waste

Stir-fries are great for experimenting with different food combinations and finding your family's favorite. You can mix and match your favorite proteins, veggies and sauce. You can use fresh, canned or frozen ingredients. It is a great way to use up leftover chicken or any other meat and add more vegetables. Using leftovers and/or ingredients you already have on hand is a way to reduce food waste and save money. The aroma of ginger and garlic cooking together will tantalize your senses.



Kids Can Help

The best part of stir-frying is that kids can help you with this meal. They can help wash vegetables and peel them. If they can handle a knife, they can assist in cutting up the vegetables.

Tips for Success

Before starting any food preparation, wash your hands and any fresh vegetables. Some tips to consider include:

- Get all the ingredients and equipment ready beforehand
- Wash, peel and cut up any vegetables into smaller pieces
- Cut your protein into bite-size pieces
- Preheat the oil in a pan or wok, adding protein along with garlic and ginger for flavor
- Stir-fry uncooked protein and then add the vegetables, or add pre-cooked protein toward the end.
- Add vegetables such as broccoli, carrots and cauliflower before the tender vegetables as they tend to need more cooking time
- Add sauce last

A stir-fry is yummy as leftovers too. Store leftovers in the refrigerator for no longer than 3 - 4 days. For a complete meal, serve a stir-fry over brown rice and add fruit to the meal.

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Let's Talk



Involving your children in the process of food planning, preparation and cooking provides many life skills for them, not to mention the meaningful conversations you can have with your child during this time. It also entices them to taste the meal that is being prepared. Use this time to talk about the health benefits of vegetables as well as how food looks more delicious when there is a variety of color in the meal.

Recipe for Health

Vegetable Stir Fry with Sweet and Sour Sauce

Yield: 4 servings Prep time 10 minutes Cook time 20 minutes
Total time 30 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 1/4 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 head broccoli (chopped)
- 1 head cauliflower (chopped)
- 2 celery (stalks, sliced)
- 2 carrots (sliced)
- 1 bell pepper (sliced)
- 2 cups cooked protein, optional (tofu, black beans, chicken, beef, pork, etc.)
- 3/4 cup pineapple juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 1/2 teaspoons soy sauce (less-sodium)
- 2 cups brown rice (cooked, start the brown rice first before chopping the other ingredients)



Directions:

1. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add broccoli, cauliflower, celery, and carrots. Cook for 2 minutes. Add bell pepper and cook for 2 more minutes.
2. Add cooked protein of your choice (optional), cook 2 more minutes to heat through.
3. In a mixing bowl, combine pineapple juice, sugar, lemon juice, cornstarch, and soy sauce.
4. Add the sauce to the skillet. Bring to a boil and cook for 1 minute or until the sauce thickens and coats the stir fry.
5. Serve over brown rice.

For Additional Flavor:

- 2 thin slices of fresh minced ginger root and 1 garlic clove peeled and minced may be added with the broccoli and other raw vegetables for flavor.

Recipe adapted from: <https://www.nutrition.gov/recipes/vegetable-stir-fry>