



# A guide to Chinese ingredients

It may be the Year of the Pig, but it's not only pork that we're serving up for our Chinese New Year celebrations...

From unusual fruits and vegetables, to interesting sauces and cooking techniques, cooking Chinese cuisine in your home kitchen can be an unfamiliar experience.

But once you know more about the delicious, flavourful ingredients often found at a Chinese New Year feast, you'll be sure to include Chinese food on your menu – no matter the celebration. We took a wander through the supermarket to explore our favourite techniques, tips and tantalising foods:

## How to cook Chinese food

From leafy greens to salty sauces, the Asian vegetable section is full of delicious traditional fresh ingredients to bring your Chinese foods to life. They're easy to cook – most just require some seasoning and a light stir-fry to impress your guests. And many are just as delicious served raw.

With a bit of time on your hands, you can pair them beautifully to make home-cooked meals that would shine on any Chinese New Year menu – from [steamed dumplings](#) to noodle dishes and finger foods.

## Leafy greens

- **Wombok** is strange-looking cabbage-like vegetable that gives a delicious textural crunch to any dish. It's best served raw and sliced (as you would for a coleslaw) but also takes on a rich flavour when lightly fried with ginger, chilli and garlic.
- **Chinese broccoli** comes from the same world as your pak choy, bok choy and spinach families – a soft leafy vegetable that just needs a light fry to wilt and leave your guests wanting more.
- **Kohlrabi** is a beetroot-looking root with delicious leafy greens growing out of it. With the texture of broccoli and a unique flavour that shines when [served raw or steamed](#), don't go past this purple or green bulb the next time you see it.

## Melons

- **Bitter melon** tastes, as its name suggests, quite bitter. But with a bit of clever cooking – take the seeds out, cut and salt the flesh to soak up the bitter juice, and [stir-fry with chilli and garlic](#) – it's a delicious, tender treat. Plus, it's packed with nutrients (from potassium to vitamin C), and believed to help with blood sugar and liver health.
- The **hairy melon** is a little more familiar – sort of like an enormous zucchini. Also known as a fuzzy melon or wax gourd, the delicacy is hard to find and best cooked fresh from the market. The seeds can

stay in, but the flesh needs to be 'rubbed' with a knife to remove the hairy exterior. It's delicious mixed with a pork stir-fry.

### **Seasoning staples**

In any pantry, there are some staples that any home chef would keep on hand in order to bring any dish to life. Why not add some Asian flavours to the mix – perfect for whipping up Chinese food that tastes authentic and delicious with minimal effort.

Soy sauce, chilli and oyster sauce are firm favourites in any Chinese recipe book. Plus, no Chinese feast would be complete without some fresh ginger and garlic – buy them whole to get the most flavour and nutrients out of them.