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Opening Extract from...

Lemongrass and Ginger

Written by Leemei Tan

Published by Duncan Baird

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my family,
Arnaud, Nelly, Azma and Kristin.

LEMONGRASS AND GINGER

Leemei Tan

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requirements or medical conditions. Ill or elderly people,
babies, young children and women who are pregnant or
breastfeeding should avoid recipes containing raw meat,
raw fish or uncooked eggs.

NOTES ON THE RECIPES:

- Unless otherwise stated:
- All recipes serve 4
 - Use medium eggs, fruit and vegetables
 - Use fresh ingredients, including herbs and chillies
 - Do not mix metric and imperial measurements
 - 1 tsp = 5ml 1 tbsp = 15ml 1 cup = 250 ml

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Home for me is Kedah in the northwestern state of Peninsula Malaysia where I grew up with my mum, dad, big sister and little brother. Picturesque, complete with lush paddy fields and dotted with kampungs (villages), the Kedah region is the ‘Rice Bowl of Malaysia’, producing more than half of Malaysia’s rice supply.

Malaysia is a society where many diverse food cultures mix so, as I grew up, not only did I have the opportunity to eat many different foods but also I was encouraged by my parents to be bold and adventurous with what I ate. Delicious foods of all kinds were available to us in abundance, and right on our doorstep.

I grew up in a town where the main street was lined on both sides with a collection of shops and homes, and this is where we lived. Dad ran his retail business downstairs, we lived upstairs, and in our large backyard my Mum grew chilli bushes, pandan plants and mango, papaya and calamansi (a type of citrus fruit) trees. We also raised free-range chickens.

Serving fresh, healthy and scrumptious meals to her family was important to my Mum, and each day after we left for school she would make her way to the nearby markets to source the freshest ingredients to use when cooking our dinner. Because Friday was the first day of the weekend in Kedah State it meant I could join Mum at the markets. After what seemed like years of nagging her to let me come along, my first outing to the markets was a real adventure. One hand clinging onto my small straw bag and the other holding onto Mum’s hand, I was mesmerized by the sounds, sights and smells. Traders and farmers vying for each customer’s business; displays of amazing fresh fruits and vegetables; and massive boxes of crushed ice covering fresh seafood and fish shipped in daily from the two main shipping ports – Kuala Perlis and Kuala Kedah. I found it captivating, but equally as exciting for me was watching Mum turn all the wonderful fresh produce into amazing food. It was never a chore for me to get involved in the kitchen; I was a willing volunteer, taking on any task Mum felt confident I could cope with.

MUM’S LITTLE HELPER

Those early years in the kitchen – learning about different fresh roots, spices and other important ingredients in an Asian kitchen; helping with the chopping, grinding, pounding and slicing; and observing my Mum gutting fish and preparing fresh poultry before cooking – are all experiences that have definitely formed my appreciation of fresh produce and my love of creating new dishes. Food was such an important part of my upbringing, and it wasn’t until quite a few years later that I understood just how priceless this time was. Even though I was a very willing helper, there were times when I moaned about how the chores given to me were all related to food preparation: ‘Why can’t I cook a dish?’, I would ask. The response was always the same, ‘You have plenty to learn before I let you handle the wok.’ I would pull a long and sulky face, not realizing that Mum wanted me to have a solid base in cooking. Back then, I could only observe how to do proper stir-frying, braising and steaming, but now I realize just how clever and insightful Mum was.

MY FORMATIVE YEARS

After I finished high school, I went to a college in Kuala Lumpur, and during this time, eating out became part of my lifestyle. There were street food hawkers almost at every corner, and it didn’t take me long to get enthusiastic about the food scene. Along with eating street food, I used to eat regularly at restaurants, so I got to experience many different cuisines from around the world, further fueling my interest in food. But there is something quite special about home-cooking, and I had always been pampered with Mum’s. Luckily for me I had a wonderful landlady who was both kind and a very good cook. Mrs Seow often spoiled me with her home cooking. I will always remember fondly how on hot, humid days she would treat me to a traditional soupy dessert to help cool me down. Another lip-smacking, simple yet flavoursome dish that she prepared was Claypot Chicken Rice (*see page 88*). Her secret was to use a free-range chicken and to be bold with seasoning.

From Kuala Lumpur I moved to Perth, Australia, for two years to complete my university degree. Leaving my home and my family was very hard, but I was embarking on a new adventure and I was with a group of friends. This period of my life turned out to be one of those important milestones in my life – it was also where my cooking skills were put to the test.

I shared a house with three friends: Peh-Ling, who was not confident in her cooking skills, so she was in charge of chopping the vegetables; Huey-Mein, who cooked a little, but everything looked dark and tasted sweet, as she is very fond of dark and sweet soy sauce; and there was Cathy, who like me had had a lot more hands-on experience in the kitchen. It was Cathy and I who ended up cooking most of the time.

As in my parents' house, we would always sit down to a bowl of fluffy white rice, which we would eat with a few different meat, fish and vegetable dishes, all nicely presented at the centre of the table – fresh and simple; fragrant and warm; delicious and healthy. I have many fond memories of this time, and quite recently Cathy and I were reminiscing about our mealtime moments when she suddenly paused and exclaimed, 'Never once did it cross anyone's mind to start dinner without everyone being home!' And it was our home away from home, a house filled with warmth and laughter. During those few years, cooking without any guidance from Mum, I learned to improvise, and this made me a keener and more confident cook.

LIVING IN LONDON

From Perth I returned to Kuala Lumpur to work, then, about seven years ago, I decided to take a sabbatical and pursued my dream to travel and experience more of the amazing world we live in. I headed for London, where I'm still based. My first year in London flew by. I cooked more than I used to back in Malaysia, and my weekly telephone conversations with Mum were never without a discussion of food of some kind. There was also lots of 'How do you...?', 'Do you remember that dish that you made...?' and 'You know the

spice paste that was freshly ground, how much of each ingredient do I use?' It was during this year that I realized just how much I had taken for granted during the cooking sessions in my parents' kitchen, and just how infectious Mum's enthusiasm had been!

It was during my second year in London, after I met my now fiancé, Arnaud, that the next stage of my food journey started. Along with our shared passion for food, we both love travelling, and Arnaud being French, meant we made many trips to France. Slowly I was introduced to a different style of cooking from the many different regions of France, and new and amazing ingredients that were so different from those we use in Malaysia.

Arnaud's mother, Nelly, also loves cooking and enjoys good food, and for her, as it is for me cooking is relaxing, therapeutic and never a chore. When I first met Nelly, I didn't speak French or she Mandarin or English, and it was food that helped us to connect with each other. Nelly, like my Mum, is one of the best role models. Her impeccable skills inspire me, and I love her home cooking. It was meeting Arnaud and then Nelly that got me wondering, 'Is working with food my destiny?'

Travelling with Arnaud to the different regions in France and to many different countries, experiencing the wonderful diversity of culture and styles of cooking, has greatly influenced my own cooking. From each place I visit, I come away with a handful of recipes and a new appreciation of what authentic cooking means, inspiring me to learn new cooking techniques and to develop my cooking style with an increasingly more international and modern flavour.

One life-changing experience was my visit to Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo, which gave me an insight into the importance of eating top-quality and fresh ingredients and preparing food simply. When you cook with fresh produce, you can turn a good dish into something that is exceptionally tasty, even when using the simplest cooking techniques. Nothing is more amazing than eating the freshest tuna sashimi, sliced in a particular way, which practically melts in your mouth. Even eating a freshly-made bowl of the

humble soba noodles, can bring about beaming, satisfied faces. At Tsujiki fish market, and generally when travelling through Japan, I learnt so much about the importance of the words ‘practical, simple, healthy and delicious’ when it comes to cooking and food, and this is now central to my style of cooking – and a great example of this is my Soy & Mirin Tuna on Soba Noodles (*see page 30*).

Simplicity lets the food speak for itself. If ever asked what is the most memorable dish I ate when travelling somewhere specific, my answer seems always to be something that was prepared in home-cooking style – simply presented yet bursting with flavour. And when I get home and recreate these dishes in my own kitchen, I get great satisfaction from this approach.

I remember a particular experience when I was in Vietnam that instilled in me, and reassured me, that in the kitchen patience is a virtue. (And now I pay even more attention to how soup stock tastes and looks.) I watched an amazing lady in her 60s start her day at 4am to prepare the stock for her version of Vietnamese Chicken Noodle Soup (*see page 144*) that she later sold on her food stall. Onions and ginger were toasted until slightly charred before adding them to the water – along with star anise, cinnamon stick, cloves and chicken carcasses – to make a fresh, rich stock. Over the lowest heat possible, she left the ingredients to simmer ever so gently for hours, so as to avoid any cloudiness. The result was the most delicious, deep and flavoursome stock – with a hint of liquorice, clove, onions and ginger. That, for me, is the result of patience and passion in cooking, which then brings warmth and happiness to those people who get to enjoy the meal.

Travelling has given me the incredible opportunity to immerse myself in learning about local foods and a country’s culture. And I have had many fantastic and special experiences, when I have spent time really talking with local people to understand their culture, which, especially in Asian countries, has often evolved through food and, in particular, spice trading.

These conversations and observations have made me realize just how important, if not essential, it is to preserve the authenticity of recipes however much you adapt and modernize them. And this realization was in part the impetus behind starting my food and travel blog, My Cooking Hut, in 2007. I wanted to do my bit to spread the love of food, and its heritage, to other people all around the world.

MY COOKING HUT

For me, my blog is not only a way to record my food and travel experiences, but also a way to share and reminisce with fellow food and travel enthusiasts. Food is a wonderful way to bond people together, and through the world of blogging I have connected with so many fantastic, like-minded people from many different cultures and parts of the world.

It may only be a small contribution, but I hope that sharing my passion, knowledge and skills will inspire an interest in food and the origin of different dishes in people of all ages, and help them to appreciate just how closely related food and the lifestyles we live are.

Stepping into the food blogging world may not have been planned, but it has given me a better insight into many different cuisines and it has allowed me to explore my own talents and interests. It was through writing and talking about food that led me to food photography and styling. Never before had I appreciated the potential I showed in these areas, and as each day passes and I further submerge myself in my blog work my passion grows stronger. Photography has enabled me to look at things differently and capture not only the beauty of food but to appreciate some of the amazing scenery that God has blessed our world with.

What keeps me going is the encouragement that I receive from the loyal readers of my blog. Every day I am touched by the sweet and kind words I receive. I am so thankful for them, and it is this appreciation that makes me even more determined to produce and share beautiful recipes and photography.

LEMONGRASS & GINGER

Writing the recipes for this book, remembering all the people and places that have inspired me and reflecting on just how far my food journey has taken me since that first trip to the market with Mum, has been, if truth be told, almost unbelievable. As I've sat in front of my computer screen typing away, so many vivid images have popped back into my mind that I can almost smell and taste the food, hear the banter and laughter, and feel the joy of sharing these moments with friends, family and new-found, food-loving enthusiasts. Being able to bring these experiences to life in my kitchen, and now in this book for you to cook and enjoy, is incredibly rewarding; to have this opportunity to show you just how tasty, rich and flavoursome authentic Asian cooking is – and how easy it is to prepare at home.

The recipes in this book are my take on wonderful, classic recipes of Southeast Asia. Many of them use modern ingredients and equipment – and different, more approachable techniques. They include recipes for dishes I have tasted during my travels that stand out in my memory. There are some that have been handed down from my family and others that are recipes that were inspired by meals I enjoyed with people I've met or have eaten with family and friends.

As you flip through the book and read the recipes, you will discover, as I have, the significant differences in dishes from one country to the next, despite the countries bordering one another, such as China and India; or, even though two countries are far apart, incredible similarities between the ingredients and spices, as in Malaysian and Indian cuisines. There are so many different types of delicious Asian foods with amazing flavours and wonderful ranges of tastes, and the recipes I've included within each chapter have been chosen specifically so you can experience the diversity of Asian food.

When writing and compiling the recipes, it was important to me that they accurately reflect the flavours and nuances of the different countries, and to do this, a lot of fresh spices are used. Within the Basics section of the

book you will find 20 spice pastes (*see pages 206–210*) that are so easy to make, you will never again need to buy the ready-made versions. Using either a food processor or mortar and pestle, you can grind up fresh spice pastes in just a few minutes. Each paste recipe makes enough for one recipe or a meal for four people, but can easily be doubled, tripled, etc., and can also be stored in the fridge for up to one week.

No matter which Asian cuisine you are cooking, the balance of flavours is very important. There is no secret to making the most perfect and tastiest dish – it all lies in the tasting and balancing of flavours. So, when cooking my recipes, or if you are taking inspiration from them to create your own, taste, taste and taste again while you are cooking. This is an important Asian cooking technique that I guarantee will help you to achieve a harmony of flavours in every dish you cook.

Another important tip, as mentioned before, is to use the freshest ingredients possible. And if you have a well-stocked storecupboard, with all the condiments essential to Asian cooking, such as light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, sweet soy sauce, fish sauce, Chinese rice wine, cooking sake, mirin and sesame oil, you can create healthy and tasty Asian food at home with ease.

I live to eat, and love to eat, and I know this will never change. I hope when you are reading and using my book you will be inspired and I manage to set off a similar passion for good, fresh food.



JAPAN & Korea

In contrast to the spiciness of Korean and other Asian foods, Japanese cuisine is mild in flavour with sweetness and saltiness as the key tastes. It is simple, light and elegant, and is cooked using the best-quality and freshest ingredients available. In Japanese cooking, there is an emphasis on the purity of the natural ingredient and eating seasonally. Key ingredients used are shoyu, Japanese soy sauce; mirin, a sweetened sake; rice wine vinegar; and miso, a fermented bean paste, which is also an ingredient used to make Japanese stock. Rice is also an important part of Japanese meals, and is the base ingredient of many favourite dishes, including Sea Bream Nigirizushi (*see page 25*) and Tempura Prawn Temaki (*see page 29*).

Korean food is largely rice- and noodle-based, and because of the liberal use of Korean hot red chilli pepper and hot pepper paste is very much associated with piquancy. Other key ingredients used in Korean cooking are soy sauce, garlic, ginger, spring onions, sesame oil and toasted sesame seeds, and nearly all meals are served with Kimchi, a Korean pickle most commonly made with cabbage (the use of Pak Choi (*see page 36*) is my tweak on the classic). There is an abundance of seafood in Korean cooking and pork and chicken are often eaten, but beef is by far the most popular meat, which is used in dishes such as Bibimbap (*see page 22*) and Sesame Barbecued Beef (*see page 24*).

CHICKEN TERIYAKI & ONIGIRI BENTO

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME 25 minutes,
plus 25 minutes marinating time

COOKING TIME 15–20 minutes,
plus cooking the rice

150ml/5fl oz/scant $\frac{2}{3}$ cup
mirin

100ml/3 $\frac{1}{2}$ fl oz/generous
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup shoyu

2 tbsp sake

2 tbsp granulated sugar

1cm/ $\frac{1}{2}$ in piece of root ginger,
peeled and finely grated, pulp
discarded, reserving the juice

4 chicken legs, skin on and
deboned (*see page 215*)

1 tbsp sesame seeds

$\frac{1}{2}$ recipe quantity Boiled
Short-Grain Rice (*see page*
214)

400g/14oz baby leaf spinach

1 tbsp sunflower oil

250g/9oz cherry tomatoes

sea salt

Delicious, healthy and convenient is how I describe a bento.

A simple packed lunch that consists of vegetables, meat or fish and rice. There are many variations of bento, and you can include anything you like – not just what I've selected here.

- 1 Put the mirin, shoyu, sake, sugar and ginger juice in a bowl. Mix until the sugar is dissolved, then add the chicken legs and coat well in the liquid. Cover with cling film and leave to marinate in the fridge for about 25 minutes.
- 2 Meanwhile, heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat, then add the sesame seeds and dry-fry for a few minutes until the seeds begin to pop. Tip onto a plate and leave to one side.
- 3 Divide the warm, boiled rice into 8 equal portions. Moisten your hands to stop the rice sticking to them and scoop up a portion of rice. Shape it into a ball, then slightly flatten and sprinkle over the toasted sesame seeds. Repeat with the remaining portions of rice and leave to one side.
- 4 Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil, add the spinach and cook for about 30 seconds. Drain and refresh the spinach under running cold water. Squeeze out any excess liquid and pat dry with kitchen paper. Divide into 4 equal portions, then shape each portion into 3 small balls. Leave to one side.
- 5 Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the chicken pieces, skin-side down, and cook for 5–6 minutes on each side until golden brown and the chicken is cooked through. Pour in the marinade and bring to the boil for a few seconds, then reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook the chicken until the sauce starts to thicken.
- 6 Remove from the heat and cut the chicken into bite-sized slices. To assemble, divide the rice portions, spinach balls, chicken and cherry tomatoes into each bento or lunch box.



Korean Fried Chicken

A few years ago in New York, I stopped by a popular Korean eatery that is most famous for one dish – Double-fried Chicken. That doesn't sound so sensational, right? I took my first bite from the chicken wing and was left speechless. Really crispy skin glazed with a soy sauce mixture. Amazing! I just wanted to keep eating and eating. Here I've recreated the recipe with the addition of sesame seeds for extra crunch.

SERVES 4
PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes
COOKING TIME about 1 hour

100g/3½oz/heaped ¾ cup
 plain flour, plus extra for
 dusting
 3 tbsp cornflour
 4 tbsp light soy sauce
 1 tbsp granulated sugar
 2 tbsp honey
 1 tbsp sesame oil
 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 1cm/½in piece of root ginger,
 peeled and finely chopped
 2 tbsp sesame seeds
 500ml/17fl oz/2 cups
 sunflower oil, for deep-frying
 1kg/2lb 4oz chicken wings

TO SERVE
 1 recipe quantity Boiled
 Long-Grain Rice (see page
 214)

- 1 Sieve the plain flour and cornflour into a bowl, then gradually mix in 200ml/7fl oz/scant 1 cup water to form a batter and leave to one side.
- 2 In a small saucepan over a medium-high heat, add the soy sauce, sugar, honey, sesame oil, garlic, ginger and 1 tablespoon water. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 10 minutes until the mixture starts to thicken. Remove from the heat, strain over a large bowl and leave to one side.
- 3 Meanwhile, heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat, then add the sesame seeds and dry-fry for a few minutes until the seeds begin to pop. Tip onto a plate and leave to one side.
- 4 Heat the sunflower oil in a deep, heavy-based saucepan to 180°C/350°F or until a small piece of bread turns brown in 15 seconds. Lightly dust the chicken wings with flour, then coat with the batter and gently slide into the oil. Fry the wings in 2 or 3 batches for 10–15 minutes per batch until lightly golden brown, then remove from the oil, using a slotted spoon, and drain on kitchen paper. Avoid overcrowding the saucepan, as this will lower the temperature of the oil.
- 5 Let the chicken wings cool for 5 minutes and bring the heat back to 180°C/350°F. Re-fry the chicken in batches for a further 2 minutes per batch, or until golden brown and crisp, then remove from the oil and drain well on kitchen paper. Put the chicken pieces in the large bowl with the soy sauce mixture and toss until well coated. Sprinkle over the toasted sesame seeds and serve warm with boiled rice.



Japanese Pork & Cabbage Pancakes

Osaka in Japan is a heaven for food lovers, and when you stroll around its recognized area of gastronomy, Dotonburi, you are spoilt for choice. Restaurants line both sides of the streets. One of the specialities from Osaka is Okonomiyaki, a savoury pancake cooked on a griddle and topped with a Worcestershire-like sauce, mayonnaise and bonito. It is also very popular in the area of Hiroshima, but instead of mixing all the ingredients into the batter, Hiroshima-style Okonomiyaki, Bibimbap, is prepared by layering the ingredients.

MAKES 8 pancakes
PREPARATION TIME 25 minutes
COOKING TIME about 1 hour
20 minutes

220g/7¾oz/heaped 1¾ cups plain flour
½ tsp sea salt
1 tbsp sake
1 tbsp mirin
½ small white cabbage, core removed, rinsed and finely chopped
150g/5½oz pork mince
150g/5½oz raw, peeled large king prawns, deveined and cut into small pieces (see page 216)
2 spring onions, finely chopped
2 eggs, at room temperature
sunflower oil, for oiling
light mayonnaise, to serve
bonito flakes, to serve (optional)

SAUCE
3 tbsp tomato ketchup
4 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
2 tsp golden syrup
2 tsp shoyu

- 1 To make the sauce, put the tomato ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, golden syrup and shoyu in a small saucepan over a medium-high heat. Stir well and cook for 2–3 minutes until the sauce starts to thicken. Leave to one side to cool.
- 2 Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl, add 230ml/7¾fl oz/scant 1 cup water and mix well to form a thick batter. Stir in the salt, sake and mirin, then add the cabbage, pork, prawns and spring onions. Break in the eggs, mix until well combined and set aside.
- 3 Pour some oil into a large, heavy-based frying pan over a medium-high heat, then use kitchen paper to grease the pan evenly and soak up any excess oil. When the pan is hot, add 3–4 tablespoons of the mixture and flatten it into a 12cm/4½in disc. Cook for 8–10 minutes, then, using a spatula, flip over the okonomiyaki and cook the other side for 8–10 minutes until golden brown and crisp. Remove from the pan and keep warm while you make the remaining pancakes. If they will fit in the pan, cook 2 okonomiyaki at a time. Oil the pan again, as required.
- 4 Divide the okonomiyaki between individual serving plates, brush with the sauce and then top with a generous dollop of mayonnaise and a scattering of bonito flakes, if using. Serve hot.

Japanese Beef Stew

The Japanese absolutely love to eat beef cooked in hotpot-style such as Nikujaga. The beef is very thinly sliced, stir-fried and then simmered with vegetables in a flavourful dashi. Here I suggest using beef topside or rump; however, for a truly sensational dish you could use wagyu beef. Originating in Japan, wagyu is now available worldwide. The fat is evenly distributed throughout the flesh and melts as the meat is cooked, giving it a soft and juicy texture and a rich flavour.

SERVES 4–6
PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes, plus making the Dashi
COOKING TIME 45 minutes

80g/2¾oz sugar snap peas
1 tbsp sunflower oil
500g/1lb 2oz casserole steak, trimmed of fat and cut into bite-sized pieces
1 onion, cut into wedges
3 carrots, cut into bite-sized pieces
2 potatoes, quartered
1 parsnip, cut into bite-sized pieces
250g/9oz daikon, quartered
½ recipe quantity Dashi (see page 211)
2 tbsp sake or rice wine
2 tbsp sugar
4 tbsp shoyu

TO SERVE
1 recipe quantity Boiled Long-Grain Rice (see page 214)

- 1 Prepare a bowl of ice-cold water and bring a saucepan of water to the boil. Add the sugar snap peas to the boiling water and blanch for 1–2 minutes. Drain, then put the sugar snaps into the iced water to stop the cooking process. Leave to one side.
- 2 Heat the oil in a frying pan or saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the beef and cook, stirring occasionally, for 3 minutes until sealed and beginning to brown. Add the onion and cook for 2–3 minutes until soft and translucent, then add the carrots and cook for 3 minutes, or until almost tender.
- 3 Tip in the potatoes, parsnip, daikon, dashi, sake and sugar. Bring to the boil and then push the ingredients around the pan, making sure the vegetables are covered by the dashi. Reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the shoyu and prepared sugar snap peas and cook, covered, for a further 5 minutes. Serve immediately with boiled rice.



BIBIMBAP

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME 30 minutes,
plus 25 minutes freezing and
soaking time

COOKING TIME 45 minutes

200g/7oz beef fillet,
wrapped and semi-frozen for
25 minutes (see page 217)

2 tbsp sunflower oil

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

1 tbsp light soy sauce

6 dried shiitake mushrooms,
soaked, drained and cut into
thin strips (see page 217)

1 tsp sesame oil

120g/4¼oz/generous 1 cup
bean sprouts

1 small carrot, cut into
matchsticks

1 courgette, thinly sliced

200g/7oz baby leaf spinach

4 eggs

1 recipe quantity Boiled
Short-Grain Rice
(see page 214)

freshly ground black pepper

TO SERVE

1 tbsp sesame seeds

Korean hot pepper paste

‘Bibim’ in Korean means to mix and ‘bap’ means rice, so this dish literally means ‘mixed rice’. There is a popular variation of Bibimbap – Dol Sot Bibimbap – where the cooked rice is spread over the base of a stone pot and becomes crunchy during cooking. The other cooked ingredients are arranged on the rice and then a raw egg is added just before serving and stirred into the rice to cook it.

- 1 Heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat, then add the sesame seeds and dry-fry for a few minutes until the seeds begin to pop. Tip onto a plate and leave to one side.
- 2 Remove the partially frozen beef from the freezer and unwrap the cling film. Using a sharp knife, cut the beef against the grain into 3mm/¼in-thick slices.
- 3 Heat 1 tablespoon of the sunflower oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat. Add the garlic and stir-fry for 1 minute, then add the beef and stir-fry for 5–6 minutes until brown and cooked through. Add the soy sauce and season with pepper. Remove the beef from the pan and keep warm. Still over a medium-high heat, add the shiitake mushrooms to the pan and stir-fry for 2 minutes, then drizzle over the sesame oil. Remove the mushrooms from the pan, using a slotted spoon, leave to one side and keep warm. Repeat the same process, without adding the sesame oil, with the bean sprouts and then the carrot.
- 4 Meanwhile, steam the courgette for 5 minutes, or until soft, and leave to one side. Steam the spinach for 2–3 minutes until wilted, then drain, squeeze out any excess water and leave to one side.
- 5 Heat the remaining sunflower oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat and fry the eggs for about 3 minutes each – the yolks should still be runny. Meanwhile, gently warm the beef and vegetables in a separate frying pan.
- 6 To assemble, divide the warm cooked rice into serving bowls, then divide the beef and vegetables between the dishes. Put a fried egg in the centre of each bowl. Sprinkle over the sesame seeds and serve immediately with the Korean hot pepper paste on the side.



sesame BARBECUED BEEF

Bulgogi is one of two dishes (*see Pak Choi Kimchi on page 36 for the other*) that really stuck with me after my first visit to Korea. The beef was very thinly sliced and gently marinated, then served raw on a platter with vegetables for each guest to cook on a shared grill at the table. Keeping the delicious, clean flavours, here is a modern take on the traditional dish with everything cooked in a pan instead.

SERVES 4
PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes,
plus 1 hour 25 minutes freezing
and marinating time
COOKING TIME 20 minutes

500g/1lb 2oz rib-eye steak
or sirloin, wrapped and
semi-frozen for 25 minutes
(*see page 217*)
3½ tbsp light soy sauce
2 tbsp granulated sugar
2 tbsp sesame oil
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1cm/½in piece of root ginger,
peeled and finely chopped
1 onion, sliced
2 tbsp sesame seeds
1 tbsp sunflower oil
2 spring onions, finely
chopped

TO SERVE
1 recipe quantity Boiled
Long-Grain Rice
(*see page 214*)

- 1 Remove the partially frozen beef from the freezer and unwrap the cling film. Using a sharp knife, cut the beef against the grain into 3mm/⅛in slices, or even thinner if possible.
- 2 Put the beef in a large bowl with the soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil, garlic, ginger and onion and mix well. Cover with cling film and leave to marinate in the fridge for about 1 hour.
- 3 Meanwhile, heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat, then add the sesame seeds and dry-fry for a few minutes until the seeds begin to pop. Tip onto a plate and leave to one side.
- 4 Heat the sunflower oil in a ridged griddle pan or heavy-based frying pan over a high heat. When the oil begins to smoke, add the marinated beef and cook for a few seconds before turning the heat down to medium-high. Spread out the meat in the pan, laying it as flat as possible so it cooks evenly. Cook for 10–15 minutes, turning occasionally, until the beef is browned and tender.
- 5 One minute before the end of cooking, add the spring onions. Sprinkle over the toasted sesame seeds and serve immediately with boiled rice.

sea Bream nigirIZUSHI

Nigirizushi is one of the most popular Japanese sushi, and is also called hand-formed sushi, because the rice is pressed and moulded into an oblong shape. I've used short-grain rice because it is readily available and gives a similar texture to sushi rice. It also takes less time to cook, which means these delicious morsels are quick to make. The blushing pink and thinly sliced pieces of sea bream are fresh and great in taste, although you can use other kinds of seafood.

SERVES 4
PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes,
plus cooking the rice

200g/7oz boneless, skinless
sea bream or sea bass fillet
½ recipe quantity Boiled
Short-Grain Rice, cooled
(*see page 214*)
1 tsp wasabi

TO SERVE
wasabi
shoyu
Pickled Ginger (*see page 213*)

- 1 Place the fish fillet horizontally to you on a chopping board. Angle the knife at 45° to the fillet and cut the fillet against the grain into slices of about 3cm/1¼in wide and 3–5mm/⅛–¼in thick.
- 2 Moisten your hands with water to avoid the rice sticking and scoop up about 1 tablespoon of rice with one hand. Put it in the palm of your other hand and shape the rice into a 5 x 2.5cm/2 x 1in oblong with rounded corners. Take a slice of the prepared sea bream in one hand and smear over a small amount of wasabi. Place the rice on top of the slice of fish, then gently press down on the rice to stick them together. Turn the nigirizushi over and press the top and the sides to make sure the fish is firmly in place. Continue until all the remaining rice and fish is used. Serve with wasabi, shoyu and pickled ginger.



Korean-style makizushi

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME 45 minutes,
plus 20 minutes cooling time

COOKING TIME 10 minutes, plus
cooking the rice

4 tsp sesame seeds

**1 recipe quantity Boiled
Short-Grain Rice**
(see page 214)

2 tbsp sesame oil

**4 nori sheets (20 x 18cm/
8 x 7in)**

FILLING

2 eggs

1 tsp sunflower oil

200g/7oz baby leaf spinach

½ carrot, cut into matchsticks

**½ cucumber, halved
lengthways, deseeded and
cut into strips**

**12 crabsticks
fine sea salt**

DIPPING SAUCE

2 tbsp light soy sauce

1 tbsp rice vinegar

generous 1 tbsp lemon juice

- 1 Heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat, then add the sesame seeds and dry-fry for a few minutes until the seeds begin to pop. Tip half the sesame seeds into a mini food processor and grind to a fine powder. Leave the other half of the sesame seeds to one side.
- 2 To make the dipping sauce, whisk all the ingredients together with the ground sesame seeds until well combined. Leave to one side.
- 3 Transfer the cooked rice to a large wooden bowl or a non-metal baking dish. Add the sesame oil and remaining toasted sesame seeds and gently fold through the rice using a spatula. Level the rice, cover with a damp tea towel and leave to cool to room temperature.
- 4 To make the filling, beat the eggs together with a pinch of salt in a small bowl. Pour the sunflower oil into a large, heavy-based frying pan over a medium-high heat, then use kitchen paper to grease the pan evenly and soak up any excess oil. When the pan is hot, pour in the beaten eggs and turn the heat down to low. Cook the omelette for 3 minutes on each side until cooked through but not coloured. Leave to one side to cool, then cut into strips.
- 5 Meanwhile, bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil, add the spinach and cook for about 30 seconds. Drain and refresh under running cold water. Squeeze out any excess liquid and pat dry with kitchen paper. Leave to one side.
- 6 Cover a bamboo sushi mat with cling film and put on a clean surface with a long side closest to you. Leaving a gap of about 2cm/¾in at the edge nearest to you, place a nori sheet, rough side up, on the mat. Moisten one of your hands to help stop the rice sticking to it, then scoop up one-quarter of the rice and spread it evenly over two-thirds of the nori sheet, leaving a small gap at each end. Place 4–6 strips of omelette, a small handful of spinach, 2–3 strips of carrot, 2–3 strips of cucumber and 3 crabsticks horizontally along the middle of the rice.
- 7 Bring up the bottom edge of the mat, fold it over the filling and then roll the nori up into a cylinder, pressing firmly at the same time to make sure the makizushi is tight and compact. Put a few kernels of cooked rice along the end of the nori sheet and press firmly to seal. Give the mat a final press to create a tight roll. Leave the roll to one side and cover with cling film. Repeat to make 3 more rolls.
- 8 To finish, lightly moisten the blade of a sharp knife and cut each roll into 5 or 6 rounds. Serve with the dipping sauce.



PHNOM PENH NOODLE SOUP

SERVES 4–6

PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes,
plus making the stock and soaking
and cooking the noodles

COOKING TIME about 1 hour,
plus cooking the noodles

1 recipe quantity Pork Stock
(see page 211)

1 onion

½ tsp coriander seeds

2 cloves

¼ tsp Sichuan peppercorns

250g/9oz pork mince

1 spring onion, finely chopped

1 tbsp sunflower oil

**200g/7oz raw, peeled king
prawns, deveined** (see page
216)

**150g/5½oz/1¼ cups bean
sprouts**

**250g/9oz cooked thick rice
noodles** (see page 215)

2 tbsp fish sauce

2 tsp sugar

**sea salt and freshly ground
black pepper**

**1 small handful of coriander
leaves, to serve**

2 tbsp Fried Shallots (see page
212), to serve

TO SERVE

1 lime, cut into wedges
bean sprouts

- 1 Pour the pork stock into a saucepan and bring to the boil over a high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer. Meanwhile, dry-fry the whole onion in a frying pan over a medium-high heat until the outer layer is slightly charred all round. Add the charred onion to the simmering stock. Put the coriander seeds, cloves and Sichuan peppercorns in a spice bag or secure in a piece of muslin and add into the stock. Continue to simmer, covered, for 45 minutes.
- 2 Put the pork mince in a bowl and season with salt and pepper. Tip into a food processor and blend to a smooth paste. Put the pork back into the bowl, add the spring onion and mix until well combined. Using a teaspoon or melon baller, scoop up the paste and shape into chestnut-sized balls and arrange on a plate – they don't need to be perfectly round. Repeat until all the pork paste is used. Cover with cling film and leave to one side.
- 3 Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat. Add the prawns and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes until they turn pink and are cooked through. Transfer to a plate and leave to one side.
- 4 Bring a saucepan of water to the boil and blanch the bean sprouts for about 20 seconds. Divide the warm, cooked noodles into deep soup bowls, then top with the blanched bean sprouts.
- 5 Bring the stock back to the boil, then add the pork balls and cook for 4–5 minutes until they are cooked through and float to the surface. Divide the pork balls into the bowls of noodles and add the cooked prawns.
- 6 Add the fish sauce, a generous pinch of salt and the sugar to the pork stock and bring to a vigorous boil. Ladle the stock into the bowls, then sprinkle over the coriander and fried shallots. Serve immediately with the lime wedges and extra bean sprouts on the side.



soy & mirin tuna on soba noodles

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes,
plus 35 minutes cooling and
marinating time

COOKING TIME 15 minutes, plus
cooking the noodles

400g/14oz skinless tuna

125ml/4fl oz/½ cup shoyu

100ml/3½fl oz/generous

⅓ cup mirin

1 tbsp granulated sugar

1cm/½in piece of root ginger,
peeled and finely grated, pulp
discarded, reserving the juice

1 tbsp sesame seeds

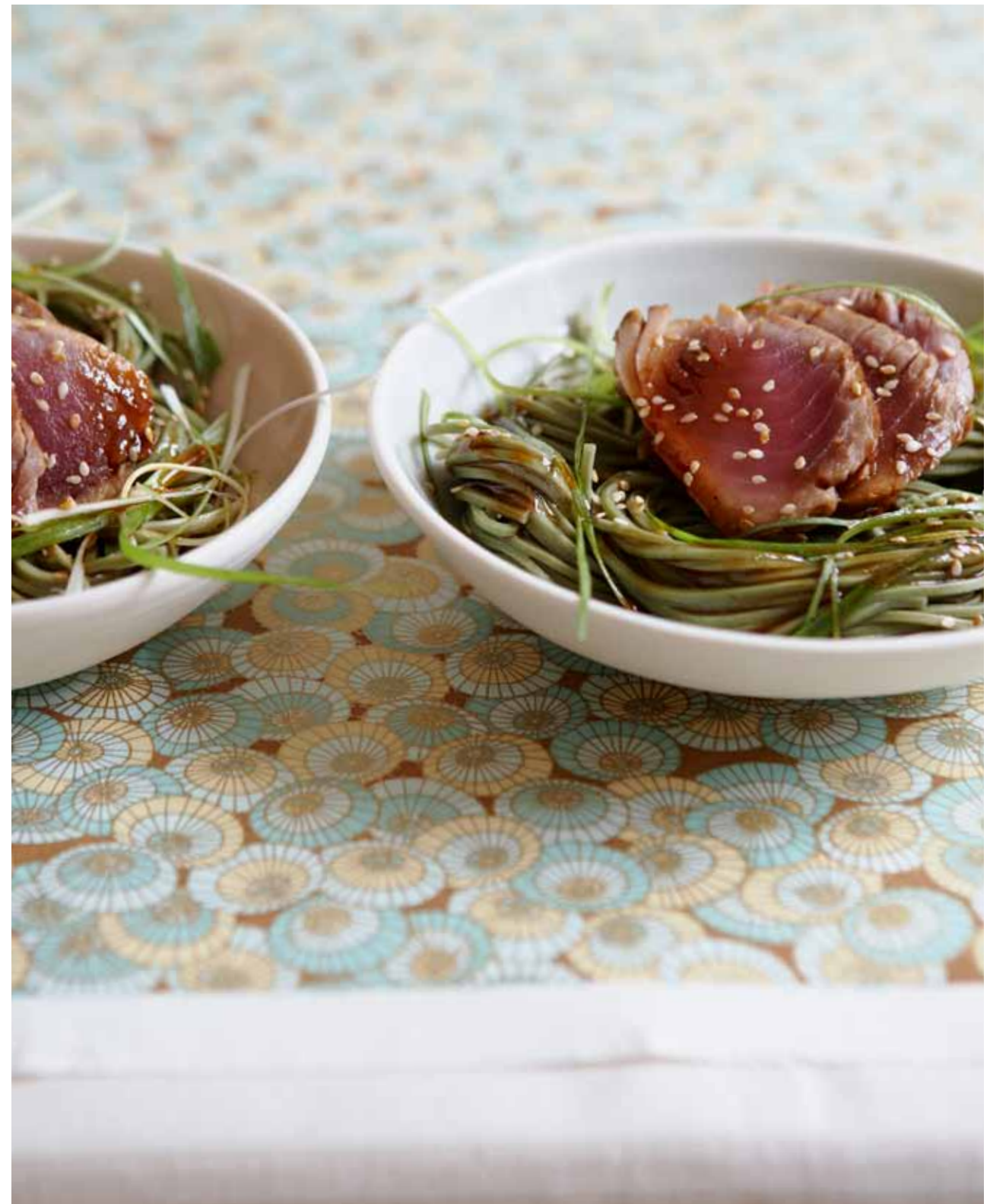
350g/12oz cooked green tea
soba or buckwheat soba
noodles (see page 215)

1 tsp sunflower oil

1 spring onion, finely chopped,
to serve

Soba means 'buckwheat' in Japanese and there are two types of soba noodles – the normal dark brown noodle with the natural colour of buckwheat and the green-coloured 'green tea' soba. You can use either, but the green tea version looks very pretty and gives a fresher, lighter taste to the dish.

- 1 Bring a saucepan of water to the boil, then poach the tuna loin for 25–30 seconds to seal. Remove the tuna from the water, pat dry and transfer to a plate to cool for about 5 minutes.
- 2 Meanwhile, mix the shoyu, mirin, sugar and ginger juice in a large bowl. Add the seared tuna and thoroughly coat with the marinade. Cover with cling film and leave to marinate in the fridge for 30 minutes.
- 3 Heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat, then add the sesame seeds and dry-fry for a few minutes until the seeds begin to pop. Tip onto a plate and leave to one side.
- 4 Remove the tuna from the marinade and strain the marinade into a small saucepan. Simmer the marinade over a medium heat for 2–3 minutes until slightly thickened. Remove from the heat and keep warm.
- 5 Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a high heat, then add the tuna and sear for 1–2 minute on each side. The outer layer should be cooked and golden brown but the inside should remain raw – don't cook the tuna completely through. Transfer the tuna to a chopping board, angle a sharp knife at 45° to the surface and slice against the grain into 5mm/¼in strips.
- 6 Meanwhile, while the tuna is searing, bring another saucepan of water to the boil and plunge in the soba noodles for a few seconds to heat through. Drain and divide the noodles into deep soup bowls, then top with the tuna. Drizzle the reduced marinade over the tuna and sprinkle over the toasted sesame seeds and spring onion. Serve hot or cold.



THAI green CHICKEN curry

My introduction to Thai Green Chicken Curry was as a teenager, and as my interest in this fresh-flavoured curry grew I learnt to make green curry paste from scratch, and have discovered that the most important ingredient is coriander root because of its intense flavour. If you cannot find coriander root, use the coriander leaves and stalks instead.

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME 30 minutes

COOKING TIME 40 minutes

500g/1lb 2oz chicken
drumsticks or skinless
chicken thighs

2 tsp sunflower oil

1 recipe quantity Thai Green
Curry Spice Paste (*see page*
210)

3 kaffir lime leaves

200ml/7fl oz/scant 1 cup thick
coconut milk

100g/3½oz pea aubergines

6 apple aubergines, cut in half

2 tbsp fish sauce

50g/1¾oz of Thai basil leaves

TO SERVE

1 recipe quantity Boiled

Long-Grain Rice (*see page*
214 – optional)

- 1 If using chicken drumsticks, rinse them under running cold water and pat dry with kitchen paper. Remove the skin and then, using a sharp cleaver or large chef's knife, cut each drumstick into 2 pieces through the bone. Remove the knuckles with a pair of kitchen scissors.
- 2 Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the spice paste and cook gently, stirring occasionally, for 10–15 minutes, until fragrant and the oil starts to rise to the surface. Add the kaffir lime leaves and chicken pieces and toss the chicken until well coated with the paste, then cook, stirring occasionally, for 5–6 minutes until starting to turn golden brown.
- 3 Add the coconut milk to the pan and bring to the boil, then add the pea and apple aubergines and fish sauce. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 20–25 minutes until the sauce starts to thicken, the chicken is cooked through and the aubergines are soft. Carefully scoop off any oil as it forms on the surface. Stir in the Thai basil and serve warm with boiled rice, if you like.

