

Tomato Beef

8 ounces flank steak, well trimmed
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1 1/2 teaspoons thin soy sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon Shao Hsing rice cooking wine
1/4 teaspoon sesame oil
1 1/4 teaspoons sugar
5 tomatoes, about 2 pounds
1 teaspoon plus 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
6 slices ginger
3 tablespoons oyster flavored sauce
4 scallions, cut into 2-inch sections

Halve the flank steak with the grain into 2 strips. Cut each strip across the grain into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Place slices in a shallow bowl and sprinkle with the baking soda; stir to combine.

Add the soy sauce, cornstarch, rice wine, sesame oil, and 1/4 teaspoon sugar. Stir to combine and set aside.

In a large pot, bring about 1 1/2 quarts of water to a boil over high heat. Add the tomatoes and cook 1 to 3 minutes, or until the tomato skins just break. Remove tomatoes with a slotted spoon and, when cool enough to handle, peel skins. Core tomatoes and cut into 1/2-inch-thick wedges.

Meanwhile, stir 1 teaspoon vegetable oil into the beef mixture. Heat a 14-inch flat-bottomed wok or skillet over high heat until hot but not smoking. Add the remaining tablespoon vegetable oil and ginger, and stir-fry about 1 minute. Carefully add the beef, spreading it in the wok. Cook, undisturbed, 1 to 2 minutes, letting beef begin to brown. Then, using a metal spatula, stir-fry 1 to 2 minutes, or until beef is browned but still slightly rare. Transfer the beef to a plate and set aside.

Add the tomatoes and remaining teaspoon of sugar to wok, and stir-fry 1 minute on high heat until tomatoes begin to soften. Add the oyster sauce and 1/4 cup cold water, cover, and cook 2 to 3 minutes, or until the tomatoes are just limp. Add the beef with any juices that have accumulated on the plate, and the scallions, and stir-fry 1 minute, or until just heated through.

Serve immediately.

Serves 4 to 6 as part of a multicourse meal.

Thick wedges of tomato cook with oyster flavored sauce and beef that has been stir-fried with ginger to make a flavorful and delicious sauce to serve over rice. Oddly enough, this is amazingly good even when tomatoes are not in season.