

The 20 essential ingredients I believe everyone should have in their KITCHEN:

Equipment:

My most important piece of kitchen equipment would be to buy a good heavy wok, which I assume most of you would have if you are serious cooks. (Did you know that 70% of Australians already own a wok?)

A wok: preferably heavy, cast iron as it heats evenly and quickly, only care should be taken to keep it oiled after each use. See "[Wok Tok](#)" for how to look after and season a wok.

A Wok Chan or a flat spade-like ladle for stirfrying and lifting from the curved surface.

A Mortar and Pestle as some ingredients are best pounded to release oils rather than blended, also some ingredients are for small quantities and do not do well in a blender different sizes, you need only a small granite one with weight so you can pound and mash, cost about \$23 in an Asian shop.

An Asian chopper knife, about 10cm wide and heavy, preferably with a moulded handle all in one piece.

Staples: for the shelf (better refrigerated after opening)

Two bottles of soy sauce – one thick and one thin. Make sure the sauces are naturally brewed and look for the wheat content in the list of ingredients.

Thin sauce is for saltiness, and often used as a marinade, thick for colour and caramel or smokey flavour at the end of the cooking cycle.

A good chilli sauce or a sambal oelek (which means pounded or blended) which may or may not have garlic and salt and a little bit of black bean for flavour.

OR

Chilli paste with Soy Bean Oil (Pantainorasingh) which is a good stirfry starter.

Instant Sour Shrimp Paste which calls itself a Tom Yum soup starter but which may be used brushed over fish before cooking, frying or barbecuing or as a stock starter.

A fish sauce: preferably a Thai one used instead of salt the "fishy-ness" dissipates after cooking leaving only flavour.

Oyster sauce: that is sweet with a rich sauce, brewed from dried oysters and soy sauce, so use sparingly.

Sesame oil: again only use as marinade or garnish or to finish off a dish, not for frying.

Tamarind puree or paste; get this in a packet which has to be reconstituted by forking through water then strained. "Ayam" have a puree ready prepared and simple, and keeps well in the jar.

Cans of coconut milk AND coconut cream, milk for cooking and cream for finishing off the dish.

Palm sugar, available in jars or in cylindrical tube-shapes not as sweet as sugar, grate to use.

Cloves of garlic. Some ginger, this may be trimmed and kept in a jar of sherry, or as my Amah did, kept it buried in the soil where it kept fresh.

Red shallot onions or some Spanish onions.

A packet of rice, basmati or long grained rice.

A packet of dried noodles, (yellow wheat noodles or white rice noodles) whichever you are likely to use.

Dried Shiitake mushrooms that can be reconstituted to cook into noodles etc.

A FRESH (not kept for a year) jar of five spice powder.

Some mixed curry powder: preferably something in a can so it keeps well (and Fresh!!).

A green or a red curry paste in a tiny can, you do not need too much and the little green cans have an authentic flavour.