



London Pride and Tyrrells crisps have shacked up to spawn Steak & London Pride crisps

# Woods West



Picture: Corbis

## Tung Gu (Chinese mushrooms)

**What is it?** Firm and slightly slippery in texture, they have a nobby skin and very distinctive flavour, sort of garlicky.

**What to do:** We soak these dried mushrooms for half an hour or so in either cold or warm water; we never put it in boiling water or it will destroy the taste. Drain (you can save the water for cooking as stock). Finely slice and add to meat or seafood or noodles in a stir fry.

Alternatively, stew with chicken on the bone, garlic and some Chinese cooking wine and soy sauce.

Fully fledged Sinophiles discussing the merits of north Chinese Dongbei fare and its wheat-based dishes and cooking at home. Home cooks are finding inspiration in places such as Manchurian Legends, the latest recherche restaurant in London's Chinatown.

SeeWoo, Britain's biggest Chinese supermarket chain, must also take responsibility for our obsession. Its stores, in Soho, Greenwich and Glasgow, supply top restaurants such as Hakkasan and Royal China and offer a veritable corpus of ingredients.

Stanley Tse, founder of SeeWoo, has even become president of Chinatown. For those of you wishing to end your bamboozlement every time you peruse your local grocer's vegetable crates, Tse gives us his insider's guide to Asian veg.

## Leon Gaw (bitter melon)

**What is it?** It's long and ridged, a bit like a cross between courgette and marrow. It is quite an acquired taste, but it's addictive.

**What to do:** 'Peel it and cut down the middle and slice like a cucumber. Add to a pan of boiling water with a little salt for 1min to remove the bitterness.

Immediately drain and rinse in cold water – as with the kai lan, over-cooking will spoil texture and colour. A tip to take out the bitterness is to add a little bit of salt and marinate for ten to 15mins. Stir fry with beef, pork or seafood with black bean sauce, chilli, and garlic. Leon gaw can be added to stews.'



## Take two ingredients...

**1. Iceberg lettuce** This is quick and easy. Wash and separate leaves of one iceberg lettuce (do not chop, it's too small). Fry in 1tbsp hot oil with 1 garlic clove, sliced. Drizzle with oyster sauce.



**2. Chinese sausages (lap cheung)** Place sausages on top of Thai fragrant rice in your rice cooker or saucepan. Cook. When the rice is done, slice sausages diagonally. Arrange on top of the rice and sprinkle with finely sliced spring onion.

## Eat me

### Meat Nirvana

Not for a long time have we seen sirloin steak so beautifully marbled or minced beef so peppered with pearly fat. The people at field&flower clearly know their butchering. The beef is hung for four weeks on the bone to maximise tenderness. With butchers closing willy-nilly, having these delivered to your door offers a glimmer of hope. *Monthly meat boxes start at £55, www.fieldandflower.co.uk*



## Try me



**Veggiestan** Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has released his eulogy on eating greens in the guise of the 400-page tome *River Cottage Veg Everyday* (£25, Bloomsbury). Less high-profile is the rather lovely *Veggiestan* by Sally Butcher (£25, Pavilion). Butcher, who runs the Persian food store Persepolis, in London, has a chapter on breads and recipes such as Persian egg and onion soup.



## Pick me



**Mushroom season** Yay, the petticoated chanterelle is back. For seasonal treasures such as Gallic black figs and golden Kent cobnuts, visit [www.natoora.co.uk](http://www.natoora.co.uk)

## Buy me

**Two-minute autumnal pasta** With autumn comes butternut squash and sage and venison tortelloni from the Fresh Pasta Company. Our verdict? The venison was fruity-nuanced meatiness in a parcel and the butternut was sumptuous. *£5.99 for 250g. Available from Ocado, Natoora and Virtual Farmers Market.*



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