

Quick Spicy Squid Sauté

You're doing it wrong ... sautéing, that is. It's a simple skill any confident cook can learn that will transform both the flavor and texture of the food you're cooking. It's not so complicated if you know how it works. Check the Cook's Notes for that. This recipe is a cheat on a popular Chinese dish, salt-and-pepper squid. We've included all the flavors of the traditional dish, but in lieu of battering and deep frying the squid, we've topped the squid with toasted panko crumbs for some crunch. It's totally optional and tastes delicious even without the crumbs. Serve with steamed rice, or eat it plain as served at dim sum. This recipe is worth every second you spend on the prep. Invite some friends over 'cause you're going to want to share it.

Ingredients

- 12 ounces raw, cleaned squid, cut into 1/2-inch-wide tubes, large tentacles halved, rinsed and patted very dry
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground Sichuan peppercorn (optional)
- 1 long, thin red chile (aka red finger chile), or 1 or 2 Serrano chiles, thinly sliced on the bias, seeds included if you like it really spicy
- 1 large clove garlic, thinly sliced
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced on a bias, divided (1/2 cup sliced)
- 3 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil, separated
- 1/4 cup panko crumbs, toasted (optional, see cook's note)

special equipment

- One 12-inch sauté pan

Directions

In a medium bowl, combine the squid, salt, sesame oil, peppers, chiles, garlic, half of the scallions and 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Set aside to let marinate for 5 to 10 minutes.

Heat a large (12-inch) skillet over high heat until hot. Add 2 tablespoons of oil; it should ripple in the pan. Add half the squid mixture and cook, tossing often, until the squid is slightly seared in spots and cooked through, 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. You don't want to overcook the squid or it will be rubbery. Toss in half the remaining scallions and transfer to a serving plate. Repeat with the remaining squid. Top plated squid with the panko crumbs, if using.

Cook's Notes:

What you need to know to sautéing: Start out with a slope-sided sauté pan over high heat. When it's hot, add a small amount of oil and wait until the right moment to add your food. Add just the right amount (easy; you should always be able to see some of the bottom of your pan). Avoid overcrowding or you'll end up steaming instead of sautéing. So you might have to cook your food in batches. The last, more advanced bit, is learning to toss the food in the pan to make it "jump" (from the French verb "sauter") without using tongs or a utensil. This is especially useful if you're sautéing something fragile which could be blemished or smashed by a utensil. It also helps to toss the food evenly so it cooks, browns and heats evenly and is coated evenly with sauce, butter or seasonings. To see how it's done, check out our video. Can you sauté using utensils? Sure, but mastering this skill without them definitely amps up the cool factor of any confident cook.

To toast the panko crumbs, stir the crumbs and 1 teaspoon of oil together in a small sauté pan over medium heat, stirring often, until the crumbs turn golden brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate to let cool.

total time: 20 minutes, 25 minutes if including the panko toasting

active prep: 15 minutes

serves: 2 if served with rice, 4 if served as an app with other dishes

difficulty: easy