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## Tool of the Trade 創意廚具

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## Feel the heat

### 熱力四射

For high-temperature stir-frying, the wok is your go-to pan  
中式炒鑊是烹調高溫煸炒菜式的最佳選擇



By Jon Wall

A staple of the Chinese kitchen since the time of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), the wok is a broad, high-sided cooking pot or pan that usually has a round bottom and is commonly used for stir-frying. As its concave shape distributes heat evenly around the inside surface and ensures that all ingredients are cooked at roughly the same temperature, it's enjoyed increasing global popularity during the last few decades as an alternative to the Western-style frying pan.

It's believed that the wok – the word is Cantonese – was originally used to dry grain; it was only during the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644 CE) that it began to be employed for cooking purposes, not only stir-frying but also deep-frying, boiling, searing and countless other processes. Soups can be made in a wok and, when a lid is used, it can even function as a steamer.

Originally the wok, which for domestic purposes is typically

around 35-37cm in diameter (ones used by bigger families or in commercial kitchens can be considerably larger), would be made from cast iron. Today, however, more modern and lighter materials are often used, such as carbon steel or aluminium – though some professionals believe that cast iron is best, as it's easier to season (ie, it develop a carbonised coating that prevents sticking).

Contemporary woks can also have cooking surfaces covered in Teflon or some other non-stick material, while for use on modern cooking ranges some also have flat bottoms. Woks featuring a handle at the top of each side are usually found in southern provinces of China, while those with a single handle are found in the west and north.

When stir-frying with a wok, it's best to use oils that can withstand high temperatures, such as vegetable or peanut oil, which should be heated until they begin to smoke. In this respect, one

distinctive aspect of cooking with a wok is what's known as the "wok hei" (wok's breath), a smoky flavour that's especially linked to stir-frying over a high open flame (above 200 degrees Celsius), with each toss of the wok causing tiny oil particles to bring a taste of fire into the wok. Also adding to the flavour are the concentrated aromas of earlier ingredients that have been caught on the wok's seasoned surface.

主要用於煸炒的圓底中式炒鑊自漢朝（公元前202年至公元220年）開始，已是中國家庭裡的必備廚具。由於中式炒鑊的弧形底部設計讓鑊身內壁平均受熱，確保食材在烹調時受熱溫度相約，在過去二、三十年，中式炒鑊在全球各地日漸流行，可用作為西式炒鑊的替代品。

據說中式炒鑊最初是用來弄乾穀物，直到明朝（公元1368年至1644年）才用作煮食工具，集炒、炸、烩、煎等各種用途於一身；甚至用來煲湯和蓋上鑊蓋當蒸爐也可。

普通家庭用的中式炒鑊直徑為35至37厘米，大家庭和餐廳廚房用的會再大一點。最初，中式炒鑊一般以生鐵製造，但現時已改用較輕的材料如碳鋼或鋁等。不過，專業廚師認為生鐵鑊最佳，因為生鐵在使用過程中會慢慢形成一層碳化物膜和油膜，以致食物不容易沾鍋。

部分現代中式炒鑊的內壁會塗上一層特氟龍或其他易潔物質，或為了適應現代的爐頭設計而改成平底。另外，兩個鑊耳設計的炒鑊廣泛見於中國南方省份，西部和北方則比較流行一個鑊柄的款式。

用中式炒鑊煸炒菜式時，最好是使用比較耐熱的食油，如植物油和花生油，並將油加熱到開始冒煙才下鑊，這樣才會「夠鑊氣」。所謂鑊氣，就是當食材在攝氏200度高溫的明火下煸炒時，微小的食油粒子會隨著每一下翻炒將火的味道帶到食材裡，令食物獲得一種獨特的煙燻味。另外，鑊身內壁的碳化物膜和油膜長年累月吸收下來的食材香氣，也會為菜式增添風味。