Sides / China

Bok Choy in Oyster Sauce

Baby bok choy blanched to brilliant jade green, arranged cut-side up, and lacquered with a glossy, garlicky oyster sauce that pools in every crevice. One of the great fast Cantonese side dishes — its success entirely a matter of not overcooking the greens by a single second.

Time 15 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 500 g Baby bok choy, halved lengthwise
- ☐ 20 g Garlic cloves, finely minced (4 cloves)
- ☐ 10 g Fresh ginger, finely minced
- ☐ 15 ml Shaoxing rice wine (or water)
- ☐ 5 g Sugar
- ☐ 6 g Toasted sesame seeds
- ☐ 40 ml Oyster sauce
- ☐ 30 ml Neutral oil (sunflower, rice bran, or grapeseed)
- ☐ 15 ml Soy sauce (light)
- ☐ 5 g Cornstarch
- ☐ 8 ml Toasted sesame oil, for finishing

Let's make it.

01 Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a full rolling boil — the salt seasons the bok choy as it blanches and helps set its vivid green color. Add the halved bok choy cut-side down and blanch for exactly 60–90 seconds. The timing is critical: too short and the stems are crunchy raw, too long and the leaves turn drab and the stems go limp and watery. The stems should be crisp-tender and the leaves should be brilliantly green and wilted.

02 Drain the blanched bok choy thoroughly in a colander, shaking to remove excess water — too much water on the vegetables will dilute the sauce. Arrange on a serving plate or platter cut-side up in a single tight layer, the leaves fanning outward and the pale stem ends grouped at the center. Cantonese plating of this dish is deliberately formal: even the arrangement signals care. Do not pile them haphazardly — the sauce pours over the arranged bok choy and should glide into every cut face.

03 Heat the neutral oil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add the minced garlic and ginger all at once — they should sizzle immediately. Stir constantly for 30–45 seconds until they are fragrant and just beginning to color — do not let them burn. Add the oyster sauce, soy sauce, Shaoxing wine, and sugar. Stir briefly. Mix the cornstarch with 2 tablespoons of cold water to form a slurry, then pour into the sauce while stirring. Cook, stirring constantly, for 30–40 seconds until the sauce turns glossy and has thickened slightly to a flowing, lacquer-like consistency.

04 Pour the hot sauce evenly over the arranged bok choy, starting from the stem ends and flowing toward the leaves. Every cut face should receive sauce. Drizzle the toasted sesame oil in a thin, even zigzag over the top — the sesame oil is a finishing fragrance, not a cooking fat, and it should be the last thing applied. Scatter toasted sesame seeds and serve within 2 minutes while the sauce is hot and the bok choy is still at its most vivid. Do not cover the dish — trapped steam will make the leaves go limp and dull.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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