Sides / China

Stir-Fried Baby Bok Choy

Baby bok choy cooked in a screaming-hot wok with garlic and a flash of oyster sauce — wilted greens that still crunch at the stem, slicked in a glossy, savory glaze.

Time 15 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Baby bok choy, halved lengthwise through the root
- ☐ 6 parts Neutral oil (peanut, vegetable, or grapeseed)
- ☐ 5 parts Garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ☐ 8 parts Oyster sauce
- ☐ 4 parts Shaoxing rice wine
- ☐ 0.5 parts Fine salt
- ☐ 2 parts Sesame oil (finishing drizzle)
- ☐ 5 parts Water or stock (a splash to create steam)

Let's make it.

01 Halve the baby bok choy lengthwise through the root — the root holds the leaves together and keeps each half intact during stir-frying. Wash the halves thoroughly in cold water, separating the inner leaves slightly to dislodge any grit or soil caught between them. Dry thoroughly with a clean towel or salad spinner — excess water on the bok choy will drop the wok temperature dramatically the moment it hits the hot oil, producing steamed rather than wok-charred greens. Prepare everything else before heating the wok: a stir-fry moves too fast for mid-cook prep.

02 Place a wok over the highest heat your burner can produce and heat it completely dry for 2–3 minutes until it begins to smoke. Add the oil and swirl to coat. The oil should shimmer and smoke within 5 seconds of hitting the wok. This stage — 'hei' in Cantonese, or wok breath — is what gives stir-fried vegetables their characteristic seared, slightly smoky, high-heat depth that is impossible to achieve with a cool pan. A domestic burner will never match a restaurant's wok ring, but maximum heat and a preheated wok close the gap significantly.

03 Add the garlic slices to the hot oil and toss for 15–20 seconds until golden and fragrant — not brown or burnt. Immediately add the bok choy cut-side down in a single layer and do not move it for 30 seconds, allowing the cut face to char slightly. Add the Shaoxing wine — it will flash and steam violently. Toss everything vigorously with a wok spatula for 1 minute. Add the water splash and cover for 30 seconds to steam the stems through. Uncover, toss once more, and season with salt. The total cooking time from adding bok choy to removing it is 2–3 minutes. Any longer and the leaves become khaki and the stems lose their crunch.

04 Remove the wok from the heat (or pull the bok choy to the side of the wok). Drizzle the oyster sauce over the bok choy and toss to coat — just 4–5 swift turns to distribute. Add the sesame oil in a thin drizzle around the edge of the wok (or directly over the bok choy). Toss once more. The heat of the greens is enough to warm the sauce; do not return the wok to the flame or the oyster sauce sugars will scorch and turn bitter. Plate immediately.

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