



The Sauce of Good Cooking

In the spirit of Chinese New Year feasting, we revisit traditional artisanal sauces and condiments for your reunion cook-off.

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01 Rock Sugar

It may not be that well known that Cheng Yew Heng Candy Factory is Singapore's oldest and only sugar manufacturer, and has been making its own rock sugar since 1947. Cane sugar is first melted down to create a supersaturated liquid, which is then transferred into giant stainless steel vats and allowed to sit in storage for more than two weeks to allow natural crystallization to happen. The rock sugar is then removed from the vats by hand and left to drip-dry before being broken down to size, sorted and packed for sale.

Priced at \$3.50 and sold in Isetan Supermarkets under Cheng Brand. Also available under Cheng Brand online on Lazada and Shopee.

02 Homegrown Sauces

Local artisanal sauce maker Kwong Woh Hing Factory has been making its soya sauce the traditional way since 1943 - fermented under the sun for more than a year to give it a multi-layered flavour not overwhelmed by saltiness. The Premium Dark Soy Sauce has a rounded savouriness and delicate sweet aftertaste - particularly good for braising liquids and in claypot rice. It also has a range of premium sauces including the fruity sweet-sour Plum Sauce that complements fatty roast duck, and Spicy Preserved Soya Bean paste for steaming fish and braising tofu.

Premium Dark Soy Sauce \$11.30 (375ml); Plum Sauce \$4.50 (300g); and Spicy Preserved Soya Bean paste \$4 (250g) are sold online at www.kwh.com.sg. Also available at Tangs Orchard B1.

03 XO Abalone Sauce

This premium condiment by HAOS is made with dried abalone which did not make the cut as its signature delicacy. The abalone is rehydrated for a day and a half, before it is infused with chicken stock for another five days and then manually cut into cubes. It's cooked with rehydrated dried scallops, shrimps and roughly chopped candlenuts, garlic and onions for texture. The result is an aromatic XO sauce with bits of abalone and scallop in every bite.

Priced at \$33.90 per bottle (180g); \$62.90 for 2 bottles. Available at Takashimaya Chinese New Year Fair, B2 Takashimaya Square till Feb 3. Available at www.haos.com.sg by end Jan.

04 Kampot Pepper

The humble Cambodian peppercorn has become an 'it' spice of sorts, thanks to the efforts of people like former civil servant Lai Poon-Piau, a Singaporean who founded Hong Spices. The company specialises in harvesting aromatic Kampot black, white and red pepper - taken from the same plants but at different times of the year. Handpicked and processed, the sun-dried peppercorns are a must-have in professional kitchens, thanks to its different flavor profile - black is stronger and spicier while red is fragrant and almost fruity. White has a milder, herbal flavour.

Priced from S\$13.80 to S\$18 for 80g at SPRMRKT as part of its Cambodia showcase till Mar 31. Also available at hongspices.com, Redmart, Lazada, and Gourmet Grocery at Takashimaya B2 Food Hall.

05 Oyster Sauce and Mustard

Besides being chef-owner of his own restaurants including the two Michelin-starred Waku Ghin, Tetsuya Wakuda is also known for his range of food products - the latest being the very Asian oyster sauce. Unlike the regular supermarket variety which is not 100 per cent made from actual oysters, Tetsuya's Oyster Sauce is pure shellfish and an umami bomb that will lift everything from a simple pasta to elaborate festive dishes such as Pen Cai or Dried Oyster with Black Moss.

Check out his Tasmanian Wasabi Mustard as well, which is lightly spicy and delivers a modest kick with a touch of sweetness. Try it with smoked salmon or for a festive twist, with Chinese roast pork belly.

Priced at \$27 and S\$19 a bottle respectively at Culina Dempsey. Also available at COMO Marketplace and Waku Ghin by Tetsuya Wakuda at Marina Bay Sands.

06 Flounder Powder and Osmanthus Syrup

Pat Chun, an 87-year-old company based in Hong Kong, is known for its exquisite vinegars, but its Flounder Powder and Osmanthus Syrup are also noteworthy. The former is made from sun-dried flounder fish that is roasted with rose wine, then ground in a stone mill to a fine powder. Add it to wontons, fried vegetables or meat balls for a boost in flavour.

For the syrup, fragrant osmanthus flowers are first meticulously sieved to remove stems and seeds, leaving only the petals. The traditional syrup is then reduced to achieve a smooth, thick consistency. Add a spoonful of delicate sweetness to tang yuan (glutinous rice balls), osmanthus jelly or even glutinous rice cakes.

Priced at S\$7 and \$6.50 at Pat Chun Specialty Shop, 17-19 South Bridge Rd. Tel: 6438 0480. Or http://www.patchun.com/shop_singapore.

07 Spice mix and aged tangerine peel

If crispy siobak is on your menu, try marinating your pork belly in online retailer Handpicked's Nyonya Roast Pork Mix from Penang. Based on a secret family recipe spanning three generations, it's a mix of 13 spices roasted individually over charcoal before being ground and seasoned with salt. It's also good for roast duck, ngoh hiang or braised dishes.

If you're cooking the latter, be sure to drop in some of Handpicked's 30-year-old aged tangerine peel from Xinhui in Guangzhou. The older the peel the better the flavour and aroma, and only those above 10 years old can be called aged peel.

Priced at S\$15 per 100g for the spice powder and S\$25 for 300g of aged tangerine peel at www.handpicked.sg.

08 Chinese Sausages

Teck Sang, a supplier of traditional Chinese food stuffs and dried goods, sells Hong Kong-style lap cheong made in Singapore since 1968 by Ideal Food Industries. Choose from lap cheong (available in extra-lean and premium, with a good mix of lean pork and fat), liver sausage or yun cheong made with duck liver, and Dongguan sausage, which is shorter, plumper and sweeter than the usual lap cheong. These firm, savoury-sweet sausages with good bite are made from an old family recipe. While machines are used to fill the casings, the old school sausages are still shaped and tied by hand.

If you're a fan of Canadian pork, check out the lap cheong made by Wing Wing Co. Ltd, which has been making them for generations using a recipe brought to Vancouver from Southern China by the Fong family over 100 years ago. Two varieties are available and sold in vacuum packaging - regular lap cheong and guan cheong made with pork and pork liver.

Teck Sang sausages are priced at \$26 per kg. Available at 11 Hong Kong Street. Tel: 6533 1133. Wing Wing sausages are priced at \$18.50 per package. Available at Culina Dempsey, Cold Storage, NTUC, COMO Marketplace and online on Redmart.