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*Recipes excerpted from **Easy Chinese Stir-Fries** by Helen Chen. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Copyright 2009. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.*

Stir-Fried Pork with Asparagus

I keep a few individually wrapped boneless pork chops in the freezer for easy last-minute stir-fry dishes like this one. Hoisin sauce lends a delicate sweetness to the dish, which enhances the natural goodness of fresh asparagus.

Serves 3 to 4.

1 pound asparagus
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon Chinese rice wine or dry sherry
1/2 pound boneless pork chops
1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
1 teaspoon sugar
3 tablespoons canola oil
1 garlic clove, sliced

(1) Snap or cut off the tough ends of the asparagus, and if desire, strip off the small leaves on the spear up to 2 inches from the tip. Cut on the diagonal into 2-inch lengths.

(2) In a medium bowl, whisk together the cornstarch and wine. Cut the pork into 1/4-inch-thick strips the same length as the asparagus. Add to the cornstarch mixture and mix well. In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, hoisin sauce, and sugar.

(3) In a wok or stir-fry pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over high heat until hot but not smoking. Test by dipping a piece of asparagus into the oil; it should sizzle. Add the asparagus and stir just until they turn a darker green, about 30 seconds. Add 1/4 cup water, cover the pan, and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until tender, 3 to 5 minutes, depending upon the thickness of the spears. Transfer the asparagus and any liquid to a platter.

(4) Add the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil to the same pan and heat over high heat. Add the garlic and stir until the oil is hot and the garlic sizzles. Stir up the pork mixture, add to the pan, and cook, stirring constantly, until the pork is no longer pink, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the soy sauce mixture and stir for about 20 seconds. Return the asparagus to the pan and stir for another 30 seconds or so, until well mixed. Serve immediately.