

How you heat Japanese wagyu greatly affects its taste and texture

Sun Chengshun

Owner chef at CHINESE CUISINE SUN 中國名菜 孫

Tender beef with a rich flavor and juicy texture. Sun goes beyond conventional Chinese cooking to imaginatively take advantage of Japanese wagyu's unique qualities.

"Three types of fried Japanese kuroge wagyu". Clockwise from front right: dusted in flour; battered in flour and water; battered in flour, water and egg. Sauces from back left: miso sauce, salt and Szechuan pepper, yellow peach sauce.

●Cut: Chuck roll ●Grade: A3

Tips for conveying the appeal of Japanese wagyu

- 1. No other meat can compare with the tenderness, juicy texture and rich flavor of Japanese wagyu. Always try to cut and cook the meat in a way that optimizes its tenderness and juiciness.**
- 2. Avoid seasoning that is too strong. Build your taste and aroma on top of the fundamental delicate flavor of Japanese wagyu.**
- 3. Garnish the dish beautifully. Use your imagination to achieve a presentation that appeals to the five senses.**



The Japanese miso and yellow peaches used in the sauces were produced domestically. "World-renowned Japanese ingredients bring out the charm of Japanese wagyu," says chef Sun.

Key points in bringing out the best from Japanese wagyu include the part of the meat and how it is cut. The chuck roll on the left page was cut into thick strips (right). The steak-like top-round (left) stir-fried on the next page was also cut thick.

Chef Sun arrived in Japan 26 years ago with the title "Super Chef", the highest rank in the Chinese culinary world. Through talent and effort, he merged Washoku (Japanese cuisine) and western cuisine to establish an original *nouvelle chinoise* (new Chinese) style. He continues to play an active role at the forefront of Chinese cuisine in Japan. Chef Sun, who knows the ins and outs of ingredients in Japan and China, recalls his first encounter with Japanese wagyu, "The texture melted in my mouth. I couldn't believe such a meat existed." To bring out the juicy aromatic flavor and the texture made possible by sashi (marbled fat), which is Japanese wagyu's chief characteristic, Sun proposes avoiding basic Chinese quick-fry methods.

This heating method locks Japanese wagyu's juices inside

— *I watched your entire cooking process today and found it both impressive and convincing. Your "Three types of fried Japanese kuroge wagyu", for example, is Japanese wagyu deep-fried in three types of batter and eaten with sauce or seasoning. Isn't it quite rare to deep-fry beef in Chinese cuisine?*

"Yes, very rare. When done, the meat is usually simmered and softened before frying. Frying beef raw, as you saw today, is something you won't see anywhere else."

— *The center of the meat is rare. When you take a bite, it's so tender! And the taste spreads through your mouth like it's melting. The main characteristic of Japanese wagyu chuck roll, its ample sashi, is magnificently brought out here, and I fully acknowledge that "deep-frying" is a method that suits Japanese wagyu well.*

"This cooking method works well for Japanese wagyu, and only for Japanese wagyu. If you apply the same method to other types of beef, the texture becomes rubbery. In Chinese cooking, quick frying or parboiling the beef before deep frying would make common sense. In the past, Chinese chefs used baking soda to soften meat. But with Japanese wagyu, such preparation is not necessary. In fact, you should absolutely avoid any kind of unnecessary preparations that release juice from the meat."

— *You fried the meat for an amazingly short time.*

"Yes. With Japanese wagyu, you must be careful not to over-fry or over-grill it. The batter helps the heat linger, so the actual length of time for deep-frying is very short. The heat will eventually penetrate naturally. This is a cooking method I recommend."

— *The texture is absolutely wonderful. I will ask more about the sauces that enhance the meat later, but for now, please tell me more about the heating treatment. Your second dish, "Stir-fried Japanese kuroge wagyu with two types of pepper", employed a unique cooking method. You browned the large, thick kuroge wagyu using the sloping surface of the Chinese wok.*

"This is one way of adding heat to bring out the best of Japanese wagyu's characteristics. First, you coat the steak-sized meat with a cornstarch-water mixture. Next, you brown the surface in the wok to lock the juices inside. Then rest the meat outside the wok until the juices settle, cut it into bite-sized chunks and return them to the wok to quickly stir-fry with potherbs. By doing so, the juices remain inside and are never released. In most stir-fry dishes, the meat you fry starts dripping



After lightly seasoning the meat with Chinese rice wine, pepper and egg, mix it with cornstarch-water batter, deep-fry it momentarily at high temperature, remove excessive oil, and set it aside for the heat to reach the center.



Sun Chengshun. Born in 1963, in Beijing, China. Acquired the Super Chef state license (China's highest culinary title, achieved by very few chefs) at the remarkably young age of 25. Highly appraised are his delicate yet bold dishes featuring seasonal ingredients prepared in the Beijing style according to Chinese Court Cuisine tradition.



Lightly coat the entire cut with a cornstarch-water mixture. Slide it around the slopes of a hot, oiled wok for about 2 to 3 minutes until evenly browned to lock in the juices and prevent even a drop from escaping.

"Stir-fried Japanese kuroge wagyu with two types of pepper". Although Sun says "This recipe focuses more on aroma than flavor," he only uses minimal potherbs and spices. This dish splendidly highlights the tenderness and flavor of Japanese wagyu. ●Cut: Top-round ●Grade: A3

juices after being placed on the plate. That didn't happen here, did it?"

—That's true. When I took a bite of the meat, though, the flavor flooded my mouth. It was powerfully delicious.

"Yes, that's the true value of Japanese wagyu. And it's why I use chunks rather than slices."

—So the thicker the meat, the juicier the Japanese wagyu. The meat in your third dish, "Japanese kuroge wagyu fried rice", was thick and chunky, too. You once again cooked it in the blink of an eye.

"That's right. Japanese wagyu suits all kinds of cooking, but one must avoid excessive heating. For this fried rice dish, I prepared the meat in advance by coating it with a cornstarch-water mixture, quickly stir-frying it and removing it from the wok. Using the same wok, I then fried the rice and at the last stage returned the meat to the wok and lightly stir-fried everything together. In the preparation stage, I also scored the surface of the meat with fine grids so the heat would enter quickly."

—In the fried rice dish, you combined two Japanese wagyu cuts; chuck roll and top-round.

"Japanese wagyu top-round is juicy and delicious. I used another cut as well to add depth to the Japanese wagyu texture and make the serving portion more generous."

—The egg in your fried rice is unlike the egg in Golden Fried Rice dishes. Stir-fried and fragrant, it goes perfectly with the tender Japanese wagyu, glimmering rice and crunchy broccoli.

"I intentionally fried the eggs thoroughly. Their deep yellow color, together with the green broccoli and red chili pepper, makes the dish look lovely, don't you think? Given a special opportunity to use Japanese wagyu, I want to make the dish look appealing, too. This is a feeling I have become more and more aware of since arriving in Japan."

Japanese wagyu appeals to all five senses

—Next, we'd like to hear some tips on seasoning Japanese wagyu. In all three dishes today, you seasoned the meat simply. For the fried rice dish, you just used salt and spices. And I thought this simplicity brought out the great flavor of Japanese wagyu.

"When using Japanese wagyu, by all means, make the most of its qualities. As long as you don't forget this basic rule, all cooking approaches will lead to a dish rich in flavor. For example, when choosing vegetables to accompany the meat, broccoli will not interfere with the taste of Japanese



After browning, sprinkle with a little black vinegar, Chinese rice wine and salt and let it rest. Cut into thick slices to create juicy mouthfuls. Return the meat to the wok and stir-fry with aromatic ingredients like garlic, leeks, ginger, red chili pepper and coriander to add an appealing aroma.



"Japanese kuroge wagyu fried rice". Key recipe points: create large cubes from two cuts of Japanese wagyu, score the surface with fine grids and add a cornstarch-water mixture to enhance the texture and highlight the juice. Parboil the broccoli in hot water with scallion oil and add it last to the rice for frying. ●Cut: Top-round, chuck roll ●Grade: A3

wagyu. On the contrary, if you choose vegetables with a strong taste, they will mask the Japanese wagyu flavor. In this dish, I paid great attention to the rice and chose a Japanese brand. The gentle fragrance and subtle sweetness of the rice matches Japanese wagyu well."

—In Japanese wagyu dishes, Japanese wagyu always plays the leading role. So it is only natural that the seasoning ends up being simple. On the other hand, in your dish "Stir-fried Japanese kuroge wagyu with two types of pepper", you effectively use the aroma of two types of pepper.

"This recipe focuses more on aroma than flavor. After browning a large portion of Japanese wagyu, I sprinkle it with black vinegar and Chinese rice wine. Then I cut the meat, return the chunks to the pot, and stir-fry it together with aromatic ingredients such as garlic, leeks, ginger, other potherbs and red chili pepper. For the finish, I add coriander, pink pepper and black pepper. These various combined aromas float around before the exquisite fragrance and flavor of Japanese wagyu begins flowing in from the behind."

—By the way, your first dish, "Three types of fried Japanese kuroge wagyu" was quite entertaining. The Japanese wagyu, deep-fried in three types of batter, is served with orthodox Chinese salt and Szechuan pepper, as well as miso sauce and peach sauce. How did you come up with the idea of serving the sauces?

"First I applied pepper and salt, because I wanted guests to experience the genuine taste of Japanese wagyu with standard Chinese spices. Next, for the miso sauce, I mixed Japanese miso with Chinese rice wine. Bean paste is often used in Chinese cooking, but the bean paste is douchi (blackbean sauce) and not Japanese miso. The taste of douchi is too strong, and would hide the delicate flavor of Japanese wagyu. However, Japanese miso highlights the flavor of Japanese wagyu. The third sauce was peach flavored. Again, since the sweetness of the peach would hide the wonderful taste of Japanese wagyu, I created a mild sauce by adding tart, flavorful Shangtang stock from high-quality chicken, lemon, salt and pepper. The peaches are, of course, Japanese yellow peaches. Japanese fruit tastes great, so I thought fruit should be enjoyed together with Japanese wagyu."

—What about garnishes? The three dishes you cooked today all included Japanese components in their presentation, such as green maple leaves that express the coolness of summer in Washoku and plates of Japanese design.

"Yes. Japan has many truly interesting things, beginning with food ingredients, culinary culture and, above all, Japanese culture. From a foreigner's point of view, Japan gives an impression of sophistication and beauty. Everything is small and, to use a trendy expression, "kawaii" (laughs). In particular, there is the notion that aesthetics play a role in cuisine, a feeling I greatly cherish now, and which I only achieved after coming to Japan. When serving Japanese wagyu dishes, one should be particular about the way the food is garnished. This means not only applying the elements of Washoku, but also more broadly expressing sophisticated beauty.

Food should be enjoyed for its taste, fragrance, texture, appearance and sound. It should please all five senses. Since it involves images and memories, it may please more than five senses. When I have the chance to use this expensive ingredient, Japanese wagyu, I want to take full advantage of it. Japanese wagyu is an ingredient that I believe has the potential to appeal to all five senses of our guests."



Chef Sun first visited Japan when 28 at the Chinese government's request to teach authentic Chinese cooking at a hotel. He has lived by choice in Japan ever since and is an owner chef of three restaurants. He also appears in TV programs, newspapers and magazines and teaches at cooking schools.



中國名菜 孫 CHINESE CUISINE SUN Roppongi Main Restaurant

This is the main of three CHINESE CUISINE SUN restaurants. The other two are in Nihonbashi and Asagaya. Guests can experience Sun's nouvelle chinoise (new Chinese) cuisine that merges Beijing, Washoku (Japanese) and Western styles. ●B1F, Kiraku Bldg., 7-6-3 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo Tel: +81-3-5785-3089