



Library podcast

Hsiao-Ching Chou discusses 'Chinese Soul Food'

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[00:00:36] Anything. Hi everybody. I'm Stesha Brandon I'm the literature and humanities program manager here at The Seattle Public Library. Welcome to this evening's event with shouting Chow presented in partnership with Elliott Bay Book Company and Sasquatch books.

[00:00:52] Thank you to our authors series sponsor Gary Kunis and to Seattle Times for generous promotional support of library programs. Finally we are grateful to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors helped the library provide free programs and services that touch the lives of everyone in our community. So if any of you are library foundation donors here with us tonight thank you so much for your support. Now I am delighted to introduce shout Ching Chao cha ching is the former food editor at The Seattle Post Intelligencer newspaper. And that's actually how we first met back in the day.

[00:01:30] I think that was a good I don't now 10 years ago maybe 15 18 years ago. Like yesterday.

[00:01:39] Anyway shushing has appeared on national television and radio including Anthony Bourdain No Reservations and on my favorite The Splendid Table she's won the coveted Bert Green Award for the International Association for Professionals for Excellence in Feature Writing and she has started a public relations firm that focused on restaurants including clients from some of the fanciest and best restaurants here in Seattle including tilth maps and the market Kalis and Polya pizza. That was back in 2007 she started that firm and then for several years until 2017 she was the director of communications at the Institute for Systems Biology a nonprofit Biomedical Research Association. As if that is not enough she keeps one foot in the food world as an instructor at a hot stove society which has chef Tom Douglass's cooking school at the hotel Ondra. She's also a member of the James Beard Foundation's cookbook committee and also a member of the dommes Esko Seattle and also volunteers on the communications committee for Fair Start dot org. What have you guys done today. I don't know. Without further ado please help me welcome shouting Chao here to talk about her new book Chinese soul food

[00:02:59] Thank you guys so much for coming.

[00:03:02] I'm going to read a little bit from the book today and then I've selected a few pieces and if we have some time I have an essay that is not in the book but is about the book that I would like to read as well. So let's start from the beginning because apparently that's a very good place to start.

[00:03:21] Cornish Julie Andrews and I wanted to read the foreword to you because I invited my mother to write the foreword and it's you know just to give her a piece of this book and a voice because she has a very strong voice. She's a writer herself. And all of these stories in this cookbook come from family stories and her wanted to give her a piece of that. So this is the from the forward in the primrose path in 1936.

[00:04:01] Ogden Nash writes her pictures in the papers now and life's a piece of cake. While reading my daughter's searchings cookbook I thought about this quote because her message ultimately is that cooking Chinese food in a western kitchen is not as hard as it may seem. Most Chinese people go into their kitchens without ever consulting a cookbook. I don't. My mother certainly didn't. The very first dish I ever cooked for myself was a bowl of rice noodle soup with daikon radish strips and a few pieces of dried shrimp for flavor. It was only because my mother was not home that day that I had to feed myself. The kitchen was normally off limits to me. The walk was there. The stove was there but my mother never let me touch them. Her biggest regret was that her circumstances prevented her from attending school so her dream was for me to complete my formal education. She didn't want me wasting my time in the kitchen. So even though I had no ambition for becoming an academic I reached graduate school and earned a master's degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism for her.

[00:05:15] My father was a military man with unlimited income. Luckily our family received a small stipend for bill for military dependents. That helped. I was born during the Sino Japanese war and I didn't even have a single photo to prove my existence. Thus my character was built on the value of not asking for too much in life and appreciating whatever I may receive after I fulfilled my mother's dream. I married a man I met in college. We both had steady jobs and fair incomes so we started a family and had Shao Ching first then her brother Hong. Then when my husband decided to pursue his master's degree also at the University of Missouri we set forth on our future life in the United States. With my husband in school and two young children in tow I eventually gave up my career as a journalist. That was when I started taking cooking more seriously. We were in a campus apartment with some hand-me-down cookware but no walk but I tried every way to feed my family including making dumplings skins with a sawed off broomstick as a rolling pin and it was blue.

[00:06:27] By the way our third child David Jr. was born at University Hospital near campus.

[00:06:34] The only cookbook I always had was my memory of good eating so I joked that I was an impressionist cook. It wasn't until we opened a small carry out restaurant that I even bought a Chinese cookbook to double check some details related to technique. Searching explains that the purpose of this book is to encourage people to get into the kitchen and start cooking.

[00:07:00] That's what we did. And so can you. I am mostly touched by the Food excuse me by the fond family memories she has brought back with her stories. A warm kitchen is the heart of the family and that is sweeter than cake.

[00:07:17] So my mother wrote that I said you know would you I really want you to write the foreword to this and I gave her the manuscript and she read it and wrote this piece and it's in Mandarin in the front of the book. And I said you write it in Mandarin because she's she's such a good writer in Chinese. And I thought and I said I'll help you with the translation. Not only did she write it in Chinese. She wrote the translation as well and I had only to refine some of the transitions. So that's just it was just so great that she took this with such enthusiasm and she's sitting right here in purple in the great hat.

[00:08:00] So she's here.

[00:08:06] She was a journalist back in the 60s in Taipei. So if you can imagine a female journalist at that time and in Asia.

[00:08:14] I mean that's pretty incredible achievement.

[00:08:18] All right so I'm going to read from the introduction just to kind of set the set the scene a little bit. Growing up in my family's Chinese restaurant and then becoming a professional food writer did not give me license to write a cookbook. I had the ingredients so to speak an immigrant story restaurant credibility journalism degree a food column in The Seattle Post Intelligencer newspaper a fan base and agent even polite interest from a couple of New York publishers. But I had nothing to say. It wasn't until after I had gotten married had two children quit the newspaper and changed career paths a couple of times that the cookbook declared to me its need to exist. Life had taken me on the scenic route toward this end and it began with the Chinese soul food blog in 2007 which I had started in hopes of maintaining my weekly practice of writing and providing a hub for my fans. I also wanted to create a space to share a straightforward but comforting Recipes Inspired by foods I ate growing up.

[00:09:27] The ingredients wouldn't break the bank and the recipes could be made possibly with a small child literally wrapped around your leg or while wearing a baby in a sling. That scenario was a reality for me at the time. Money was tight too so I had to be resourceful about ingredients. I knew that the Chinese cooking I had grown up eating could be extremely economical considering many stir fries or vegetable centric with meat only as a condiment. I figured if I needed such a resource there probably were other parents out there in the same boat. Despite a good start the blog suffered from the neglect especially after I had a second child. So it went dormant until about 2015 when the opportunity to teach regular classes on Chinese cooking at Hot Stove society in avocational cooking school in Seattle revived my need for a recipe blog. When I was at the newspaper my column was a weekly trigger for home cooks to reach out to me with questions or comments about recipes of all types. I learned as much from the readers as they learned from me after I left the paper. That channel of exchange became non-existent. It took five or so years away from the day to day of journalism to

give me the perspective I needed to understand what I had missed about being a columnist telling universal stories through the lens of cooking eating and thinking about food and more importantly being in a position to convey cooking skills to a broad audience in order to empower them to feed themselves and their families.

[00:11:10] Deliciously simply and wholesomely I knew I needed to return to the food community in some way to regain that connection with home cooks through monthly cooking classes on how to make pots, ticker's soup, dumplings and simple stir fries. The path back into the conversation opened up again. My ultimate goal is to get you into the kitchen. Chinese cooking can be daunting because the ingredients and methods are unfamiliar and if you haven't experienced the diversity of regional Chinese dishes your palate may not have a baseline for the flavor profiles. The complaints I hear most often about why people don't cook Chinese food are that the ingredients seem to quote exotic and that cutting all the ingredients is so much work. The most common aha I hear after students attend a class however is that a given dish wasn't as hard to cook as they thought even one of my chef colleagues at the cooking school commented that she was surprised at how accessible and delicious many of my recipes are. I think our brains are wired to associate long lists of ingredients with a higher degree of difficulty causing us to see a greater challenge than exist.

[00:12:31] I make it a point to remind all the home cooks I meet to have a growth mindset. You will likely have some Jessup's to start and that's okay. You will improve only if you first develop a habit of cooking Chinese dishes. When you internalize some of the basic principles you will be able to improvise based on what's available. Chinese cooks in general don't start with a recipe or menu. They're more likely to love the ingredients on hand than any leftovers to determine what they cook. They are more concerned with balancing the components and flavors of a meal than following a particular recipe. Perhaps your journey starts with cooking a Chinese meal once a week and building from there. Don't fret about not having the exact equipment or the full complement of specialty ingredients. Yes having the appropriate equipment in general makes it easier to cook. But ultimately Chinese home cooking is about being resourceful and adaptable.

[00:13:35] Any kitchen can be a Chinese kitchen.

[00:13:38] When my parents first arrived in Columbia Missouri in 1975 with two young children and a few suitcases there were no Asian markets.

[00:13:47] They had to shop at IGDA Schnucks and Kroger where they couldn't even find Napa cabbage or any other familiar ingredients. They had to drive 10 hours north to Chicago to stock up on good soy sauce. We had secondhand cookware and a humble food budget. We lived in a tiny apartment in a university owned complex for graduate and married students.

[00:14:11] And yet my parents cooked Chinese meals every day.

[00:14:16] It's this food that sustained me in those early formative years. I have clear memories of being 4 or 5 years old standing on my toes trying to watch my mother make dumplings or slurping two

hot chicken soup with ginger inch talkies while sitting at her white metal dinner table eating bowls of rice topped with red braised pork of the very special occasions my father would splurge for frozen Alaskan snow crab to stir fry with green onions ginger garlic Asso can hear the dull sound of the wooden chopsticks tapping the bottom of the small aluminum pot that my parents used to make rice soup and even the kungfu brand instant noodles that to this day I will eat on occasion by the time my parents opened a restaurant in 1980 it was easier to get Asian ingredients in Colombia. There were specialty wholesalers in St. Louis that would send their trucks an hour and a half to our town to deliver us and other Chinese restaurants. Having access to authentic ingredients did not mitigate our customers demands for deep fried sweet or pork cream cheese wantons chop suey cashew chicken and the like. They wanted cheap and fast Chinese food that satisfied their sweet. During the 23 years the restaurant operated the turning point came in the mid 1990s when my parents pivoted from full service dining to a buffet restaurant business increased substantially which certainly benefited the family.

[00:15:46] But while much of the menu reflected Americanized dishes we build ourselves as a HomeStyle Chinese restaurant. We offered classic dishes such as small tofu fried green beans fresh fish fragrant eggplant cum chicken and rice cooked pork. These were far from best sellers but they were dishes. My parents liked that reminded them of home neither of them were born in the southern province in China. However their pilots were shaped by war. My mother's family was from the north of Manchuria. My father's family was from Hunan in central China because my grandfathers were both officers and Kuomintang national army. They and their families retreated to Taiwan when the Communist takeover in 1949 all the mainlander Millot military families settled in what initially were meant to be provisional villages throughout the island. The colony are a result of this displacement of people from diverse regions across China who now were surrounded by Taiwanese culture was a delicious intersection of influences on home cooking this thread carried through to our family's restaurant.

[00:16:58] The Chinese name my parents coined for the restaurant translates roughly to homeland cooking or homestyle eats. Similarly the Chinese name for this cookbook loosely translates to everyone's kitchen. The spirit of the name connects to the heart of the cooking in this book which is grounded in this legacy of intertwined regional traditions and resourcefulness. I can take small liberties to accommodate taste preferences or apply refinements to the techniques and choice of ingredients but the recipes all have humble origins. Comfort comes in the tingling manner or numbing spice of such Chinese tofu. The nuance of Northern steamed dumplings the caramelized richness of Taiwanese braised beef soup.

[00:17:46] It isn't high cuisine.

[00:17:49] It is Chinese food for the soul says that's from the introduction and just to kind of tell a little bit of the story of what happened to me once I left the Seattle P.I. because I sort of fell off the face of the culinary landscape in Seattle and went dark so to speak and did a few other types of work and then suddenly surfaced again and cooking classes so people people were just wondering what happened to you.

[00:18:17] Where did you go. Did it go anywhere. I just was doing other work and while I was working at the Institute for Systems Biology there for six years and about over the last couple of years. That's when I decided that I needed to write this book and so I wrote I worked full time and wrote the book in the evenings and on weekends and hid away in a quiet part of our house just to do the writing.

[00:18:46] And probably about a year writing and writing recipes and testing them photographing etc. So it was a long process but it was on I think what I'll do now is I have this what I think is a kind of a fun essay that I wrote for The Powells Books wall they wanted. They said hey you can write an essay for the blog and we'll promote your book. And I said OK what should I write about you. And they said you can write about anything you want which you should never tell a writer write about anything you want.

[00:19:21] So I thought OK I thought about and thought about it and there's a really funny story about how this some of the book came together that I thought I would share a cookbook is born a good friend who recently completed her first manuscript ascribe the writing process to giving birth through her face. I choked from laughter at this image and then settled into an empathetic nod. Writing a book especially an inaugural work does usher in all the excitement of being an expectant parent.

[00:19:54] In the early stages of gestation eventually the novelty dissolves into the reality of putting the first 10000 words on the page and then the next ten thousand words and the next the high voltage prods zapping you if you relent before deadline might. Cookbooks birth story could have been an episode of cutthroat kitchen on the Food Network where competitors pay for the right to sabotage an opponent by taking away an essential cooking tool like a proper chef's knife or stove.

[00:20:29] The inadvertent saboteur in my case was my husband Eric who let's be clear I would never purposely or maliciously pitched me a curve ball but ended up dealing me a serious handicap. I was about three months into writing Chinese soulfood when Eric decided it was the ideal time to refinance our home. This was not a problem but my husband is a devotee of HDTV and the DIY Network. He had been scheming and wanted to use the refinancing to kickstart what had been our some day kitchen remodel. You want to remodel the kitchen now. I asked. While I'm writing a cookbook. Yes Eric said he rattled off his plan to build my dream kitchen and promised that the work would be completed before Thanksgiving which would give me two months and a new kitchen. Before my book was due it was early summer the refinancing was still in progress.

[00:21:27] The project's scope and contractor still had to be determined. The scheduling had to be confirmed and and and but my husband had that Ernest far away look that he gets when visions of demo day and the big reveal start dancing in his head. Of course I wanted a new kitchen. Of course we'd increase our property value of course and inevitably the project would start late run into delays and personnel drama go over budget and push into Christmas. I had front loaded as much of the recipe testing as I could and left the storytelling and had no writing for when my kitchen would be out of service.

[00:22:07] But with the delays and a looming deadline I had to get back into the kitchen.

[00:22:12] I used a baking sheet on a bar stool to hold my table top butane stove footstools to hold a tray of seasonings and a step stool to hold sundry other items when I needed to stir fry would crack open the door. Fire up the stove test whatever recipes needed to be tested.

[00:22:29] It was not ideal but like on Cutthroat Kitchen I had to prove my mettle as an experienced resourceful Cook who can adapt to almost any kitchen situation and still turn out great food I talk about this trade in my cookbook recounting how my parents after immigrating from Taiwan were able to make sumptuous Chinese meals for our family even though they had a tiny kitchen secondhand pens no walk in a few authentic Chinese ingredients.

[00:22:57] Having to use this bar stool stove in a construction zone had started as a pain point for me. But I realized that this quote sabotage was just the reminder I needed that not all the people who cook for my book have high end kitchens.

[00:23:14] Anyone should be able to cook a compliment of my recipes with the tools and ingredients they have at hand and the barstool stove worked just fine.

[00:23:25] The labor was long and the complications now make for a funny story but my cookbook now has a life of its own and is ready to meet the world that was behind the scenes and people who followed me on Facebook and Instagram saw some of the construction zone and you know we laugh about it now. But I was a little nerve wracking when when we didn't have a kitchen and I couldn't test recipes so I was all my friends. Thankfully they were like oh come Vajra my kitchen. Because they knew that they would get to eat whatever I made.

[00:23:57] So I had a few a few of those requests.

[00:23:59] Few of those offers. Right.

[00:24:02] So typically around this time in the then they open it up for Q and A. So I'm going to let you choose your adventure I could read one more selection or we can move on to some questions and just have a conversation which might be more fun and interesting.

[00:24:20] Anybody want to ask a question. Yes.

[00:24:24] So the question is whether you can substitute instead of using cornstarch if you can use arrowroot. And sure you can. Yeah it would be fine because really it's not so much for flavor. What I do with that is just a little bit of cornstarch in the marinating in the meat. And what that helps to do is when you're making the sauce it helps to thicken the sauce a little bit. Beef

[00:24:49] Yeah yeah that's fine. Totally fine. Yes sure. Yes sir.

[00:24:56] So the question is what some of the flavors are for some of the sauces serve for soy sauce.

[00:25:04] B You know it's made from soybeans and if you get when you're buying soy sauce you should buy soy sauce that is naturally fermented and brewed. So when you buy it you know go to the store look look for that on the label. And if you see something that says hydrolyzed soy protein don't buy that.

[00:25:24] It's not going to kill you it's not the end of the world if you buy that or if that's what you have. And as a note I never want any lack of an ingredient or lack of piece of equipment be a barrier. But if you do you have the opportunity to shop at an Asian market to kind of look for if you're cooking Chinese food look for a Chinese soy sauce and then look for naturally fermented fruit. So the process is quite long and it varies depending on on the maker of the soy sauce. But yes they cook the soybeans down and they do let that ferment. And that creates a lot of the the flavors.

[00:26:03] You ever come to one of my cooking classes I actually have a soy sauce tasting bar that I set up and you can taste through and just see how different they taste.

[00:26:12] Most people have done wine tastings or olive oil tastings things etc. and nobody ever gets to taste the difference sauces.

[00:26:21] So that's something they do have a lot of different flavor profiles. And in the book I have a little bit of a touch just a little bit on some of the research that has been done in all of the the flavor give me attributes. You know they've identified tens dozens of those flavors giving attributes. And it's just like with cheese or with wines whatever the wherever the soy beans are grown whatever the the soy sauce maker is the fermentation process adds that special something to the flavor of the soy sauce. Now yes so it will say on the label naturally fermented and naturally brewed. So that's a good indicator. And everybody is familiar with Kikkoman soy sauce because that is the most common and it's a Japanese brand which if that's what you have you know don't let that stop you from making this food. But like I said if you do you have the opportunity to go shopping look for something that will say whether it's made in China or Made in Taiwan. That's a good indicator. So read the fine print. And yes a lot of sometimes the labels will have only Chinese on it or. But usually there's a sticker on the back that has a very tiny print. The Chinese that that's the key indicator because the bottles don't typically list the flavor profiles on it so it would be hard to tell just based on the bottle. There are different. I don't want to call them pressings but there's just the regular soy sauce there is soy sauce paste. It's thicker the dark soy sauces those are used typically for braising but for like a multi purpose one there's a section in the book where I talk about give you some tips on which brands that you could try that would be good for multipurpose use back there.

[00:28:16] So the question is how did I decide to get back into the food community.

[00:28:23] And why did I decide on teaching at this particular school. Is that kind of the gist of the question or

[00:28:30] What were the options I was looking at. So I don't know that I had a specific plan for that.

[00:28:38] I had been working in science for a long time.

[00:28:45] And you know I still had all of my friends and colleagues in the food roll and I could see what they were doing but I just you know once you kind of exit that world you are pulled off of mailing lists and you get invited to all the the foodie events and the restaurant openings and such.

[00:29:03] So I felt like I mean I needed that distance you know because when you're in it all the time you sort of you get tunnel vision and you don't have any perspective. So it's good to have that break.

[00:29:14] And as far as getting back into the food community the opportunity to teach at hot stove was I thought it was going to be like a one time thing or maybe two time thing. And because I at the time the director she still is a friend but she was the director at the time and she said hey you know it'd be great. It was just the conversation would be great if you could come and teach a class on dumplings. And I said sure one night I posted that class or they posted that class it sold out in 24 hours and oh ok. What's going on here. Maybe I need to offer another class so they posted a second one and that also sold out very fast.

[00:30:04] And so that was a clue to me that there was a hunger so to speak for dumplings pot stickers and maybe specifically Closs from me because they so you know I had I had a lot of readers from my days at the P.I. And so every once in a while I'll run into somebody who remembers me from those days and those wax poetic about oh I missed your call.

[00:30:32] Well they shut down the paper so you can't really do anything about that.

[00:30:37] And as far as looking at other cooking schools you know it's working full time it makes it hard to spread myself that. And so I kind of have selected one place as a home doesn't mean that I haven't committed to being exclusive to the hot stove.

[00:30:53] But it's such an amazing venue if you've ever been there it's a great place to to do hands on classes. And I've been teaching there for over three years now so and pot stickers still hot seller.

[00:31:07] I can't you know they sell out faster than any class. Now if that really answered your question. Yes ma'am.

[00:31:18] So the question is why don't the green beans taste as good as they do in a restaurant. That's true for many dishes. And when you're in the restaurant the the walk stove is so hot that you cook food in seconds and if you're not careful you'll burn it in seconds. That high heat with the carbon steel walk gives it you know that say qua quality to the food and that is really challenging to produce at home in a western kitchen if you're in Asia where Wok Cooking is just a part of life. Hot stoves are just that. They install that in your home. So it's just a different culture. But to mitigate that you know

make sure that you have the right PAN the white right walk for your stove. So if you have a flat top stove get a flat bottom wok. If you're trying to cook using a round bottom wok on a flat stove you're not going to get that heat concentration. You also want to preheat your Buhr walked to. I've found that the little table top butane burners actually give off pretty good heat.

[00:32:31] When we go visit my my my in-laws you know they always want me to make green beans and I bring my stuff because they have a electric stove and I have a round bottom wok it's not going to work so I just bring the stove and cook outside and it gives off pretty good heat. So you just have to don't overcrowd Japan pre-heat Japan and that will get you a little bit closer to that well you have to determine how much Ginger you actually will actively use so if you don't if you know you're not going to use a whole lot then don't buy a whole lot. Right. So especially if you shop in the Asian market it's totally ok to flip through the pile and find just the right size or just break off the smaller piece because I use Jinjur frequently. I tend to just store it on the counter but some people saw it in the refrigerator or just buy the right size buy it as fresh as you can don't buy the super wrinkly one and then you can start the fridge

[00:33:37] Oh like it does the just the thickness effect the quality of the ginger. I don't know that I've noticed a flavor difference.

[00:33:45] Sometimes ginger can be more fibrous than others so it's you know that's just the variety and the grower and you can always tell just by looking at it. I just always want to look for the freshest piece of ginger that I can find so that the skin on the outside is really bright and not wrinkled. That will that will help. I mean it the skin itself it is a root. It's like it's got some roughness on it. But the wear this wear it is smooth make sure that it's really smooth and that means it's still moist on the inside.

[00:34:20] What's it like teaching cooking. It's a privilege to teach cooking because I just want more people to cook. It's so easy to order out these days. You pull up an app and people deliver food to you very fast and you can get anything you want. And people don't have time they're overworked and so they don't cook anymore. And that's sad to me. So for me the more the more I can get people into the kitchen the better because and I'm not talking about fancy food either. I mean most of the food I make is pretty straightforward and simple work.

[00:34:57] Have kids they don't want to wait. So I have to cook fast.

[00:35:03] So it's really fun to be in front of the room and that hot stove because the kitchen the kitchen counters are super tall.

[00:35:12] They actually built the stage for me so there's a platform that kind of looks like this box except it's bigger. And I say every time they introduce me I've run up on stage and then I get to talk to people and help answer questions about dumplings or stir fries and things like that and then they get to cook and then I walk around and help them cook.

[00:35:35] It's just fun to talk to people and get them her family.

[00:35:42] For my family because my children have completely opposite eating eccentricities.

[00:35:52] So I would I like to do is I will make make several stir fries.

[00:35:58] So instead of say stir fried chicken with baby bok choy I will make sure of fried bok choy instead of fried chicken and then the grownups can mix them together and then my son can eat the Bok Choy. My daughter can eat just a chicken. So it is it is my strategy for getting you know not being the shoulder to cook but at the same time appeasing everybody's desires. So for an everyday meal yeah two or three quick stir fries is you know that's the go to because you can accomplish that pretty simply.

[00:36:37] I love any of the stir fried vegetables. There's walk seared corn recipe in the book that is so simple you can't you won't believe how fast you can cook that and the Greens simple stir fry greens you can do that in just a few minutes. And so be any vegetable in there that you want. Whether that is an Asian green or kale. You can do that and then

[00:37:05] You know maybe a suit like the egg drop soup with tomato soup with spinach super easy to make you don't even need profits just water. So yeah keep it pretty simple.

[00:37:18] Sir back here at OK largest walk size like What's an ideal walk size for a home cook probably a 12 to 14 inch walk.

[00:37:28] I have I have several sizes but I think 14 inch if you have a family is a good size.

[00:37:35] If you are cooking for you know to a 12 inch walk should be fine. And it just depends on the type of like if you plan on doing a lot of entertaining then maybe err on the 14 inch because 16 inches that's a little too big.

[00:37:50] Like I have one and I rarely use it.

[00:37:55] Can you heat it up enough so that again will depend on what kind of stove you have. So if you have again if you have a flat flat top stove get a flat bottom walk. That's that's the key. And then if you do have gas you can try the round bottom so that you have the right attachments stuff.

[00:38:15] Yes ma'am.

[00:38:17] Personally I have both. I love the cleaver for it's utilitarian.

[00:38:26] You know you can use it as a scraper as well so that that makes it very convenient and you can chop bones etc. but I have small hands so I tend to use a chef's knife and I also tend to use a Japanese chef's knife because they're lighter. Yeah. And sometimes DiSanto couldn't have because they're shorter.

[00:38:46] The blade is shorter so that's just a personal preference but definitely the Cleaver is is a lot more utilitarian and you know I have a very expensive one. And yeah

[00:39:01] Totally fine. Those you know the Chinese Chinese don't put the same kind of value on the cooking equipment. And what I mean by that is we're not spending 150 dollars on an all clad hand to make our food the walk if you spend more than 35 dollars you spent too much Lievre if you spent more than 20 bucks you've spent too much like we don't we don't. That's not where we place the value. You know so so don't don't get don't use the kind of that Western perspective the European perspective where you're spending so much on your know and the brand name not that those are all good products don't get me wrong.

[00:39:42] But it's not necessary like you don't need to. I've had students come in with very very expensive stainless steel all clad. You know one of those walks and like sorry but it's really hard to cook out of that. And a lot of money on it. Whereas this 20 dollar walk would have been just fine.

[00:40:00] So yeah that Kleber sounds great. I mean things are. Oh. We have some other kid questions about

[00:40:10] Do I ever get embarrassed by my kids when I'm cooking in public. What do I get embarrassed for my kids when I'm cooking in public. No my children aren't angels

[00:40:24] I don't get embarrassed by them. They get the hairy eyeball if they approach anything near embarrassing. So so no up here. Yes sir.

[00:40:36] Are you trying to serve everything all at once. Or are you actually coursing it out.

[00:40:43] No right.

[00:40:45] You know what I try to do is balance the menu selections so that I will have something say soupy or something that's braised so that I can just cook while you're doing the olive minute stuff so the fast stir fry dishes because if you if you have say a braised dish that's already done and it can just hold. And then you balance that out with two or three really fast stir fries if everything is prepped. It really just takes a couple of minutes on each dish. And then and then you can sit down with your friends or family. But if you pick everything that requires a lot of labor and a lot of last minute then yeah you'll never be able to sit down. So what I try to do is just make sure something that there's something that that can just sit on the stove and not you know can hold and then pick a couple of really fast dishes to do so just kind of balance it that way. Question Is since Chinese New Year is this week what simple dishes could a novice cook do to stir fried noodles with shrimp is a good one because that is noodles are are for longevity. At New Year. So the noodle dish would be a good one and then maybe the steam fish. Because long as you rely on your fishmonger to get a really fresh fish you can put that in the steamer and there's not a ton of technique there that you could do. So the fish is good. Good luck and good fortune lots of prosperity.

[00:42:19] And then Mr. Fried greens because greens are so good.

[00:42:25] All right. Are we doing. Oh one last question

[00:42:30] Working in science. Did that change the way that I looked.

[00:42:35] Working in science changed the way that I think for sure and I worked in a research facility where it was all about systems thinking and the the basic principle is that everything is interconnected everybody is interconnected. And if you think about that just in a global philosophical sense it's pretty profound. Nothing happens in a vacuum. And so from that perspective it's like all right if I'm going to be a part of this world a part of this community how do I continue that that connectivity and whether that's true food through books through writing. You have to write and present this information in a way that is inclusive and not exclusive.

[00:43:25] So science science helped me do that. Thank you for asking that question that was awesome. Thank you guys so much for coming. I'm happy to sign your books if you have them.

[00:43:43] This podcast was presented by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to The Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.