

WOLFGANG PUCK REVEALS INGREDIENTS

“...LUXURY TO ME IS NOT A MATERIAL ACHIEVEMENT BUT A PERSONAL ONE: HAVING THE TIME TO ENJOY THE COMPANY OF THE PEOPLE I LOVE...



Photos courtesy of Wolfgang Puck Cooking School

A world-renowned master in the kitchen and a charismatic personality, Wolfgang Puck is a dynamic “chef-lebrity” who is globally revered for his combination of classic cooking techniques and the modern fusion cuisine he pioneered in his iconic restaurants all around the world. All of the accolades that have ensued are decidedly well-earned, given he began his formal kitchen training at just fourteen years of age with the encouragement of his mother—herself a chef in the Austrian town where he was born.

After honing his craft at some of the finest restaurants in France and, subsequently, in the United States, Wolfgang arrived in Los Angeles in 1975 where he took the city’s culinary scene by storm—rapidly gaining favor with the Hollywood elite. His dynamic personality and culinary brilliance, which notoriously bridges tradition and invention, quickly made his food a magnet for the rich and famous and himself an A-list star in his own right.

Driven by a genuine love of his craft and a passion to share his lifetime of professional knowledge with as many home cooks as possible, Wolfgang has added yet another venture to his credit: the Wolfgang Puck Online Cooking School. This digital destination is rife with beautiful, original, entertaining and inspiring high definition videos that capture Wolfgang’s expertise and utter joy in the kitchen. This comprehensive, ever-growing online collection of instructional recipe-lessons, how-to techniques and engaging video cooking courses provides members with easy-to-learn teachings to prepare diverse dishes and learn culinary practices in the comfort of a home environment.

What does the word “luxury” mean to you? I remember when I was a young chef in my 20s, new to the United States, the idea of luxury to me meant having my own big convertible American car, which I drove across the country to settle in Southern California. Now, in my mid-60s, luxury to me is not a material achievement but a personal one: having the time to enjoy the company of the people I love—my wife Gelila, our sons Oliver and Alexander, and my two grown sons Cameron and Byron.

What do you love to splurge on? My personal philosophy of good cooking,

a concept I teach in every single video recipe class in my new Wolfgang Puck Online Cooking School, is that you always start with the best-quality ingredients and then cook them in ways that highlight and intensify their natural flavor, aroma, color and texture. So, in general, I’d have to say that I like to spend money on good-quality ingredients, especially if they offer pleasures I can share with my family, my friends, and the guests in my restaurants.

What does your travel schedule look like up ahead? I do a lot of travel for my businesses, with new restaurants opening up all the time around the world. I’ve found it fascinating to visit the new locations of our restaurants in Dubai, and Istanbul and Singapore. We have a new Wolfgang Puck restaurant opening soon in the Disneytown district of the new Shanghai Disney Resort, and I can’t wait to visit there.

What is your favorite dish and who cooks it? My all-time favorite dishes were ones that my mother and grandmother cooked for us when I was growing up. One of them was my grandmother’s giant Austrian-style ravioli filled with potato, cheese, and fresh herbs, served topped with freshly grated cheese and brown butter. She made it for us almost every single week. When I recently filmed a lesson in how to make that dish for my online cooking school, I actually got choked up, reminiscing about how she made as I recorded the dish for the members who watch online. Good food has that kind of power to bring back memories.

What is your best tip for living fabulously? More and more, I’m aware how important it is to eat healthfully and to exercise. Healthy food and delicious food aren’t mutually exclusive, and I certainly teach ways to achieve both goals at once in my online cooking school. I now try to work out in some way almost seven days a week.

What is your best tip for living fabulously? More and more, I’m aware how important it is to eat healthfully and to exercise. Healthy food and delicious food aren’t mutually exclusive, and I certainly teach ways to achieve both goals at once in my online cooking school.

Have your life's luxuries been fairly consistent or have they changed over time? As I mentioned before, even though I may now have more of the material success I had dreamed of when I was a young chef just starting out, the greatest luxury to me today is not material things but the time I get to spend with the people I love. And I think that cooking great food at home every day, as I love to teach people how they can do so easily through my online cooking school, is one of the secrets to achieving that goal. You'd be surprised by the effect a delicious home cooked meal—in which the home cook has learned through the simple tricks I share to easily turn ordinary everyday recipes into something extraordinary—can transform a family's life by gathering everyone around the table.

What is the one luxury you would have the hardest time giving up? I'd have a very hard time giving up good food and good wine, especially when I'm enjoying them both in the company of the people I love.

Are there any wardrobe items you can't do without? Most of my days and evenings I spend dressed in a classic white double-breasted chef's jacket, personalized with my initials, WP. But, being a chef, I find really comfortable shoes are a must. The make may vary, but it's got to offer good support while also being made with soft leather that is easy on my feet.

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"CHINOIS" ASIAN CHICKEN SALAD ►**



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WOLFGANG PUCK'S FAMOUS "Chinois" Asian Chicken Salad

Ingredients:

1 cup raw cashews
6 wonton wrappers
peanut oil for drizzling
3 green onions, trimmed and cut diagonally into thin slices
2 medium heads napa cabbage, several large leaves reserved, remaining leaves cut into thin strips
10 pods snow peas, trimmed, blanched briefly in boiling water, cooled in ice water, and cut into thin strips
1/2 small head radicchio, leaves cut into thin strips
1/2 small head romaine lettuce, or iceberg lettuce, leaves cut into thin strips
1 carrot, peeled, trimmed, and cut into thin strips
1 red bell pepper, quartered, stemmed, seeded, deveined, and cut into thin strips
1 whole roast or rotisserie chicken, about 4 1/2 pounds, for about 4 cups shredded cooked chicken meat
1/4 cup unseasoned rice vinegar
2 teaspoons dry Chinese mustard, or English (Colman's) mustard
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon pickled sushi ginger, chopped, plus 1/2 teaspoon of its juice
1/2 teaspoon Asian-style toasted sesame oil
1/2 cup peanut oil
1 pasteurized egg yolk
kosher salt
freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon honey

Directions

Toasting the cashews: Preheat the oven to 450°F. Spread the cashews on a baking sheet. Toast in the oven until deep golden brown, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Set aside to cool. With the bottom of a heavy pan, or with a meat pounder or other heavy object, gently press down on the cooled cashews in the baking sheet to crush them coarsely.

Baking the wonton strips: Stack the wonton wrappers and, with a sharp knife, cut them into strips about 1/2 inch wide. Toss them on a baking sheet to separate them. Drizzle with a little peanut oil and toss again. Bake in the 450°F oven until deep golden brown, about 15 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Crisping the vegetables: Fill a mixing bowl halfway with ice cubes and water. Add the strips of Napa cabbage, snow peas, radicchio, Romaine, carrots, and bell pepper. Leave to crisp in the ice water for about 30 minutes.

Spinning the vegetables dry: Lift out the vegetables from the ice water and transfer to the basket of a salad spinner. Spin the vegetables to remove excess water. Transfer the vegetables to a large salad bowl. Discard the water from the spinner.

Cutting up the chicken: Remove any skin from the cooked chicken and pull out and discard any bones. With a sharp knife, cut the meat into bite-sized slices or strips; or shred it by hand. Add the chicken to the salad bowl.

Blending the vinaigrette: In a measuring cup, combine the rice vinegar, mustard, soy sauce, pickled ginger and its vinegar, sesame and peanut oils, and egg yolk. Insert an immersion blender, positioning it over the yolk. Blend, gradually moving the blender up and down the cup, until the dressing is emulsified, smooth and creamy. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and a little honey, briefly blending them in.



Photos courtesy of Wolfgang Puck Cooking School

Dressing & tossing the salad: With clean hands or kitchen tongs, toss together the chicken and vegetables. Drizzle in enough around the side of the salad to coat the ingredients thoroughly but lightly, and toss again. Taste and adjust the seasonings, if necessary, with more salt and pepper.

Serving the salad: Arrange the reserved whole cabbage leaves on a chilled large serving platter or individual plates. Mound the salad on top. Garnish with cashews, wonton strips, and green onions. Serve immediately. ●

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