



Eat Right

Rooting for ginger

A tribute to a much-loved Asian spice that's piquant, flavourful and chock-full of health benefits.

BY JUSTINE KOH PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRENCHESCAR LIM

Infused in tea, pickled or candied, sauteed with beef, served with salad...

The culinary possibilities of ginger are endless. With its distinctive tang, the herb stands out on its own – and adds character to any dish. But that's not all. The root and flower are also prized for their medicinal properties by scientists and traditional herbalists alike. Three experts tell you why you should give it a chance. Not sure how to cook it? We've included three easy-to-follow, absolutely delicious recipes to get you started.

THE DIETITIAN SAYS...



Jaclyn Reutens, clinical dietitian at *Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants*

Ginger is a low-calorie way to add flavour and nutrients to your dishes. For each 100g serving, you get 80kcal, 2g of protein, 13g of sodium, 415mg of potassium and less than 1g of fat.

Fights inflammation The active ingredients in ginger, particularly shogaol, have anti-inflammatory properties that relieve body aches. It works much like the painkiller, aspirin.

Improves digestion Gingerols, another active constituent, works directly on the stomach to improve gastrointestinal tract movement, so that food is cleared out more quickly from the intestines.

Reduces nausea Young ginger is most commonly used to relieve motion sickness symptoms and digestive discomfort. Various chemicals in ginger work in the stomach, intestines and nervous system to ease nausea.

Boosts immunity Besides the root, the flower of the ginger plant is also rich in phytochemicals that boast antioxidant benefits. Galangal, also from the ginger family, is said to possess anti-tumour, anti-bacterial, anti-ulcer and anti-fungal properties. As for young ginger, a 2007 US study found that extracts could inhibit tumour cell growth in ovarian cancer cells. However, further research is still needed to fully assess its cancer-fighting potential.

But it's not for everyone

Gynaecologists are still debating whether pregnant women should eat ginger as it may affect foetal sex hormones – particularly in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Women with bleeding disorders should also be wary of ginger's blood-thinning effects. Experts generally advise against consuming more than 1g a day.

THE TCM EXPERT SAYS...



Felicia Ng Yu Zhen, senior acupuncturist at *Complementary Integrative Medicine Clinic, Tan Tock Seng Hospital*

Ginger is "warm" or "heaty" in nature and gives off "yang" energy. And young ginger is usually recommended for cooking and herbal drinks as it's more potent.

Gets rid of "wind" To beat flatulence and improve digestion, drink green tea boiled with young ginger. Blue ginger is typically used to treat abdominal colic nausea, bloating, and seasickness.

Treats common colds Fresh ginger is usually used to treat the common cold – simply boil it with honey, spring onion or fresh milk. The ginger flower acts as a decongestant and helps the body expel white, watery phlegm.

Relieves headache A few heated slices of dry ginger on your temples may relieve that dull throb in your head.

Enhances circulation Cooked with black vinegar and pig trotters, ginger helps post-natal mothers expel "stale"

blood from the uterus. This dish is often eaten during the customary Chinese post-delivery confinement of 30 days' rest and recuperation at home.

THE CHEF SAYS...



Reynaldo Arriola, Chef de Cuisine at *The Halia*

In cooking, ginger is commonly used to enhance the overall flavour of a dish. What I love about ginger is that it's so versatile.

Prep as needed Slice, grate or mince, depending on the dish. In restaurants, sliced ginger is used for flavouring and often removed before serving. The other methods are recommended when a more intense gingery taste is desired, or when the ginger is to be incorporated into the dish, as in a sauce or gravy.

Intensity matters Both young and old ginger pack a flavourful punch, but the former is more aromatic and less sharp and bitter.

Compared to young ginger, galangal is lighter on the palate. To reduce its spiciness, I like to chop it up and air-dry it before sprinkling it over dishes.

The ginger flower has the subtlest flavour, and is used in many Nyonya dishes, like assam laksa and fish stew, because of its distinctive floral aroma. Try grating it over a salad.

Watch your cooking duration Older ginger is tougher, so it's more suited for use in soups and stews where it can be boiled and simmered for a long time to allow the full flavour to be released.

No hard and fast rules It's not true that ginger should only be paired with certain foods. Another misconception is that since it's fiery, it shouldn't be cooked with anything with a similarly pungent taste. In fact, ginger and galangal are often made into a paste and combined with other spices for curry. To find out, experiment!

RECIPES ON NEXT PAGE ➡



Young ginger and kaffir lime leaf beef with coriander potato puree

PREP TIME: 30MIN

COOK TIME: 5MIN

SERVES 2

YOU'LL NEED

For beef stir-fry

- 360g beef tenderloin, cut into 6mm slices
- 4-6 kaffir lime leaves
- 16 edamame beans
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 20g (about 8 slices) young ginger
- 2 pinches salt
- 2 pinches pepper

For coriander mash potato

- 1 big potato
- 12g unsalted butter
- 30ml milk
- ½ pinch salt
- 60g chopped coriander leaves

Garnish (optional)

- 2 edible flowers (such as chrysanthemum)
- 2 sprigs chervil

1/ Place potato in a pot of cool water and boil for 25 minutes or until soft. Remove from heat, drain and mash.

2/ Heat butter, milk and salt in a pot until boiling. Reduce to simmer and fold in mashed potato and coriander leaves, mixing well.

3/ In a pan, heat oil over medium heat. Stir-fry ginger and lime leaves for about 1 minute. Throw in beef slices and edamame beans and stir fry for about 4 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.

4/ Place mashed potato and beef on plate. Garnish and serve.



Apple Waldorf salad with galangal & honey mustard dressing

PREP TIME: 15MIN

NO COOKING

SERVES 2

YOU'LL NEED

- 10g air-dried galangal (sliced)
- 50g (about 2 handfuls) mesclun leaves
- 60g honey mustard dressing (store-bought for convenience)
- 10g grated orange zest
- 1 green apple, sliced thinly
- 8 seedless red grapes
- 12 roasted walnuts
- 16 golden raisins

1/ Mix air-dried galangal into mesclun leaves. Toss salad with honey mustard dressing and orange zest.

2/ Arrange apple slices in a circle on a plate and place mixed salad in the middle. Garnish with red grapes, roasted walnuts and raisins.

CHEF REYNALDO'S SECRET!

Air-dried galangal is great as a flavour enhancer and keeps well for one week when stored in a cool, dry place. To prepare, peel off skin and chop it up. Place pieces on a tray and heat in oven for 90 minutes at 55 deg Celsius.



Tomato, avocado, ginger flower and mango tian

PREP TIME: 20MIN
NO COOKING
SERVES 2

YOU'LL NEED

- 2 vine ripened tomatoes
- 1 avocado
- 1 mango
- 6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 4 sprigs chopped chives
- 6g grated ginger flower
- 2 pinches salt
- 2 pinches pepper

Garnish (optional)

- 2 sprigs chervil
- 4 slices blanched green courgette
- 4 slices blanched yellow courgette

1/ Blanch tomato for 15 seconds and remove peel. Cut into quarters and

remove seeds before dicing. Do the same for avocado and mango separately. Keep fruits in three separate bowls.

2/ Mix tomato with 1 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

3/ Mix avocado with 2 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

4/ Mix mango with grated ginger flower and chopped chives.

5/ Using a round mould, layer bottom with tomato, then avocado, and top with mango.

6/ To garnish, add chervil and courgette. Finish off with a drizzle of olive oil (optional).