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Celebrate the Chinese New Year with a healthy meal at home

January 19th, 2011 1:24 pm ET

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The Year of the Rabbit begins on February 3, 2011. This year, Chinese New Year falls within National Heart Month. And dietitian Gloria Tsang, founder of [HealthCastle.com](#), says there's plenty of healthy Chinese food to enjoy.

"Many people think of fat-heavy dishes like lemon chicken or spring rolls when they think of Chinese food," Tsang says. "But there are many heart-healthy ingredients that have been part of Chinese cooking for centuries."

Here are Tsang's top five ingredients for making heart-healthy Chinese dishes at home:

- Citrus:** Citrus fruits like oranges, pummelos, and tangerines are good sources of flavonoids, antioxidants that contribute to heart health. Of course, they're also packed with Vitamin C. Toss these traditional symbols of happiness and good fortune into stir fries, or use the juice instead of salad dressing.
- Brown Rice:** Rice and Chinese cooking go hand-in-hand, but whole-grain brown rice is much better for your heart than white rice. Whole grains like brown rice can reduce heart disease by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure. Use brown rice instead of white rice in any Chinese recipe.
- Tofu:** Soy, the source of tofu, has been shown to help lower cholesterol and triglycerides and prevent heart disease. To add more heart-healthy soy to your Chinese cooking, use tofu to replace meat. Try a stir-fried tofu (firm) and broccoli dish with black bean sauce.
- Bok choy:** Bok choy is packed with Vitamins A and C, phytonutrients, and folate, which add up to one heart-healthy vegetable! Plus, it's very filling, high in fiber, and low in calories. Try stir-frying it in a non-stick pan or tossing it into your salad.
- Fish:** Omega-3 fatty acids from fish have been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering cholesterol. Cod and sea bass are more prevalent on the Chinese menu, but you can use any fish you prefer. Try steaming with ginger or topping with black bean sauce.

Use some of these ingredients to celebrate Chinese New Year at home with your kids for a healthy and fun meal.

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Angele Sionna has been a professional journalist for over a decade. She enjoys writing about family activities, travel, food and, of course,...Read more

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