

Sweet and Sour Sauce

For my sweet and sour sauce, all you need are ingredients you probably already have at home (and there's certainly no red food coloring). **Here's how I make it:** In a small saucepan, combine **¼ cup of white sugar**, **2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar** (I like the fruitiness of cider vinegar, but most recipes use rice or white vinegar), **2 tablespoons of tamari** (you could use soy sauce here, but I like tamari because it's less salty and gluten-free), **¼ cup of ketchup**, **1 grated or minced clove of garlic**, and **¼ cup of water**. Place the pan on low heat and stir the mixture until it comes to a gentle boil. Reduce the heat to the very lowest setting possible while you prepare the cornstarch slurry.

What is a “cornstarch slurry” you may ask? It's basically the magic potion that thickens up a dish, and it's often used in Asian cooking. It's not as fancy or mysterious as it sounds: It's simply a combination of cornstarch (you could also use potato or tapioca starch) and water. For my slurry, you will need to whisk **1 tsp. cornstarch** together with **2 Tbsp. cold water** until it's dissolved (this is a very small amount of cornstarch compared to many recipes you might come across, as I prefer my sauce on the runnier side, with zero gluggliness!), and then slowly stir it into the sauce (the stirring is the key to ensuring a smooth sauce). Cook on low heat for another 2 minutes or so, until the sauce looks thick.



Decidedly less fluorescent than the stuff you get in the bottle!

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Of course, sweet and sour sauce can be used in traditional ways—add it as the last step of a stir-fry or use it as a dip for deep-fried wontons or egg rolls—but in my everyday cooking, I'm most often using sweet and sour sauce as a dressing that pairs perfectly with roasted vegetables, and in particular, cauliflower. I'll roast the cauliflower florets until they are golden and earthy sweet, and then toss through noodles (instant ramen works well here), or my favorite grain (usually a 10-minute farro), along with slivers of red bell pepper, a scattering of sesame seeds, and big handfuls of cilantro and scallions. It's a perfect little dish to show the sweet, sour, and *savory* side of this classic Chinese sauce.