CHINESE (XINJIANG)

Cumin Beef (Ziran Niurou)

COMPLEXITY	SERVES	PREP	COOK	TECHNIQUE	CUT
Basic	**4**	**20 min + 20 min marinating**	**10 min**	**Stir-fry**	**Skirt steak**

Ingredients

- 500 g (1 lb) skirt steak, trimmed of silverskin
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp Shaoxing wine (or dry sherry)
- 1 tsp cornstarch
- 1 tbsp whole cumin seeds
- 1 tsp Sichuan peppercorns (optional; or omit and add ¼ tsp extra black pepper)
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, sliced into thin wedges
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced
- 3 to 5 dried red chillies, snipped in half
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- ½ tsp salt
- Handful of coriander, roughly chopped

Steps

1. Slice the beef against the grain into strips 5 mm (¼ in) thick and 6 cm (2½ in) long.
2. Toss with the soy sauce, wine and cornstarch and leave for 20 minutes.
3. Toast the cumin seeds and peppercorns in a dry pan over medium heat for 1 to 2 minutes until fragrant. Crush coarsely in a mortar.
4. Heat a wok or large skillet over high heat until smoking. Add 2 tbsp oil and half the beef, spread out.
5. Stir-fry for 1½ minutes until browned. Remove, then repeat with the rest, keeping the pan very hot.
6. Add the last tablespoon of oil and the onion, and fry for 2 minutes until it softens at the edges but keeps some bite.
7. Add the garlic, dried chillies and chilli flakes for 20 seconds, until the chillies darken.
8. Return the beef with the crushed cumin and salt. Toss for 1 minute until coated and sizzling.
9. Finish with coriander and serve with rice or flatbread.

Notes

- **Heat level:** use fewer dried chillies and skip the flakes for a milder dish.
- **Other cuts:** flank steak or flat iron are good swaps.
- **Cumin:** freshly toasted seeds make a big difference; ground cumin works in a pinch, about 2 tsp, added at the end.
- **Make ahead:** toast and crush the cumin and peppercorns up to a week ahead in a jar; marinate the beef in the morning.
- **Pair with:** a smashed cucumber salad with black vinegar.