

Mapo Tofu

Recipe and image taken from: <https://omnivorescookbook.com/authentic-mapo-tofu/>

INGREDIENTS

½ cup oil (divided)
1-2 fresh Thai bird chili peppers (thinly sliced)
6-8 dried red chilies (roughly chopped)
1 1/2 tablespoons Sichuan peppercorns
(powdered or coarsely ground to taste, plus 1/4 teaspoon for garnish at the end)
3 tablespoons ginger (finely minced)
3 tablespoons garlic (finely minced)
8 ounces ground pork (225g)
1-2 tablespoons spicy bean sauce (depending on your desired salt/spice levels)
2/3 cup low sodium chicken broth (or water)
1 pound silken tofu (450g, cut into 1 inch cubes)
1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon sesame oil (optional)
1/4 teaspoon sugar (optional)
1 scallion (finely chopped)



PREPARATION

First, toast the chilies. If you have homemade toasted chili oil, you can skip this step. Heat your wok or a small saucepan over low heat. Add ¼ cup of the oil and throw in the fresh and dried peppers. Stir occasionally and heat until fragrant, about 5 minutes, ensuring that the peppers don't burn. Remove from heat and set aside.

Heat the remaining ¼ cup of oil in your wok over medium heat. Add your ground Sichuan peppercorns and stir occasionally for 30 seconds. Add the ginger. After 1 minute, add the garlic. Fry for another minute, and then turn up the heat to high and add the ground pork. Break up the meat and fry it until it's cooked through.

Add the spicy bean sauce to the mixture and stir it in well. Add ⅔ cups of chicken broth to the wok and stir. Let this simmer for a minute or so. While that's happening, ready your tofu and also put a ¼ cup of water in a small bowl with your cornstarch and mix until thoroughly combined.

Add the cornstarch mixture to your sauce and stir. Let it bubble away until the sauce starts to thicken. (If it gets too thick, splash in a little more water or chicken stock.)

Then add your chili oil from before—peppers and all! Stir the oil into the sauce and add the tofu. Use your spatula to gently toss the tofu in the sauce. Let everything cook for 3-5 minutes. Add the sesame oil and sugar (if using) along with the scallions and stir until the scallions are just wilted.

Serve with a last sprinkle of Sichuan peppercorn powder as a garnish if desired.