



Mabo Tofu

Recipe by Dr. William T. Wong

This popular Sichuan recipe is spicy and aromatic, and deeply satisfying with a side of brown rice.

Ingredients

- o Approximately 1 ounce of dried Shiitake mushrooms
- o 2 cups water
- o Salt
- o 15-ounce block of soft tofu
- o 1-2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- o 3 small dried Thai red peppers (for a spicier version)
- o 1 tablespoon fermented black beans, rinsed or 1 tbsp fermented black bean paste
- o 1 tablespoon fermented spicy broad bean paste (doubanjiang)
- o 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- o 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- o 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- o 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- o 1 teaspoon finely ground Sichuan pepper (peppercorn)
- o 1 tablespoon corn or potato starch, dissolved in 3 tablespoons cold water

- o ½ cup slivered scallions, both white and green parts
- o Cilantro sprigs, for garnish

This recipe yields 4 to 6 servings. Ready in 30 minutes.

Note: Dried shiitake mushrooms, fermented black bean paste, fermented spicy broad bean paste (spicy doubanjiang), and Sichuan peppercorn can be found in your local Asian market.

Instructions

1. Make a light mushroom broth by simmering mushroom in 2 cups warm water for 15 minutes, then strain and reserve broth. Remove stems from mushrooms if not already removed. Dice mushroom caps and set aside.
2. Cut tofu into 1-inch cubes.
3. Put oil in a wok or wide skillet over medium heat. Add red peppers, black beans, bean paste, and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add garlic and ginger and let sizzle, then add mushrooms, soy sauce, sesame oil, and Sichuan pepper (peppercorn). Add 1 1/2 cups mushroom broth and cook mixture gently for 2 minutes.
4. Add tofu cubes. Shake pan to distribute sauce, using a wooden spoon to help. Try to avoid smashing the tofu.
5. Drizzle in cornstarch mixture, gently swirling pan to incorporate (sauce will thicken) and simmer tofu in sauce for 2 minutes more. Thin with a little mushroom broth if necessary.
6. Transfer to a low bowl or platter. Sprinkle with scallions and cilantro sprigs.