

Mapo Tofu

Authentic Sichuan Mapo Tofu recipe with silky tofu in spicy, numbing doubanjiang sauce. A classic Chinese dish ready in 30 minutes.

12 min

PREP

18 min

COOK

30 min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Medium

DIFFICULTY

Mapo Tofu

Ingredients

- 500 g tofu
- 100 g ground beef
- 3 tbsp canola oil
- 1 tsp roasted sesame oil
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 450 ml water
- 3 clove garlic
- 5 scallion
- 6 slice fresh root ginger
- 1 tbsp corn starch
- 1 tsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp chili flakes

Instructions

1 Prepare the tofu

Cut 500g soft tofu into 2cm (3/4-inch) cubes, handling gently to avoid breaking. Bring a large pot of water with 1 teaspoon salt to a rolling boil. Add tofu cubes and blanch for 2 minutes to remove excess water and firm up the texture. Drain carefully using a slotted spoon and set aside.

2 Prepare aromatics

Mince 3 cloves garlic and finely chop 6 slices fresh ginger. Slice 5 scallions, separating white and light green parts from dark green tops. Mix 1 tablespoon cornstarch with 3 tablespoons cold water in a small bowl until smooth.

3 Cook the pork

Heat a wok or large skillet over high heat until smoking hot. Add 1 tablespoon oil and swirl to coat. Add 100g ground pork and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes, breaking up clumps, until meat is browned and slightly crispy. Transfer pork to a plate and set aside.

4 Build the sauce base

Reduce heat to medium and add 3 tablespoons doubanjiang (fermented bean paste) to the remaining oil in the wok. Stir-fry for 1-2 minutes until fragrant and the oil turns deep red.

- 5 Add minced garlic, ginger, and white parts of scallions to the wok. Stir-fry for 30 seconds until very fragrant but not browned.
- 6 Pour in 450ml hot chicken stock and add 1 teaspoon sugar and 1 teaspoon soy sauce. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 2 minutes to meld flavors.
- 7 **Add tofu and finish**
Gently slide blanched tofu cubes into the simmering sauce. Cook for 3-4 minutes, occasionally sliding a spatula under the tofu to coat with sauce without breaking the cubes.
- 8 Stir the cornstarch mixture and slowly drizzle into the wok while gently stirring. Cook for 1 minute until sauce thickens enough to coat the tofu.
- 9 Return cooked pork to the wok and add 1 teaspoon sesame oil and 1 teaspoon ground Sichuan peppercorns. Gently fold together for 30 seconds. Sprinkle with dark green scallion tops and serve immediately over steamed rice.

Tips

Source authentic Pixian doubanjiang from Asian markets for the most authentic flavor. This specific variety from Sichuan province provides the proper fermentation depth and bean texture that defines traditional Mapo Tofu.

Blanch tofu cubes in lightly salted boiling water for 2-3 minutes before cooking to firm up the exterior and prevent breaking during the final cooking process.

Toast Sichuan peppercorns in a dry pan until fragrant, then grind fresh for maximum numbing potency. Pre-ground peppercorns lose their essential oils and effectiveness quickly.

Keep sauce at a gentle simmer rather than a rolling boil when tofu is added. Aggressive bubbling will cause delicate tofu cubes to break apart and create an unappealing texture.

Taste your doubanjiang before cooking, as salt levels vary significantly between brands. Start with less and adjust seasoning at the end to avoid over-salting the final dish.

Make cornstarch slurry with cold water and add gradually while stirring to achieve the proper sauce consistency. The sauce should coat the tofu without being gluey or too thin.

Serve immediately after cooking for the best texture and temperature contrast. Mapo Tofu loses its appealing mouthfeel when it sits and cools.