

MAPO TOFU

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SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE PORK

- 6 ounces ground pork
- 2 teaspoons water
- 1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon white pepper powder

FOR THE REST OF THE DISH

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup neutral oil
- 3 tablespoons finely minced fresh ginger (from a 2-inch piece)
- 3 tablespoons finely minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon to
- 1 tablespoon ground Sichuan peppercorns (to taste)
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons spicy bean sauce
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons fermented black beans, rinsed twice in cold water and drained
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Ultimate Chili Oil
- 1 pound silken or soft tofu, cut into 1-inch cubes
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 scallion, white and green parts finely chopped



INSTRUCTIONS

1. **MARINATE THE PORK:** In a medium bowl, combine the ground pork, water, Shaoxing wine, cornstarch, baking soda, and white pepper.

2. **ASSEMBLE THE DISH:** Heat a wok over medium heat. Add the oil, followed by the ginger. Cook for about 1 minute, until the ginger turns lightly golden. Add the garlic and cook for 2 minutes. The garlic should become fragrant but not darken in color. (Ensure the garlic and ginger don't burn, or the dish will be bitter.)

3. Add the ground pork and break up the meat to mix it with the garlic and ginger. Increase the heat to medium-high and cook until the pork is just cooked through, about 1 minute. Add the ground Sichuan peppercorns, reserving $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon to sprinkle over the finished dish. Then add the spicy bean sauce and fermented black beans. Stir and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in $\frac{2}{3}$ cup water. Bring to a simmer and let the mixture bubble for 1 minute.

4. Combine the cornstarch with the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water to make a slurry, then stir it into the center of the wok. Simmer for another 1 to 2 minutes to thicken the sauce.

5. Stir in the chili oil, then gently slide the tofu into the wok. Use your spatula to gently toss the tofu in the sauce while keeping the cubes intact. Add the sugar and sesame oil. Simmer for 4 to 5 minutes, giving it a stir at the halfway point. Gently fold in the scallion, just until wilted. Serve with a final sprinkle of the remaining ground Sichuan peppercorns.