



CHINESE (SICHUAN)

Mapo Tofu with Beef

COMPLEXITY	SERVES	PREP	COOK	TECHNIQUE	CUT
Basic	4	15 min	15 min	Stir-fry	Ground beef

Ingredients

- 250 g (½ lb) ground beef
- 500 g (1 lb) soft or medium-firm tofu, cut into 2 cm (¾ in) cubes
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp Sichuan doubanjiang (fermented chilli bean paste; or 1½ tbsp gochujang + 1 tsp miso)
- 1 tbsp fermented black beans, rinsed and chopped (optional)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp grated fresh ginger
- 1 tbsp Korean chilli flakes (or Sichuan chilli flakes, or 2 tsp sweet paprika + 1 tsp red pepper flakes)
- 250 ml (1 cup) beef or chicken stock
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1½ tsp ground roasted Sichuan peppercorns (or ½ tsp black pepper + 1 tsp finely grated lemon zest; no numbing tingle)
- 1 tbsp cornstarch mixed with 2 tbsp cold water
- 3 spring onions, sliced
- Steamed rice, to serve

Steps

1. Bring a pot of water with 1 tsp salt to a gentle simmer. Slide in the tofu and leave it for 3 minutes, then drain carefully. This firms the tofu and seasons it.
2. Heat a wok or wide skillet over medium-high heat. Add the oil, then the beef, and stir-fry for 4 minutes, breaking it into small crumbs, until browned and crisp at the edges and no pink remains; ground beef is safe at 71°C (160°F).
3. Push the beef aside, lower the heat to medium, and add the doubanjiang and black beans. Fry in the oil for 1 minute until the oil turns red.
4. Add the garlic, ginger and chilli flakes and stir for 30 seconds.
5. Pour in the stock, soy sauce and sugar and bring to a bubble.
6. Slide in the tofu and nudge it gently with the back of a spatula, never stirring hard. Simmer for 5 minutes so it absorbs the sauce.
7. Stir the cornstarch mixture, add half, and swirl for 30 seconds until the sauce turns glossy and thick enough to cling. Add more if needed.
8. Scatter over the Sichuan pepper and spring onions and serve hot over rice.

Notes

- **Doubanjiang:** find it in Asian markets; Pixian brand is the classic. Salt levels vary, so taste before adding more soy.
- **Numbing heat:** toast whole Sichuan peppercorns in a dry pan for 1 minute, then grind them fresh.

- **Make ahead:** keeps 2 days; reheat gently until steaming hot so the tofu does not break.
- **Pair with:** a smashed cucumber salad with garlic and a little rice vinegar.