

Mapo Tofu

Ingredients

¼ C - Vegetable oil (or some neutral cooking oil)	1 # - Ground pork
1 t - Dried chili flake	½ C - Shaoxing wine (or dry cooking sherry)
1 t - salt	¼ C - Soy Sc. (have more ready to finish dish)
1 t - sugar	2 T - Fermented Chinese black beans, soak in warm water for 15 min., drain & chop
1 t - Black peppercorn, crushed	2 C - Chicken broth or water
2 t - Sichuan peppercorns, crushed	1 # - Silken tofu, cut into 1.5" cubes
3 T - Ginger, finely minced	2 t - Cornstarch, mixed with ¼ cup water or stock
3 T - Garlic, finely minced	2 ea - green onion, sliced thin
½ ea - Yellow onion, small diced	½ C - cilantro, rough chop
1 ea - Celery stalk, small diced	1 ea - jalapeno, sliced thin
	2 C - white rice, short grain

Process

1st. - Measure out Black Beans and begin soaking in about 2 C warm water, set aside on counter while prepping. Rinse, drain and then soak rice (ratio is 2 C rice to 2¾ C water) for 10 min. Then begin cooking rice (once rice has cooked, leave covered on stove/counter top until ready to serve).

2nd. - Prep ginger, garlic, onions and celery, and place all in a mixing bowl on the counter.

3rd. - Heat oil in a wok or large dutch oven type pan over medium heat. Add ground pork, salt, sugar, both types of peppercorns and chili flakes. With a wooden spoon or spatula, break apart the ground pork and incorporate the spices by constantly stirring and smushing the mix into the bottom of the pan. When the pork is cooked through (about 5 - 7 min.) take the pan off of the heat and hold at an angle, so that the oil and rendered pork fat pools on one side of the cooking vessel. While the pan is still propped at an angle, pull the ground pork mixture to the high side of the pan, to allow oil+fat to separate from the meat. Using a large slotted spoon, carefully remove the ground meat to a mixing bowl and hold on the counter.

4th. - Return the wok or dutch oven to the stove top and turn medium heat back on. Add the garlic, ginger, celery and onion and cook for about 5 mins., stirring enough so that the vegetables do not brown. Then add the Shaoxing wine, deglaze and reduce by ¾. Add Soy. Sc., Chicken Stock (or water) and the ground meat back to the cooking vessel. Add the drained and chopped black beans, cover and simmer for 25 - 30 min. on a low heat.

5th. - While meat is cooking, wash dry and prep the green onion, cilantro and jalapeno and place each into a small side dish to serve at the table. Then cut tofu and set aside in a mixing bowl on counter.

6th. - 5 minutes before service, turn up the heat on the meat sauce to medium high and bring up to just below a boil. Add the corn starch slurry and stir quickly until the sauce tightens up. Add the tofu, drop the heat to low, gentle stir the tofu into the cooking vessel (so that it does not break apart too much). Taste and add additional soy sc. as needed, then cover and let sit for 2-3 min.

7th. - To serve. Place both the Mapo Tofu and Rice on the table, on trivets. Around them place the side dishes of scallion, cilantro and jalapeno. Alongside the garnish, place a small container of soy sc., a bowl of spicy chili oil, and some additional ground Sichuan peppercorn, so that each guest can adjust the salt, heat and numbing spice to taste.