

XO sauce

Ingredients

- 150 grams of skinless dry shrimp (grind 120 grams and save the rest for presentation)
- 150 grams of dry scallop
- 120 grams of Jin Hua ham
- 1 cup of Chinese cooking wine
- 3 cups of canola oil
- 1 medium size onion finely diced
- 25-30 cloves of garlic finely diced
- 2 pieces of spring onion
- 3 slices of ginger
- 3 pieces of cilantro stem
- 2 - 4 tbsp of oyster sauce
- 2 - 4 tbsp of soy sauce
- 1 tbsp of sugar
- 2 tsp of ground black pepper
- 1.5 tbsp of chili flake



★★★★★
5 from 1 vote

Instructions

First, let's talk about the main ingredients.

1. Dry shrimp [海米, 虾米, 干虾仁]: It is basically just shrimp that have been sun-dried and shrunk to a thumbnail size. Different than fresh shrimp, it has a strong umami taste. It is very popular in Chinese cuisine. We call it the nature MSWhen you go to an oriental store, get the smaller dry shrimp. It is much cheaper compare to the big ones. The taste is the same and you will need to grind them. So it doesn't matter the size. For the big ones, I will take a little bit for presentation so the final product will look prettier.
2. Dry scallop or conpoy [瑶柱, 干贝]: Same as the shrimp, you can by the smaller ones since it is cheaper. It is also popular in China and we consider it as a luxury ingredient.
3. Jin Hua Ham [金华火腿]: It is a type of dry-cured ham, a specialty from Zhe Jiang Province in China. I don't have it today. So I used a piece of Hu nan Style smoked bacon. I found that it adds a really nice smokiness to the sauce. It is even better than the Jin Hua ham. If you can't find Chinese ham, you can use any dry-curd meat you can find. Surely, the taste will be different but you won't ruin the sauce.

We only use lean ham for this recipe. Make sure you remove any attached fat. Cut it into smaller pieces so it is easier to steam.

4. Put the dry shrimp, dry scallop, ham into a steamer. Add some Chinese cooking wine. Don't need too much. Just enough to fill up half of the bowl. When you put them above water, the steam will drip down and the bowl will catch more liquid. Even though the recipe asks for Chinese cooking wine but I have tried it with water, works beautifully as well. Turn the heat to high. When the water comes to a boil, start counting the time. We gonna steam them for 25 minutes. This is to help re-hydrate and soften the ingredients which make them easier to grind later.

While waiting, you can prepare some aromatics. I got here few pieces of cilantro stems, 2 pieces of spring onion, tie into knots, 3 slices of ginger. These 3 ingredients are going to be used to season the oil. It is not going into the final sauce, just for the flavor.

1. Besides that, you will also need 25-30 cloves of garlic and 1 medium size onion. Smash the garlic one by one and finely diced them. Don't use a garlic presser because it makes the garlic sort of mushy. That wouldn't be good for deep frying. It is better to spend some time to chop it finely. This way, the garlic will still be the individual pieces. Dice the onion finely as well.
2. Now, you can go back and check the steamer. Drain the water. Save the liquid for later. We will grind them in a food processor separately. You want to process it on and off for 3-4 times. We don't want to grind them into a paste. We still want to keep them in a loose form. If you don't have a machine, you can mince all the ingredients by hand.
3. These 3 ingredients, you want to rub it with your fingers to feel the moisture level. In my case, they are similar. If yours are different, you need to add them to the wok in an order. The one that has the highest moisture level should go into the wok first. Fry it until the steam evaporates a little bit and then add in the other ingredients.
4. Use 3 cups of canola oil. Don't need to wait for the oil to get hot, just add in the ingredients. Since they have a similar moisture level so I am just going to add them to the oil at the same time. Cook them on low heat. All the ingredients will be simmered in the oil for a long time. That encourages the umami fragrance to come out. In the beginning, It will look like the oil is not enough. That is because the ingredients are still wet. Once the moisture evaporates a little bit, the oil will appear on the top. Then you can add the whole shrimp that is for presentation. We didn't steam them so they are very dry. That is why we add it into the oil now.
5. This frying process will go on for 35-45 minutes in total. Make sure to keep the flame at low the whole time and stir it continually to ensure they cook evenly. Or else the bottom might get burned. As the moisture content gets less and less, the

oil will appear more. You will see lots of bubbles on the top as well. At this stage, you want to pay attention to the color. Once it reaches a light golden brown. You can take them out. Let them go through a sieve. Drain out all the oil. We will use the oil later.

6. Get a big frying pan. Add in the fried shrimp, scallop, and the ham. Pour in 1/2 cup of the remaining steamed liquid that we drain out before. Continue adding 2 to 4 tbsp of soy sauce, 2-4 tbsp of oyster sauce, and 1 tbsp of sugar. The reason I didn't give you the exact amount is that the seafood and the ham have different saltiness depending on different suppliers. You need to taste and adjust the flavor. Just remember, we use this as an ingredient to cook with, so it should be saltier than normal recipes. Cook this on medium heat to reduce the liquid that we just added. You might be curious now, why do I add the liquid and reduce it again? Well, the ingredients are deep fried and they are coated in oil. The seasonings usually don't attach well with oil. It will be hard to get the sodium infused into the food. As the water evaporates, the flavor will be mixed well with everything. Continue to stir them until you don't see any liquid. This will take about 8-10 minutes. Set it aside.
7. We gonna use the leftover oil to fry the aromatics. Throw in the cilantro stems, scallion knots, the ginger slices, the diced onion, and the diced garlic. Let it cook on low heat as well. We want to fry them until they are golden. It will take about 20 minutes. This is a time-consuming recipe but once you made the sauce, you can use it for a long time. When the color of the oil turns brown and the garlic is slightly golden, you can turn off the heat. We don't want to fry the garlic all the way until brown because the rest of the heat will keep cooking it. Take out the cilantro, scallion, and ginger.
8. Add the fried seafood and ham back into the wok. Mix them with the fried aromatics. Add 1.5 tbsp of chili flakes, and 2 tsp of black pepper. You can adjust the heat level to your own preference. These 2 spices are dry, there is no moisture in them so we add them at the end. Your XO sauce is basically done. You do want to give it a taste. Mine does needs a little more soy sauce. But you need to understand that when you add more liquid in it, you should cook it a few more minutes to reduce it. Turn off the heat and let it cool down with the lid on.
9. Boil some containers so they are bacteria free. Wipe the excess water and you can store the XO sauce in it. The amount of oil I gave should be enough to cover all the ingredients. If you don't have enough, you can add a little vegetable oil at the end to make sure everything is under the grease. That way, the sauce will last longer. Normally, XO sauce can be stored in room temperature for 4 months, it will last about 8 months in the fridge.