



Mushroom Udon Noodle Bowl
David Tanis

1 hour



Mapo Tofu
Andrea Nguyen

30 minutes



Mushroom Miso Soup
David Tanis

1 hour



Spicy Stir-Fried Cabbage
Martha Rose Shulman

10 minutes



Hot & Dumplings
Rose C

15 mi

Vegan Mapo Tofu

By [David Tanis](#)

YIELD 4 to 6 servings

TIME 30 minutes

Save to Recipe Box



Mapo tofu is a justly popular menu item in many Chinese restaurants. It is a quickly cooked dish of braised tofu with minced pork (sometimes beef) in a bracing spicy sauce made with fermented black beans and fermented broad bean paste, along with hot red pepper and Sichuan pepper. This meatless version with fresh shiitake mushrooms is completely satisfying, and surprisingly easy to make. For the best texture, use soft tofu rather than firm, taking care to cook it gently to keep it from crumbling.

Featured in: [Mapo Tofu Goes Vegetarian](#).



David Malosh for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Simon Andrews.

Chinese, Fermented Bean Paste, Fermented Black Bean, Shiitake, Sichuan Pepper, Soft Tofu, Dinner, Lunch, Quick, Main Course, Vegetarian

Mark as **Cooked**

1,809 ratings ★★★★★

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces shiitake mushrooms
- 2 cups water
- 15 ounce block of soft tofu (do not use silken)
- Salt
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 small dried hot red peppers
- 1 tablespoon fermented black beans, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon fermented spicy broad bean paste (doubanjiang)
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon finely ground Sichuan pepper
- 1 tablespoon corn- or potato starch, dissolved in 3 tablespoons cold water
- ½ cup slivered scallions, both white and green parts
- Cilantro sprigs, for garnish

Add to Your Grocery List

[Ingredient Substitution Guide](#)

PREPARATION

Step 1

Remove stems from mushrooms. Make a light mushroom broth by simmering stems in 2 cups water for 15 minutes, then strain and reserve broth (discard stems). Dice mushroom caps and set aside.

Step 2

Cut tofu into 1-inch cubes. Cover with boiling salted water, let steep for 15 minutes, then drain.

Step 3

Put oil in a wok or wide skillet over medium heat. Add red peppers, black beans and bean paste and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add garlic and ginger and let sizzle, then add mushrooms, soy sauce, sesame oil and Sichuan pepper. Add 1 1/2 cups mushroom broth and cook mixture gently for 2 minutes.

Step 4

Carefully add tofu cubes. Shake pan to distribute sauce, using a wooden spoon to help. Try to avoid smashing tofu. Drizzle in cornstarch mixture, gently swirling pan to incorporate (sauce will thicken) and simmer tofu in sauce for 2 minutes more. Thin with a little mushroom broth if necessary. Transfer to a low bowl or platter. Sprinkle with scallions and cilantro sprigs.



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COOKING NOTES

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JD | 3 years ago

Things to simplify what some found difficult or puzzling:

1. It is not necessary to steep tofu.
2. Canned mushroom/vegetable/beef broth work fine as a substitute for broth from mushroom stems.
3. For fermented black beans and broad bean paste, substitute the readily available Black Bean Sauce with Garlic (e.g., Kikkoman's), using 2 tablespoons.
4. Cayenne pepper substitutes for ground Sichuan peppers, using 1/4 teaspoon or less, to taste.

Result: authentic-tasting mapo tofu.

👍 521 This is helpful



J Boyce | 3 years ago

Cayenne peppers are totally unrelated to Szechuan peppers, have a completely different chemistry and effect in food and do not "substitute" for Szechuan peppers to yield anything even approaching "authentic-tasting" Mapo dofu. It could be a tasty dish, but not even close to authentic (especially if one also substitutes Japanese black bean sauce with garlic for the totally different combo of fermented black beans and chile bean paste).

👍 407 This is helpful



Michele | 3 years ago

No. Absolutely do not substitute cayenne pepper for Sichuan peppercorn. Sichuan peppercorns are not peppercorns or even related to peppers! They are the husk of a seed. and the soft tofu definitely benefits from the incredibly easy step of steeping in salted water - why would you skip it? Sichuan peppercorns are surprisingly widely available and absolutely integral to this dish. If you can't find them, wait to make this until you do.

👍 164 This is helpful



smaurya | 3 years ago

This dish ended in the trash can. I now realize that I used the wrong ingredient. I couldn't find "fermented broad bean paste" and went with a Chinese lady's recommendation to use Bean Sauce. Next time, I'll make it with the "Toban Djan" I did find. When it comes to Asian dishes, photos of the ingredients are helpful because of the wide variety in products, names rarely match, spellings vary, online search results are not always trust-worthy.

👍 145 This is helpful

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By DAVID TANIS

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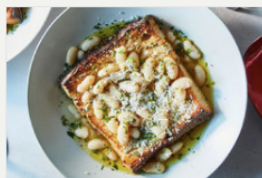
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Melissa

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