

Ants Climbing a Tree

INGREDIENTS

3 ounces cellophane noodles
 6 ounces pork loin
 4 tablespoons peanut or corn oil
 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped fine
 3 or 4 scallions, cut diagonally into long slices, white and green parts separated
 1 to 1½ tablespoons hot soybean paste or chili sauce
 2 teaspoons Shaoxing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ½ pint clear stock
 salt to taste
 thin or thick soy sauce to taste

FOR THE MARINADE

½ teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon thick soy sauce
 4 turns black pepper mill
 1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine or medium-dry sherry
 ½ teaspoon potato flour
 1 tablespoon water
 2 teaspoons sesame oil

*Serves 6 with 3 or 4 other dishes
 or 4 as a first course*

Illustrated opposite

Don't be put off by the name of this dish: it is characteristic of the Szechwanese sense of humor to visualize minced pork over cellophane noodles as ants climbing up a tree, even though you may not wish to conjure the same image. Whatever the mental picture, the marinated pork cooked in a spicy sauce lends color and flavor to the otherwise bland cellophane noodles, which do, however, contribute an interesting texture to the overall effect.

1. Put the cellophane noodles in a large bowl and pour over them about 1¾ pints of boiling water. Let soak, preferably covered, for a minimum of 20 minutes.
2. Chop fine or mince the pork. Put into a bowl.
3. *Prepare the marinade:* Add the salt, soy sauce, pepper, wine or sherry, potato flour and water to the pork. Stir vigorously for 1 or 2 minutes, in order to give the pork the right consistency. Let marinate for about 15 minutes. Blend in the sesame oil.
4. Drain the cellophane noodles and make a few cuts with a pair of scissors to make them shorter and easier to handle.
5. Heat a wok over high heat until smoke rises. Add the oil and swirl it around. Add the garlic, then the white scallions. As they sizzle, add the soybean paste or chili sauce and stir a couple of times. Add the pork and, sliding the wok scoop or metal spatula to the bottom of the wok, turn and toss for about 1 minute, breaking up any lumps at the same time. Splash in the wine or sherry around the side of the wok, continuing to stir and break up any lumps.
6. When the sizzling dies down, add the noodles. stir and fold to

