

Glazed Tofu With Chile and Star Anise

By Yewande Komolafe

Time 30 minutes

Rating ★★★★★ (1653)



Bryan Gardner for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Barrett Washburne

This sauce — a dark, star anise-spiced caramel intermingled with rice wine, soy sauce, ginger and scallions — builds sweet, acidic and umami notes as it coats and infuses tofu. Sichuan hui guo rou, or twice-cooked pork, inspired the technique used here with tofu: The blocks are first seared whole, then torn into bite-size pieces and returned to the pan, where the craggy edges absorb the sauce. Additions from your pantry, such as a spoonful of doubanjiang, or fermented broad bean paste, fermented black beans or chile oil can invite deeper, more complex flavors. Serve warm with steamed rice and stir-fried greens (<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1021378-smoky-stir-fried-greens>).

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

2 (14-ounce) packages firm tofu, drained

2 tablespoons neutral oil, such as canola or grapeseed

Kosher salt

¼ cup granulated sugar

1 whole star anise

1 cup vegetable broth or stock

¼ cup Shaoxing wine

¼ cup dark soy sauce (see Tip)

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 (½-inch) piece fresh ginger, scrubbed and thinly sliced

1 small hot dried chile

PREPARATION

Step 1

Place the tofu blocks between paper towels and press gently to remove excess liquid.

Step 2

In a large skillet or cast-iron pan, warm the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Season both sides of the tofu with salt and place in the pan; sear without moving until the contact side is browned, about 4 minutes. Turn the pieces over and sear the other side until browned, about 3 minutes. Transfer the tofu to a plate.

Step 3

Carefully add ½ cup water, the sugar and star anise to the pan. (The mixture will sputter and steam.) Cook, stirring, until the syrup is reduced and turns deep amber, 4 to 5 minutes. Pour in the stock carefully (again being mindful of sputtering), along with the Shaoxing wine, soy sauce, garlic, ginger and chile, and cook,

6 scallions, whites cut into ½-inch pieces, greens thinly sliced

Steamed rice, for serving

stirring frequently, until reduced, syrupy and glossy, 5 to 7 minutes.

Step 4

Use your fingers to break the tofu into ½-inch pieces, return to the pan and add the scallion whites. Toss to coat with the sauce and cook until warmed through, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove and discard the star anise and dried chile. Garnish with scallion greens and serve immediately with steamed rice.

Tip

To replicate ¼ cup dark soy sauce using regular or light soy sauce, combine ¼ cup regular or light soy sauce with 2 teaspoons molasses.

Private Notes

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