

Ma Po Tofu

Developed by [The RoboGourmet](#) – v. 1.0, 12/7/2011

Adapted from <http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/Ma-Po-Tofu-103565>

Serves 3 to 4

Notes: I prefer silken tofu because that's what I'm used to, but this means that you have to take some care in handling so you don't pulverize it too much. Simmering the tofu helps firm it up a bit. Firmer tofus are perfectly fine as well. The two major soy sauces in Chinese cooking are San Chau (light) and Lou Chou (dark). Light soy sauce is lighter in color and is saltier, typically used for seasoning. Dark soy sauce is made from light soy sauce and is further aged and/or has caramel/molasses added to enhance the color and flavor. Dark soy sauce is typically used to finish dishes and served on the table. I typically use Kimlan San Chau and Kimlan Lou Chau. If you only have one soy sauce, that's OK. For the Chiu Chow chili oil, I use Lee Kum Kee brand. If you don't have it, definitely include the optional red pepper flakes and add 1-1/2 teaspoons sesame oil. Serve with steamed rice.

Pork

1/2 pound ground pork

1 tablespoon light soy sauce (*see notes*)

1 teaspoon cornstarch

Sauce

1/4 cup low sodium chicken broth

1 tablespoon Chiu Chow chili oil (mostly the solids) (*see notes*)

1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional for more heat)

2 tablespoons dark soy sauce (*see notes*)

1 pound silken tofu, drained and cut into approx. 3/4" cubes (*see notes*)

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely minced

1 tablespoon ginger, peeled and finely minced (optional)

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in about 2 tablespoons water

1/4 cup thinly sliced green onion

Marinate the pork: Mix the soy sauce and cornstarch in a small bowl until smooth. Work the sauce mixture into the ground pork and set aside.

Other Prep: Put about a quart of water in a saucepan. Cover and heat over medium-high heat until it simmers. In the meantime, mix together in a small bowl the chicken broth, Chiu Chow chili oil, and dark soy sauce for the main sauce and set aside. Mince the garlic, slice the green onion, and cut the tofu.

Cooking: When the water in the saucepan simmers, gently slide in the tofu and continue to simmer (barely) while you prepare the rest of the dish. Add vegetable oil to a wok, saucier, or a skillet over medium-high to high heat (depending on the

weight/responsiveness of your pan – lower for heavier pans). When the oil barely starts to smoke, add the pork and cook, breaking it up with a wooden spatula into crumbles. Cook until the pork is no longer pink. Add the garlic and stir occasionally until fragrant, about one minute. Stir in the sauce mixture and bring to a simmer – if not using a nonstick pan, use a wooden spatula to scrape up the fond into the sauce. Gently drain the tofu in a large fine mesh strainer and then slide it into the pork/sauce mixture. Stir gently to combine and return to a simmer. Carefully mix in the cornstarch-and-water mixture and simmer for 30 seconds. Turn off the heat and gently stir in half the green onion. Transfer to a dish and top with the remaining green onion.