

VEGETARIAN MAPO TOFU



Ingredients

Servings: 5

- 8 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms
- 2 cups water
- 15-ounce block of soft tofu (do not use silken)
- 2 cups boiling water with 2 teaspoons salt
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 small dried hot red peppers
- 1 tablespoon fermented black beans, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon fermented spicy red bean paste (use more or less depending on hotness)
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon finely ground Sichuan pepper (use more or less depending on hotness)
- 1 cup frozen peas, defrosted
- 1 tablespoon corn or potato starch, dissolved in 3 tablespoons cold water
- 1/2 cup slivered scallions, white and green parts
- Cilantro sprigs, for garnish
- Remove the stems from the mushrooms. Make a light mushroom broth by simmering the stems in 2 cups of water for 15 minutes, then strain and reserve the broth (discard the stems).
- Dice the mushroom caps and set aside.
- Cut the tofu into 1-inch cubes. Cover with the boiling salted water, let steep for 15 minutes and then drain.
- Put the oil in a wok or wide skillet over medium heat. Add the red peppers, black beans and bean paste and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the garlic and ginger and let sizzle, and then add the diced mushrooms, soy sauce, sesame oil and Sichuan pepper. Add 1 1/2 cups mushroom broth and cook the mixture gently for 2 minutes.
- Carefully add the tofu cubes. Shake the pan to the distribute the sauce, using a wooden spoon to help. Try to avoid smashing the tofu. Add the peas.
- Drizzle in the cornstarch mixture, gently stir and simmer the tofu in the sauce for 2 minutes. Thin with a little mushroom broth, if necessary.
- Transfer to a low bowl or platter. Garnish with the scallions and cilantro sprigs.

