

Hot and Sour Soup

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Total Time 50 minutes

Prep Time 20 minutes

Cook Time 30 minutes

Rating ★★☆☆☆ (477)

Rich with pork, silky with tofu, punchy with rice vinegar, and spicy with both red and white pepper, this comforting soup is a Chinese classic. Hot and sour soup has been around for centuries in China, eventually making its way to the United States where it was tweaked for American palates (less sour and spicy) and became a popular staple at Chinese-American restaurants. Variations of the dish abound, mostly dependent upon the protein used: Pork is most common, but lamb, beef, chicken and vegetarian versions also exist. Cornstarch is essential to the recipe as it provides the soup's velvety texture. (Just note that the soup can thicken as it cools.) Adjust the pepper and vinegar amounts to your preference.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6

½ ounce dried wood ear mushrooms

6 ounces pork tenderloin, sliced into ½-inch-thick strips (see Tip 1)

2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons low-sodium soy sauce

2 teaspoons Shaoxing wine, or dry sherry

½ cup plus 1 teaspoon cornstarch

8 cups low-sodium chicken broth

4 ounces shiitake or baby bella mushrooms, stemmed and sliced ¼-inch thick

1 (8-ounce) package dry spiced tofu, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices,

PREPARATION

Step 1

Bring 2 cups of water to a boil in a kettle or small pot. In a 4-cup heat-proof measuring cup or medium bowl, add the wood ear mushrooms, then pour the boiling water directly over them. Let sit until hydrated and doubled in size, about 10 minutes.

Step 2

Meanwhile, in another medium bowl, add the pork and 2 teaspoons of regular (low-sodium) soy sauce, Shaoxing wine and 1 teaspoon of cornstarch. Toss until well combined and marinate for 5 minutes.

Step 3

In a large, wide pot, bring 7 cups of the broth to a boil over high. Reduce heat to medium, then add the marinated pork, shiitake mushrooms, spiced tofu, firm tofu, bamboo shoots, scallion whites, vinegar, remaining 2 tablespoons regular soy sauce, dark soy sauce, sugar, crushed red pepper and white pepper. Simmer

optional (see Tip 2)

4 ounces firm tofu, cut into ½-inch cubes

1 (8-ounce) can of sliced bamboo shoots, drained

2 medium scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced, whites and greens separated

⅓ to ½ cup rice vinegar, to taste

2 tablespoons dark soy sauce

2 teaspoons granulated sugar

¾ to 1½ teaspoons crushed red pepper, to taste

¼ to ¾ teaspoon ground white pepper, to taste

1 large egg, beaten

until mushrooms have softened and flavor has developed, 5 to 7 minutes.

Step 4

While the soup is simmering, drain the wood ear mushrooms; discard the liquid and thinly slice into strips. Trim and discard any hard ends that haven't softened. Stir into the soup.

Step 5

Whisk the remaining ½ cup cornstarch with the remaining 1 cup chicken broth in a small bowl. Slowly stir into the soup; continue stirring until the soup has thickened, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Taste the soup and add more pepper or vinegar, if desired.

Step 6

Stir the soup in a circular motion and slowly drizzle in the beaten egg to create ribbons. Simmer for 1 minute. Divide soup among bowls and top with scallion greens. Serve immediately.

TIPS

Tip 1: If purchasing a whole tenderloin, remove the 6 ounces needed for this recipe and freeze the remaining piece, wrapped tightly in plastic. Or, cut the remaining piece into strips and freeze in a single layer on a sheet pan, then transfer to a zip-top bag and store it in the freezer for a quick stir-fry.

Tip 2: Dry spiced tofu, sometimes known as five-spice tofu, is a vacuum-sealed package of firm, braised tofu blocks that can be found at Asian supermarkets or online. It's usually smaller in size compared to traditional silken and firm tofu packages, but the tofu packs a big punch of flavor. It can be used in soups and stir-fry. Look for it in the refrigerated area near the other tofu packages.

Private Notes

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