CULINARYORIGIN / CHINA

麻婆豆腐

Mapo tofu with minced beef



Own image (AI-generated)

CHN-001 | 2-3 people | Difficulty 2/5

Approx. 25 min

Sichuan cuisine / Home cooking (家常菜) | China, Sichuan (Chengdu)

The ingredient is explicitly hot stock or water; the method uses hot stock. The time applies with the stock already prepared. Rice is served separately.

Before you cook

Authenticity and sources

Mapo tofu combines tender tofu with a bold chilli-bean paste and the tingling aroma of Sichuan pepper. The Sichuan reference DB51/T 3126-2023 describes Chen mapo tofu with beef, Pixian doubanjiang, douchi and green garlic. Our quantities and some steps differ: this is an editorial home-kitchen version, not a verified formula from the original restaurant. The historical Meishichina link could not currently be read. The earlier claim of eight characteristics, accompanied by a list of only seven, has been removed.

Timing and preparation

The ingredient is explicitly hot stock or water; the method uses hot stock. The time applies with the stock already prepared. Rice is served separately.

Ingredient clarification

Editorial home-kitchen quantities, not a verified original-restaurant formula. Slurry water scales separately; use the slurry only until the sauce reaches the required thickness. Salt and blanching water as needed; rice is separate. Chinese light soy sauce is explicitly specified.

Ingredients (metric)

Main ingredients

400 g	Soft tofu - 嫩豆腐 - tender but firm enough to cut (not firm smoked tofu)
100 g	Minced beef - 牛肉末 - beef for this version; keep chilled until needed

Seasoning base (the heart of the dish)

30 g	Pixian doubanjiang - 郫县豆瓣 - Sichuan chilli bean paste, roughly chopped
5 g	Douchi - 豆豉 - fermented black soybeans, chopped
5 g	Chilli flakes / powder - 辣椒面
2 g	Whole Sichuan pepper - 花椒 - ideally 汉源; toasted and ground into 花椒面
15 g	Garlic, finely chopped - 蒜末
10 g	Ginger, finely chopped - 姜末

Liquids and finishing

40 ml	Rapeseed oil - 菜籽油 - traditional Sichuan oil
10 ml	Shaoxing rice wine - 料酒
10 ml	Soy sauce - 酱油 - Chinese light soy sauce (生抽), specified editorially
5 g	Sugar - 糖 - just to round out the flavour
150 ml	Hot stock or water - 高汤 / 热水
20 g	Cornflour (cornstarch) - Reserve for thickening; use only enough for the required consistency
1 stalk	Green garlic - 蒜苗, ~20 g, sliced into rounds - added at the end
Not specified	Salt - 盐 - use sparingly; doubanjiang is already very salty
40 ml	Cold water for the starch slurry - additional to the broth; stir before each addition

Method

01 Toast the Sichuan pepper

Toast the Sichuan pepper briefly in a dry pan over low heat until fragrant, without blackening it. Cool and grind finely. Reserve some for the finish.

02 Prepare the tofu

Cut the tofu into cubes about 2 cm across. Gently simmer in additional lightly salted water for about 2 minutes, then drain carefully. Mix the cornflour with the separately listed cold water until smooth. Have the hot broth, seasonings and washed, sliced green garlic ready.

03 Fry the beef

Heat the rapeseed oil in a wok. Fry the minced beef over medium heat until crumbly, fully cooked and crisp in places. Break up large lumps. Use clean utensils after handling raw meat.

04 Fry the seasoning base

Reduce the heat. Add the chopped doubanjiang, douchi, chilli powder and some toasted Sichuan pepper. Move gently until fragrant and the oil turns reddish; do not burn the paste. Briefly cook the garlic and ginger with it.

05 Deglaze

Pour in the rice wine and Chinese light soy sauce, then bring briefly to the boil. The specific soy sauce type is an editorial clarification of the earlier unspecified ingredient.

06 Simmer the tofu

Add the hot broth and sugar. Slide in the tofu carefully and simmer gently for about 5 minutes. Ease a spatula under it from the edges or move the wok; do not stir vigorously. Briefly cook the green garlic towards the end. Taste only now and add a little salt if needed.

07 Thicken gradually

Stir the slurry before each addition. Add a little to the simmering sauce, distribute gently and bring back to a simmer. Add only enough for the sauce to coat the tofu while remaining fluid; do not automatically use the whole reserve.

08 Serve

Remove from the heat, scatter over the reserved Sichuan pepper and serve hot with separately cooked rice. The pepper garnish belongs to this version; it is not presented as a secret, universal identifying feature of a restaurant.

Archivist’s notes

Quantity status: The existing formula is retained as an editorial home-kitchen version. The Chinese reference gives different beef, oil, broth and seasoning amounts. It does not verify our complete formula or staged thickening as an exact original-restaurant recipe; no in-house cooking trial has been carried out.

Thickening: 20 g cornflour and 40 ml cold water make a reserve. The amount needed depends on starch type, liquid released by the tofu and evaporation. Do not force any excess into the sauce.

Move the tofu gently; carefully easing a spatula underneath is allowed. The earlier absolute ban on stirring was unnecessary. Beef and green garlic remain ingredients in this version.

Chinese light soy sauce is specified here. It is different from dark soy sauce and Japanese usukuchi shōyu. Doubanjiang and douchi already contribute salt; adjust additional salt only after cooking.

Alternatives usable in Europe

郫县豆瓣 → good Sichuan doubanjiang from an Asian food shop; as a last resort, mild tobanjan plus chilli powder.

花椒 → Sichuan pepper from a spice supplier; do not replace it with black pepper, which lacks the 麻.

豆豉 → fermented black beans; omit if necessary rather than replacing with soy sauce.

蒜苗 → thin leek (green part only) or spring onion greens as an approximation.

菜籽油 → neutral oil; rapeseed oil comes closest to the original.

Nutrition

Not calculated. No reproducible nutrition calculation is available for this recipe version. The tofu type, beef fat content, specific seasoning products, additional salt and finished dish weight are not sufficiently documented. The former serving column assumed one third of the dish, although the recipe also allows two servings. Rice is a separate accompaniment. Earlier estimates, including the plate with rice, are preserved in the audit archive; missing values do not mean zero.

Nutrient	Per 100 g	per serving
Energy	not calculated	not calculated
Protein	not calculated	not calculated
Fat	not calculated	not calculated
Carbohydrate	not calculated	not calculated
Salt	not calculated	not calculated

Documented sources

Method review on 19 October 2026: the historical source could not currently be read in full; its card and access date are retained. New references support comparison methods, not the complete home-kitchen formula. No cooking trial or new nutrition calculation.

01 美食天下 - 正宗麻婆豆腐

Chinese | Accessed 22 July 2026

Open original source

02 Sichuan DB51/T 3126-2023 - comparison version, Annex E.2 (Chinese PDF mirror)

Chinese | Accessed 19 October 2026

Open original source

Keywords: China, Sichuan, Tofu, Beef, Doubanjiang, Sichuan pepper, Home cooking, Spicy, MapoTofu