

Braised Bean Curd with Mushrooms Recipe

Ingredients: Serves 4

Vegetable oil, for passing through
8 Chinese dried black mushrooms, soaked in hot tap water until softened, stems trimmed, caps cut in half
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup canned straw mushrooms, drained and cut in half lengthwise
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sliced fresh mushrooms
450g soft or silken bean curd, drained, cut in half lengthwise, and cut crosswise 5 times to get 12 pieces
1 scallion, white and green parts, trimmed and sliced diagonally into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
1½ cups plus 3 tablespoons chicken stock or canned chicken broth
1 tablespoon rice wine or dry sherry
3 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon oyster sauce
a pinch of sugar
a pinch of ground white pepper
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon dark sesame oil

Method:

Heat a large wok over high heat. Add enough oil to come about 1 inch up the sides of the wok, and heat it to 180°C. Add the soaked mushrooms, straw mushrooms and fresh mushrooms, and stir gently until the fresh mushrooms are soft and light brown, about 1 minute. Using a smooth metal strainer, transfer the mushrooms to a colander to drain. Carefully add the bean curd to the wok, and pan-fry, barely moving the bean curd, until it is light brown, about 30 seconds. Using a spatula, gently turn the bean curd over, one or two pieces at a time, so as to avoid breaking the pieces. Cook for 30 seconds. Using a smooth metal strainer, transfer the bean curd to a shallow, smooth colander to drain. Discard all but 2 tablespoons of the oil from the wok. Return the wok with the oil to high heat. Add the scallion and stir-fry for 10 seconds. Stir in the 1½ cups stock and the rice wine. Then add the bean curd and mushrooms, and bring to a simmer. Meanwhile, mix the soy sauce, oyster sauce, sugar and white pepper in a small bowl; add to the boiling liquid. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer gently, uncovered, for 3 minutes. Add the peas and cook for 30 seconds. Dissolve the cornstarch in the remaining 3 tablespoons stock in a small bowl. Add to the wok and cook until the sauce thickens, about 30 seconds. Add the sesame oil, and serve immediately. Note that fragile silken bean curd requires gently handling, or it will break into little messy pieces. To open a package of silken bean curd, use a sharp knife or scissors to cut through the paper on all four sides. Discard the paper, and gently tilt the package to drain off the water. Invert a plate over the top of the package, and quickly invert the package and plate together; remove the packaging. The bean curd will sit whole on the plate, ready to be cut up. The bean curd will continue to give off water, so it must be drained again before it is cooked - just hold the bean curd and tilt the plate to drain off the water. Choose the utensil used to remove the bean curd from the wok carefully. A shallow, smooth strainer made from fine wire mesh works well, but the typical wide wire-mesh strainer may cut into the bean curd and break it.