

# SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB

September 2022

## Join us to discuss

9/29 @ 6:30pm / Meeting Room

Spend the month cooking with your spice and join us to discuss your opinions, experiences, and recipes!



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We'll send you notices when kits are ready to pick up, meeting reminders, and shared recipes!

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**Note: Due to financial constraints, we're providing a blend of Sichuan peppercorns and chili peppers that has the same flavor profile.**

## This month's spice: SICHUAN PEPPER!

### History

Native to Sichuan, the southwestern province of China that borders on Tibet, Sichuan pepper is thought to have come into culinary use during the first millennium BC, as a result of Indian cultural influences, and is made with the dried berries of various *Zanthoxylum*, or prickly ash, trees. North American native peoples employed the bark of a different variety (*Z. americanum*) as a general stimulant and panacea for toothache.

### Use

The aroma of Sichuan pepper is warm, peppery, and fragrant, with citrus notes. When crushed it smells of lavender flowers. Its flavor is similarly pepper-like and tangy and leaves a lingering numbing, fizzy sensation on the tongue. The leaves are powdered and used in Japanese cooking as *sansho*.

Sichuan pepper's tangy, sharp flavor makes it an ideal accompaniment to rich and fatty foods such as pork and roast duck. Peking duck, served with rich, dark, salty sauces and wrapped in paper-thin pancakes, gets much of its unique flavor from Sichuan pepper.



# Sichuan Hot and Sour Potato

*Spicy, tangy, and simple. Serves 2.*

## INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 pound waxy potatoes
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons dried crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon ground Sichuan pepper
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon black rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 pinch flaked salt
- 1 teaspoon fresh cilantro leaves, or to taste

1. Peel potatoes and cut into 1/4-inch matchsticks. Rinse under running water until water runs clear. Soak potatoes in water for 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Drain potatoes and pat dry.
3. Heat a wok over medium-high heat. Add oil. Add pepper flakes and ground Sichuan pepper to the hot oil; cook and stir until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add potatoes and garlic; toss and cook until potatoes begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Add vinegar, soy sauce, and salt; toss to combine. Cook until flavors have infused, 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Serve garnished with cilantro leaves.



# Sichuan braised eggplant

**Serves 6.**

## INGREDIENTS

80 ml (1/3 cup) peanut oil

3 small eggplant, each cut into 8 wedges

150 gm minced pork

1 tbsp Sichuan pepper (add more for greater flavor and heat)

25 gm ginger, coarsely chopped and pounded with a mortar and pestle to a paste

5 garlic cloves, crushed

2 tbsp Chinese chilli bean paste

100 ml chicken stock

60 ml (¼ cup) soy sauce

60 ml (¼ cup) Chinkiang vinegar

To serve: coarsely chopped coriander, thinly sliced spring onions, prickly ash oil\* (see note) and steamed jasmine rice

\*Prickly ash oil, also known as Sichuan peppercorn oil, is available from Asian grocers.

1. Preheat oven to 150C. Heat 50ml oil in a large frying pan over high heat. Brush eggplant with remaining oil and cook in batches, turning, until golden (3-5 minutes). Transfer to a casserole dish.
2. Add pork to pan and stir occasionally until cooked (3-5 minutes). Add peppercorns and stir until fragrant (1-2 minutes), then add ginger, garlic and chilli bean paste, and stir until colour deepens (1-2 minutes). Add stock or 100ml water, soy sauce and vinegar, and bring to the boil, then pour mixture over eggplant, cover with a lid or foil and braise for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove cover and braise until eggplant is very tender (45 minutes to 1 hour).
3. Serve hot scattered with coriander and shallots, dotted with prickly ash oil to taste, and with steamed rice to the side.



# Sichuan Three Pepper Pork Belly Stir-Fry

***This uses crispy chunks of pork belly with three peppers: dried red peppers, Sichuan pepper, and long green pepper. Serves 4.***

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 12 ounces pork belly (sliced 1/2-inch thick)
- 4 long hot green peppers (cut into 1-inch pieces, deseeded if desired, will be less spicy without seeds)
- 1 teaspoon minced ginger (sliced to 1/8-inch thickness)
- 12 dried red chili peppers
- 5 cloves garlic (sliced)
- 1 teaspoon Sichuan pepper
- 2 tablespoons chili oil with chili flakes
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine
- 1 scallion (chopped)



1. Heat your wok with 1 tablespoon vegetable oil and add the pork belly. Stir fry the pork belly, turning down the heat to medium and cooking the pork until just crispy and browned (about 6 minutes). Remove the pork from the wok and set aside.
2. Turn the wok back up to high heat, and add the long hot green peppers to the leftover oil from frying the pork belly. Stir-fry until just scorched, but not wilted, and set aside along with the pork belly.
3. At this point, there should still be leftover oil in the wok. Turn the heat down to medium, and add the ginger. Gently stir until fragrant. Add the dried red peppers, garlic, and the Sichuan peppercorns if you are using the whole peppercorns. Some people enjoy the whole peppercorns, but others don't--especially if you bite into one! For this dish, I don't mind them whole, but if you would rather grind them, hold off on adding them to the dish at this point.
4. Gently stir-fry for another 30 seconds. It's important to toast the dried peppers and garlic but not burn them, or it will result in a bitter flavor!
5. Next, turn the heat back up to high, and stir in the pork belly and peppers you set aside before. If you're using the powdered Sichuan peppercorns, add them to the dish now.
6. Add in the chili oil (making sure to get some of the flakes, not just the oil itself), salt, and sugar, and stir fry everything together. Next, add the Shaoxing wine around the perimeter of the wok.
7. Add the scallions on top, and stir fry for another 60 seconds until the pork is well-coated with all the spices.