



Dandy Dan Dan Noodles

A spicy rich Sichuan sauce for an easy vegetarian dinner

Sauce:

- 1/4 cup Tahini or unsweetened natural peanut butter
- 1/4 cup (each) light soy sauce; organic rice vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon minced fresh garlic
- 3 to 4 green onions, trimmed, sliced
- 2 Tablespoon granulated sugar
- 4 to 6 Tablespoons peanut or avocado oil as desired

1 Tablespoon chili crisp
1/2 Tablespoon red chili oil or as desired
Freshly ground Sichuan peppercorns as desired

1. In a medium bowl, whisk the Tahini and light soy sauce until combined. Add vinegar; stir to mix well. Stir in minced garlic, sliced green onions and sugar.
2. Stir in the oil, chili crisp, red chili oil, adding a little at a time until spicy taste desired. If the sauce is too thick, add some water; stir to mix well. Add ground peppercorns as desired.

Vegetarian “Meat” Topping:

8 ounces mushrooms, cleaned, stem removed (such as shitake. Maitake, or white))
4 green onions, trimmed, sliced
1/2 cup chopped pecans
1 Tablespoon minced fresh garlic
7 or 8 ounces extra firm organic tofu, chopped
2 Tablespoons avocado or peanut oil
1-1/2 Tablespoon light soy sauce
2 Tablespoon Shaoxing, Mirin, or dry sherry wine

1. Set aside 2 ounces mushrooms and 1/3 cup sliced green onions.
2. In a food processor, blend the remaining mushrooms and green onions, pecans, and peeled garlic until they're chopped into small bits. Add the tofu and pulse until all the ingredients are evenly chopped into 1/8-inch bits but not into a smooth paste.
3. Place 1 Tablespoon oil in large skillet over medium heat until hot; sauté reserved mushrooms and green onions until softened. Remove from skillet; set aside for garnish.
4. Place 1 Tablespoon oil in large skillet over medium heat until hot. Add the tofu mixture and cook, stirring until the bottom of the pan looks dry, 1 to 2 minutes.
5. Add the soy sauce and wine; use a spatula to release any bits that are stuck to the pan. Reduce heat to medium or medium low; cook stirring occasionally until the mixture thickens like ground meat and is lightly browned.

To Assemble:

12 ounces dried thin wheat noodles or fresh thin wheat noodles
1 small bunch leafy baby bok choy, slice large leaves lengthwise if desired
1/2 cup unsalted dry roasted peanuts or roasted peanut halves

1. Boil the noodles according to package directions until tender. Drain and reserve water; place noodles in a colander; rinse noodles under cold water to stop cooking.

2. Place reserved water over heat; add lengthwise sliced baby Bok choy; cook for about 1 minute or until almost tender. Remove; pat off excess water with paper towels.
3. Divide noodles among individual serving bowls. Spoon on some sauce; add topping and leafy greens or toss noodles with sauce to coat and serve remaining sauce separately. Garnish dish with reserved mushrooms and green onions. Serve with crushed peanuts in a small bowl. Serve hot or cold. Serves: 4 to 6

Cook's Note: I prepared the sauce and the topping ahead of time, which made the recipe easy to make for dinner. Watch out when making the sauce as the purchased red chili oil is hot, making the sauce very hot and spicy, even when I used only 1/2 Tablespoon. We did like adding some chili crisp to the recipe. The classic recipe uses 1/2 cup Sichuan pickled greens or 2 Tbsp. black bean sauce in the "meat" topping, which I didn't add. The vegetarian "meat" topping was delicious and provided a general amount, so leftovers could be used for other recipes like won ton wrappers.

Recipe Inspired by: Maggie Zhu, *Chinese Homestyle*, Quarto Publishing Group, Inc. See *Dan Dan Noodles*, p. 138, 2022, for the original recipe.

About the Recipe: Dan Dan Noodles with its famous Szechuan style, is a popular Chinese street food. The red chili oil and the peppercorns make the dish spicy, which could cause a numbing reaction. We only used a small amount, but it still was spicy hot and sweet. Taste the sauce while preparing until the desired spicy flavor that you prefer. The noodles and topping were easy to prepare, and the dish might be fun to make when you celebrate Chinese New Year.