

Sichuan-Style Asparagus and Tofu Salad Recipe

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A very quick and easy side dish for a Chinese feast. Tender-crisp asparagus and firm tofu are tossed in a fiery-sweet Sichuan-style vinaigrette made with roasted chilies and Sichuan peppercorns.



YIELD: Serves 4 to 6

ACTIVE TIME: 30 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For the Sauce:

4 to 8 whole hot Chinese dried red peppers (or arbol chilies), stems removed

2 teaspoons Sichuan peppercorns

1/4 cup vegetable or canola oil

3 tablespoons Chinkiang vinegar (or a mixture of 2 tablespoons rice vinegar and 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar)

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic (about 3 medium cloves)

1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

For the Salad:

Directions

- For the Sauce:** Place chilies and Sichuan peppercorns on a microwave-safe plate and microwave on high until toasted and aromatic, about 15 seconds. Transfer to a mortar and pestle or a food processor and crush until it's about the texture of store-bought crushed red pepper flakes. Transfer to a small saucepan.
- Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Immediately pour hot oil over chili/peppercorn mixture (it should sizzle). Let cool for 5 minutes then transfer to a medium bowl. Add sesame seeds and set aside.
- Combine sugar, vinegar, soy sauce, and garlic in a small bowl and stir until sugar is dissolved. Add chili oil mixture. Set aside until ready to use. (Sauce can be stored in a sealed container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks).
- For the Salad:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add asparagus and cook, stirring occasionally, until asparagus is bright green with a tender snap, about 1 minute. Drain in a colander and rinse under cold running water until completely cooled. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet lined with a clean kitchen towel or a double layer of paper towels and shake

Kosher salt

1 pound thin asparagus stalks, ends trimmed, cut into 2-inch pieces

10 ounces extra-firm plain, smoked, or five-spice tofu, cut into 2-inch matchsticks

4 scallions, sliced thinly on a sharp bias

to dry thoroughly.

5. Combine asparagus, tofu, and scallions in a large bowl. Stir dressing and add to taste, tossing to coat vegetables. Serve immediately.