

Braised Aubergine Recipe

(Chinese Sichuan Style Recipes)

Ingredients: Makes 4-6 servings

1½ lb (750 g) Asian (slender) aubergines (eggplants)
1 tablespoon salt
3 tablespoons canola or peanut oil, or as needed

For the sauce:

¾ cup (6 fl oz/180 ml) low-sodium chicken broth
1 tablespoon each chili bean paste, black vinegar and dark soy sauce
1½ teaspoons light soy sauce
1 teaspoon each tomato paste and Asian sesame oil
½ teaspoon each sugar and cornstarch (cornflour)
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon peeled and minced fresh ginger
¼ cup (1½ oz/45 g) minced celery
1 teaspoon grated or prepared horseradish
¼ lb (125 g) ground or minced pork
2 green scallions, thinly sliced on the diagonal

Method:

Working with 1 aubergine at a time, cut on the diagonal into 1-inch (2.5-cm) pieces. Place the aubergine pieces in a large bowl. Add cold water to cover and stir in the salt. Weight the aubergine pieces with a plate to keep them submerged. Soak for 30 minutes, drain, and pat dry with paper towels. In a wok or large saute pan over high heat, heat 2 tablespoons of the canola oil until very hot. Working in 2 batches, add enough aubergine to cover the bottom of the pan in a single layer and stir-fry until crisp and brown on all sides, 7-10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a bowl. Repeat with the remaining aubergine, adding more oil if needed. Set the pan aside without rinsing. To make the sauce, in a bowl, stir together the broth, chile bean paste, vinegar, dark soy sauce, light soy sauce, tomato paste, sesame oil, sugar and cornstarch. Set aside. Return the pan to high heat, add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, stir in the garlic, ginger, celery and horseradish, and saute until just golden brown, about 2 minutes. Stir in the pork and stir-fry until the meat just turns opaque, about 5 minutes. Add the sauce and bring to a boil. Stir in the aubergine, reduce the heat to low, cover, and braise the aubergines until just tender, 7-10 minutes. Uncover and simmer for a few more minutes until the sauce thickens. Transfer the aubergines to a warmed bowl and garnish with the scallions. Serve at once.

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