Sauces / China

Chili Oil (Sichuan Style)

Sichuan's essential table condiment — fragrant with star anise, cinnamon, and Sichuan peppercorn, dark brick-red from a long blooming of chili flakes, and complex enough to drizzle over anything from dumplings to cold noodles to fried eggs. The moment oil meets chili is the alchemical heart of the recipe.

Time 40 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 250 ml Neutral oil (grapeseed or canola)
- ☐ 60 g Dried chili flakes (gochugaru or Sichuan facing-heaven chili)
- ☐ 10 g Sichuan peppercorns
- ☐ 4 cloves Garlic cloves (smashed)
- ☐ 15 g Fresh ginger (3 slices)
- ☐ 2 pieces Star anise
- ☐ 1 stick Cinnamon stick
- ☐ 2 leaves Dried bay leaves
- ☐ 20 g White sesame seeds (toasted)
- ☐ 4 g Fine sea salt
- ☐ 15 ml Soy sauce

Let's make it.

01 Combine the cold oil, Sichuan peppercorns, smashed garlic cloves, ginger slices, star anise, cinnamon stick, and bay leaves in a small saucepan. Set over medium-low heat and bring slowly to a gentle sizzle — you want a steady, quiet frying sound from the aromatics, never an aggressive snap or crackle. The temperature should hover between 120°C and 140°C; use a thermometer if you have one, or watch the garlic as your guide. Cook for 20 minutes, adjusting the heat to maintain a slow, steady frying bubble. The garlic will gradually turn pale gold. Remove from the heat when the garlic is light golden and everything in the oil smells warmly fragrant — a complex perfume of anise, cinnamon, pepper, and ginger fused into one.

02 While the oil infuses, prepare the chili base. Place the chili flakes in a heatproof bowl large enough to hold all the oil safely. Add the toasted sesame seeds, salt, and soy sauce to the bowl and mix briefly. The critical blooming will happen when the hot oil hits: the chili flakes will sizzle, darkening and releasing their colour and flavour into the oil instantaneously. Have everything measured and within arm's reach before you strain the oil — the sequence must be fast and controlled.

03 Strain the hot infused oil through a fine sieve directly over the prepared chili base in a fast, controlled pour. The oil will hit the chili flakes and immediately produce a dramatic sizzle and a bloom of dark red colour — this is the moment everything happens. Stir quickly with a heatproof spoon to submerge all the flakes and ensure even contact with the hot oil. The colour will deepen from bright red to a dark brick-red within 30 seconds. Let the oil rest and cool to room temperature, then stir in the soy sauce if you prefer to add it at this stage for a cleaner flavour. Transfer to a clean jar.

04 Once the oil has cooled to room temperature, taste a small amount on a piece of plain white rice or bread. Adjust with additional salt or soy sauce as needed. The finished oil should taste complex and layered: the chili heat arrives first, followed by the deep spice fragrance of star anise and cinnamon, then the subtle numbing quality of Sichuan peppercorn. The soy sauce adds a background umami richness that rounds the edges. Store in a sealed jar at room temperature for up to 1 month, or refrigerated for up to 3 months. The colour will deepen and the flavour will mellow over the first week — most chili oil makers agree it is best after 24 to 48 hours of resting.

Recipe & provenance ForkRecipe Kitchen / ForkRecipe / FoodML and contributors / CC BY-SA 4.0.
Original recipe and attribution CC BY-SA 4.0
Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
recipes.dvs-services.be / chili-oil