Main dishes / South Korea

Doenjang Jjigae

Korea's essential soybean-paste stew — doenjang simmered with zucchini, tofu, and mushrooms in a kelp-anchovy broth, intensely savory and deeply comforting in every mouthful.

Time 35 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 500 g Anchovy-kelp stock (myeolchi dashima yuksu)
- ☐ 50 g Doenjang (Korean fermented soybean paste)
- ☐ 200 g Firm or medium tofu, cubed 2 cm
- ☐ 120 g Korean zucchini (or regular zucchini), half-moon sliced
- ☐ 60 g Shiitake mushrooms, quartered
- ☐ 40 g Scallions, cut into 3 cm lengths
- ☐ 15 g Garlic cloves, minced
- ☐ 10 g Gochugaru (Korean chili flake)
- ☐ 10 g Toasted sesame oil

Let's make it.

01 Pour the anchovy-kelp stock into a clay pot (ttukbaegi) or medium heavy saucepan and bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and gochugaru and stir to combine. Now add the doenjang: do not drop it in whole — instead, place it in a fine-mesh strainer set over the simmering broth and press it through with the back of a spoon, or place it directly in the broth and dissolve it by mashing against the side of the pot with a wooden spoon. Undissolved lumps of doenjang will cook unevenly and leave harsh, sharp pockets. Once fully dissolved, taste the broth — it should be assertively savory, slightly pungent, and have a good underlying heat. Adjust with a pinch more doenjang if it tastes flat.

02 Add the zucchini half-moons and quartered shiitake mushrooms to the doenjang broth. Stir gently to submerge and bring back to a gentle simmer. Cook for 5–7 minutes until the zucchini is just tender — it should offer slight resistance at the center when pressed with a spoon but not be raw or crunchy. The mushrooms will have softened and begun to release their own umami into the broth, deepening it further. Do not overcook the zucchini to mush; it should hold its shape while becoming silky and fully cooked through.

03 Add the cubed tofu gently to the simmering stew, nestling it between the vegetables without stirring aggressively — tofu is fragile and breaks apart easily, and large intact cubes are part of the visual and textural identity of the dish. Add the scallion lengths. Simmer gently for 3–4 more minutes, just enough for the tofu to heat through completely and absorb some of the broth. The tofu should retain its cube shape; do not stir the stew once the tofu is in, only gently tilt the pot or spoon broth over the top of the tofu cubes to cook the upper surface.

04 Remove the pot from the heat and drizzle the toasted sesame oil in a thin stream across the surface of the stew. Do not stir it in; let it pool and shimmer on top. Carry the entire pot or clay vessel directly to the table — doenjang jjigae is served bubbling hot, traditionally in a clay pot that retains heat throughout the meal. Set it on a trivet and ladle into individual bowls over steamed rice. The stew should be eaten immediately while piping hot; the flavors are at their most vivid in the first five minutes of serving.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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