Sauces / South Korea

Tteokbokki Sauce

The fiery, sticky sauce that coats chewy rice cakes in the most beloved Korean street food — gochujang and gochugaru simmered with anchovy stock into a glossy, sweet heat.

Time 25 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 4 parts Anchovy-kelp stock (or water for vegan)
- ☐ 2 parts Gochujang (Korean fermented chili paste)
- ☐ 1 parts Gochugaru (Korean coarse chili flake)
- ☐ 1 parts Sugar
- ☐ 0.5 parts Soy sauce
- ☐ 0.25 parts Garlic cloves, minced
- ☐ 0.1 parts Toasted sesame oil

Let's make it.

01 Pour the anchovy-kelp stock into a wide, heavy-bottomed pan or low pot and bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Add the gochujang, gochugaru, sugar, soy sauce, and minced garlic, then whisk everything together until the gochujang has completely dissolved and no clumps remain — gochujang is thick and sticky and will sit in lumps if not stirred aggressively at the start. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to an active bubble. The sauce should simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 8–10 minutes. As it reduces, the color will deepen from a bright orange-red to a burnished brick-red and the surface will shift from watery to glossy.

02 If using rice cakes, add them now and cook for 4–5 minutes until they are heated through and have absorbed some of the sauce. The starch released from the rice cakes will naturally thicken the sauce into its signature glossy, clingy consistency. If preparing the sauce without rice cakes to store or use later, continue reducing until a spoonful dropped on a cold plate sets to a thick, gel-like consistency that holds its shape briefly before spreading slowly. Taste and adjust: if flat, add a pinch more soy sauce; if too harsh, add a little more sugar; if thin, keep reducing.

03 Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the toasted sesame oil. The heat-sensitive aromatic compounds in sesame oil dissipate if added too early — always finish with it off the heat to get the full nutty, toasty fragrance. Taste one final time: the sauce should deliver a bold, immediate heat from the gochugaru, a deeper fermented complexity from the gochujang, a clean sweetness from the sugar that rounds the edges without cloying, and a soy-backed saltiness that extends the finish. Serve immediately in a bowl or from the pan; tteokbokki waits for no one.

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