

Sichuan Eggplant

- **Prep time: 10 minutes**
- **Cook time: 10 minutes**

This recipe calls for Asian eggplants, or Japanese eggplants. They are long and thin compared to a European or globe eggplant, and much more tender and delicate. If you can't find them you can substitute globe eggplant, but the dish is really best with the Asian eggplant.

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INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 lbs. Asian (long and skinny) eggplant
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1/4 cup chicken stock (substitute vegetable stock for vegetarian)
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1/2 - 1 1/2 tablespoons chili bean paste*
- 2 teaspoon crushed Sichuan peppercorns** (optional, but inauthentic without)
- 3 teaspoons freshly grated ginger
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon corn starch
- 2 teaspoons Chinkiang vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 4 scallions, roughly chopped
- Cilantro for garnish (optional)

**A lot of grocery stores have Asian ingredient aisles now. You should be able to find [chili-bean paste](#), a mixture of preserved chilies mixed with mashed soybeans, there or at any Asian market. (Do not confuse with black bean paste or chili-garlic paste.)*

***Sichuan peppercorns are available at some stores and [online for quite cheap](#). They aren't spicy like other peppers but rather have a citrusy flavor and induce a tingly, numbing sensation like a carbonated drink.*

METHOD

1 Begin your *mise en place*. Quarter the eggplant lengthwise and chop into large batons and set aside. In a small bowl, mix together the chicken stock, sugar, and soy sauce and set it aside. In a second bowl, mix together the

chili bean paste, garlic, ginger, and sichuan peppercorns and set it aside. In a third bowl, mix together the cornstarch with a tablespoon of water and set it aside. Lastly, in a fourth bowl, mix together the scallions and vinegar and set it aside.

2 Place the oil in a wok or large sauté pan over medium-high heat until the oil is almost smoking. Add the eggplant and sauté, allowing it to sit for a few seconds each time you move it to allow it to brown and blister. If the eggplant absorbs all the oil and some pieces don't get any then add a little more oil.

3 Add the chili bean paste, garlic, ginger, and sichuan peppercorns and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the chicken stock mixture, turn the heat to medium-low and simmer for 90 seconds. Add the cornstarch mixture and stir together until the sauce thickens a bit. Add the scallions and vinegar and cook for 15 seconds to diffuse their harsh flavors a bit. Garnish with cilantro and serve.

Yield: Makes 2-4 servings.