

## Braised Bean Curd Casserole Family Style

Bean curd is ideal for braising, as it readily absorbs flavours and colours, and Chinese bean curd seems to me the best in the world, smooth and satiny in texture and invariably perfectly prepared.

Here is a particularly tasty and easy-to-prepare recipe which reheats extremely well. One of the ingredients, hoisin sauce, added colour and a slightly sweet flavour to the bean curd. Hence dishes like this are often called red-cooked.

Serves 4

450 g (1 lb) firm bean curd  
8 whole spring onions  
450 ml (15 fl oz) groundnut or vegetable oil  
1½ tablespoons groundnut or vegetable oil  
2 tablespoons garlic, coarsely chopped  
2 tablespoons Shaoxing rice wine or dry sherry  
3 tablespoons hoisin sauce  
1 tablespoon light soy sauce  
2 teaspoons dark soy sauce  
1 teaspoon sugar  
250 ml (8 fl oz) vegetarian stock  
1 tablespoon sesame oil

Cut the bean curd into 2.5 cm (1 inch) cubes and drain it on kitchen paper. Trim the spring onions and cut them into 2.5 cm (1 inch) segments.

Heat the 450 ml (15 fl oz) oil in a deep-fat fryer or large wok until it almost smokes, and then deep-fry the bean curd cubes in 2 batches. When each batch of bean curd cubes is lightly browned, remove and drain well on kitchen paper. Let the cooking oil cool and then discard it.

Wipe the wok clean and reheat it over high heat until it is hot. Add the 1½ tablespoon of oil, and when it is very hot and slightly smoking, and then add the garlic and spring onions. Stir-fry for a few seconds and then add the drained bean curd. Stir-fry for 30 seconds, and add all the other ingredients, except the sesame oil. Reduce the heat to low and slowly simmer the mixture for 8 minutes. Turn the heat to high and cook until most of the liquid has evaporated. Stir in the sesame oil and serve at once.