

# Mapo Ragù

Recipe from David Chang and Tien Ho

Adapted by Sam Sifton

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**Total Time** 1 hour

**Rating** ★★★★★ (3,705)



Christopher Testani for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Spencer Richards.

This is my simple, everyday take on a dish developed at Momofuku Ssam Bar in Manhattan many years ago by the chefs David Chang and Tien Ho and their band of collaborators. It is almost literally a mashup: a meal that is kind of Korean, kind of Chinese, kind of Italian. If you don't like spicy food, use miso instead of the gochujang and don't use Sichuan peppercorns, which add a numbing, tingly pop to the fire. (If you like really spicy food, add dried chiles or hot pepper flakes to the recipe at the point you add the gochujang.) And if you want to make it even more luxe than it is already, follow the lead of Chang's crew and stir 6 ounces of silken tofu into the sauce at the end. —**Sam Sifton**

## INGREDIENTS

**Yield:** 4 to 6 servings

- 3 tablespoons neutral oil, like canola
- 2 large onions, peeled and sliced
- Pinch of kosher salt, or to taste
- 1 pound ground pork
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
- 10-15 frozen cylindrical rice cakes (optional), or rice noodles, or pasta, or steamed rice
- 1 inch fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 3 tablespoons gochujang (Korean chili-bean paste)
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons Sichuan peppercorns (optional)
- 1 bunch kale or any hearty cooking greens, roughly chopped
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced, for garnish

## PREPARATION

### Step 1

Heat the oil in a wok set over medium-high heat. When it shimmers, add the onions and the pinch of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions have released their moisture and are starting to brown, approximately 10 minutes. Then turn the heat down to low, and continue to cook, stirring every few minutes, until they have turned golden brown and sweet, an additional 20 minutes or so.

### Step 2

Tip the onions into a bowl, and return the wok to high heat over the stove. Add remaining tablespoon of oil, then the pork, and cook, breaking the meat up with a spoon, until it is just cooked, but not yet browning, approximately 10 minutes. Add the cooked meat to the reserved onions.

### Step 3

If using the rice cakes, put a large pot of salted water over high heat, and bring to a boil.

### Step 4

Return wok to stove over medium heat and cook the garlic and ginger in fat remaining from pork (add an extra splash of neutral oil if necessary). When the garlic and ginger soften, add gochujang, soy sauce, brown sugar and, if using, the Sichuan peppercorns. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup to 1 cup of water, enough to loosen the gochujang and make a sauce, then return pork and onions to the wok and stir to combine. Adjust seasonings.

### Step 5

Bring sauce to a simmer, and add the chopped greens, then stir to combine and cook until they have started to soften, approximately 5 minutes.

**Step 6**

If using rice cakes, place them in the boiling water for 3 to 5 minutes to soften, then drain and add to the sauce. (If not, serve the ragù with steamed rice, rice noodles or pasta.) Garnish with the sliced scallions.

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