

K's Kitchen: Trying to re-create Chinese dish in America

By Kathryn Reed

I need another lesson – or lessons.



I did OK following the recipe, but it just wasn't the same as when I made it in Beijing earlier this year. I needed my two Chinese instructors telling me how to chop, stir and what to add. But that wasn't happening no matter how hard I tried to channel their wisdom.

Still, I think I did pretty well with this recipe. (See below.)

First, I had to shop for the ingredients. Oh darn, a trip to San Francisco. I pointed to the recipe for what I needed – some is written in English, some in Chinese. And the guy at this particular shop read the Chinese better.

Next stop was the Chinese grocery store to get soy sauce and rice wine vinegar. Yes, you can get these at a regular U.S. store. But what amazed me is the price difference. I wish I had bought more while I was in the The City because it's so much cheaper even being imported from China.

While my sister, mom and I visited my niece this spring in Beijing, one of the things we did was take a cooking class. It included shopping for the ingredients, a lesson in condiments, and then the cooking.

One of the dishes we chose (maybe I chose it!) was the Five Spices Doufu. I learned that tofu is the Japanese word for the

soy product and doufu is what they call it in China.

At the market it was amazing to see the varieties of tofu, uh, doufu. I'm used to it in a container with the three choices of firmness. In Beijing it was like being at a small meat counter with the variety of doufu available.

While the recipe calls for pork, we left that out to accommodate my vegetarianism.

I don't know what is in the five spice powder that I bought in San Francisco. And it might be available closer, but I was in SF for a Giants game, so no biggie to buy some.

Five Spices Doufu

Firm tofu, 500g

Minced pork, 50g

Spices:

Ginger minced, 1 T

Garlic minced, 1 T

Spring onion, 2 pieces finely chopped, separate green part and white part

Five spices powder, 1 tsp

Seasoning 1: (add during cooking)

Sugar, 1 tsp

Light soy sauce, 4 tsp

Dark soy sauce, 2 tsp

Wine vinegar, 2 tsp

Seasoning 2: (add at the end of cooking)

Green part of spring onion

Sesame oil, 2 tsp

Method: Cut doufu into 0.5cm thick slice.

Season wok with 1 T oil, medium heat, add doufu inside, pan fry doufu until both sides become light golden color. Take out.

Season wok with 1 T oil, add minced pork, stir until all separate and change color, about 20 seconds, add ginger, garlic, white part of spring onion and five spices powder, stir until fragrant, about 10 seconds.

Add rice wine 2tsp, then water 300ml, add sugar, light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, add doufu, mix, cover. Cook over medium low heat until water is gone, about 20 minutes.

Add seasoning green spring onion and sesame oil, mix, serve.



Various types
of doufu at
market in
Beijing.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed



Pam (sister),
Cleo (mom),
and Veronica
(niece)
prepare the
ingredients.



Veronica, Pam
and Cleo cook
up several
dishes in
Beijing.