

PANEER MANCHURIAN

It's not uncommon for people to assume that vegetarian meals can't be flavourful and inventive. The rise of more people moving towards a plant-based diet over the past decade means that there is a significant step towards more vegetarian options when dining out or preparing meals at home. Here, I've looked to new ways of preparing paneer by mixing soy sauce, chilli sauce, vinegar and seasoning to give it an Indo-Chinese punch.

Serve with steamed jasmine rice or noodles.

SERVES 4

PANEER

¼ cup cornflour (Maizena)
2 Tbsp rice flour
½ tsp fine black pepper
1 tsp chilli powder
¼ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp coriander powder
½ tsp Garam Masala (page 134)
1 tsp crushed garlic
1 tsp grated fresh ginger
2 Tbsp plain yoghurt
½ tsp salt

¼ cup water
15–20 medium-sized cubes paneer
2 cups sunflower oil
Chopped spring onions to garnish

SAUCE

½ each red, green and yellow pepper, deseeded and cut into chunks
1 large red onion, cut into chunks
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 dried red chilli, slit
4 cloves garlic, slivered

1 sprig curry leaves
2 Tbsp tomato sauce
1 Tbsp sweet chilli sauce
2 Tbsp soy sauce
2 Tbsp vinegar
2 Tbsp Szechuan chilli sauce
2 Tbsp water
¼ tsp red food colouring
2 Tbsp cornflour (Maizena) mixed to a paste with ¼ cup water

PANEER

- 1 Mix the cornflour, flour, black pepper, chilli powder, turmeric powder, coriander powder, garam masala, garlic, ginger, yoghurt, salt and water in a large bowl until well combined.
- 2 Toss in the cubes of paneer and make sure they are well coated in the marinade. Set aside for 1 hour.
- 3 Heat the oil in a pan over high heat until it comes to a full heat.
- 4 Deep-fry the paneer, just long enough for the marinade to form a crispy coating.
- 5 Remove from the oil with a slotted spoon and set aside.

SAUCE

- 6 Using the same oil and pan in which you fried the paneer, fry the red, green and yellow pepper chunks for 5 minutes.
- 7 Add the onion and fry for 3 minutes until translucent.

- 8 Remove the vegetables with a slotted spoon and set aside.
- 9 Remove most of the oil, retaining ¼ cup in the pan.
- 10 Fry the cumin seeds over medium heat for a few minutes.
- 11 Add the dried red chilli, garlic and curry leaves, and continue to fry for 2–3 minutes.
- 12 Add all the remaining sauce ingredients, excluding the slurry (the cornflour and water paste).
- 13 Allow the ingredients to cook for 5 minutes, then finally add the slurry, stirring well.
- 14 Cook until thick and glossy.
- 15 Return the paneer, onion and peppers to the pot, combining well with the sauce until heated through.
- 16 Remove from the heat.
- 17 Garnish with chopped spring onions, and serve with jasmine rice or noodles.

