

FOOD52

My Ultimate Chile Oil

By Mandy @ Lady and pups

I once thought about bottling this stuff and selling it as my ticket to an early retirement in a grand château in the French countryside. It is that good. During my chile oil–sodden years in New York, Beijing, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, swimming through countless commercial brands and the versions offered in restaurants, I could always find legitimate reasons that this recipe is comparably more versatile and better tasting. And that’s saying a lot. *Reprinted with permission from From THE ART OF ESCAPISM COOKING: A Survival Story, with Intensely Good Flavors by Mandy Lee, published by William Morrow Cookbooks. Copyright © 2019 by Mandy Lee. Reprinted courtesy of Harper Collins Publishers (<https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062802378/the-art-of-escapism-cooking>)*

Makes 2 1/2 cups **Prep time:** 2 hrs 30 min

Cook time: 5 min

- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 4 garlic cloves, grated
- 1/2 cup (50 grams) Sichuan (spicier) or Korean (milder) chile flakes (I don’t recommend using any other kind)
- 1 star anise pod
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon curry powder
- 2 cups canola oil
- 3 tablespoons white sesame seeds
- 2 dried bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons finely ground Sichuan peppercorns

1. Mix the soy sauce and grated garlic together. Set aside.
2. Using a spice grinder, grind the chile flakes, star anise pod, coriander, cumin, and curry powder into a fine powder. In a large saucepan at least 6 inches (15 cm) deep, combine the spice powder with the oil, sesame seeds, and bay leaves. Set it over medium heat and bring the mixture to a gentle boil. Boil for 3 minutes, stirring frequently, until the chile flakes have turned maroon in color (but not black!).
3. When the chile flakes have turned to the desired color, turn off the heat immediately, then add the ground Sichuan peppercorns. Stir and let fry in the residual heat for about 30 seconds, then add the soy sauce/garlic mixture. The oil will boil up a little due to the added moisture (which is why we’re using a deep pot). Just keep stirring until the sizzling has died down.
4. Let the chile oil sit at room temperature for at least 2 hours (or best overnight) before using. Keep in an airtight jar in the fridge for up to 3 months.