

Cold Eggplant with Sesame Sauce

1 large American style eggplant (aubergine) or several Italian or Asian style eggplants to equal about 1 lb (500 g)

For the sauce:

2 Tbs (30 ml) sesame seeds
1 tsp (5 ml) Szechwan peppercorns*
1 tsp (5 ml) hot red pepper flakes, or to taste
1 inch (2 cm) piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and coarsely chopped
3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
1/4 (1 ml) salt
1 tsp (5 ml) sesame oil
2 tsp (10 ml) sugar
1 Tbs (15 ml) rice wine vinegar
2 Tbs (30 ml) soy sauce

For garnish:

1 scallion (spring onion) white and green part, thinly sliced

* These may be impossible to find in the US and other countries due to import restrictions. I include them here for authenticity's sake, but please omit them if necessary.

Cut the large eggplant into 5 or 6 pieces, the smaller varieties in half. There is no need to peel the eggplant. Place in a sauce pan with enough water to cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Cover and simmer over low heat until the eggplant becomes soft, which may take anywhere from 10 to 25 minutes. Drain thoroughly, and place in the refrigerator to chill.

Combine the sesame seeds and Szechwan peppercorns in a small skillet and heat over moderate heat until they become lightly toasted and aromatic. Combine this mixture with the remaining ingredients in a food processor or electric blender and process until fairly smooth.

When the eggplant is cooled, slice it into strips about 1/2 inch (1 cm) wide and place in a serving dish. Pour the sauce over the eggplant and mix thoroughly. Sprinkle with the sliced scallion. Serves 4 to 6.