

Chángshā Kǒuwèixiā

长沙口味虾

'A Taste of Shrimp'

*An Introduction To
A Wonderful Chángshā Delicacy
Hot and Spicy Freshwater Crayfish*

Written By Tsc Tempest



INTRODUCTION

It is said that in the whole of China, there is nothing like the taste and flavor of, Kǒuwèixiā. The streets of Chángshā ripple in the late Summer months with rumour and speculation that the ‘true’ secret to Kǒuwèixiā lies in the special xiā, which are grown locally, and that there is no other to match them in quality, size, and/or taste.

I spent a total of eight years in China, the first year spent in Chángshā, Húnán Province, and I fell in love with this dish. Since that time, I have cautiously researched and trialed different recipes for Kǒuwèixiā, and this booklet is the result of that effort.

In these few pages you will find a blueprint recipe to follow and supplementary information to help you understand how this dish works so that you can confidently modify it yourself for your own unique take on this fabulous dish.

Kǒuwèixiā – WHAT IS IT?

Kǒuwèixiā translates loosely as, “*taste of shrimp*” and in essence is freshwater crayfish cooked and served with chili and other spices. It is normally fiery and is considered one of the hotter spiced dishes in Húnán - style Cuisine.

The crayfish is of the species, Klinefelter Procambarus shrimp (*Procambarus clarkii*) also known as red swamp crawfish, which are native to Louisiana, USA and found their way into mainland China, via Japan, during World War II.

Today, thanks to the “tireless” efforts of IKEA to spread its cultural influence around the world, 1 kg packets of frozen crayfish, in dill brine (KRÄFTOR), are readily available from around August each year. These crayfish are the real deal and are sourced from China.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups oil

1-2 tbsn sticky chili bean sauce

4-6 cloves garlic

**3-4 thick spring onions/small
leeks**

1-2 cm ginger root

½ cup whole dried chilies (soak)

2-4 whole star anise

4-6 pieces of Cassia Bark

3-4 Bay Leaves

1-2 tspn red flower pepper

2-3 black cardamom pods

1-2 tspn rice wine vinegar

1 tsp Chili infused oil

1-2 tspn salt and sugar each

1-2 cups hot water

1kg IKEA Kräfter frozen crayfish

Garnish with Spring Onions

PREPARATION

If using fresh crayfish, they will need to be cleaned and cooked ready for use. You'll need to soak them in clean fresh water, a toothbrush to clean the dirt from their various parts, and to drop them into boiling water. Reserve some cooking water for later in the dish.

If using the IKEA frozen crayfish, you will need to first defrost them, remove them from the brine, and then soak them for a couple of hours in clean fresh water, this helps to “refresh” the crayfish, ready for use.

Chop all ingredients other than the crayfish into large, coarse pieces, or leave whole and lightly crush, e.g. garlic. These items will not be eaten but will be served up with the crayfish.

WOK 101 – SPICING IT UP

1. With a wok over medium to high heat, add the oil (yóu) and heat well.
2. Next carefully add the sticky chili bean sauce (dòu bàn jiàng) to the oil and fry out for a few minutes. When finished either strain the oil or scoop out the cooked bean paste with a slotted spoon or long handled sieve.
3. Reduce the heat under the oil to medium heat then add garlic (dà suàn), spring onions/leeks (jiǔ cài) and ginger (jiāng).
4. Carefully add well drained, dried chilies (là jiāo) that have been soaked for an hour or two in water. Stir the mixture well, and allow to infuse.

5. Add Star Anise (bā jiǎo), Cassia Bark (guì pí), Bay Leaf (yuè guì shù yè), Sichuan Pepper Corns (huā jiāo), & Black Cardamom pods (cǎo guǒ) and stir through well.
6. Turn the heat to low and allow the oil to cool slightly then add a ladle of water.
7. Next, add rice wine vinegar (bái cù), a drizzle of red chili infused oil (hóng yóu), some salt (yán), msg (wèi jīng), and a teaspoon of sugar (shā táng).
8. Add approx.. 1 tbsn of red rice flour starch (hóng mǐ fěn) and mix through, allowing the liquid to lightly thicken.
9. Mix well and then add crayfish to the spice mixture.

10. Warm/cook the crayfish for 3-5 minutes. With large slotted spoon, scoop out all the cooked ingredients into a serving dish, pour a little of the oil over the dish and garnish with sliced green spring onion tops.

Serve the Kǒuwèixiā with plastic gloves and bibs if you like, include plenty of good quality, cold beer and, perhaps some crusty bread for mopping up the sauce afterwards.

EATING Kǒuwèixiā

Kǒuwèixiā is typically dismembered and cracked open with the teeth, but a nutcracker or lobster tongs can also work. It is hard work and there is an art to it. IKEA has an excellent ebook on “[How to Peel a Crayfish](#)” which can serve as a good starting point.

To Eat: I usually, start by taking off the claws, remove the bottom pincer carefully, pull out and eat the meat. Suck the juice out of the larger pincer, and bite it open to get at the meat. I then remove the tail, open the carapace and suck the juice out. After this I peel the tail and eat it.

It's quite messy and lots of good fun with friends. So, have a go at this and enjoy, some spicy *Taste of Shrimp* – Chángshā Kǒuwèixiā, Tài Bàng Le!



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