

New & Improved (& Easier) Chili Crisp

From Hot Dish with Sohla

Makes about 3 cups / Active time: 1 ½ hours / Total time: 3 hours

Ever since I first tasted Laoganma's Spicy Chili Crisp I've been hooked. It's spicy and crispy for sure, but also tingly, salty, sweet, and aromatic. It's my favorite condiment and I need to put it on something every day. Before there was only Laoganma, but nowadays, there are countless jars of chili crisp lining market shelves, but I still like to make my own. My version is heavy on the crisp and relatively light on the chili, suitable for bigger dollops (and maybe even eating by the spoonful). Some of you may have spotted a chili crisp recipe of mine floating on the internet for a few years now, but this is the new and improved version. It's better balanced *and* easier to make. Don't you love it when things work out like that?

the spices & seasonings:

3 tablespoons whole Sichuan peppercorns
1 tablespoon whole black peppercorns
1 tablespoon coriander seeds
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 ½-inch piece ginger, peeled & cut into thin matchsticks
4 tablespoons Korean red chili flake
2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
One 3-inch cinnamon stick
1 whole star anise
1 tablespoon kosher salt
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
½ teaspoon MSG (optional)

the crisp:

3 medium shallots, peeled & sliced on a mandolin into 1/16-inch rings
12 garlic cloves, peeled & thinly sliced on a mandolin
2 cups neutral oil
½ cup raw peanuts
¼ cup raw sesame seeds

1. *Prepare the spices & seasonings:* Heat a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add Sichuan peppercorns, black peppercorns, coriander, cumin, and toast, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Blitz in a spice grinder until fine and pour into a medium heat-proof bowl. Add ginger, chili flake, cayenne, cinnamon, star anise, salt, sugar, and MSG (if using) to bowl as well and set aside.
2. *Set yourself up:* Line a large plate or medium sheet tray with paper towels. Set a wire mesh strainer over a second medium heat-proof bowl.

3. *Fry the shallots:* Combine the oil and shallots in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat and cook, stirring constantly. Once all the shallots are evenly light golden brown, immediately strain through the mesh strainer, collecting the shallot oil in the bowl below. Quickly spread the shallots onto the paper towel lined plate or sheet tray.
4. *Fry the garlic:* Pour the oil back into the pot, add the sliced garlic, and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. Once all the garlic slices just begin to show hints of light golden brown, immediately strain through the mesh strainer, collecting the garlic oil in the bowl below. Quickly spread the garlic chips onto the paper towel lined plate or sheet tray.
5. *Fry the nuts & seeds:* Pour the oil back into the pot, add the peanuts and sesame seeds, and cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until lightly golden brown. Pour the hot oil, nuts, and seeds directly over the bowl of spices, stirring well to evenly bloom all the spices. Let cool fully at room temperature.
6. *Bring it all together:* Once cool, remove the cinnamon stick and star anise. Add the shallots and garlic, stirring to combine. Store in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for 3 months. Stir well before each use.

Don't want to spend all day in the kitchen? Break up this recipe:

Day 1 - Peel, slice, and fry the shallots

Day 2 - Peel, slice, and fry the garlic in the reserved shallot oil

Day 3 - Toast and grind the spices, fry the peanuts and sesame in the reserved shallot/garlic oil, and bring it all together