Taiwanese Garlic Chopped Cucumber Salad with Homemade Chili Oil

A crunchy, garlicky street-food favorite that arrives with a sassy slap of heat and a cool, refreshing finish.

Country, Taiwan
Servings: 4
Prep Time: 25 min / Inactive Prep Time: 30 min

Ingredients

1 lb English cucumbers, cut into bite sized pieces
1 t kosher salt
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 T rice vinegar
1 T soy sauce
1 t sugar
2 T olive oil
1 t toasted sesame oil,
1 T chili oil, or more to taste *(Purchased or see homemade chili oil below)*
1 T toasted sesame seeds, for garnish
2 T scallions, thinly sliced, for garnish

Homemade chili oil
½ C avocado oil
2 T crushed red pepper flakes (adjust for heat)
1 t Sichuan peppercorns, lightly crushed, optional
1 clove garlic, smashed
1 t kosher salt

Method

Rinse cucumbers and trim the ends.
Place cucumber halves or lengths in a resealable bag and gently smash with the flat side of a knife or a rolling pin until the skin cracks and the flesh splits.
Cut smashed cucumbers into 1–1½ inch pieces and transfer to a bowl.
Sprinkle kosher salt over the cucumbers and toss; let sit 15–20 minutes so excess water releases.
Drain and gently press out any pooled liquid; return cucumbers to the bowl.
Whisk minced garlic, rice vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, olive oil, and toasted sesame oil if using until sugar dissolves.
Toss cucumbers with the dressing until evenly coated.
Drizzle chili oil over the top and sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds and sliced scallions.
Let rest 10–15 minutes for flavors to marry before serving chilled or at room temperature.

Method for homemade chili *oil* *(There are some very good chili oils on the market but if you want to make your own… try this ~ it's delicious!)*
Place crushed red pepper flakes, Sichuan peppercorns if using, smashed garlic, and kosher salt in a heatproof bowl.

Heat avocado oil in a small saucepan over medium heat until it shimmers and a pinch of red pepper sizzles when dropped in.
Carefully pour the hot oil over the pepper and aromatics in the bowl so it sizzles and releases fragrance.
Let the mixture cool to room temperature, then strain if you prefer a clear oil or leave solids for extra texture.
Store in a jar in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks; serve cold or bring to room temperature before using.

Notes:
Use Persian or Japanese cucumbers for thinner skins and fewer seeds.
For extra crunch, add a handful of peanuts just before serving.
Toast sesame seeds in a dry skillet until fragrant for a nuttier finish.