

# Pasta with Creamy Lemon–Sichuan Peppercorn Sauce

**SERVES** 4 TO 6

**TIME** 50 MINUTES

**Why This Works:** This surprising pasta dish features bright lemon, fragrant miso, and creamy crème fraîche. But the real star is the tingly Sichuan peppercorns. Sichuan peppercorns create a unique numbing and tingling sensation due to a compound called hydroxy-alpha-sanshool. This compound interacts with our nerve endings, triggering a phenomenon known as chemesthesis, which is responsible for the distinctive sensation. To get even flavor distribution and a pronounced (but not overwhelming) level of that buzzing sensation, we toast and grind 4 teaspoons of Sichuan peppercorns and incorporate them in two ways: gently heated in some oil to release their flavorful compounds and form the base of the creamy sauce, and stirred into the pasta right before serving.

- 1 pound spaghetti**
- Table salt for cooking pasta**
- 4 teaspoons red Sichuan peppercorns**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 cup chicken broth**
- 1 cup crème fraîche**
- 3 tablespoons white miso**
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest plus 2 tablespoons juice**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**
- Parmesan cheese (optional)**

**Before You Begin:** Use high-quality Sichuan peppercorns in this recipe, and pick through them to remove any debris. We call for a mortar and pestle to grind the Sichuan peppercorns, but you can also use a spice grinder. You can use vegetable broth instead of chicken broth. Serve with extra lemon juice if you like a very punchy sauce.

- 1.** Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot.
- 2.** Heat dry medium saucepan over medium heat for 1 minute. Add 4 teaspoons red Sichuan peppercorns and toast until fragrant, about 1 minute, stirring frequently.
- 3.** Transfer to mortar and pestle and let cool to room temperature, then grind until coarsely ground; set aside.
- 4.** Once water is boiling, add 1 pound spaghetti and 1 tablespoon table salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente.
- 5.** Reserve 1 cup cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot. Cook 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, 2 minced garlic cloves, and half of reserved ground Sichuan peppercorns over medium heat in now-empty saucepan until fragrant, about 1 minute.
- 7.** Stir in 1 cup chicken broth and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until reduced by half, 4 to 5 minutes.



- 8.** Whisk in 1 cup crème fraîche, 3 tablespoons white miso, 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest plus 2 tablespoons juice, and 1 teaspoon ground black pepper. Increase heat to medium-high and return to brief simmer. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 9.** Add sauce and ½ cup reserved cooking water to pasta and toss to combine. Adjust consistency with remaining reserved cooking water as needed.
- 10.** Stir in remaining ground Sichuan peppercorns, then season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 11.** Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley and serve immediately with Parmesan, if using.