

4

COOK LIKE A PRO

Hot Tip

Fermented hot sauce is bubbling up at restaurants

BY JUNO DE MELO

► Tang is having a moment. Not the orange drink from the '60s, but the funky flavor that defines fermented foods like kefir, kimchi—and now hot sauce. Chef Dan Kluger of New York's **Loring Place** is one of many chefs who likes to imbue his hot sauce with a whisper of funk.

"What makes fermentation so compelling is that it gives hot sauce this complex, well-rounded flavor," he says. "And it's quite easy to do." (His version sits out for just a few days.) Kluger uses red cayenne chiles in Loring Place's version, which he

tosses with spaghetti as a sort of pasta sauce and adds to tomato sauce for baked eggs. The hot sauce's ingredient list is as adaptable as the finished product. "You can sub in whatever chiles are at the farmers' market," Kluger says. (A little more inspiration: **Sqirl** in Los Angeles makes its fermented hot sauce with jalapeños, and **Woodberry Kitchen** in Baltimore uses heirloom fish peppers.) The only nonnegotiable is that you let the mash sit for at least two days. We promise it's time well spent.

Garlic and Achiote Fermented Hot Sauce

MAKES ABOUT 2¾ CUPS Adding fat in the form of olive oil to this hot sauce lends it body and mellows some of the heat.

- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 lb. fresh red chiles (such as cayenne, Fresno, or Holland), coarsely chopped
- 3 Tbsp. kosher salt
- 3 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 cup olive oil
- 3 Tbsp. achiote (annatto) seeds
- 2 tsp. smoked paprika
- ¾ cup distilled white vinegar

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: A 1-pint glass jar; a layer of cheesecloth

INGREDIENT INFO: Achiote seeds can be found in specialty stores, in the spice section of some supermarkets, and online.

Pulse garlic in a food processor until finely chopped. Add chiles, salt, and sugar and pulse until chile pieces are no bigger than ½". Transfer mixture to jar and press down so chiles are slightly submerged in their own liquid. Cover with cheesecloth and fasten with kitchen twine or a rubber band. Let sit in a cool place away from direct sunlight at least 2 days and up to 5 days. The liquid will develop a slightly sour smell and there should be small bubbles scattered throughout. The longer you let it ferment, the more active it will become, but don't go longer than 5 days.

Heat oil, achiote seeds, and paprika in a small saucepan over medium-high. As soon as small bubbles appear around the edges of the pan (2–3 minutes), let cook another 30 seconds; let cool. Strain oil through a fine-mesh sieve into a heatproof bowl; discard solids.

Blend achiote oil, vinegar, and two-thirds of chile mixture in a blender until smooth. Transfer to an airtight container and stir in remaining chile mixture.

DO AHEAD: Hot Sauce can be made 2 weeks ahead; cover and chill.

The chiles you choose will determine how spicy it is. Use fresh cayenne if you like it hot.