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The Morning

An oil that tingles and transforms



Craig Lee for The New York Times

When I was having dinner last year at Zhangmama, a little Sichuan restaurant in Beijing, a young couple eating next to me did me a favor: Realizing I didn't speak Chinese, they signaled to the waitress to bring me a small bowl of oil in which I could dip my sautéed vegetables. The oil was made from Sichuan peppercorns, which have a numbing, tingling spice very different from hot peppers. It transformed my vegetables.

But the oil — which also goes by the name prickly ash oil — is not easy to find in the U.S. So I've been thrilled to discover a small company called 50Hertz, founded by a World Bank clean-energy specialist named Yao Zhao, that sells a boldly fragrant version. [The company just began selling a new batch online.](#)

On Instagram, the cookbook author Fuchsia Dunlop has recommended using the 50Hertz oil on [dan dan noodles](#). You can pair either the noodles or your vegetables with [Gong Bao chicken](#), adapted from one of Dunlop's recipes.