

Camille Oger

The Complete

Tofu

Cookbook



170+

DELICIOUS,
PLANT-BASED RECIPES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

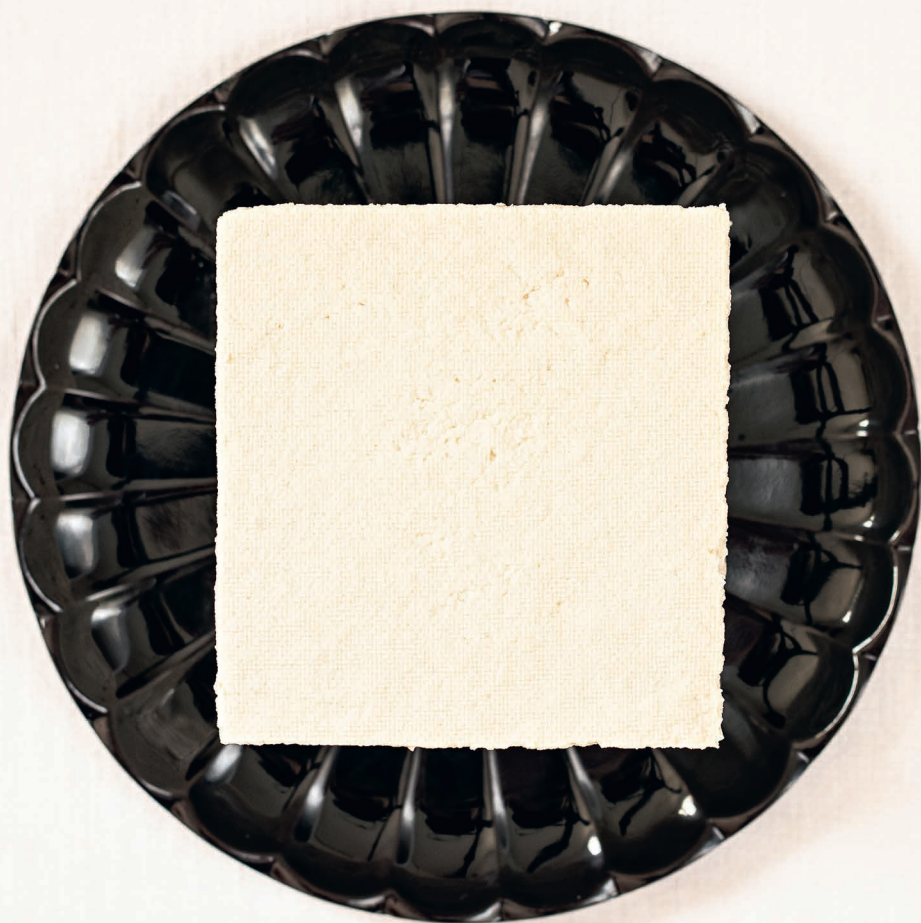
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FOREWORD

The Complete Tofu Cookbook was first published in France in 2019. It is now available in the English language to the American public.

This is the most comprehensive tofu cookbook created to date. It is pure joy to visit tofu culture through its pages featuring China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, Burma, India, and other parts of the world. This is more than a tofu cookbook; it is an adventure in traditions and cultures. Add to this a distinctly French love for the art of making exquisite food, and you have a historical breakthrough in preparing tofu!

Various Asian traditions are described to highlight the unique craftsmanship handed down through generations of making tofu. The step-by-step recipes provide clear and detailed instructions, while the beauty of the finished dishes is highlighted through masterful photography.

The history of tofu in the United States dates back to the late 1800s but at that time the ingredient was almost unknown to the non-Asian population. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1950s, and my parents were fond of Chinese food. I remember eating dishes that on the menu included “soybean curd.” This was my first encounter with tofu.

It was not until 1975 that my interest in tofu really blossomed. That was when I met William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, who published *The Book of Tofu* that same year. Akiko and William toured the United States to promote the consumption of soyfoods, including tofu, tempeh, and miso. By 1978 the number of non-Asian tofu manufacturing facilities in the United States had grown from zero to nearly 300,

and the first Soy Crafters Conference was held in Colorado. My Swedish wife and I attended this conference, and this inspired us to start Sweden’s first tofu manufacturing facility in 1980. By the late 1990s, this company, Aros Sojaprodukter, was selling seven varieties of tofu and a soybean frozen dessert called Tofu-Line Glass.

In 1993 we moved from Sweden to California and continued to develop and produce new lines of soyfood. By this time, soyfoods had expanded exponentially in the United States. At most natural food stores and in natural food sections of supermarkets, one could find a large variety of soyfoods, including soy milk, soy yogurt, marinated tofu, baked tofu, and numerous Asian specialties with approachable English labels. Companies such as Soyfoods of America, Quong Hop, Island Spring, Tofutti Brands, Mori-Nu, Azumaya, and House Foods dotted the burgeoning natural foods landscape.

I have been preparing and enjoying tofu dishes in my home for decades and have a well-stocked library of tofu cookbooks. But *The Complete Tofu Cookbook* is unique. It far surpasses anything I have seen in the past. The curious reader will find intriguing preparations and ingredients, flavors, and spices that will inspire cooking experiences well beyond their expectations. Camille Oger’s contribution to the world of soyfoods will bring joy to the art of preparing tofu in ways we never imagined in the West in 1975!

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FOUNDER WHOLESOFY & CO
SONOMA, CALIFORNIA
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INTRODUCTION

IS THIS A VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK?

In Western countries, tofu is invariably associated with a vegetarian diet. This is not necessarily the case in Asia. This book, however, does offer only vegetarian and vegan recipes, as I find this is the best way to not exclude anyone. An omnivore can eat vegetarian, while the reverse is not possible. Not using meat products is also a way of getting around a number of religious bans, whether one is a Catholic observing Lent, or an adherent of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or another belief system that discourages the eating of pork, beef, or meat in general. If I can encourage people who eat meat every day to eat a little less, that's good for them. But please don't see this as a militant position. That is not the purpose of this book; its purpose is simply to present an often misunderstood and underestimated ingredient, to offer inspiration to those who sometimes lack it when mealtime comes around (myself included), and to give a little insight into other cultures, countries, and cuisines.

I am neither vegetarian nor vegan. I know the flavors of meat, fish, and eggs; I know what consistency they give to the dishes. So I won't tell you "it tastes like meat!" or "it has the same texture as with cream and eggs!" if that's not the case. There is nothing more frustrating than a substitute ingredient that does not perform well. No, tofu is not and never will be meat. In some recipes, it can be surprisingly deceptive (believe me, I'm the first one surprised, every time), but that's not the purpose of tofu. The meat/tofu dichotomy is pretty nonsensical anyway, and it's largely a Western perspective. The fact that tofu is not meat does not

mean that it is "less than" or uninteresting; it has very special qualities in cooking that meat does not have. If there is one thing to remember about Asian cultures when it comes to tofu, it is that it is a normal everyday ingredient, and that it is not restricted to a particular population (like vegetarians). Tofu is for everyone!

WHAT IS TOFU?

"Tofu" is a Japanese word meaning "bean curd." For readers who still regard tofu as a mysterious, even suspicious, ingredient, know that it is actually a very simple product that has many points in common with fresh cheese. It is based on a legume: yellow soybeans. Soybeans are soaked and then mashed, mixed with water, and pressed to extract an off-white liquid known as soy milk. This is cooked, then curdled with the help of various coagulants. Traditionally, the coagulant used was *nigari*, a seawater precipitate rich in minerals such as magnesium and calcium chlorides. Modern-day manufacturers simply add magnesium chloride or calcium sulfate. Other coagulating agents are glucono-delta-lactone (GDL), a food additive that also plays a role in curing and pickling, or even just lemon juice or vinegar. (Turn to page 8 for more details on all these coagulants.) This coagulation process separates the soy milk into two distinct elements: "whey" and "curds" of proteins and lipids – in chemistry, we'd call the curds a "gel". This process works much the same way with animal milk as it does with soy milk.

To create what we call "firm" tofu, the soy milk curd is molded and pressed in order to squeeze out the whey, then cut into tidy blocks, rinsed in cold, clean water, and sold bathing in this water. In the US, most tofu is pasteurized to extend

its shelf life. The texture of tofu can vary greatly depending on the coagulating agent used; it can be quite spongy and airy, denser and smoother, or rather gel-like. So-called “silken” tofu, on the other hand, is the result of soy milk coagulating directly in a mold, without pressing – a process similar to the way yogurt is made. There are many subtle variations in the manufacturing process that can yield a wide variety of results, which will be described in detail throughout this book.

Tofu is more or less white in color. Its color depends on several factors. First, the whiteness of the finished tofu is linked to the variety of soybeans used, and the color will be more or less bright white depending on the soybeans’ content of beneficial plant nutrients such as anthocyanins, isoflavones, and polyphenols. In an industrial setting, you can force the whiteness of the soybean by playing with its pH during soy milk extraction. Next, the richer the tofu is in calcium and proteins, the denser it will be, dispersing light better, and therefore taking on a whiter appearance.

INVESTIGATING SOY

Some people tend to feel rather distrustful of soy, the raw material for tofu. This legume is interesting from a nutritional point of view because it is rich in protein, vitamin K, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, manganese, zinc, and copper. However, since it contains plant-based dietary estrogens it is sometimes accused of being an endocrine disruptor. There is no scientific consensus on this question at present; the many studies carried out on soy and soy products give varied, and sometimes even completely contradictory, outcomes. The wide divergence of conclusions can be explained quite simply: some studies are carried out on animals, others on humans; the subjects belong to different ethnic groups, who tend to consume differing amounts of soy and have been shown to derive less or more health benefits from it; the subjects’ prior hormonal conditions can cause variations in the results; and finally, different

studies focus on distinct types of soy (different varieties of soybean, processed or unprocessed soy products).

Historically, the principal concern about soy’s health effects centered around its isoflavone content. Researchers wondered whether these phytoestrogens, or “plant estrogens,” could influence hormone receptors and cause either estrogenic or anti-estrogenic activity. However, the effects of plant estrogens in the human body have proven to be much weaker than the effects of our hormones. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, results of recent, well-designed human population studies indicate that soy has either a beneficial or neutral effect on human health.

In this context, the right approach is to encourage moderation. We’ll read in one place that soy calms hot flashes, fights osteoporosis, and protects against hormone-related cancers, we’ll read elsewhere that it encourages hormone-related cancers and thyroid problems. Do not panic: there is no risk in eating tofu in moderation several times a week. Like everything, you shouldn’t abuse it and eat a couple of pounds a day. If you stick to reasonable portions (consumption of about four ounces per day three times a week is considered prudent), you can safely take advantage of the many benefits of soy. Soybeans are indeed one of the rare plants to offer complete proteins containing the nine amino acids essential to our bodies, and they are rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids, fiber, vitamins, and minerals while being low in saturated fat.

COAGULANTS

As mentioned previously, nowadays the main coagulants used commercially to curdle soy milk are magnesium chloride, calcium sulfate, and glucono-delta-lactone (GDL). Each gives a different texture to the final product and influences its taste. These additives are not risky to our health and are sold freely.



Tofu ingredients: yellow soybeans (1), magnesium chloride (2), calcium sulfate (3), and glucono-delta-lactone (4).

Magnesium chloride, the coagulant most commonly used in Japan and France, contributes a slightly bitter flavor and produces a less elastic gel, creating a fairly firm tofu with a rough and slightly spongy texture. To counter the bitterness of magnesium chloride, you can mix a pinch of licorice powder into your soy milk (or an amount equivalent to 0.2 percent of the total volume); not only will its flavor be sweeter, but your tofu will keep a little better.

Calcium sulfate, the most common coagulant used in the United States and China, results in a sweeter-tasting tofu and produces a more elastic and less firm gel. After pressing, we are left with a denser, softer, smoother, and whiter tofu.

Glucono-delta-lactone is particularly used in Japan for making silken tofu and in Southeast Asia and China for a snack called *dòuhuā*, known here as tofu pudding. GDL creates an extra-fine gel consistency similar to that of jelly. The resulting tofu has a flexible, elastic, and fragile flan-like texture.

Calcium chloride and magnesium sulfate are other chemical compounds that can work as coagulants, as can simple lemon juice, vinegar, or another acidic ingredient. Seawater and fermented whey are also traditional tofu coagulants in some countries. The three products mentioned above give the best results, however. To obtain a precise consistency or flavor, you can use them alone or mix them. These coagulants are easily found in organic markets or online, on sites dedicated to brewing beer or making tofu.

INTOLERANCES & ALLERGIES

Some people are convinced they can't stand silken tofu – even though they have no problem digesting firm tofu. They sometimes blame certain coagulating agents. These remain behind in silken tofu, which is not pressed, whereas they are partially removed with the extracted liquid when firm tofu is pressed. Obviously, some people might not be able to tolerate a particular additive; in that case, they must identify and avoid the offending ingredient. Magnesium chloride is known for its laxative effects, but the amounts used to make tofu (firm or silken) are not typically enough to have a significant impact. However, if you have the impression that this coagulant does not work for you, make sure to choose a silken tofu made with calcium sulfate or glucono-delta-lactone (GDL).

Also bear in mind that a suspected food intolerance is sometimes an illusion. I myself believed for years that silken tofu didn't agree with me; one very bad experience had nearly obliterated my desire to ever taste it again. However, I did go back and try it again, and have eaten it repeatedly since. I have tested all the coagulants, I have eaten it cooked and uncooked, and I have not been sick. It was, in fact, a case of food poisoning that one time. Unfortunately, this can happen if tofu is not stored carefully and is then eaten uncooked. Tofu is more fragile than it might seem; it must be kept refrigerated and used by the expiration date on the package. If tofu is removed from its package and stored in the refrigerator, keep it immersed in water and covered. The water should be changed each day to keep the tofu fresh. One to five days is usually the maximum time tofu will remain fresh under these conditions.



Tofu textures: firm tofu (1), pressed (super firm) tofu (2), medium tofu (3), and firm silken tofu (4).

TOFU HAS NO FLAVOR?

All styles of tofu have at least one flavor: that of soy. It is a little reminiscent of hazelnut, but very delicate. That said, there are many different styles of tofu that can have other flavors and aromas. Some are known for their blandness, others for their strong taste. But in general, the most widely known one is plain fresh tofu, which is particularly mild in flavor. This impression is reinforced by its simple white appearance and by the fact that it is not salty, sweet, or fatty. It is not uncommon to hear people criticizing tofu for its lack of flavor, sometimes even with a certain vehemence. There's something special about it: It's one of the few foods that causes some people to complain both that it is perfectly tasteless and that they hate it. Which doesn't really make sense. How can someone develop such an aversion to something whose flavor they do not perceive?

If you think about it, most foods that have little flavor are generally appreciated or at least tolerated by everyone, because they do not have a characteristic off-putting flavor – rice, white cheese, chickpeas.... Take the potato. It has no strong aromas, but I have never met anyone who hates potatoes. A plain, salt-free, fat-free boiled potato is at least as bland as a block of tofu. You will often be told that the potato is different because it can be transformed in a thousand ways, all delicious. Guess what? Tofu can too. Except that Westerners have a few centuries of experience with potatoes, and very little with tofu. The categorical rejection of tofu by some Westerners is in my opinion a posture, a stubborn prejudice, an admission of ignorance, or a silly food phobia.

Ironically, tofu is a food that is not supposed to trigger passions. In traditional Chinese medicine, it is a “cold” food. The blandness of fresh tofu is seen as an advantage, a culinary “white page,” like that of white rice or wheat flour, which can be exploited in many ways – by marinating it to give it different flavors, by cooking it with spices, aromatics,

and various condiments.... Its neutrality makes it versatile; it goes with all vegetables, all fruits – it goes with everything. It's an inexhaustible source of culinary diversity. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination, because everything is possible, from sweet to salty, or a combination of the two.

As you will see in the coming sections of recipes originating in different countries, there are types of tofu that are not bland at all. Chinese fermented tofus have a taste, smell, and appearance similar to traditional European cheeses. The flavored tofus found in Asia and in France have well-developed, very distinctive aromas, such as smoked tofu or five-spice tofu. These products are very interesting to use in cooking but play a smaller role than fresh natural tofu, because their unique flavors can limit ways of cooking them. Finally, taste is not just a matter of aromas and flavors. It's also a story of textures, and there are endless texture variations in the world of tofu. If your mind immediately goes to picture a white block, firm and smooth, you need to expand your thinking. Here is an overview of tofu textures, which can help you find your way around and identify your favorite types of tofu by their specific consistencies.

TOFU TEXTURES

Tofu can take on a variety of textures: firmer or less firm and smoother or less smooth. Labeling practices, which vary from one brand to another and from one country to another, are meant to guide consumers, but in practice can be confusing. In addition, some packages are especially enigmatic, when they are imported products labeled in foreign languages. So here I try to classify the textures of tofu in a way that lets you know what you are looking at when you're shopping for tofu.

The firmness of a tofu product depends mainly on two very different things. First there is its density, which in turn depends on its water content and can be guessed at

FIRM TOFU (per 3½ ounces)		
Pre-pressed (super firm)	200+ Calories	Extremely dense and firm, generally smooth and supple.
Extra firm	145+ Calories	Very high density, very firm and solid tofu.
Very firm	125–145 Calories	Nice density, firm and solid tofu.
Firm	105–125 Calories	Basic firm tofu.
Medium	80–105 Calories	Basic firm tofu in Japan. Can be rather spongy (if made with magnesium chloride), crumbles easily. May be rather flexible (if made with calcium sulfate), firmer, and more crumbly.
Soft	55–80 Calories	Common in Asian grocery stores. Made with magnesium chloride, it is spongy, very tender, and fragile. With calcium sulfate, it is more flexible and holds together better.
SILKEN TOFU (per 3½ ounces)		
Extra firm	60–75 Calories	Quite solid, can be handled without great difficulty if it is made with calcium sulfate or GDL. Less fine and less flexible texture if made with magnesium chloride.
Firm	55 Calories	Basic silken tofu. If made with calcium sulfate, will have a flan-like texture, can be handled with care. If made with magnesium chloride, it has a more creamy texture, but reluctant to hold together. With GDL expect an extra-fine texture, almost jelled.
Soft	45 Calories	Texture of very fragile custard or firm yogurt. Chinese <i>dòuhuā</i> , (tofu pudding) falls into this category.
Extra-soft	44 Calories maximum	Extremely fragile, does not hold together regardless of the coagulant used. The curd can be gathered but never pressed. Generally sold in tubes in Korean grocery stores (<i>sundubu</i>).

by the number of calories indicated on the packaging – no matter what country the tofu comes from, this label is required. The more calories a tofu has, the denser it is, and therefore lower in water in proportion to its weight. The most caloric tofu is the firmest. Then, the firmness of tofu also depends on another crucial element: its porosity. The coarser and airier the texture of a tofu, the less firm it will be when compared to a smoother and more porous tofu, even when the two have an equivalent density.

The determining factor in denseness and porosity is the coagulant that was used to make the tofu. Magnesium chloride makes a tofu with an airy, somewhat spongy texture. Calcium sulfate makes a smoother and more flexible tofu that holds together better even at equivalent density. Finally, glucono-delta-lactone (GDL)

makes a tofu with an extra-fine texture, less porous and therefore even firmer at comparable density. Now, the coagulant used is indicated in the list of ingredients on the packaging. The full name may be listed – for example, “glucono-delta-lactone”; an abbreviation or acronym may be used, like “GDL.” To make matters more complex, each tofu-producing country has its own conception of firmness. For example, Japanese firm tofu is much less solid than Chinese firm tofu, which is in turn much less dense than super firm vacuum-packaged tofu. So, here is a basic table in which I have tried to standardize the different degrees of tofu firmness according to density and porosity. I have separated tofu into two main categories: so-called “firm” tofu (which is pressed into a block) and so-called silken tofu (which is not pressed but molded

TYPE OF TOFU	PRIMARY USE
Pressed (super firm)	Sautéed, braised, grated, poached in a salad.
Extra firm	Braised, fried, sautéed, boiled, grilled.
Firm	Uncooked, braised, fried, sautéed, boiled, grilled.
Medium	Uncooked, crumbled, mixed, braised, boiled, soups and stews.
Soft	Uncooked, crumbled, mixed, boiled, fried dishes, soups and stews.
Extra firm silken tofu	Uncooked, mixed, desserts, soups and stews.
Firm silken tofu	Uncooked, mixed, desserts, soups and stews.
Soft silken tofu and tofu pudding (<i>dòuhuā</i>)	Uncooked, mixed, smoothies, sauces, desserts, soups and stews.
Extra-soft silken tofu	Uncooked, mixed, smoothies, sauces, desserts, soups and stews.

directly into its container, and which is therefore much more fragile, with a generally finer texture).

In order to have a game plan, I will use Western tofu standards as a reference in all the recipes in this book. When I talk about firm tofu without further details, it will be basic firm tofu made with magnesium chloride. If I specify that it is soft firm tofu, the coagulating agent is, on the other hand, calcium sulfate. For silken tofu, the mention of “firm” refers to the most common firmness of silken tofu in the West. If I specify that it is extra fine silky tofu, this means that the coagulating agent is GDL, which creates a perfectly smooth texture, quite supple but fragile, close to a jelly.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

CHOOSING TOFU

Anyone can eat tofu and enjoy it – if it’s a good product and it is treated properly. And that’s where we have our work cut out for us. You must learn to choose, prepare, and cook your tofu just like any other food. Westerners are not educated about

tofu at home, and so many styles of tofu are available – which does not make the neophyte’s task any easier. We weren’t trained to recognize the right ones, taught what kind of tofu is made for what. So, here is a guide to help you see the field more clearly. Of course, we all have personal preferences and constraints, so I advise you to see what is available to you locally and to test various types of tofu for yourself. Do not hesitate to visit Asian groceries, which offer a wide choice of products, from the firmest to the most tender. And don’t forget that a good tofu is always found in the fresh section: the only exception is shelf-stable silken tofu, found in Tetra Pak containers, which can be stored in a cupboard for up to a year.

HANDLING TOFU

Firm, extra firm, and pressed tofu are easy to work with because they are solid. They are easy to remove from their packaging, drain, and cut. The other types of tofu are much more fragile and must be treated with care and precision. Blocks of medium and soft tofu can be damaged from the slightest jostling; from the moment you buy them, you must transport them without banging or bumping them, as you would delicate pastries or

ripe fruit. The best way to get them out of their packaging while keeping them whole is to stand in front of your sink, open the wrapping completely and put one hand on the tofu block, then turn the packaging over to let the whey drain into your sink, holding the tofu back with your hand. You can then gently place the tofu on a cutting board and cut it to your liking. Tofu artisans often unmold their tofu in a large water bath to avoid damaging it and hold it in their hand while cutting, still in the water. However, this precaution is not needed with smaller tofu blocks.

Silken tofu does not bathe in its whey; it fills its mold completely. This means it can be removed more easily from the mold directly onto a plate or cutting board. To make sure it comes out easily from its mold, pass the blade of a knife around the sides before turning it over and gently squeezing the packaging if necessary. If you cut it into slices or pieces, for example to eat it cold, transfer it with the flat edge of a large knife. If you use silken tofu or soft tofu in a stew, such as the famous *mápó dòufu*, always make sure to use the back of your wooden spoon to mix the preparation so as not to damage the cubes, which are very fragile.

PREPARING TOFU

Before cooking, tofu can be treated in different ways to adjust its taste and texture. A few tips will let you really take advantage of tofu's great versatility.

FIRMING UP TOFU

Method 1: pressing

Block tofu should always be drained before cooking. If it's extra firm or pressed tofu, it will be solid enough for sautéing in a frying pan or wok. All you will need to do is pat it dry with paper towels. Medium to firm tofu will need to be firmed up for some recipes. The simplest and most effective method to get your tofu texture

a little denser is to wrap it with several layers of paper towel, place it on a plate, and weight it with another plate for 30 minutes, 1 hour, or more depending on the desired firmness. The block will give up some water and lose volume, but will gain solidity. In each of the recipes in this book, you will find details on the recommended pressing method, when needed. The technique is always very simple and does not require any special equipment – simply plates, cutting boards, even bowls filled with fruit.

Method 2: saltwater bath

Some tofus are too fragile to be pressed. This is true of soft tofu and extra firm silken tofu, which would be crushed under any weight and is even too fragile to be wrapped in paper towels without damage. To firm them up a bit before cooking them, perhaps in a stew, just give them a saltwater bath. To do this, dissolve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of salt in 1 quart of boiling water. Cut your tofu as desired



Using the inclined plane method to drain and firm up tofu in a manufacturing workshop in Japan.

(into cubes, slices, or so on, depending on the recipe) and gently place it in the water – ideally, use a large and shallow container that you can place the tofu into without damaging it. Let it soak for 15 minutes, then carefully remove it from the water and place it on several layers of paper towels. Let drain another 15 minutes.

You can also do a saltwater soak for firmer tofu: hot salt water flushes out excess moisture from the surface of the tofu by tightening its structure. It also keeps it soft inside. Plus, tofu absorbs salt well, so it is in effect pre-salted. Finally, if you sauté or fry it, it will be crisper on the outside. Do not hesitate to apply this treatment to your tofu whenever you want, even if the recipe does not specify it; it will never hurt.

Method 3: the inclined plane

To drain your tofu effectively, wrap a cutting board with a clean cloth and lay your block of tofu on top. Tilt the board as much as possible (without letting the tofu slide off – it's up to you to find the right angle), directing the lowest side toward your sink to collect the liquid. Leave the tofu like this for at least 1 hour.

MARINADES

Before cooking, tofu can be treated in different ways to adjust its taste and texture. A few tips will let you really take advantage of tofu's great versatility.

Brown the tofu in advance

By browning slices or cubes of tofu in a frying pan for a few minutes on each side, you create a crust on the surface that does a fabulous job of absorbing sauces and marinades. Many Asian recipes require this step, especially before braising the tofu. You can also fry a block in an oil bath (the Japanese call it *atsuage*; see recipe on page 113), or you can even buy ready-fried tofu, available in the refrigerated case at Asian groceries.

Freeze the tofu beforehand

This may seem surprising, but freezing tofu radically changes its consistency. There are two basic methods for this: the Japanese version and the Chinese version. The Japanese method is to drain a block of firm tofu, wrap it in a cloth, place it in a box, and freeze it overnight for 24 hours. Then let it thaw in the fridge, after running it under warm water to remove the cloth wrapper – or immersing it in a large warm saltwater bath. Drain on several layers of paper towel for at least 15 minutes, and it will be ready to be cut into pieces and marinated. During the freezing and thawing process, tofu releases a lot of water; when it stays overnight in the fridge, small ice crystals form inside, giving it a slightly more spongy texture that absorbs marinades beautifully. A unique form of tofu is found in Japanese grocery stores, which takes this process to the extreme: freeze-dried tofu, called *kōyadōfu*. Rehydrate it in a bowl of water, squeeze it by hand to drain the excess water, and then marinate it as desired.

The Chinese method is to encourage the formation of ice crystals in the tofu in order to leave visible holes after thawing. This produces a more fragile but very absorbent tofu. To do this, slice a block of firm tofu, place it directly on a plate, in a plastic bag, or in an airtight container, and leave it in the freezer for 24 to 48 hours. Then leave it to thaw in the refrigerator or in a cool place on a plate covered with several layers of paper towel. You can also speed up thawing by dipping the tofu slices in a large, warm salt-water bath. Drain the slices on several layers of paper towel for at least 15 minutes. Then they will absorb marinade at an impressive speed!

Infusions

Firm tofu can be flavored by infusions; this is how you make five-spice pressed “tofu” (see page 94). For this technique, we simmer a block or pieces of tofu in a spicy and fragrant concoction for about thirty minutes. You can use the spices of your choice instead of the traditional Chinese.



CRUMBLE & MIX

You almost always see tofu called for in the same form in most recipes: cut into cubes or slices. In fact, there are many other things you can do with it. It is interesting to run a few cubes of medium to firm tofu through a blender or small food processor. By pulsing in short bursts, we can observe each stage of its transformation, and all the different consistencies that appear suggest new ideas. First the tofu is coarsely chopped, then finely, and then begins form a paste that can be mixed with a little water to achieve a perfectly smooth and homogeneous cream.

Fairly soft and spongy tofu can simply be crumbled by hand. Rough, hand-torn pieces are sometimes what we are looking for, rather than a clean cut with a knife. Coarsely shredded tofu has a better texture for breading or a sauce to cling to.

STORING TOFU

Despite its clean white appearance and style of packaging that suggests an aseptic product, fresh tofu is as fragile as cheese. It must be refrigerated. Check the expiration date before buying tofu, and stick to it. If you've started a package of firm tofu without finishing it, you can keep the rest for two days in the refrigerator – it should soak in a liquid, whether it's whey or fresh water. Firm tofu can also be frozen without any problem, whole in its unopened or opened box, drained and placed in an airtight container or a freezer storage bag. When frozen, it turns yellowish and a bit translucent, but don't worry – it hasn't gone off. It will go back to its normal color once thawed. Its time in the freezer will even give it a superpower: that of absorbing marinades (see page 16). Silken tofu loses its smoothness in the freezer; it will take on some chewiness and can no longer be used in recipes that highlight its creamy texture. It can still be used in soups, broths, and stir-frys.

OTHER SOY PRODUCTS & TOFU DERIVATIVES

To make tofu, you need yellow soybeans. After they have been soaked in water, you can make soy milk. This can easily be done at home (see page 24), and is also preferable to industrial soy milk, which will likely not be concentrated enough to make a good tofu, and will sometimes contain additives (sugar, preservatives, thickeners). Freshly pressed and cooked soy milk is very good, try it! You can also use it in cooking. After pressing ground soybeans and water to extract the “milk” that will be used to make tofu, you end up with dry soybean pulp, or *okara*. This can be used in cooking, in particular to make a delicious little Japanese dish simmered and served as an accompaniment or as a starter, called *unohana* (see page 144). You will also find in this book an absolutely delicious recipe from Korea that uses unfiltered soy milk: *kongguksu*, a noodle soup garnished with soy, pine nuts, and sesame (see page 188).

There are a multitude of types of tofu with different consistencies, as well as derivatives based on tofu or soy milk that are commonly used in the different cuisines of the Far East. You will discover them in detail in this book in sections devoted to each country. The amazing skin of soy milk, or *yuba*, will open up unexpected possibilities in the kitchen. Tofu fermented in brine, or *dōufūrū*, will add flavor to your wok-fried vegetables and sauces. Pressed tofu in all its forms, including fabulous noodles, will allow you to use tofu in previously unthinkable ways. Tofu puffs will absorb the liquid in your soups, broths, and casseroles beautifully, or if you grill or fry it, will offer a crisp surface and airy interior. The world of tofu is much larger than you might think at first glance, and it's a lot of fun.

OTHER TYPES OF “TOFU”

It's not just all about yellow soybeans. You can also make tofu with black soybeans (though this is rare) or edamame, which are immature yellow soybeans and have a pretty green color. Some people even try making tofu with other legumes. Not all of them work, and the results are quite variable. However, by changing the method, you can do wonders with chickpeas or pigeon peas. This is what the Burmese do. Their yellow tofu is very different from soy tofu and it is a real wonder to discover in the chapter devoted to Burma (see page 245).

Then, there are many so-called “tofus” that are not really tofus. They are given this name in their countries of origin because of their block shape, but the resemblance stops there. They are based on nuts and oilseeds, like almonds, sesame, or peanuts. These ingredients are finely ground with water to obtain vegetable “milks.” Instead of adding a coagulating agent, they may be thickened using kudzu, the starch from the roots of *Pueraria montana*, a vine of the legume family, or set using agar-agar, a vegetable substitute for gelatin made



Pressed tofu can take many forms.

from different species of red algae. The resulting thick paste is then molded and cooled. They form solid blocks with a more or less flexible consistency, and give off pleasant and delicate aromas of the almonds, peanuts, or other nuts and seeds used to make them. They are generally eaten cold; they are perfect as a starter with salty condiments, and delicious as a dessert with a sweet sauce or even fruit. You will find different recipes of this type in the pages dedicated to China and Japan.

TOFU BASICS

Soy

Tofu is usually made from yellow soybeans, although black soybeans can also be used. There are a huge number of varieties of yellow soybeans in Asia, each with its unique advantages for a specific use. In the West, the choice is much more limited. The most important thing is to choose good fresh Asian soybeans (available in Korean and Japanese grocery stores) or untreated fresh soybeans (in organic stores). The soybeans should be bright and unblemished, uniform in color and size.

Water

Tofu is above all a story of water. This is the ingredient that the tofu artisans I have met in China, Japan, and Korea paid the most attention to. The water should be very soft and very pure. Use a soft mineral water or filtered water.

The coagulant

Coagulants can be found in several forms. Food-grade magnesium chloride in crystals is common because it is sold in most organic stores and in pharmacies. It also exists in liquid form. *Nigari* is the traditional Japanese version, made from evaporated seawater. Calcium sulfate and glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) can be ordered online in powder form without any problem. I recommend using magnesium chloride or calcium sulfate to make firm tofu, and GDL to make silken tofu.

Equipment

Few utensils are really essential for making tofu. At the very least you will need a large, heavy-based pot, a smaller pot, a stand blender (not a hand blender), a wooden spatula, a large chinois or fine sieve, cheesecloth, a ladle, and a tofu pressing box. This tofu pressing box can be replaced by other things: a cheese mold, a plastic takeout container you've saved, or a colander and a small plate. You will also need a few heavy items to press the tofu, such as full cans of beans or tomatoes.




Yellow soybeans.



Black soybeans.



The background of the entire image is a dark teal or black color, featuring a repeating pattern of stylized white flowers and leaves. Overlaid on this is a large, solid teal rectangle that serves as the background for the text.

Basic recipes

SOY MILK

(& Okara)

Making soy milk at home is a little time consuming and it will require you to wash some dishes, but it is so good! Homemade soy milk is generally the best choice for making tofu, because you'll have just the right amount and it will contain no additives. In addition, you will get *okara*, or pressed soybean pulp, which you will also find useful in the kitchen.

⌚ prep 20 min ⌚ soak 10 hr ⌚ cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

For 2 quarts soy milk

• 1 cup dried yellow soybeans • 2 qt filtered water

Rinse the soybeans well and soak them in a large bowl with five times their volume of tap water. Let them soak at room temperature for at least 8 hours in summer and up to 10 hours in winter. Once rehydrated, they should open easily when you squeeze one with your fingers. Drain, then rinse them again several times.

In a large, heavy-based pot, bring 5 cups of filtered water to boil over medium-high heat. While it is heating, whirl the rehydrated beans in a blender with 2 cups of filtered water. The mixture should look like a milkshake. Add this mixture to the boiling water, lower the heat, and rinse out the blender with ½ cup of filtered water and add this to the pot. Heat the mixture over low heat for a few minutes until it begins to foam. Watch it carefully, so it doesn't overflow! Turn off the heat, use a skimmer to remove excess foam, and stir to incorporate the rest.

Place a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth in another pot set in your sink. Have at hand a tool for pressing, such as a potato masher or a pestle. A wooden spoon could do the trick. Pour the hot mixture into the cheesecloth-lined strainer. When it is full, wait for the level to drop and continue to pour.

When all of the soy milk has passed through the cheesecloth, gather all the corners of the fabric in one hand and twist the fabric to form a bag – if it's too hot, let it cool for a moment. Press the bag with against the strainer your potato masher, pestle, or wooden spoon to extract the last drops of liquid. Open the fabric, lightly spread out the remaining solid pulp, add ½ cup of filtered water, and mix with a wooden spoon. Squeeze the cheesecloth again by hand to extract a little more liquid.

(continued)



The white juice in your pot is your soy milk (still raw), in a perfect quantity to make firm tofu. It can also be used in other recipes. The dry pulp in your cheesecloth, called *okara*, can be used in cooking: you can add it to your pie dough, cookies, and other baked goods, or make it into a delicious little Japanese dish called *uno-hana* (see page 144). It must definitely be cooked before being consumed.

To cook your soy milk, heat it over low heat in its pot, covered (a clear lid is ideal for keeping an eye on it, because it tends to overflow if it gets too hot). Bring to a gentle simmer and let cook for 5 minutes. You can drink it, refrigerate it for up to 3 days, or immediately continue with the recipe opposite to make firm tofu.

Notes To make silken tofu, follow the steps above but make a more concentrated milk using only 1½ quarts of filtered water. For an even richer soy milk, use 2¼ cups of soybeans.

By covering soy milk, you can prevent a film from forming on its surface. If it seems more convenient, do not cover it, but be sure to remove the solid elements from the surface using a skimmer.

Many tofu makers recommend not stirring soy milk while heating, so as not to give it a burnt flavor (the bottom always burns a little, even on very low heat). I don't stir it either. To make cleanup easier, just use a nonstick pan.

FIRM TOFU

Once you've made your soy milk, it's not a great deal more effort to make firm tofu. You just have to coagulate the milk and then press it. For coagulation, you can use magnesium chloride to create a rather spongy and rigid tofu, or calcium sulfate for a more dense and flexible tofu.

🕒 prep **20 min** 🕒 press **15 min** 🌱 **vegan**

For 1 block firm to medium tofu (12–16 oz)

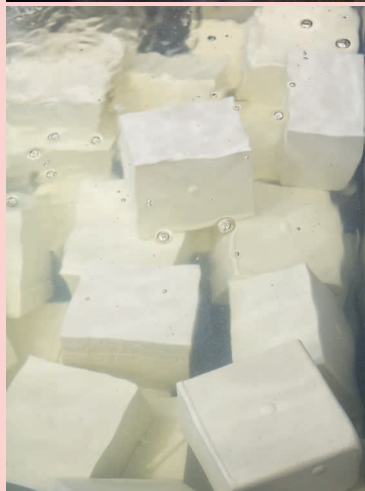
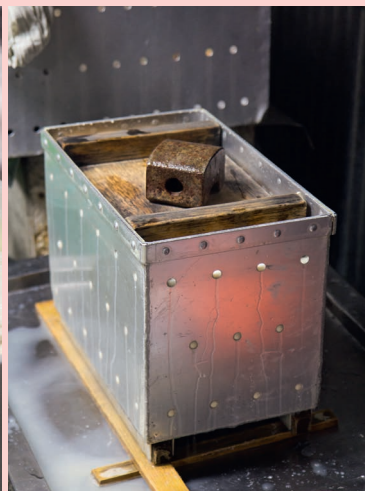
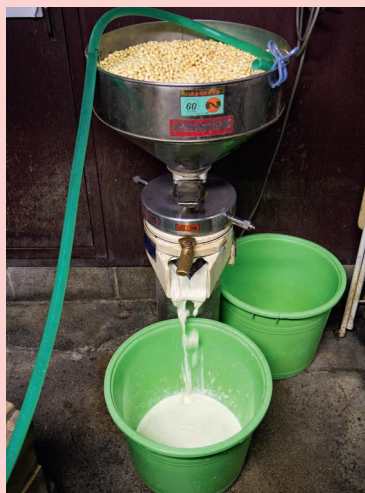
- 2 qt soy milk
- 1 tsp (6 g) magnesium chloride in crystals or scant ½ tsp (6 g) calcium sulfate in powder
- 7 Tbsp filtered water

If you've just made your soy milk, it will be very hot in the pan. Turn off the heat and let it cool for 2 minutes without removing the lid. Otherwise, heat 2 quarts of soy milk over low heat in a pot covered with a clear lid (so you can keep an eye on it). When the milk comes to a gentle simmer, continue cooking for 5 minutes, keeping watch so that the milk does not overflow. Turn off the heat and let cool for 2 minutes without removing the lid.

Meanwhile, prepare your coagulant: in a small bowl, combine the crystals or the powder with 7 tablespoons of filtered water and stir to mix. Place a tofu pan – or other perforated pan, or colander – in your sink and line the inside with a generous length of cheesecloth, letting it hang over the sides of the pan.

Stir the soy milk vigorously using a wooden spatula, making a Z shape six to eight times. Pour a third of the coagulant into the pot, stirring again to distribute it throughout the milk, then stop the spatula in the center of the pot. When the milk is no longer moving, take out the spatula while holding it vertically, so as not to move the milk. Distribute another third of the coagulant over the milk with a teaspoon; do not mix. Cover the pot and wait for 3 minutes. Add the rest of the coagulant with the teaspoon, trying to distribute it evenly over all the milk. Use a spatula to gently turn the top layer of the mixture (going ¾ inch deep), then cover and wait for 3 minutes if you are using magnesium chloride, or 6 minutes for calcium sulfate.

(continued)



Artisanal firm tofu making.

Uncover the pot; the milk should be completely curdled. With a ladle, carefully scoop out as much whey as possible and use it to moisten the cheesecloth lining the mold. With the ladle, carefully scoop up the curd and place it in the cheesecloth. Squeeze out the excess whey by slightly lifting the cheesecloth. When all the curd is settled in the mold, fold the cheesecloth over and place the mold lid on top. If you are using a colander, place a small plate over it.

To make semi-firm tofu, weight the lid with a 1-pound weight and let drain for about 15 minutes. For firm tofu, use a 3-pound weight and drain for 15–20 minutes. After pressing, the volume of the tofu should be reduced by half for medium-firm tofu, and by two-thirds for firm tofu. It will firm up further as it cools; do not overpress it.

Fill a bowl with cold water and unmold the tofu into it. Leave it in the water for about 5 minutes to firm up. Slide a plate under the tofu and take it out of the water. Let it sit for a few hours in a cool place, covered with a cloth, before using. If you do not intend to use it within 8 hours, place it in the refrigerator in an airtight container, covered with water. Change the water every 2 days; the tofu should keep for up to 1 week.

Note If you are not up for making your own soy milk, you can buy it commercially. Ideally, choose the fresh soy milk that is sold in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean grocery stores. If you buy a domestic brand, be careful: it should not contain any thickeners, preservatives, or additives, and above all should not be sweet. Also make sure it is rich enough: it should contain at least 1.8 grams of fat and 3.6 grams of protein per 100 ml.

SILKEN TOFU

To make a good Japanese-style silken tofu, with a very fine, smooth, and almost custard-like texture, ideally you need to use glucono-delta-lactone or calcium sulfate as a coagulant. This tofu is in no hurry; we are not going to help it along by curdling the soy milk. The milk must set while remaining whole. It is a good idea to reuse the plastic trays from store-bought tofu to mold your silken tofu; this type of tofu, being quite fragile, does best in small containers. They must be small enough to place in a steamer basket. Butter dishes or small glass ramekins are also recommended.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

For about 1½ pounds of silken tofu

- ½ tsp (2 g) glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) or ¼ tsp (2 g) calcium sulfate • 2 tsp filtered water
- 3 cups concentrated soy milk, cold or at room temperature

Heat water for steaming in a large pot. When the water comes to a boil, lower the heat slightly to keep it steaming steadily. In a small bowl, mix the GDL or calcium sulfate and the 2 teaspoons of filtered water.

Stir the soy milk to check its consistency; if it is not completely smooth, strain it through a cheesecloth-lined colander. Combine the soy milk and the coagulant. Mix well and pour into the molds to a depth of 1–2½ inches. Place the molds in a steam basket and partially cover the pot, leaving the lid askew so as to minimize condensation. Cook until the tofu is set – a 1-inch depth will require about 6 minutes.

The tofu is ready when it jiggles when shaken, like custard. If you tilt the mold, the tofu may slide slightly. To make sure it's cooked, insert a toothpick in the center; it should leave a small visible hole on the surface. If the tofu cooks for a little too long, it will be all right. If you are not sure whether it is ready, it is better to leave it in the steamer basket for too long than not long enough.

Carefully remove the steamer basket from the pot and let cool for a few minutes. Remove the molds from the basket and allow them to cool completely at room temperature before placing them in the fridge for at least 4 hours. The silken tofu will keep for 3 days.

To unmold the tofu, let it warm up slightly at room temperature for 15 minutes, then slip the blade of a knife along the sides of the mold. Place a plate on top and turn plate and mold over together.

SILKEN TOFU WITH CITRUS

It is somewhat rare to find flavored tofus in Japan. The vast majority of the products available are natural. Some artisans, however, offer versions with a light scent, including silken tofu with yuzu (a mandarin orange hybrid). The recipe is very simple and can be made with other citrus fruits of your choice: orange, lemon, Buddha's hand, citron, bergamot orange...

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

For about 1½ pounds of silken tofu

- ½ tsp (2 g) glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) or ¼ tsp (2 g) calcium sulfate • 2 tsp filtered water
- 3 cups concentrated soy milk, cold or at room temperature
- organic or untreated citrus fruit of your choice

Heat water for steaming in a large pot. When the water comes to a boil, lower the heat slightly to keep it steaming steadily. In a small bowl, mix the GDL or calcium sulfate and the 2 teaspoons of filtered water. Set aside.

With the finest grater possible (small Japanese graters are ideal), remove 1½ teaspoons zest from your chosen citrus. Be sure to remove only the colorful skin and not the bitter white pith. The zest should be extremely fine; if needed, chop it further.

Stir the soy milk to check its consistency; if it is not completely smooth, strain it through a cheesecloth-lined colander. Combine the soy milk and zest, mixing well. Leave to infuse for a few minutes. Stir again, then add the coagulant. Mix well and pour into small molds (such as ramekins, butter dishes, or leftover tofu trays) to a thickness of 1–2½ inches. Place the molds in a steam basket and partially cover the pot, leaving the lid askew so as to minimize condensation. Cook until the tofu is set – a 1-inch depth will require about 6 minutes.

The tofu is ready when it jiggles when shaken, like custard. If you tilt the mold, the tofu may slide slightly. To make sure it's cooked, insert a toothpick in the center; it should leave a small visible hole on the surface. If the tofu cooks for a little too long, it will be all right. If you are not sure whether it is ready, it is better to leave it in the steamer basket for too long than not long enough.

Carefully remove the steamer basket from the pot and let cool for a few minutes. Remove the molds from the basket and allow them to cool completely at room temperature before placing them in the fridge for at least 4 hours. The silken tofu will keep for 3 days. To unmold the tofu, let it warm up slightly at room temperature for 15 minutes, then slip the blade of a knife along the sides of the mold. Place a plate on top and turn plate and mold over together.

TOFU SKINS

(Yuba)

Like milk of animal origin, soy milk is very rich in protein and quite rich in fats, especially if it is concentrated. When you heat it up, it behaves similarly: a film or skin forms on its surface. This skin is a concentrate of proteins and fats, very popular in China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Japan. It is easy to create this skin, but more difficult to handle it, because it sticks to itself like plastic wrap – but even worse. Ideally, you'll use highly concentrated homemade soy milk for this recipe, or rich fresh soy milk purchased from a Chinese, Korean, or Japanese grocery.

🕒 prep + cook **30 min** 🌱 **vegan**

For 4 servings

• 1 qt rich soy milk (see page 24)

Heat the soy milk over low heat, using a frying pan rather than a saucepan, to expose as much of the milk surface to the air as possible. When a skin forms on the surface, pass the blade of a knife along the sides of the pan to loosen this “skin” cleanly. With a pair of chopsticks, collect it and place it on a plate, trying to fold it neatly.

Repeat this operation as many times as necessary. If your soy milk is concentrated enough, it will not stop forming this skin on the surface as long as it is heated. Divide the tofu skin among 4 small separate bowls. Clean your chopsticks from time to time as you work. If you are not comfortable handling chopsticks, you can use a plastic spatula, the handle of a spoon, or any other smooth and flat utensil to collect the *yuba*. The Japanese craftsmen I met also do it by hand – beware, it's hot – or even with pliers.

Note Use a nonstick frying pan for easier cleanup! Even at very low heat, the soy milk sticks to the bottom of the pan.



Method 1

TOFU PUDDING

(Dòuhuā)

Delicious *dòuhuā*, of Chinese origin but adopted in much of Asia, is a kind of tofu custard with a wonderfully smooth texture, somewhat similar to silken tofu. It is very fragile and breaks as soon as you insert a spoon into it. Prepared in wide pans, *dòuhuā* is served with a large, flat spatula to make beautiful, thick layers in a bowl. It is seasoned with a salty sauce and all kinds of condiments (see the recipe for Yunnan-style tofu pudding on page 83) or enjoyed with sweet toppings (see the recipe for tofu pudding with red fruit coulis, page 368). This recipe makes it easy achieve a successful tofu pudding at home.

🕒 prep 2 min 🕒 rest 1 hr 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 servings

- Scant 1 tsp (6 g) calcium sulfate • 1½ tsp cornstarch or potato starch
- ⅓ cup water • 1 qt homemade soy milk (see page 24)

In a small bowl, mix the calcium sulfate, starch, and water.

In a large nonstick pot over medium-low heat, bring the soy milk to a boil. Turn off the heat as soon as it boils and remove the foam on its surface with a skimmer.

Stir the calcium sulfate mixture again and pour it into a large bowl or pot. Immediately pour over the soy milk. Do not stir. Cover the container with a clean kitchen towel and a lid. Let the preparation set for about 1 hour.

Use a shallow ladle or large, flat spoon to divide the tofu pudding among bowls, and enjoy with a savory or sweet condiment.



Method 2

TOFU PUDDING

(Dòuhuā)

Many *dòuhuā* recipes call for using cornstarch as a thickener. It's not necessary if you're making very rich soy milk like this. The royal version of tofu pudding! For savory accompaniments, see page 83; for sweet toppings, see page 368.

🕒 prep 40 min 🕒 soak 8–10 hr 🕒 cook 5–10 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 servings

- 1½ cup dried yellow soybeans • 5¼ cups filtered water (+ 2 Tbsp)
- 1½ tsp (6 g) glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) or scant ½ tsp (6 g) calcium sulfate

Rinse the soybeans well and soak them in a large bowl with five times their volume of tap water. Let them soak at room temperature for 8 hours in summer or 10 hours in winter. Once rehydrated, they should open easily when you squeeze one with your fingers. Drain, rinse thoroughly, and place the beans in a blender. Blend them quite finely, then add 1 quart of filtered water and mix again for a few minutes. Place a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth in a pot set in your sink. Pour the soy liquid into the cheesecloth, then rinse the sides of the blender with the remaining 1¼ cups filtered water and pour it into the cheesecloth as well. Squeeze the cheesecloth to extract all the liquid. Reserve the dry pulp (*okara*) if desired.

Rinse the cheesecloth thoroughly to clean it and repeat the straining process once or twice if needed to achieve perfectly smooth soy milk. Bring the milk to a boil over low heat, skimming off the foam as needed. Use a nonstick pan for this, if possible, as soy milk tends to burn and stick to the bottom. Do not stir it while it is heating, as scraping the burnt milk from the pan bottom will give the milk a burnt taste.

Mix the GDL or calcium sulfate with 2 tablespoons of filtered water. Pour this mixture into a large container (bowl or pot), then pour over the boiling soy milk. Do not stir. Cover and let set for at least 20 minutes. Use a large, flat spoon to divide among bowls, and serve with the sauces and condiments of your choice.

China & Taiwan

豆腐



Tofu manufacturing in an artisan workshop in the north of China.



THE BIRTHPLACE OF TOFU

The Chinese are the undisputed masters of tofu; they are also its inventors. At least that's what we assume, because we don't have written proof of the existence of tofu before 950. While several theories point to the north of the country as the birthplace of tofu, and describe its invention an accident, others argue that its creation was inspired by other peoples who had already mastered the coagulation of milk, such as the Mongols or certain Indian ethnic groups. During the Sung dynasty (960–1279), tofu became a common staple among the lower social classes. The secret of its success is that it was nourishing, filling, and cost less than mutton. This poor man's dish began to appeal to the rich as well, during the Ming dynasty (1368–1662); prized for its delicacy, it quickly became a staple food of all Chinese people, including the nobility.

Though Buddhist and Taoist monks were strictly vegetarians, this was not the case for the rest of the population. Traditionally, the Chinese are fond of meat products but refrain from eating meat at certain times of the year, especially around the lunar new year. While this practice has certainly contributed to making tofu such a popular product, this is not is not the only reason. Its low cost and high availability probably played a role in its success. And the Chinese have developed a taste for this versatile ingredient with varied textures, as sophistication in tofu has progressed. It must be said that with more than a millennium of expertise today – some historians think that we could even be close to two millennia – the Chinese have not only acquired an exceptional tofu-making mastery, but have also developed a real culture linked to this product.

TOFU CULTURE

Chinese tofu is really different from Western tofu. Or rather, the many types of Chinese tofu. Look at the tofu section of a good Chinese grocery, and you will be surprised. The choice is immense,

even in tiny hole-in-the-wall shops, and the many forms that this ingredient can take will probably be foreign to you for the most part. These long brown strands over here are tofu. Just like these light beige leaves that look like super-dense lasagna. These little golden puffs, these are tofu too.

Truly, I invite Westerners to check out the products sold in Chinese groceries. And I invite domestic tofu manufacturers to copy these products. We would gain in quality and variety. Without even getting into the most specialized forms of Chinese tofu, the basic products themselves are really different from what we make. Firm tofu has several variations, none of which is as coarse and compact as the typical supermarket “firm” tofu.

Moreover, the various Chinese tofus available in the West – some of which are made domestically by Chinese-founded companies (and supplying only Asian businesses, not regular organic groceries) – are just a sample. When visiting China and Taiwan, you really grasp the idea of what tofu culture means. It's a bit like observing the culture of bread in France. Tofu is everywhere, its shapes are endlessly varied, many are handcrafted, and not a day goes by without seeing this all-important food. It's there at the table, it's in grandma's shopping bag as she returns from the market, it's in every corner store, on television...tofu is there. It is essential, and it is so much a part of everyday life that locals do not notice it, do not necessarily think about it. They will start thinking about it the day they find themselves in a foreign context where, for the first time, they will be confronted with its absence or its pitiful presence. Look at French people traveling, who complain about the lack of good bread. For the Chinese, it's the same story with good tofu, good rice, and other staples of their diet.

For a foreign visitor who is not used to tofu, its omnipresence in China and Taiwan is confusing, surprising. Especially if it is a



Tofu in all its forms is a regular sight in Chinese market stalls.

visitor who believes that tofu is off-putting or uninteresting. He'll stumble across old-fashioned factories, chimneys smoking early in the morning, windows fogged up by the steam from large tubs full of soy milk. He'll smell the nutty scent of cooked beans, he'll see wood fires crackling even now in the 21st century. He'll see styles of tofu that he has never seen, and that he probably won't see anywhere else. Tofus drying in the sun on the street. Furry tofus that are fuzzy like little soft white stuffed animals. Tofus made just like the world's most beloved cheeses, runny, blue in places, or downright blackened, with molds to see, touch, smell, and taste. Stinky tofus that you can smell from 100 yards away. And so many other forms of tofu that are less extreme, theoretically less remarkable, but still quite delicious, surprising, and different from what we know. If you are

even a little interested in tofu, a trip to China or Taiwan is a goldmine of discoveries and revelations.

ONE DOESN'T RULE OUT THE OTHER

Your attention please: just because there is a lot of tofu in China doesn't mean that Chinese people are all vegetarians. In fact, the Chinese overwhelmingly tend to be big fans of meat (more so than, for example, the Taiwanese). The consumption of meat products has been increasing as the middle class has grown and become richer. At the same time, a fraction of young Chinese people – rather well-off and educated ones – have become vegetarians or vegans in recent years, exactly as in the West – not for religious or cultural reasons, but for personal, ethical, and environmental

reasons. However, they remain few in number. In a study by researchers at Jiao Tong University in Shanghai in 2016, only 0.77 percent of the 4,004 people interviewed were vegetarian (including 0.12 percent vegan). You might try to argue that perhaps this sample is not representative of the population, but as it turns out, Shanghai is one of the Chinese cities where there are the *most* vegetarians. The Chinese really love meat.

The fact is that, in China, even though tofu is a staple for vegetarians monks and is linked to specific vegetarian practices in the rest of the population, it is also and above all a product for everyone, whether omnivore, vegan, flexitarian, and so on. Tofu does not exist in opposition to meat. On the contrary: it rubs shoulders with it, it highlights it, it completes it. Don't expect, when you order a tofu dish in a restaurant, that it is devoid of meat: most of the time there will be both in the pot, wok, and bowl. These two foods coexist easily, because with their different tastes and textures, they fulfill different culinary roles.

Some Chinese tofu dishes are 100 percent vegetarian, but they are not defined or perceived as such. People don't even think about it. There is no meat in the recipe for cold tofu with green onions, for example, but that does not make it a dish for vegetarians – and this is especially true since vegetarian practices in China and Taiwan prohibit the use of green onions and all bulbous plants, because they are killed when plant is harvested. It's similar to how there is no meat in tabbouleh, but that does not mean that the people who eat it are vegetarians or that this dish is reserved for folks who don't eat meat products. That's just the nature of recipe, that's all, and omnivores don't think about it when they eat it. They don't feel like they're depriving themselves or that something is missing (unless you are seriously addicted to meat!).

In Taiwan, things are a little different. A significant portion of the population is part-time vegetarian – not only around the lunar new year – and they are doing it voluntarily and consciously, whether for religious or personal reasons. There are many vegetarian restaurants; it's common to frequent them once a week, with people telling themselves that they're vegetarian on Thursdays, on weekends, for a week a month, or when they need a cleanse. This discipline is much more common and visible than in China, even if it exists there too. In vegetarian restaurants, there is plenty of tofu – but not only tofu. Tofu is not the obvious solution to a meatless diet, the way we regard it in the West. It is only part of the answer. And it doesn't have the label “product for vegetarians” that it has in France. You can eat tofu on meatless days, but you can eat it on meat-eating days as well.

Tofu is an essential foodstuff in China and Taiwan precisely because it is not reserved for a certain population, or for a particular dietary regime. Or maybe it's the other way round: tofu is an essential food there, therefore it is not just intended for a particular population – much like rice throughout Asia, or like potatoes in Europe. In any case, there is nothing special, alternative, or marginal about tofu. It is commonplace. And sometimes it is exceptional. Like a potato: nothing is more unremarkable than a potato. But a beautifully cooked, high-quality potato is amazing. Tofu in itself can be unusual, or the way it is prepared can be. It may be hard to imagine this from where we're sitting, due to our cultural poverty when it comes to tofu. The pages that follow will help you better understand the different types of tofu we find in China and Taiwan. And keep in mind that this is only a small sampling...

TOFU TYPES & USES

FIRM TOFU

It is rather simplistic to want to make generalizations, especially in a country as vast as China, where, in terms of tofu, everything exists – each nuance of texture, density, and taste. Overall, though, we can consider that what is called “firm tofu” in this country is firmer than what is found in Japan and Korea under the same name – Taiwanese tofus represent a middle ground. This firmness is partly due to the fact that Chinese tofus are often more supple and less spongy – the more pronounced use of calcium sulfate in the production of firm tofu gives denser textures, with an equivalent soy content and caloric intake. It can also be due to the fact that they are often pressed more, in order to prepare the tofu for stir-frying. Firm tofus can be fried, sautéed, and braised, among other cooking techniques. Firm tofu is an extremely common everyday product in China and is very inexpensive.

SILKEN TOFU

Silken tofu found in China really is silken. No doubt invented by the Japanese, it must have been adopted by the Chinese, who call it “smooth tofu,” *huádòufu*, because of its fine and slippery texture, slightly elastic but fragile, a bit like a well-set custard. It has a certain firmness, although it is not pressed but rather molded directly in its container (seen in the way that it does not bathe in water but comes in the same size as its packaging). Its taste is very mild, without any bitterness, thanks to generally being set with calcium sulfate or glucono-delta-lactone. Also, it is rich and creamy, being made from a more concentrated soy milk than is used to make firm tofu. There are several degrees of firmness found in silky tofus; the most tender are difficult to handle, but the densest can be manipulated with

care. Silken tofus are excellent served cold or uncooked, with only a few condiments, but also work wonders in soups and some stews. They can be very carefully fried, resulting in a crispy exterior and melting interior.

TOFU PUDDING

Tofu pudding, called *dòuhuā*, is the jewel in the crown. Extremely smooth, even gelatinous if it is made with glucono-delta-lactone, it is very fragile and melting despite its solid appearance. It is also called *dòufunáo*, or “tofu-brain,” in reference to its consistency. It may be eaten warm or cold, sweet or savory, depending on the region and the season. Prepared in impressively large containers, it is dished up in layers that servers are careful not to break; with a few expert strokes of a large flat spoon, your bowl is full of a delicate tofu that breaks into pieces as soon as you touch it. It is light and slides down your throat just like that. It is a popular breakfast dish, ideal for starting the day.

PRESSED TOFU

Pre-pressed tofu is neither spongy nor silky; it contains very little water because it has been pressed to extract as much as possible, offering exceptional firmness and density. It is called *dòugān*, literally “dry tofu,” or *su ji*, meaning “vegetarian chicken,” when it comes as sausage rolls. Its texture, though, is not really that of meat. It is more reminiscent of certain cheeses, in particular *scamorza* – but unlike cheese, pressed tofu does not melt during cooking because it is not fatty. Its unique consistency lets it take on various forms: blocks, sheets, rolls, noodle-like strands...it holds up very well to stir-frying, but can also be used in stews and various other preparations. It is often found flavored with five-spice (see page 94), but you can also find a plain version, sometimes labeled super firm.



There is a very wide variety of tofu in China: firm tofu (1), pressed tofu (2 and 3), silken tofu (4), tofu pudding (5), stinky tofu (6) and fermented tofu (7).

FLAVORED TOFU

In China, tofu is generally not flavored before being molded. It may be flavored afterward. This is the case with five-spice pressed tofu (see page 94), which is flavored by steeping, and with smoked tofu, or *xiāng gān*, which is pressed and traditionally smoked over burning wood or herbs. Not only does this treatment give good flavor to the tofu, but it also helps it keep longer. Tofu can also be flavored in the same way as Chinese tea leaf eggs, by steeping in a solution of tea, soy sauce, and spices. While flavored pressed tofu is widespread – especially the five-spice version – fresh tofu (silken or firm) is generally kept plain, for a simple reason: the sauces and condiments used in Chinese cuisine bring plenty of flavor. Also, a fairly neutral base allows you to do what you want in the kitchen. And, of course, a good tofu made with good soy can be a pleasure in itself; its fine aroma is appreciated, there is no need to hide it.

FERMENTED TOFU

In China, as in Taiwan, fermented tofu is a whole world in itself, which feels completely insane and disconcerting for a French person like myself, since it certainly mirrors our obsession with cheeses (plus, tofu and cheese making processes are almost identical, and the results can be very similar in appearance and flavor). Most fermented tofus are regional specialties that you will probably never find abroad, just like unpasteurized French artisanal cheeses. Some fermented tofus show visible mold in various colors, from yellow to pink, blue-green, and black; they also vary in texture, becoming runny and creamy. A very cute tofu variety typical of Hui cooking is called *máodòufu*, which can be translated as “furry tofu” or “hairy tofu.” Tofu cubes are covered with molds that form long, very fine filaments reminiscent of angora wool.

Other fermented tofus are visually less impressive, such as “tofu cream” or *dòufúrǔ*, which is very easily found abroad. These are small tofu cubes that have fermented in the open air before being put in a jar in brine. The “white” version is cream to beige in color, while the “red” version, which tends to be used in braised dishes because of its full-bodied and boozy flavor, is a very beautiful dark red. There are fermented tofus flavored with chile or herbs, for example. *Dòufúrǔ* reminds one of cheese because of its creamy consistency and its strong and very salty taste. The white version can be used uncooked as a condiment, or used in cooking: it is used in particular to flavor vegetables stir-fried in a wok. A jar of it is inexpensive, lasts a long time, and can be kept for years; it is an item to taste if only out of curiosity.

STINKY TOFU

Taiwan has built a solid reputation for smelly tofu because the one they have is particularly odorous – it’s really just called that, *chòudòufu*, which is to say, “stinky tofu.” Fermented in a solution that generally includes dried shrimp, you can smell it from afar as you approach Taiwanese night markets. It is sold prepared in different ways, mainly fried or cooked in a soup that is in itself an olfactory poem: stinky tofu, curds of goose blood (known as “blood tofu”), mustard pickles, and pork tripe. Take a whiff of that. Taiwan does not, however, have monopoly on in-your-face tofu. It is a specialty in many Chinese regions, each locality having its specialty. In Yunnan, for example, fermentation is spontaneous and takes place in the open air. Small squares of hand-molded tofu are stored for a few days in shelves on wooden trays, until they develop an odor that is completely bearable. They are then grilled and served with sauce of cilantro, chili, and Sichuan pepper.



Máodòufu (literally “furry tofu”) is covered with molds that form long, very fine filaments.

FRIED TOFU

There are several ways to fry tofu. The easiest way is to fry pieces of tofu – firm to extra firm, even super firm pressed tofu – in oil to make what is called *zhádòufu*. The interior remains intact, but a crisp golden crust forms on the outside. It happens to be porous and therefore can absorb sauces and marinades. Tofu can be fried at home or bought ready-made; it is eaten hot with a light sauce, or used in all kinds of preparations. In Chinese and Korean cuisines, it is common to fry tofu before using it in many recipes, as you will see. Not only is it a way to give it a fairly solid external structure, but it also lets it soak up the good flavors of a braise, for example.

TOFU PUFFS

Tofu puffs are another form of fried tofu, with a radically altered consistency. It is called *dòupào* or *dòubǔ*, which means “pea bubble,” in reference to the soybeans and to its airy interior. Outside, it looks rather yellow and slightly spongy; inside, it is fully honeycombed and fairly dry, so it absorbs liquid beautifully. It’s a typical ingredient in some Buddhist dishes, like the famous Buddha’s delight. This form of tofu is also very popular in Southeast Asia, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia.

TOFU SKINS

Tofu skin is not really tofu, but it is often made by the same producers, because its raw material is the same: soy milk. When soy milk is heated, a skin forms on its surface that is made up of about 50 percent protein, 25 percent fat, and 12 percent carbohydrate (among other components). Similar to the skin you get from heating whole milk, it’s an excellent health food, popular in China and Taiwan, called *fūpí* (*yuba* in Japanese). You can eat it fresh and tender, or dry it; its texture allows for it to take on various shapes: sheets, rolls, knots.... It is traditionally used in vegetarian Buddhist cuisine because it is a good substitute for meat thanks to its rich protein and its particular mouthfeel. It’s an ingredient you’ll always find in Taiwanese vegetarian restaurants and dishes for the lunar new year.



It is not uncommon to come across tofu drying in large baskets in the street.

EVERYDAY FRIED RICE

(Chǎofàn)

There are very formal fried rice recipes in China. And then there are all the other fried rice “happenings” that we don’t even really talk about, which are essentially a practical and popular way to use up leftovers or make a coherent dish with a few fresh but motley ingredients. The tiny lady I stayed with in Yunnan would have me fry rice almost every day with the ingredients she had on hand. Part of a head of cabbage? Perfect. A tomato, an egg? Great. Well, I put a little tofu in too, and a little green onion. It was always delicious, whatever the mixture. Here is a recipe for you...

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 clove of garlic, minced • 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 shallot, thinly sliced
- 1 small carrot, diced • 4 oz napa cabbage, coarsely sliced • 4 shiitake mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 4 oz five-spice pressed tofu, diced • 1 egg, beaten • 2½ cups leftover rice
- 1 Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 Tbsp black vinegar • Vegetable oil • Salt

Pour a little oil around the sides of a wok heated over high heat; it will run down to the bottom of the wok anyway, but at least the sides won’t stick. Quickly stir-fry the garlic, green onion, and shallot. Add the carrot, salt lightly, and continue to stir-fry, stirring for about 1 minute. Quickly scoop the vegetables out of the wok, leaving as much oil behind as possible, and set them aside close at hand.

Add a little more oil to the wok if needed, then add the cabbage. Stir-fry for 1 minute, then add the mushrooms and tofu, salt lightly, and continue cooking for 1 minute. Scoop out and set aside with the carrots.

Lightly oil the wok again if needed and pour the beaten egg into the wok, salt lightly, and cook for 30 seconds without stirring. Add the rice to the forming omelet and mix quickly by breaking up the rice with a spatula. The omelet will break up as well.

Return all the reserved vegetables to the wok and vigorously stir and toss all the ingredients. Add the soy sauce and vinegar, plus a little water if the rice seems too dry. Mix well and turn off the heat. Taste and adjust the seasoning, and serve hot.

EGG TOFU

(Dàn dòufu)

The Chinese may call this dish literally “egg tofu,” but it is not a real tofu. The name derives from the fact that the final dish looks like tofu and is used in the same way. Plus, it does contain a lot of soy. The catch is that it is not coagulated and pressed soy milk, but a steamed custard made of egg and soy milk. This preparation, which can replace extra firm silken tofu or flexible medium tofu in many recipes, is very popular in Japan, Thailand, Malaysia.... It is quite easily found in tubes in Asian grocery stores, but it’s much better homemade – and at least that way we know exactly what’s in it.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegetarian

For one 7-inch square pan

- 6 eggs • 2 cups soy milk, homemade or not
- ½ tsp salt • Vegetable oil

Line your pan with parchment paper greased with vegetable oil. Mix the eggs, soy milk, and salt, stirring until you have a homogeneous mixture. Strain the mixture through a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer into the pan. Steam for 15–20 minutes; a knife blade inserted in the “tofu” should come out clean. If you used a smaller pan, the tofu will be thicker and the cooking time may be longer.

Let cool completely before cutting into slices. You can keep the egg tofu in the refrigerator for 4 days without any problem.

COLD TOFU

WITH GREEN ONION

(Xiǎocōng bàn dòufu)

Cold tofu is a classic in China, very refreshing in summer. People eat it uncooked to appreciate its smooth texture and season it with a salty, spicy, and tangy sauce as well as fresh herbs and sesame seeds, although the ingredients vary from region to region. This recipe requires a tofu with a very fine texture, coagulated with calcium sulfate, like a flexible medium tofu or extra firm silken tofu. This is nothing like typical store-bought silken tofu; it is finer, firmer, and more flexible, and therefore easy to handle – with care. It is found in the fresh section of Chinese and Japanese food markets.

🕒 prep 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 7–10 oz flexible soft to medium tofu or extra firm silken tofu
- A few cilantro leaves • 1 green onion, thinly sliced

For the sauce

- 2 Tbsp light soy sauce • 2 Tbsp sesame oil • 2 Tbsp water • 2 tsp black vinegar
- 1–2 red chiles, thinly sliced, or 1–2 tsp chile oil
- 1 Tbsp toasted white sesame seeds • 1 tsp sugar • 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 2–3 sprigs cilantro, thinly sliced

Gently unmold the tofu and cut it into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes. With the blade of a large, wide knife, place the tofu cubes in a large serving bowl or divide them among 4 individual bowls. You can also choose to keep the tofu in a single block to share, or to divide it into 4 small blocks.

In a bowl, combine all the sauce ingredients. Pour it over the tofu, add the cilantro leaves and green onion, and serve immediately.

Note To firm up your tofu before cutting it, you can dissolve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of salt in 1 quart of boiling water and soak your block for 15 minutes, then drain it for at least 15 minutes on paper towels.



SAUTÉED TOFU IN LETTUCE CUPS

(Shēng cài bāo)

This recipe is said to come from the ancient village of Fangcun, which is today in the city of Canton (Guangzhou), known for its lettuce production. One doesn't necessarily associate green salad with China, and yet many varieties are found there – China is the world's top lettuce producer. In Fangcun, and more particularly in Kengkou, lettuce is celebrated in a festival every year; it is thanks to this celebration that *shēng cài bāo* was created. The idea is to wrap various ingredients in a lettuce leaf with a little sauce. There are hundreds of different interpretations of the idea, yielding extremely varied recipes. Here is a very crunchy and colorful vegan version with a light sauce, to eat as a snack, as an aperitif, or as a starter.

🕒 prep 25 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

For 12–15 cups

- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 1 small carrot, julienned or diced
- 1 small handful edamame • 3 black mushrooms, fresh or rehydrated, diced
- 3 shiitake mushrooms, fresh or rehydrated, diced • 2 red chiles, thinly sliced, or ½ red bell pepper, diced
- 4 oz flexible firm tofu, coarsely chopped • 2 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • 2 Tbsp light soy sauce
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 2 Tbsp sesame oil • 2 hearts of Little Gem lettuce or 1 head escarole or iceberg lettuce • Vegetable oil • Salt, white pepper

Heat a wok over high heat and add a little vegetable oil, then the ginger. Brown for 15 seconds, then add the carrot. Salt lightly and stir-fry very briefly, stirring. Add the edamame and continue cooking for 30 seconds. Scoop them out of the wok, leaving as much oil behind as possible, and set aside in a bowl.

Add a little more oil to the wok if needed. In the same way, sauté the mushrooms and the chile (or the bell pepper). Add the tofu, rice wine, and soy sauce. Stir well, add the green onions, and stir-fry for another 30 seconds. Place in the bowl with the carrot. Toss together all the ingredients in the bowl. Season with salt (if needed) and pepper, and add the sesame oil. Toss again.

Separate your lettuce leaves. The small leaves of the heart are particularly practical and attractive for this recipe, but large leaves cut in half will also work. Fill the small leaves with the vegetable and tofu mixture like little boats. For a large leaf cut in half or a whole medium leaf, place a heaping tablespoon of filling on it, roll it up, and fasten it with a toothpick to keep the roll closed. Serve the little boats and rolls nicely arranged on a large platter.



COLD TOFU

WITH CENTURY EGGS

(Pídàn dòufu)

Century eggs and cold tofu form a classic culinary marriage in China and Taiwan – a marriage that terrifies Westerners. However, these eggs are delicious and absolutely not spoiled. They have changed texture and color by being preserved for several weeks to several months in a mixture of clay, salt, rice hulls, ash, and quicklime. The pH of the egg increases considerably during the process (becoming more basic); the whites turn amber to brown, translucent and brittle like a jelly; and the yolk takes on a melting texture and fabulous colors varying from deep black to green and blue. They are very good, and not weird at all. The rich taste and amazing consistency of the eggs go amazingly well with humble tofu.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍴 4 servings

- 10 oz flexible soft to medium tofu or extra firm silken tofu
 - 2 century eggs • 1–2 Tbsp soy sauce
 - 1–2 tsp sesame oil • 1 green onion, thinly sliced

Carefully unmold the tofu in your hand over the sink to drain it. Place it on a plate and cut it into slices or cubes, or keep it whole. Peel the eggs and cut them in half, then cut each of the 2 halves in three wedges. Arrange them around the tofu. Drizzle with soy sauce and sesame oil, add the green onion and serve right away as a starter.

Note You will find century eggs (or hundred-year eggs) made from duck or chicken eggs in the refrigerated section of Asian groceries. Be careful not to confuse them with fertilized eggs – that's another story...



“THOUSAND-LAYER” TOFU

(Qiānyè dòufu)

“Thousand-layer” tofu is badly named. Personally, instead of “thousand-layer” I would rather call it “thousand-hole” tofu. It has a striking appearance, with a honeycomb texture that would seem to have required work, but the technique is in reality as easy as pie. It is simply frozen, then thawed. Ta-da! The ice crystals that form in the tofu leave holes as they melt. Besides the visual effect and the fun consistency, thousand-layer tofu has the advantage of absorbing sauces, marinades, and broths really well, just like a sponge. This lets it work wonders in many dishes, and it can replace firm tofu in most of the recipes in this book. It can also be fried.

🕒 prep 1 min 🕒 set 24 hr 🌱 vegan

For 1 block thousand-layer tofu

• 1 block firm tofu

All firm tofus are suitable for this purpose. Extra firm or super firm pressed tofus are too dense.

Drain your tofu block and cut it into slices slightly thinner than ½ inch thick. Place them in a plastic bag and place in the freezer for 24–48 hours. When the slices are frozen through to the center, take them out of the bag and let them thaw in the refrigerator or in a cool place on a plate covered with several layers of paper towels.

The thawed tofu can be eaten uncooked with a sauce, or cooked – braised, fried, simmered, marinated.... It will absorb sauces particularly well.



TOFU HONEYCOMB SOUP

(Fēngcháo dòufu tāng)

When you cook firm tofu for a while in a simmering water bath, you slowly alter its composition and structure. It will lose firmness, and its small holes will widen to form “honeycomb tofu,” as it is called in southeastern China. Its sweet flavor (it loses all trace of the flavor of its coagulating agent) and its extremely fragile and tender texture are appreciated in various recipes, in particular soups that shine with their finesse and simplicity – like this one.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 soak 1 night 🕒 cook 1 hr 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 dried shiitake mushrooms • 10 oz firm tofu • ¼ cup Shaoxing rice wine
- ¾-inch piece root ginger, thinly sliced • 2 green onions
- Salt or mushroom powder • ⅓ cup edamame or green peas, fresh or frozen
- White pepper • 1 Tbsp sesame oil

The day before, rehydrate the mushrooms in 1 quart of cold water (you can do it the same day, but the broth will have less flavor). The next day, strain the mushroom-soaking water and pour it into a pot. Remove the stems from the mushrooms, slice the caps, and add them to the pot.

Cut the tofu in half lengthwise and then into slices a little less than ½ inch thick. Place them in a second pot and cover them with water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower the heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Drain the water, keeping the tofu in the pot, cover with water again, and cook in the same way. Repeat the operation a third time. The tofu will become more and more fragile, so be careful.

Transfer the drained tofu to the mushroom water. Add the rice wine, ginger, and the white parts of the green onions, left whole (slice the green parts thinly, and reserve for garnishing). Bring to a boil over high heat, then salt the water or add mushroom powder to taste. Lower the heat, cover, and let simmer for 30 minutes. Remove the ginger and the green onion. Add the edamame or peas and return to a boil. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve in bowls, adding to each some of the reserved sliced green onions and a drizzle of sesame oil.

Note You can use thousand-layer tofu (see page 56) for this recipe. It is already honeycombed and therefore will not need to be cooked several times; add it directly to the soup, which can be ready in just 15 minutes!



BOK CHOY & TOFU SOUP

(Qīng cài dòufu tāng)

The Japanese do not have a monopoly on blandness; it is also appreciated in China. It is not a boring or depressing blandness, it is rather a moment of rest – and I would go so far as to say tenderness – for our taste buds, which are often overworked. This soup perfectly illustrates this idea: the vegetable is fresh and crunchy, the tofu is soft, the broth is mild, refined, made with almost nothing. It's good and it's very healthy.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 8 oz baby bok choy • 10 oz flexible medium tofu
- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 2 tsp sesame oil • 1 tsp salt

Separate the bok choy leaves, and rinse. Cut the tofu into ¾-inch cubes or into rectangles ½ inch thick.

Bring 1 quart of water to a boil. Add the tofu, bok choy, and ginger, then let boil for 2 minutes. Add sesame oil and salt to taste (add salt gradually, tasting as you go – you may not need a whole teaspoon). Mix well and serve hot.



CHINESE CABBAGE

SAUTÉED WITH FERMENTED TOFU

(Dòufūrǔ càixīn)

Vegetables stir-fried with a little fermented tofu are an essential dish in China. The idea is that more or less all vegetables are suitable for this preparation, but leafy cabbages like flowering Chinese cabbage (*choy sum* or *yu choy*), water spinach (bindweed), and eggplant are the most common. If you can't find flowering Chinese cabbage, available in the vegetable section of Chinese grocery stores, you can replace it with Chinese broccoli (*gai lan*) or broccoli rabe (rapini), broccolini, or something similar.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 10 oz flowering Chinese cabbage (*choy sum* or *yu choy*) • 2 Tbsp peanut oil
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced or minced • 1 Tbsp water • 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine
- 2 cubes white fermented tofu (*dòufūrǔ*), crushed into a purée • 1 pinch white pepper

Prepare your cabbage: keep the thinnest and most tender bunches whole, separate the larger ones. If some stems are very thick and fibrous, you can cut them in half lengthwise. Peel the ends of any woody stems, much as you would asparagus. You can cut all the cabbage stems in half crosswise to shorten them, or keep them long.

Blanch the cabbage in a pot of boiling water for 30–40 seconds, then immediately immerse in a bowl of ice water to stop cooking. Drain well, pressing lightly to extract the moisture.

Heat your wok over very high heat, then add the oil. Add the cabbage and stir-fry for about 2 minutes. Spread it up the sides of the wok and put the garlic, water, rice wine, crushed tofu in the center. Stir this to make a sauce; when it comes to a boil, stir and toss it with the cabbage, then turn off the heat. Sprinkle with white pepper and serve at once.



TOFU NOODLE SALAD

(Liángbàn gān sī)

Pre-pressed tofu is found in blocks in Chinese grocery stores; it can be plain or five-spice flavor. It can also found in the form of sheets and strips resembling noodles. These tofu “noodles” are tough, firm, but flexible – much less delicate than actual noodles, in fact. There are many ways to cook them, but it’s common to eat them cold, as a salad, with carrots and celery – or other vegetables of your choice. It’s very good in summer, as a starter to share or as an accompaniment to other dishes, and is full of protein.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 8 oz tofu noodles (plain or five-spice) • A few stalks of Chinese celery (or 1 rib of celery), julienned • 1 large carrot, spiralized, shredded, or julienned
- 1 clove garlic, minced • 2 Tbsp sesame oil • 2 Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 Tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp sugar • 1 Tbsp toasted white sesame seeds

Cut the base of the tofu noodles to separate them if needed (they are sometimes joined on one side) and cut them down to size if they are too long. Blanch for 1 minute in a large pot of boiling salted water, along with the celery and carrot. Drain and rinse with cold water.

In a serving bowl, combine the garlic, sesame oil, soy sauce, rice vinegar, and sugar. Add the tofu noodles and vegetables to the bowl and toss. Serve sprinkled with sesame seeds.

Note You can add chile oil to your salad dressing if you like a little spice.



SWEET & SOUR TOFU

(Suān tián dòufu)

The original sweet-and-sour sauce recipe, called *gūlōuyuhk* in Cantonese and made with pork and with ingredients not widely found in Western countries, has undergone all kinds of changes over time. Even in its region of origin, it has become a “fusion” dish, with the addition of pineapple, bell peppers, and tomatoes. This tofu version corresponds to the modern standard of the dish, but revisits a basic principle of the traditional recipe: frying in two batches, for a crispy result. For the sauce, I preferred to avoid ketchup, widely used in Chinese restaurants in the West; sweet and savory plum sauce (see Note) is closer to the original recipe.

⌚ prep 20 min ⌚ cook 20 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍴 4 servings

- 14 oz flexible medium to firm tofu or very firm to extra firm tofu
- 1–2 eggs, beaten • 6 Tbsp cornstarch, tapioca flour, or potato starch
 - 1 clove garlic, minced • 1 tsp minced root ginger
 - 1 green onion, cut into ¾-inch lengths
 - ½ green bell pepper, cut in 1½-inch triangles
 - ½ red bell pepper, cut in 1½-inch triangles
- 15-oz can chunk pineapple or ½ fresh pineapple, cubed • Peanut oil • Salt

For the sauce

- 2 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine
- 3 Tbsp plum sauce
- 1 tsp cornstarch, tapioca flour, or potato starch mixed with 3 Tbsp water

With your hands, tear the tofu into rough bite-sized pieces. You can cut it with a knife, but tearing it leaves it rougher and gives the sauce something to cling to. Blot the tofu dry with paper towels. Heat oil for deep-frying in a deep fryer or heavy pot.

Sprinkle the pieces of tofu with salt, then dip them in the lightly salted beaten egg and dredge with cornstarch. Fry in batches until they start to brown. Transfer with a skimmer to a rack set on a baking sheet lined with paper towels and let rest, well spaced out, for 10–15 minutes. Reserve the frying oil.

Heat the oil again. Dip the tofu pieces a second time in the egg and dredge again with starch. Fry until the pieces are perfectly golden and crisp. Transfer them to the rack, and prepare the rest of the dish immediately.

Heat a wok over high heat. Add a little peanut oil, then add the garlic, ginger, and the white part of the green onion. Stir-fry for 15 seconds, then add the bell peppers and stir-fry for 30 seconds. Add the pineapple, green onions, rice wine, and mix. Then add the plum sauce and the green part of the green onion, and the corn-starch slurry. Mix well. As soon as the sauce has thickened, remove the wok from the heat. Arrange the fried tofu on a platter and cover it with the hot vegetables and sauce.

Note Plum sauce (sometimes called “sweet-and-sour sauce”) may be found in Asian groceries and well-stocked supermarkets. Some brands offer a good quality product, without preservatives, MSG, or other additives; read the ingredients carefully before choosing.

MUNG BEAN NOODLES

BRAISED WITH TOFU & VEGGIES

(Dòufu Fěnsī bāo)

Braised dishes made with mung bean noodles (also called cellophane noodles or glass noodles) are common in China and neighboring countries. All kinds of combinations of ingredients are possible; the noodles, which have a slippery and interestingly elastic texture, do not really have much flavor of their own, so they lend themselves to many dishes. They will absorb the flavors of the broth, vegetables, spices, and aromatics they cook with. Normally this type of dish is prepared in a terra-cotta pot, but enameled cast iron also works very well.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 8 dried shiitake mushrooms • 8 oz mung bean noodles • 14 oz firm to extra firm tofu
- 2 cloves garlic, minced • 2 thin slices root ginger, julienned
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced • 1 carrot, julienned
- 1 baby bok choy, leaves separated and coarsely sliced • 2 Tbsp light soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • Vegetable oil • Salt

Soak the mushrooms and the noodles in separate bowls of water for about 15 minutes. Cut the tofu in half lengthwise and then into slices a little less than ½ inch thick. Blot the slices dry with paper towels.

Heat a frying pan or wok over medium-high heat, add some oil, and brown the tofu slices on both sides. Remove it to a plate, leaving as much oil behind as possible. In the still-hot oil, stir-fry the garlic, ginger, and green onion for 30 seconds. Add the carrot, stir, then add the bok choy. Stir-fry briefly, season with salt, toss, and turn off the heat.

In a cast-iron pot, layer the drained noodles, then the vegetables and tofu. Score the mushroom caps and stand them up in the pot, stem down. Add a little salt, soy sauce, rice wine, and 2 cups of the mushroom-soaking water. Place over medium heat, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes, or until the noodles are tender. Taste and adjust the seasoning if needed, and serve at once.



SICHUAN-STYLE MAPO TOFU

(Mápó dòufu)

This dish has a funny backstory. It was created at the end of the nineteenth century in Chengdu, Sichuan, by a restaurant owner nicknamed Mápó (“má” for *mázi*, which means “pockmark”, and “pó” for *pópo*, which means “grandmother”). Granny Pockmark, aka Mápó, real name Chen Liu, cooked many dishes based on rice and tofu. Until the day she invented a ground beef and tofu stew (in some versions, at the request of her customers). Huge success: beef was rare in small canteens at the time and made the dish famous. The recipe has become more and more spicy over time. Today it is based on fermented black beans, or *dòuchǐ*, and fava (or broad) beans fermented with chile, a Sichuan specialty called *là dòubànjiàng*. As the chile is fermented, it does not taste that strong. You can also add a good dose of Sichuan pepper. Here is the recipe – without beef.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 28 oz flexible medium or soft tofu, or extra firm silken tofu
- 3 Tbsp fermented fava bean paste with chile (*là dòubànjiàng*)
- 1 Tbsp fermented black soybeans (*dòuchǐ*) • 1½ tsp minced root ginger
- 3 cloves garlic • 1 Tbsp red chile flakes (optional) • 2 Tbsp light soy sauce
- 2 garlic chives, thinly sliced • 1 Tbsp cornstarch or potato starch mixed with 3 Tbsp water
- 1 Tbsp sesame oil • ½ Tbsp Sichuan peppercorns, toasted and ground • Vegetable oil
- Salt • Steamed rice, for serving

Cut the tofu into ¾-inch cubes and gently add them to a large pot filled with cold water. Add ½ teaspoon salt, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for 3 minutes. Drain the tofu gently in a colander. Set aside.

Roughly chop the spicy fermented fava beans and fermented black soybeans on a board with a knife. Heat a wok over high heat and add a little oil. Reduce the heat, scrape the beans into the wok, and stir-fry for 1 minute. Add the ginger and garlic and stir-fry for 30 seconds, then add the chile flakes. Pour 2½ cups of water into the wok, mix, and bring to a boil over high heat. Gently add the tofu cubes and soy sauce. Adjust the heat as needed to simmer for 8 minutes. Add half of the garlic chives and half of the cornstarch slurry to the wok. Wait 30 seconds, then pour in the rest. Gently mix with the back of a spatula, so as not to crush the tofu. Taste and season with salt, if needed. Let the sauce thicken, add the sesame oil, and mix. Serve sprinkled with Sichuan pepper and the rest of garlic chives, accompanied with rice.

Note To firm up your tofu before cutting it, you can dissolve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salt in 1 quart of boiling water and bathe your tofu in it for 15 minutes, then drain it on paper towels for at least 15 minutes.



TOFU POT STICKERS

(Dòufu guōtiē)

The hardest part about making Chinese dumplings is to get the dough right. The rest is very easy. The folding does take a little while, but boy is it good! To simplify your life, I advise you to buy ready-made dumpling wrappers, available in the fresh case or the frozen aisle of Asian groceries (see Note, page 74). Then you can feast on these airy, crisp-on-the-bottom dumplings, called *jiān jiǎo* or *guōtiē*, which are the inspiration of Japanese *gyōza* (hence the very close names). You can stuff the *guōtiē* with just about anything you want; this vegan recipe calls for tofu, cabbage, and green onions.

🕒 prep 45 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan

For 40 dumplings

- 7 oz napa cabbage or pointed cabbage, coarsely chopped
- 10 oz extra-firm tofu, chopped • 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced • 1 tsp minced root ginger
- 1 Tbsp sesame oil • 1 Tbsp light soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • 1 tsp cornstarch or potato starch
- 40 dumpling wrappers • Salt, white pepper • Vegetable oil

For the sauce

- 3 Tbsp light soy sauce • 3 Tbsp black vinegar • ½ tsp julienned root ginger

Put the cabbage in a bowl and sprinkle it with 1 teaspoon salt. Mix well with your hand and let drain for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the ingredients for the stuffing: tofu, green onions, garlic, ginger, sesame oil, soy sauce, rice wine, and cornstarch. Use your hands to squeeze the cabbage and remove excess water. You can rinse it briefly and squeeze again if you find it too salty. Add it to the stuffing, and mix. Taste and season with salt, if needed, and pepper.

(continued)



Place 1½–2 teaspoons of stuffing in the center of each disc of dough. Pick up each disc with two hands and fold it over itself while holding it by the ends. Make a pleat in the center of the dough on the side in front of you, and two pleats on either side of the central fold. This will give the ravioli a curved shape, much like a pretty, very chic croissant. Glue together the dough edges; to do this, dip your finger in a bowl of water, wet the edges of the dough, and pinch them together firmly all along their entire length, especially at the ends.

If this is too complicated, you can simply make half-moons by folding the dough disc over on itself and gluing the edges together flat. Place the folded dumplings on a sheet of parchment paper, taking care that they do not touch each other.

To make the sauce, combine the soy sauce, vinegar, and ginger in a bowl and stir to mix. Set aside.

Place a large frying pan over medium heat, add some vegetable oil, and when the oil is shimmering arrange the ravioli in the oil, all on the same side, in concentric circles without crowding (you will probably need to do this in 2 or 3 batches). Brown them for a few minutes on one side only. When they are golden on the bottom, add ¼ cup of water to the pan, pouring it down the sides of the pan. Cover, lower the heat slightly, and cook for another 3–5 minutes.

The water should evaporate and the ravioli will be fully cooked. If the water evaporates too quickly, add a little more. If, on the other hand, there is too much water left and the dumplings become too soft, remove the excess water, cook uncovered, and adjust the amount of water for the next batch. Serve the dumplings hot as you go along, accompanied with the sauce.

Note When purchasing dough rounds, be sure to buy dough for *gyoza*, *mandu*, and other *guōtiē*, which is egg-free. The egg yolk dough used to make wontons is thicker and won't pleat as well.

CRISPY SALT & PEPPER TOFU

(Jiāo yán dòufu)

When they talk about “salt and pepper” in China, they’re usually thinking of Sichuan peppercorns – in Cantonese and Taiwanese cuisine, however, they are referring to white pepper. There are many variations of salt and pepper recipes, more or less saucy, more or less spicy, with different herbs.... Here is a rather dry version (made without broth), which of course includes tofu. The tofu becomes very crisp when it is fried twice.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb flexible firm or medium tofu • 3 Tbsp cornstarch, tapioca flour, or potato starch • $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ground white or Sichuan peppercorns • 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 1 green onion, thinly sliced • 1–2 red or green chiles, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • Peanut oil • Steamed rice for serving

Cut the tofu into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes. Place them on paper towels and blot dry. Heat oil for deep-frying into a deep fryer or heavy pot. Dredge the tofu cubes in cornstarch on all sides, and fry until crisp. Do this in several batches to avoid crowding. Place the fried tofu as it’s ready on a rack set on a baking sheet lined with paper towels.

Combine the salt and pepper in a bowl. Heat a wok over high heat, add a little peanut oil, and then add the garlic, ginger, the white part of the green onion, and the chile. Stir-fry for about 10 seconds, then add the rice wine and the fried tofu and stir-fry for a few moments. Add the salt and pepper and the green part of the green onion and sauté for another 1 minute, stirring. Serve hot with rice.

Note When using Sichuan peppercorns, green or red, pick out any black seeds that may remain (you can tell higher-quality brands by the fact that they contain no gritty seeds or stray twigs). Toast them for a few moments in a dry pan and grind them to a powder before using.

STEAMED STUFFED YUBA

(Fu pei gyun)

Stuffed rolled tofu skins (*yuba*) are a classic dim sum dish. They are usually stuffed with pork, sometimes shrimp, and possibly vegetables, and are then cooked in water, steamed, panfried, or deep-fried. This vegetarian recipe shows a simple, delicious, and very healthy way to use *yuba* to make delicious rolls as a starter or a main dish. Dried tofu skins are sometimes labeled “bean curd sheets.”

🕒 prep 30 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 8 pieces

- 4 dried shiitake mushrooms • 10 oz extra firm tofu, diced • 2 small carrots, grated or julienned
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 4 oz bamboo shoots, julienned • 2 tsp cornstarch or potato starch
- 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • Salt and pepper • 2–4 dried tofu skins, cut into eight 8-inch squares
- 1 egg white, beaten • Peanut oil

For the sauce

- 1 tsp minced garlic • 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • 2 Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 cup mushroom soaking water • 1 Tbsp sesame oil • 1 tsp cornstarch or potato starch mixed with 1 Tbsp water

Rehydrate the mushrooms by placing them in a bowl and covering them with cold water. When they are softened, squeeze them to drain, remove the stems, and slice the caps. Strain and reserve the soaking water.

Mix all the stuffing ingredients in a large bowl: mushrooms, tofu, carrot, bamboo shoots, cornstarch, rice wine. Season with salt and pepper.

Place a square of yuba on your work surface. Moisten it with a damp cloth to soften. Place 3 heaping tablespoons of stuffing on the sheet an inch from the edge nearest you. Pack the stuffing into a sausage shape, leaving room on the sheet at both ends of the sausage. With a brush, apply egg white to all the edges of the sheet. Fold in both sides to contain and compact the stuffing, then roll forward (the folding and rolling is identical to that of spring rolls). Repeat the procedure until you have no more stuffing. Heat an inch or so of peanut oil in a frying pan or wok, and fry the rolls until golden.

Prepare the sauce: in a wok or a frying pan, combine the garlic, rice wine, soy sauce, and reserved mushroom water, and simmer for a few minutes. Add the sesame oil and the cornstarch slurry, and let the sauce thicken. Remove from the heat.

Place 2 to 3 rolls in a soup dish. Pour a quarter or a third of the sauce over them. Steam for 8–10 minutes. Repeat the procedure with the rest of the rolls and the sauce. Serve the rolls hot as they are ready.

3-CUP TOFU

(Sān bēi dòufu)

This recipe is the vegan version of three-cup chicken, *sān bēi jī*, which is one of the most popular Taiwanese dishes. Pleasantly scented with Thai basil leaves, it owes its name to the fact that it is cooked with a cup of soy sauce, a cup of sesame oil, and a cup of Shaoxing rice wine. The tofu variant is quite common in Taiwan, with a large part of the population being part-time vegetarians – the Taiwanese people make a conscious and willing choice to not eat meat every day.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14 oz firm tofu • 4 Tbsp sesame oil • 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- ¾-inch piece root ginger, thinly sliced • 1 Tbsp sugar
- 4 Tbsp soy sauce • 4 Tbsp *mijiu* or Shaoxing rice wine
- 1 small handful Thai basil leaves • Vegetable oil • Steamed rice for serving

Cut the tofu into 1-inch cubes and blot dry with paper towels. Heat a wok or frying pan over high heat, add a little vegetable oil, and brown the tofu cubes. Set aside.

Heat a Dutch oven or casserole pan over medium heat, and add the sesame oil, garlic, and ginger. Let cook for a few moments, then add the sugar, soy sauce, and rice wine. Mix well, add the tofu, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir again, add the basil, cover, and simmer for 1 minute more. Serve hot with rice.

SPICY TOFU

WITH PEANUTS

(Gōngbǎo dòufu)

Like many Chinese dishes, the origin of *gōng bǎo* chicken (*gōng bǎo jī dīng*) is uncertain and controversial. The story that the Chinese like – probably because it flirts with legend – links this recipe to Dīng Bǎozhēn (1820–1886), who was the governor of Sichuan at the end of the Qing dynasty. He bore the title of *Gōngbǎo* and adored chicken cooked like this, to the point where they ended up baptizing this preparation in his honor. Whether it is true or not, the dish offers the typical Sichuan flavors: there are dried chile – from varieties that are less spicy and larger than Thai chiles – and Sichuan peppercorns, as well as peanuts, black vinegar, and sesame oil. Here is a vegan version of the recipe, with pre-pressed tofu replacing the meat.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb pressed tofu (plain or five-spice) • 1 handful unsalted peanuts
- 10 dried Sichuan chiles • 1–2 tsp Sichuan pepper (whole husks, no seeds) • 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp minced root ginger • 4 green onions, white parts chopped, green parts thinly sliced
- Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving

For the marinade

- 1 pinch salt • 2 tsp soy sauce • 1 tsp Shaoxing rice wine

For the sauce

- 2 Tbsp sugar • 1 tsp cornstarch • 1 Tbsp water • 1 tsp light soy sauce
- 1 tsp dark soy sauce • 1 Tbsp black vinegar • 1 tsp sesame oil

Cut the tofu into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch squares that are $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, and mix them with the marinade ingredients in a large bowl. In another bowl, combine all the ingredients for the sauce.

Heat a wok over medium-high heat, add a little vegetable oil, heat until shimmering, and then add the peanuts. Stir-fry, stirring constantly for 1–2 minutes. Transfer them to a bowl nearby, leaving the oil in the wok.

Add a little more oil to the wok if needed, then add the chiles and Sichuan peppercorn. Stir-fry until the chiles are a little puffy and the oil is fragrant. Add the tofu and its marinade, and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger, and green onion, toss, and continue to stir-fry for 2 minutes. Pour the sauce into the wok, mix well, and add the peanuts. When the sauce has thickened, turn off the heat, garnish with green onions, and serve at once with rice.

Note To reduce the heat of the chiles, make a slit and remove the seeds (wear gloves!). You can also use a smaller amount.



RED-COOKED TOFU

(Hóngshāo dòufu)

The term “*hóngshāo*” is associated with several quite different recipes with varying main ingredients. It is translated as “red cooked” or “red braised,” but these dishes are not necessarily red. Nor are they spicy. In this case, *hóngshāo* tofu is not really red, and not at all spicy. Tofu is first fried or sautéed and then braised with garlic, ginger, green onions, oyster sauce, and often some vegetables. It’s very simple and quick to do, and really good.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 1¼ cups water or unsalted vegetable stock • 1 Tbsp vegetarian oyster sauce
- 1 Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 tsp dark soy sauce • 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine
- ½ tsp sugar • ½ tsp salt • 1 tsp cornstarch or potato starch • 1 Tbsp water
- 14 oz flexible medium to firm tofu, or firm to extra firm tofu • 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 3–5 black wood ear mushrooms, cut into 1-inch cubes
- ½ red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch cubes • ½ yellow or green bell pepper, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 green onion, chopped crosswise • Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving

In a bowl, combine the water or broth, the oyster sauce, soy sauces, rice wine, sugar, and salt. Set aside. In a small bowl, combine the cornstarch and water. Set aside.

Cut the tofu in half lengthwise, then into slices a little less than ½ inch thick. Blot dry with paper towels. Set a wok or frying pan over high heat, add a little oil, and when the oil is shimmering brown the tofu on both sides.

Add the garlic, ginger, mushrooms, and the soy sauce mixture. Shake the wok a little to make sure the tofu doesn’t stick. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes. Some of the liquid should evaporate. Continue cooking uncovered if you find there is still too much liquid.

Raise the heat to high and add the bell peppers and green onions. Gently mix with the back of a spatula so as not to break up the tofu. Add the cornstarch slurry, mix again, and heat until slightly thickened. The sauce should coat the tofu and vegetables nicely. If it’s too dry, add water. If it is too runny, let simmer for a few more moments, uncovered. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve hot with rice.



SICHUAN-STYLE BRAISED TOFU

(jiācháng dòufu)

China is a big country with different dialects, and Chinese people don't always understand one another. The words *jiā cháng*, which can have multiple meanings, are understood by the majority of the country to mean "home-style," along the lines of a family dish. But in Sichuan, they are taken very differently: the inhabitants of this province see in them the evocation of flavors typical of *their* home "Sichuan-style." Some Sichuanese diplomatically note that this is the same thing, since the ingredients they use for their recipe are found in every family cupboard. Anyway, here is the version of this "Sichuan-style" tofu dish. It is braised in a spicy fermented fava bean paste sauce (*là dòubànjiàng*), a wonderful condiment that should be used in everything.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 5 oz bamboo shoots • 14 oz firm to extra firm tofu • 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 1–2 Tbsp fermented fava bean paste with chile (*là dòubànjiàng*)
- 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • 1 tsp sugar • 1–3 medium-spicy red chiles, thinly sliced (optional)
 - 1¼ cups water • 1–2 Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 Tbsp sesame oil
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 tsp cornstarch or potato starch mixed with 1 Tbsp water
 - Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving

Cut the bamboo shoots into lengths of 1–1½ inches. Slice these in the direction of the grain. Cut the tofu into rectangles or triangles ¼ inch thick. Blot dry with paper towels. If you have time, you can press and drain the tofu for 30 minutes before cutting it.

Brown the tofu in an oiled wok or frying pan. You can fry it in an inch of vegetable oil if you prefer. Reserve on a plate.

Set a wok over high heat, add 1–2 tablespoons of vegetable oil, and stir-fry the garlic and ginger for 30 seconds. Add the bean paste and the bamboo shoots, and stir-fry for a few moments, then add the rice wine, the sugar, and the chiles. Put the tofu in the wok and add the water. Mix and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a bare simmer and gently braise for about 10 minutes, until three-quarters of the liquid is gone.

Taste, add a dash of soy sauce if it need salt. Add the sesame oil, cornstarch slurry, and three-quarters of the green onions, and mix well. Serve hot, sprinkled with the remaining green onion, with rice.

TOFU PUDDING

YUNNAN STYLE

(Hóng yóu dòuhuā)

In Yunnan, as in Sichuan – as well as in northern China – tofu pudding is eaten salty – as opposed to the south of the country and Southeast Asia, where it is sweetened. The specialty of Yunnan and Sichuan is to make a spicy version served with an array of toppings, which is absolutely delicious. The perfectly smooth, silky, and melting tofu pudding slides into the mouth and mixes with the crisp and crunchy textures of the aromatics. It's sweet and strong, fresh and salty, healthy and delicious. Here is the recipe that is served every morning at the food stands in the city of *Shāxī*, accompanied by delicious crispy and fluffy long doughnuts called *yóutiáo*.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 28 oz tofu pudding (homemade or not) • 4 Tbsp vegetable oil • 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 4 tsp fried shallots • 4 tsp crushed toasted peanuts
- 4 tsp crushed toasted sesame • 4 tsp Sichuan chile oil • 4 tsp soy sauce • 4 tsp black vinegar
- 4 tsp light soy sauce • 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 handful cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped
- 4 tsp medium-spicy Korean red chile flakes (*gochugaru*)
- A few pinches of Sichuan peppercorns, toasted and ground

Place the tofu pudding, in its container or other suitable container, in a steam basket and heat it with steam for about 15 minutes.

In a small pot over medium-low heat, warm half of the vegetable oil with the garlic. Gently cook the garlic until it is golden to almost brown, but don't let it burn. Remove from the heat and let cool. Do the same with the rest of the vegetable oil and the ginger. These two scented oils will be used in the tofu serving bowls (garlic and fried ginger included). You can prepare larger quantities, they keep well. Serve the tofu pudding warm in bowls, covered with all of the above-listed toppings and sauces. Each diner can arrange it to taste: more or less salty, spicy, peppery, and so on. Eat with a small (or large) spoon.

Note You can find tofu pudding in the refrigerator case section of Chinese groceries – look for “tofu pudding,” “tofu flan,” or “*douhua*” made with glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) – or, prepare it yourself (see pages 34 and 36).

RICE PORRIDGE

WITH SWEET POTATO

(Xifàn)

Chinese rice porridge, or congee, which is called *zhōu* or *jūk* (among other names) in China, and *xīfàn* in Taiwan, is a classic breakfast dish. Very sweet, easy to digest, and nourishing – without being heavy – this dish is made from rice cooked for a while in a large amount of water. Depending on the region and the family, the end result may be thicker or thinner, with more or less texture. Quite bland in itself, porridge is accompanied with many toppings, usually leftovers from the previous day, pickles, soy sauce, and fermented tofu. Here is the recipe for Taiwanese *xīfàn*, which has the very nice habit of including sweet potatoes. An excellent dish to start – or finish – the day.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 cup rice • 7½ cups water • 10 oz orange-fleshed sweet potatoes
- 1–2 green onions, thinly sliced • 3 thin slices root ginger, thinly sliced
- 1½–3 cubes of white fermented tofu (*dòufūrǔ*), plain or spicy • Soy sauce • Salt

Rinse the rice several times and drain it. Place it in a Dutch oven or casserole pan with water. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 30 minutes, partially covered. Stir from time to time and make sure the rice isn't sticking to the pan bottom.

Meanwhile, halve or quarter the sweet potato lengthwise depending on its diameter, then cut into ¾-inch wedges. Steam these for 15 minutes. Transfer the sweet potato to the pot with the rice for the last 5 minutes of cooking. Turn off the heat and let stand for 5 minutes. Place the green onions, ginger, fermented tofu, soy sauce, and salt in separate bowls. Serve the porridge in individual bowls and let each diner choose toppings to taste.

Note You can also offer sesame oil, leftovers from the previous day, and pickles at the table to garnish the porridge.



BREAKFAST NOODLES

(Dòuhuā mǐxiàn)

A typical breakfast in Yunnan usually includes rice noodles, extra fine and light silken tofu (tofu pudding), or both. *Mǐxiàn* are quite special rice noodles: they are thick, round, and fermented. Oddly, they are reminiscent of Japanese udon due to their slippery and somewhat elastic texture, though they are not made in the same way at all. They are used to make the favorite dish of the people of Kunming to start the day, called *dòuhuā mǐxiàn*, literally “rice noodles with tofu pudding.” The dishes doesn’t just include noodles and tofu; it is a spicy ground pork dish, served with a multitude of herbs and condiments. I offer here a vegan version.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14 oz tofu pudding or silken tofu • 4 tsp Korean red chile paste (*gochujang*)
 - 10 oz dried rice noodles (thick) or 4 portions of fresh rice noodles
 - 4 tsp crushed toasted peanuts • 4 tsp Sichuan chile oil
 - 4 Tbsp light soy sauce • 4 tsp dark soy sauce
 - 4 Tbsp mustard pickles, minced (*suāncài*)
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 handful cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped

Place the tofu pudding, in its container or other in suitable container, in a steam basket and heat it with steam for about 15 minutes.

In a bowl, dilute the chile paste with a little water to achieve the consistency of ketchup.

Cook the rice noodles according to package directions. Rinse them thoroughly with cold water to stop the cooking, shaking them in a colander. (When ready to eat, you can immerse them briefly in simmering water to warm them up, or eat them cold.)

Serve the rice noodles in large bowls or soup plates, topped with warm tofu and the above-listed toppings to your liking – the quantities shown opposite are just a suggestion. Mix the contents of your bowl before eating.

Notes Mustard pickles are found in Chinese and Vietnamese groceries; they are sold in sachets in brine.

You can find tofu pudding in the fresh section of Chinese groceries – look for “tofu pudding,” “tofu flan,” or “*douhua*” made with glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) – or prepare it yourself (see pages 34 and 36).



TOFU STIR-FRY WITH BLACK BEANS

(Chǐ zhī dòufu)

Very good, very simple, ultra-fast, this recipe requires only a few ingredients and has flavors that we are really not used to. It's the fermented black soybean that's responsible, and we're thankful. Widely used in China and elsewhere in Asia, it is salted, generally dried, and used to make amazing and delicious sauces. Will you like it? I'll take that bet. You can easily find fermented black soybeans in Asian groceries and well-stocked supermarkets. In Mandarin, they are called *dòuchǐ*.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 14 oz firm to extra firm tofu • 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbsp dried fermented black beans, rinsed • 2 green onions, coarsely chopped
- 1 Tbsp Shaoxing rice wine • ½ Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 pinch white pepper
- 1 pinch sugar • 1 tsp cornstarch or potato starch mixed with 1 Tbsp water • Vegetable oil
- Steamed rice, for serving

Cut the tofu in half lengthwise, then into slices about ¼ inch thick. Blot dry with paper towels. Set a wok over high heat, add some oil, then brown the tofu on both sides. Reserve it on a plate.

Add a little more oil to the wok if needed and stir-fry the garlic, black beans, and the white parts of the green onions for 1 minute. Add the tofu, rice wine, soy sauce, white pepper, sugar, and the green part of the green onions. Stir-fry gently to avoid breaking up the tofu.

Add the cornstarch slurry and continue stirring until the sauce has thickened and coats the tofu nicely. Serve hot with rice.



PRESSED TOFU

WITH GARLIC CHIVES

(jiǔcài chǎo dòu gān)

Here is a really easy and very tasty recipe. Garlic chive stems (with or without flower buds at the end) have an aroma very similar to that of wild garlic shoots, but stronger. If you love garlic, you're going to fall in love. If you don't like it, go your merry way. The pre-pressed tofu is, as the name suggests, already flavored with five-spice – but not spicy. So there is no need to add all kinds of aromatics, sauces, or herbs and spices to this little stir-fry dish: you can settle for a little salt or a dash of soy sauce.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 2 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 5 oz garlic chive stems (1 bunch)
- 7 oz five-spice pressed tofu
- Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving (optional)

If the bases of the garlic chives are too fibrous, remove them. Cut the rest into 1½-inch lengths, keeping the flower buds if there are any. Cut the tofu into slices about the same length and ¼ inch thick.

Heat a wok or frying pan over high heat, pour in a little oil, and add the tofu. Stir-fry for 30 seconds–1 minute. Add the garlic chives and stir-fry for 30 seconds–1 minute. Taste and season with salt, and mix.

Serve with rice, or as an accompaniment to other dishes.

Note Be careful not to confuse long green onions (*Allium fistulosum*, or *cōng*) and garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*, or *jiǔcài*). Also be careful not to confuse the leaves and stems!



TOFU PUDDING

WITH ADZUKI BEANS

(Hóngdòu dòuhuā)

In Taiwan, they eat tofu pudding topped with brown sugar syrup and sprinkled with peanuts, taro balls, oats, tapioca pearls (boba), herb jelly, and beans of all kinds.... Here is a basic recipe, with sweet adzuki beans and syrup. You are free to add other ingredients. I personally love candied palm fruits, even if they are incongruous in Taiwan – on the other hand they are very common in Malaysia and Thailand. As for adzuki, it is better to cook them yourself than to buy the canned version. This is what I had the misfortune to do to save time, and the beans were too firm. They are better overcooked.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 soak 1 nuit 🕒 cook 2 hr 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

• ½ cup adzuki beans • 1 pinch salt • ½ cup sugar • 28 oz tofu pudding (homemade or not)

For the syrup

• 1¼ cups water • ½ cup brown sugar • 3 thin slices root ginger (optional)

Soak the beans overnight in 1½ cups of water. In a pot over high heat, bring them to a boil in their soaking water. Drain, discarding this water, and return the beans to the pot with 1½ cups fresh water and a pinch of salt.

Bring the beans a boil again, then reduce the heat to the lowest possible setting and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until the beans are tender, about 2 hours (or, 15 minutes in a pressure cooker). Drain if needed, return the beans to the pot, and mix in the sugar. It will melt and make the beans look shiny. Let cool.

While the beans are cooking, prepare the syrup. Pour the water into a small pot and bring to a boil. Add the brown sugar, reduce the heat to low, and melt, stirring. Remove from the heat and let cool.

Serve the tofu pudding chilled in bowls, top with as much adzuki as you like, and drizzle with a little syrup. You can serve the tofu pudding warm if you prefer, steamed for a few minutes to heat it up, drizzled with warm syrup.

Notes The quantities of syrup and adzuki in this recipe are quite generous; you can apportion them as you like. Leftovers will keep in the refrigerator for 1 week.

You can find tofu pudding in the refrigerator case section of Chinese groceries – look for “tofu pudding,” “tofu flan,” or “*douhua*” made with glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) – or, prepare it yourself (see pages 34 and 36).



FIVE-SPICE PRESSED TOFU

(Wǔxiāng dòugān)

Pre-pressed five-spice tofu, recognizable by its smooth, brown exterior and its fine, very dense interior texture, is easy to find in any Chinese grocery, in the fresh section. Depending on the brand, it can be thick or thin, large or small, light or dark. If you prefer to make it at home, no problem: here is the recipe.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 blocks pressed tofu

- 4 blocks firm or extra firm tofu (each 12 oz)
- 2 cups water • ½ cup dark soy sauce • ¼ cup Shaoxing rice wine • ½ tsp five-spice powder
- 1 tsp sugar • 3–4 thin slices root ginger

Start by pressing your tofu. Drain the tofu and wrap it in cheesecloth or paper towels. Place it between two large cutting boards, in a cool place where its liquid can drain away without causing damage. Put a weight on top – for example, a mixing bowl. Every hour or two, as the tofu becomes denser, you will be able to increase the pressure and add more and more weight. You can fill your bowl with fruit, stones, whatever you want, as long as the weight increases gradually: otherwise, you will just mash your tofu into porridge. See how it reacts and adapt accordingly. Depending on the pressure applied, it will take you 6–12 hours – or more – before you have a pressed tofu worthy of the name. It will only have a third of its original volume.

Cut each block of tofu into quarters. Place all the remaining ingredients except the tofu in a pot, and bring to the boil. Lower the heat, add the tofu, and simmer for 30 minutes. The tofu should be covered with liquid.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cover a plate with paper towels, place the pressed tofu on the paper, and bake for 15 minutes. Turn the tofu blocks over and bake for another 15 minutes, or until the surface of the blocks has dried. Let cool. You can use your pressed tofu at once, or keep it in the fridge in an airtight container for about 1 week.

Notes Five-spice powder, very common in Chinese grocery stores, consists of ground cinnamon, cloves, fennel seeds, Sichuan peppercorns, and star anise. You can buy good whole spices, briefly roast them, and grind them yourself for a more fragrant result.

If you have a tofu press, pressing will be even easier.

ALMOND TOFU

(Xìngrén dòufu)

Almond tofu has a misleading name: it is not made with sweet almonds but with bitter almonds, or more precisely a nonpoisonous bitter almond substitute, in this case the pits of Chinese plums – similar to how Italian amaretti cookies are made with “bitter almond” flavor from apricot kernels. These peeled “almonds” are found in some Chinese groceries. If you can’t find them, you can still use regular almonds plus bitter almond flavor or extract, but it won’t really be the same.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 soak 24 hr 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 lb almond tofu

- 4 oz bitter almonds, chopped
- 2¼ cups filtered water (or soft mineral water)
 - 2 tsp agar-agar powder
 - 1 Tbsp confectioners’ sugar
 - 1 pinch salt

Soak the almonds in a large bowl of water for 24 hours. Drain them and use a blender to blend them with the filtered water for several minutes, grinding them as finely as possible. Place a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth over a pot. Pour the almond milk through the strainer. Squeeze the cheesecloth to extract the last drop. The remaining almond pulp (a sort of bitter almond “okara”) can be used in recipes for pie dough, cookies, and so on.

Sprinkle the almond milk with agar-agar and mix with a whisk. Heat over low-medium heat, continuing to whisk to dissolve the agar-agar. Bring to a boil, whisking all the while. Turn off the heat, add the sugar and salt, and mix until they are dissolved.

Pour the mixture through a strainer into a rectangular glass mold with moistened sides. Let cool to room temperature, then cover and place in the refrigerator until the “tofu” is cool and firm. Unmold by placing a plate or a cutting board on the mold and turning mold and plate over, then cut into cubes with a knife.

Note You can make a more robust almond tofu (this one is quite delicate) by replacing half of the water with soy milk, or even plain milk.

ALMOND TOFU

WITH LONGAN FRUIT

(Lóngyǎn xìngrén dòufu)

Longan is a delicious fruit, very common in southeast China and Southeast Asia, reminiscent of lychee. It is about the same size but its skin is light brown and smoother. When you peel it, you find white flesh of a similar consistency, with a big pit inside. The pulp, sweet and fragrant, tastes like honey. It is common to pair this fruit with almond tofu; this lovely tone-on-tone dessert is refreshing and ready in five minutes (if you have almond tofu already prepared; see page 95). You can replace canned longans with fresh fruit and homemade syrup, but it will take more effort and you will have to work around the pits.

🕒 prep 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14–16 oz almond tofu, diced
- 1 can longan fruit in light syrup

Divide the diced almond tofu and the longan fruits among dessert cups. Drizzle with light syrup, and serve chilled.







Japan

豆腐



Tofu fabrication in a workshop in Japan.

THE OTHER LAND OF TOFU

While Japan may not display the same exceptional variety of tofu forms as China, it is unequivocally the country that produces and eats the most after it. The Land of the Rising Sun should also have the nickname Soybean Nation: it's the world's leading consumer with 54 pounds per adult each year on average, in the form of tofu, *nattō*, soy sauce, miso, and others. Japanese tofu has a very long history, the beginnings of which are rather vague. The exact date of tofu's invention in China is unknown, but it is believed to have been introduced to Japan by Chinese Buddhist monks who came to teach, or to have been brought in from China by Japanese monks. Indeed, monks made many exchanges between the two countries between the eighth and twelfth centuries, and the first mention of tofu in Japan dates from 1182.

In China, tofu was a dish for the poor at the beginning of its history, while in Japan, tofu immediately seduced the upper classes – those who traveled to and interacted with China. In addition, it was very chic among the aristocracy at that time to cultivate a stripped-down simplicity, demanded by Buddhism (and perhaps snobbery), and tofu seemed to be the ideal food for expressing that. It was undoubtedly the Buddhist monks, numerous and in contact with the people, who popularized it among the poorest populations, and it could therefore have spread among the upper and lower classes simultaneously.

One peculiarity of Japan is that a government effort emerged in the ninth century to impose the vegetarian regime on all of its population, after an initial decree in this direction was made in the seventh century. In this context, tofu and other soy products had a forced but very real success, becoming pillars of the diet. Certainly, the Japanese found every possible loophole to allow them to continue eating animals. The consumption of fish and birds not being prohibited, they reclassified unrelated species into these two categories,

such as dolphins, whales, and even game – hares, hinds, wild boars.... In fact, it was mainly the raising of domestic animals as a food source that was prohibited. Each culture has its own definition of vegetarian diet, you see.

Most classic Japanese tofu recipes date from the fifteenth century, when Japan began to grow soybeans on a large scale and this ingredient became widespread. Grilled tofu, or *yakidōfu*, dates back to that time, as does Kyoto-style tofu hot pot (*yūdōfu*), grilled tofu with miso (*tōfu den-gaku*) or *l'oden*, Japanese hot pot. All are still widely enjoyed today. To put a little variety in their daily meals, the Japanese also invented at this time and in the following century forms of tofu that did not exist in China, like cold-dried tofu (*kōyadōfu*), *aburaage*, and *inariage*, the two main forms of Japanese fried tofu, as well as silken tofu. So you see they really did develop a unique tofu culture, with their own recipes and their own products, which explains the obvious differences between the Chinese and the Japanese approach to tofu.

IN PRAISE OF BLANDNESS

One of the peculiarities of the Japanese is to cultivate blandness, more than any other people, even if the Chinese can sometimes do it too. In addition to their appreciation of rather extreme aromatic mildness, the Japanese have a weakness for tender textures; tofu is ideal for this, especially if you keep it as is, in its simplest expression: white, plain, self-sufficient or almost so. While most Asian cuisines use the blandness of tofu as a blank canvas to transform with lots of spices and sauces – much as they willingly transform its texture – the Japanese have a real soft spot for tofu that simply resembles tofu. They are ready to pay top yen for an artisanal tofu that they will savor with a tiny spoon, appreciating the delicate aromas of the soybeans that have been rigorously selected for this specific use. Unfortunately, traditional tofu workshops have become rare. Colossal tofu factories – the largest in the world are



Firming tofu with the inclined board method.

in Japan – largely replaced them during the twentieth century.

Between this religious heritage, a quest for blandness, and a culture of “cleanliness,” tofu has become a fundamental element of the Japanese diet. And while the consumption of meat and dairy products has skyrocketed in Japan, tofu is not about to disappear. Not only is it not necessarily opposed to meat – the two can be married – but it remains very inexpensive, widely available, and particularly easy to stock (square boxes, a Japanese passion), store, and cook. And then, it just pleases people. It is a little surprising from a Western point of view because we do not particularly want to taste the tofu we produce with a tiny spoon. And that’s normal. But a very good tofu made with very good Japanese soybeans does not have the same taste or texture at all. You have to be a little humble and remember that we have only a few decades of experience in making tofu, compared with a

people who have perfected it for close to a millennium, at least; yes, their tofu really is better, and yes, it is really good. It is the natural result of spending a few centuries working on the question.

NOT JUST FOR THE LADIES

For all its blandness and delicacy, tofu is not considered a “girly” food in Japan. Certainly, women who are healthy conscious will often prefer it to meat because it is less fatty and caloric, and is easy to digest, but the men don’t feel that their virility is tested by eating tofu. Every day at the supermarket, you can see big muscular fellows or construction workers buying a block of tofu and some vegetables to make a little evening meal. A lot of guys who have something to prove – or inveterate meat-eaters – would see this as a strange paradox, a sissified behavior in these seemingly masculine men, as if food had a gender, and as if wanting to eat healthy was a confession that one is not a “real man.” What a funny idea – especially since the Japanese are not the least macho guys on earth, they just like to eat tofu. Most tofu artisans, like chefs, have always been men, by the way.

Tofu has no gender or social class in Japan. It may be showing a generational divide, however: although it is far from unpopular, it is consumed much more by older people than by young people, unless they are part of the small vegetarian or vegan fringe of the population. The Japanese diet is changing at this time, becoming fattier, sweeter, and richer in meat products, but tofu has not said its last word. It is still considered a daily ingredient and is mass produced; simultaneously, in craft workshops and large restaurants, it is prized as an exquisite delicacy. Its forms are certainly less varied than in China – which wins the prize in this field – but they are numerous. Here are the most common.

TOFU TYPES & USES

FIRM TOFU

In Japan, firm tofu is called *momen dōfu*, or “cotton tofu.” When it is traditionally made in presses covered with cheese-cloth, the cloth leaves an impression on the surface of the finished block, hence the term “cotton” – referring to the texture of the tofu and not to the cloth used for its production. Japanese people traditionally don’t use woks or frying pans, so their firm tofu doesn’t need to be as solid as in other countries; instead, it is often simmered, crumbled, or mashed, or deep-fried in a large amount of oil. To fry it in the pan, you’ll want to squeeze it for an hour to drain the excess water. Japanese firm tofu often has a slight bitter flavor due to the *nigari* that is used to coagulate the soy milk (see page 6). This coagulating agent also gives it a fairly spongy texture, generally, although there is a wide range of consistencies to satisfy all types of customers. The tofu shelf of any Japanese supermarket seems fairly uniform at first glance – all of these perfectly arranged blocks are the same color – but it actually contains a world of nuances.

SILKEN TOFU

The origin of silken tofu is unknown; however, we know that the first documented silken tofu was produced in Japan by pouring soy milk into small lacquered wooden molds. The coagulant, *nigari*, was then poured directly into the molds with the milk, which was allowed to set without stirring and without pressing. The second known form of silken tofu, produced in larger containers, was invented in a Tokyo restaurant as early as 1703, and then gradually spread. Very fragile and therefore difficult to transport, it was a dish reserved for the aristocracy. You will sometimes read that Japanese silken tofu is called *kinugoshi dōfu* (literally “tofu pressed into silk”) because they used this fabric to make it, as opposed to the

cotton of *momen dōfu*. This is a mistake: silken tofu is by definition not pressed – and firm tofu may have been pressed into silk, especially in China, as we can read in the book of traditional Chinese medicine *Bencao Gangmu*, completed in 1578. The idea of “silk” refers to its fine and slippery texture. However, the *nigari* used in Japan did not achieve the ideal consistency of silken tofu, until chemists got involved. This is where the story of modern Japanese silken tofu, the one we know today, began.

Very popular in China, the coagulant calcium sulfate, which produces a softer tofu with a finer texture, has been used in Japan for making silken tofu only since the Second World War. The firmer and more elastic consistency of this new product, with an equal content of water and protein, made it possible to manufacture pressed silken tofu, or *softo dōfu*, relatively solid but smooth and delicate. This is the one I classify as a soft, tender tofu. The great revolution of silken tofu came a little later, in the 1960s, with the use of glucono-delta-lactone, which makes a silken tofu that is super fine, super slippery, firm and elastic, even jelled (and therefore not very fragile), and easily transportable. It quickly established itself on the Japanese market and elsewhere in Asia. It is eaten uncooked, fresh, with a few condiments and sauces.

GRILLED TOFU

This Japanese specialty, called *yakidōfu*, dates back to the fifteenth century; traditionally, blocks of firm tofu are skewered and grilled over coals. In factories, the process is less poetic but gives a similar result: the tofu is slightly blackened on the surface, taking on a little grill flavor. This surface cooking gives it a certain solidity; it works best in hot pots and other broth dishes. It can also be eaten as is, if you have grilled it yourself, with a little soy sauce and grated ginger.

FREEZE-DRIED TOFU

Frozen tofu is a Chinese invention; blocks of firm tofu were once buried under the snow in winter to give the tofu a very special honeycomb texture. The Japanese have developed another form of frozen tofu of their own: freeze-dried tofu, or *kōyadōfu*. Usually, when a food is dried, it is exposed to warm temperatures to evaporate the water in it. In traditional freeze-drying, the food is repeatedly frozen and thawed, until all the water is extracted and the food is completely dried. In the coldest regions of Japan, this technique was mastered very early to preserve food and make it lighter. The first mentions of freeze-dried tofu by the Buddhist monks of Mount Kōya date back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Before being cooked, this tofu is rehydrated by covering it with hot water and letting it swell. It can then be pressed firmly, but gently, by hand to squeeze out the excess water, then simmered, added to soups and broths, marinated, stir-fried, deep-fried.... It can replace other tofus in most recipes, but it has a very different texture. More spongy and dense, it does an admirable job of absorbing liquid and flavors.

FRIED TOFU

Japanese fried tofu is a little different from its Chinese counterpart. It exists in several forms, the simplest of which is without doubt inspired by the Chinese *zhádōufu*. In Japanese, it is called *atsuage*, literally “thick fried,” or *namaage*, which means “raw fried.” The technique is to take a block of firm tofu, press it for an even firmer texture and to drain some of its water, then deep-fry it in oil until a golden crust forms on the outside. Fried tofu can be purchased or prepared

at home; it is eaten hot with a sauce and some condiments, or used like firm tofu in other preparations: soups, stews, and so forth. Similar products can be found outside of Japan in organic markets, generally under names like “tofu cutlets” or “bean curd strips.” We Westerners treat fried tofu like a meat replacement, because we assume that we cannot be happy in life if we do not eat something that resembles meat.

FRIED TOFU POCKETS

Aburaage (literally “fried in oil”) is another Japanese specialty. It is firm tofu cut into thin slices and fried twice: first in an oil bath at around 250°F, then in another at 350–400°F. This somewhat special treatment gives it an airy texture like that of Chinese tofu puffs; but since *aburaage* are narrow and elongated, they end up hollow inside, forming a sort of fried tofu pocket. There are many ways to use these in the kitchen. You can, for example, take advantage of their thinness to make strips to garnish miso soup, or make use of the pocket and stuff them with all kinds of things, including rice. Generally, since these little puffs absorb liquid so well, they end up being marinated, simmered, or added to broths.

TOFU PUDDING

Tofu pudding is called *oboro dōfu* in Japanese, which could be translated as “tofu mist” or “cloud tofu.” It is not as common as in China and Southeast Asia, and not necessarily as smooth: it can be coagulated with *nigari* and therefore take on a fairly lumpy texture. In any case, it is delicate, watery, and savored with a spoon with salty condiments and soy sauce. It is not common in Japan to eat it sweet, whereas this is the norm in many parts of Asia.

Yakidōfu (grilled tofu) is a Japanese specialty dating back to the fifteenth century. The process has become enormously industrialized since then.



YUBA

The skin that forms on the surface of heated soy milk, called *yuba* in Japanese, is mentioned in Chinese and Japanese texts from the sixteenth century. It is probably much older. In Japan, you can make it at home or buy it fresh or dried. While these products are fairly common, they remain associated, in their craft form, with certain regions. The city of Nikko in particular, dotted with Buddhist temples, is a *yuba* mecca. Many restaurants offer it in all its forms: fresh, fried, with noodles, in curry, in soup...

OKARA

The leftover pulp of soybeans that have been pressed to make soy milk are never thrown away in Japan. As in China and Korea, it is an ancient food, since it has been associated with tofu production since tofu's inception. However, its commercial potential is limited because it does not keep long. Humans consume significantly less *okara* than they produce in the great tofu nations, so most *okara* is used to feed livestock, including pigs and dairy cows. Much of the *okara* is also composted as fertilizer, and only a small fraction of the production is used in cooking. The most common Japanese *okara* dish, called *unohana no iri ni* – or simply *unohana* – is a typical small stewed dish, served cold. Besides the soybean pulp, it contains vegetables; the ingredients are braised in a mild broth until the liquid is completely absorbed.



Many products are derived from soy milk or tofu production: fresh *yuba* (1), dried *yuba* (2) and *okara* (3) .

COLD TOFU

WITH GINGER & GREEN ONION

(Hiyayakko)

Japanese silken tofu, which is finer, firmer, and more flexible than what we find sold in Western organic grocery stores, is very delicate, so be careful when handling it. It can also found in individual serving portions ideal for this recipe: all you have to do is unmold them and accompany them with bright flavors that wake up bland and modest tofu. The Japanese call these ingredients with a strong “*yakumi*” flavor. Among them, the great classics are green onions, grated ginger, yuzu citrus zest, *myōga* (Japanese ginger), wasabi, minty *shiso* leaf.... Salt-rich condiments are also welcome, especially soy sauce and pickled plum. Cold tofu with these flavors is a Japanese summertime classic.

🕒 prep 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 7 oz firm extra-fine silken tofu
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp very finely grated root ginger
 - 4 tsp soy sauce

Unmold the tofu onto a plate and cut it into 4 small blocks. Place each block in a saucer. Arrange a quarter of the green onion and ginger on each, and drizzle each with 1 teaspoon soy sauce. Serve cold.



COLD TOFU

WITH NATTŌ

(Hiyayakko no nattō)

Soy + soy + soy = love. This recipe boasts soybeans in three totally different forms: tofu, soy sauce, and *nattō* (fermented soybeans that take on a rich flavor and a nice slippery texture, great for health). There is also a little pickled plum and okra, a vegetable appreciated by the Japanese and often paired with *nattō* because they have a similarly sticky texture. You can serve this cold tofu as a starter; soy's umami has a reputation for piquing the appetite, and the variety of textures will give you a very fun, cute, and surprising start to a meal for tofu neophytes.

🕒 prep 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 7 oz firm extra-fine silken tofu • 1 can *nattō* (Japanese fermented soybeans)
- 2 tsp soy sauce • 1 pickled plum (*umeboshi*), puréed
- 2 okra, thinly sliced

Unmold the tofu and cut it into 4 small blocks. Place each block in a saucer. In a bowl, combine the *nattō*, soy sauce, pickled plum, and okra slices. Divide this topping among the 4 tofu blocks. Enjoy with a small spoon, drizzled with a little more soy sauce if needed.

Note *Nattō* is found in Japanese grocery stores (and sometimes Korean, Chinese, etc.) in the frozen section, usually in batches of 3 boxes. Let it thaw in the box in the refrigerator overnight, then stir it vigorously with a pair of chopsticks. It will take on a slightly mousse-like texture and make long, sticky threads. It's strange, but it's normal.



ZEN SALAD

WITH TOFU SAUCE

(Shiraae)

This salad, which originates from Zen vegetarian cuisine, can be made with many different vegetables, but one thing remains constant: its very tasty sauce is made with tofu, sesame, and miso. Its consistency is not liquid but rather thick; some people like it a more diluted, others like it thicker, but it generally stays somewhere between a paste and a smooth or rough cream. It's not just a seasoning, but one of the main ingredients in this recipe. This unfamiliar way of using tofu opens up many possibilities for those who lack the inspiration to cook it.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 press 30 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 4 oz firm tofu • 2 tsp white sesame paste (*nerigoma* or tahini)
- 1 tsp sugar • 1 tsp white miso paste • 4 oz fresh mushrooms (*shimeji*, shiitake, enoki...)
- 1¾ oz konjac root (see Note) • 1 small carrot, julienned • 2 handfuls fresh spinach
- 1 Tbsp white sesame seeds, toasted • Salt

If you use Japanese firm tofu, which is richer in water than regular firm tofu, wrap it with paper towels and place it between two plates for about 30 minutes to drain it. Pound it with a wooden spoon or mortar to reduce it to a coarse paste. Add the sesame paste, sugar, white miso, and a little salt, and stir until you get a homogeneous mixture.

If you are using small mushrooms (*shimeji* or enoki), cut the base of their stems and separate them; if you are using shiitake, remove their stems and slice caps into 1/16-inch slices. Blanch them in boiling water for 2–3 minutes, then run them under cold water and drain well. Squeeze to extract as much water as possible.

Cut the konjac root into 1/16-inch slices, and boil them for 2 minutes to neutralize the odor. Drain. Blanch the carrot for 2 minutes and drain it. Blanch the spinach leaves for about 30 seconds, then run them under cold water, drain, and squeeze to extract as much water as possible.

Mix all the vegetables with the tofu paste. Add a little water if you prefer a more diluted consistency. Serve and sprinkled with toasted sesame seeds.

Note Konjac is a starchy root used in Asian cooking in root form, as noodles, or as a thickening powder.

VERY SIMPLE FRIED TOFU

(Atsuage)

There are several types of fried tofu in Japan, some of which you can buy ready-made at the supermarket. *Inariage*, fried twice at different temperatures, is very fine and has a puffed texture, becoming almost empty inside, a sort of tofu pocket. As for *atsuage*, it keeps its density because it is fried only once, as a block; it's just fried on the outside. Whereas making *inariage* at home is quite complex and technical, there is nothing simpler than making *atsuage*. *Atsuage* can be used in many ways: it can be served at once, still hot, with a few condiments, or used later as an ingredient. For example, you can marinate it in a sauce or broth, garnish a soup or a salad...

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 press 2 hr 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 block tofu

• 1 block firm tofu • Oil for deep-frying

Wrap the tofu in paper towels and place it between two plates for 1 hour. Now change the paper towels, reposition the tofu, and place an additional weight on top: another plate, for example. Leave it for another 1 hour.

Heat oil for deep-frying to 350°F. Cut the block in half crosswise and fry the two blocks for about 10 minutes, until they are evenly golden. Drain on a wire rack.

You can cut the blocks into bite-size pieces and serve hot with a little thinly sliced green onion, grated ginger, and a drizzle of soy sauce, or marinate them to use in another dish.

MELTING FRIED TOFU

(Agedashi tōfu)

This fried tofu is extremely delicate; crusty on the outside, melty in the middle. *Agedashi tōfu* is served in a clear sweet-and-savory sauce with finely grated white radish and green onion, so it's not bland at all. On the contrary, it is one of the favorite dishes of Westerners in *izakaya* and other Japanese restaurants, because it offers, with very few elements, an extraordinary variety of textures and flavors. Simple, refined, exquisite.

🕒 prep 10 min (+ traditional dashi 1 hr) 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1/8 oz (3 g) kombu seaweed or 3/4 tsp kombu dashi powder • 1 cup water
 - 1/4 cup soy sauce • 1/4 cup mirin rice wine
- 1 lb extra-firm silken tofu or flexible soft to medium tofu
- 1/4 cup potato starch • 2 inches daikon radish, finely grated
 - 1 green onion, thinly sliced • Oil for deep-frying

First prepare your soup base, or dashi: cut or break the kombu into pieces, and put it in a saucepan with the water. Let steep for at least 1 hour, then heat over low heat, covered. Just before boiling, when small bubbles form on the surface of the kombu, remove the seaweed pieces from the pan. The scented water that remains will be your dashi. If you're in a hurry, you can use instant dashi and just add the powder to the same amount of heated water.

Combine the dashi, soy sauce, and mirin in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, then turn off the heat. Set aside.

Cut the tofu into large cubes or rectangles about 1 1/2 inches square (you need some thickness to the tofu to end up with a variety of textures). Plan on 3 pieces per person. Lay the cubes on several layers of paper towel and let them drain for 10 minutes.

Heat oil for deep-frying to 340°F. Dust the tofu with potato starch on all sides. You can use a brush for this. Fry the tofu as soon as the oil is ready (if it sits, the starch coating will become gummy), in batches of 4 to prevent crowding. Gently remove each piece when the outside is just crisp. They should not brown, or barely. It takes a few minutes. Place them on a wire rack and continue until you run out of tofu.

Divide the sauce among 4 bowls and add 3 pieces of fried tofu per bowl. Top with grated daikon and sprinkle with chopped green onion. Serve at once.

Note To firm up your tofu before cutting it, you can dissolve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of salt in 1 quart of boiling water, remove from the heat, and soak your block for 15 minutes, then drain it for at least 15 minutes on paper towels.



MISO SOUP

WITH TOFU & WAKAME

(Tōfu to wakame no misoshiru)

Miso soup is a basic element of the Japanese meal. Seventy-five percent of Japanese people consume it at least once a day. Miso, a fermented soybean paste, is diluted in a clear broth – dashi – and garnished with all kinds of vegetables, tofu, seaweed, and more. Depending on the region, the type of miso will vary and so will the other ingredients; there are hundreds of possible variations on miso soup. Here is one of the most common recipes.

🕒 prep **5 min** (+ traditional dashi **1 hr**) 🕒 cook **10 min** 🌱 **vegan**

For 4 bowls

- ¼ oz (8 g) kombu seaweed or 2 tsp kombu dashi powder • 3⅓ cups water
- 1 Tbsp dried wakame seaweed • 5 oz soft, flexible or medium-firm tofu
- 3 Tbsp white miso paste or mixed miso paste • 2–3 green onions

First prepare your soup base, or dashi: cut or break the kombu into pieces, and put it in a saucepan with the water. Let steep for at least 1 hour, then heat over low heat, covered. Just before boiling, when small bubbles form on the surface of the kombu, remove the seaweed pieces from the pan. The scented water that remains will be your dashi. If you're in a hurry, you can use instant dashi and just add the powder to the same amount of heated water.

While the kombu is steeping, rehydrate the wakame in a bowl of water. Cut the tofu into ½-inch cubes. Slice the green onion.

When the dashi is ready, add the tofu and the drained wakame to the pan and continue cooking over low heat for 1–2 minutes. Put the miso in a ladle filled with dashi or in a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer, and gently swirl it in the pan to dissolve it into the soup. Remove from the heat. Serve at once in small soup bowls, garnished with a little green onion.

Notes The higher the quantity of rice in miso (this is the case with white miso), the more alcohol it contains, which makes its aroma volatile. It is therefore advised to add it at the end of cooking and not to reheat it.

If you can't find tender or medium-firm tofu, you can replace it with regular firm tofu, or extra-firm silken tofu (available in some Asian groceries). Regular tofu will be a little firmer than soft tofu, and extra-firm silken tofu will be a little more delicate.



MISO SOUP

WITH FRIED TOFU & DAIKON

(Aburaage to daikon no misoshiru)

Fried tofu pockets, which are called *aburaage* in Japan, are often used in miso soup. They are cut into simple strips and allowed to absorb the delicious broth. Crunchy vegetables are favorite additions that provide texture variety. Daikon radish works very well, but you can also try small sweet turnips, okra slices, leafy greens...

🕒 prep 5 min (+ traditional dashi 1 hr) 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 bowls

- 3½ cups water • ¼ oz (8 g) kombu seaweed or 2 tsp kombu dashi powder
- 4 oz fried tofu pockets (*aburaage*) • 4 oz daikon radish
- Boiling water • 3 Tbsp *hatchō miso* (red miso paste made with 100% soybeans)
- 2 green onions

First prepare your soup base, or dashi: cut or break the kombu into pieces, and put it in a saucepan with the water. Let steep for at least 1 hour, then heat over low heat, covered. Just before boiling, when small bubbles form on the surface of the kombu, remove the seaweed pieces from the pan. The scented water that remains will be your dashi. If you're in a hurry, you can use instant dashi and just add the powder to the same amount of heated water.

Pour boiling water over the fried tofu and squeeze it by hand to drain out the excess water and oil. Flatten it again, cut it in half lengthwise, then slice it into slices ⅛ inch thick. Cut the daikon into slices ⅛ inch thick and then into half-moons or quarters, depending on the diameter. Thinly slice the green onion.

Put the miso in a ladle filled with dashi or in a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer, and gently swirl it in the saucepan to dissolve it into the soup. Add the daikon and continue cooking the dashi with miso and daikon over low heat for 5–10 minutes. Add the fried tofu strips to the pan, cook for another 2 minutes, and serve in bowls garnished with a little green onion.

Note The higher the quantity of soybeans in miso (in the case of red miso, 100 percent soybeans and therefore gluten free), the more it needs to cook to release its flavor.



BUDDHIST BROTH

(Kenchinjiru)

This simple and healthful vegan soup, a legacy of Buddhist culinary traditions in Japan, is comforting during the cold season. Very popular in the Japanese mountains, it can be prepared with any autumn and winter vegetable: turnip, taro root, burdock root, winter squash or pumpkin.... In some regions, it is enriched with a little miso.

🕒 prep 30 min (+ traditional dashi 1 hr) 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- ¼ oz (8 g) kombu seaweed or 2 tsp kombu dashi powder • 3 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 7 oz firm tofu • 4½ oz konjac root (see Note, page 112) • 7 oz daikon radish
- 1 carrot • 5 oz lotus root • 1 Tbsp sesame oil • 3 Tbsp sake
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce • 2 green onions, sliced on the diagonal • Salt

First prepare your soup base, or dashi: cut or break the kombu into pieces, and put it in a saucepan with the water. Let steep for at least 1 hour, then heat over low heat, covered. Just before boiling, when small bubbles form on the surface of the kombu, remove the seaweed pieces from the pan. The scented water that remains will be your dashi. If you're in a hurry, you can use instant dashi and just add the powder to the same amount of heated water.

While the kombu is steeping, rehydrate the mushrooms in 1 cup of cool water. Wrap the tofu in paper towels, place it on a plate, and place another fairly heavy plate over it while you prepare the other ingredients.

Cut the konjac into slices 1/16 inch thick, and boil for 2 minutes to neutralize their odor. Drain and set aside. Peel the daikon and carrot and cut them into half-moons 1/16 inch thick. Clean the lotus root if needed and cut it into half-moons 1/8 inch thick.

When the mushrooms are rehydrated, gently squeeze them to extract excess water. Cut them in half or in quarters, depending on their size. Strain their soaking water through a coffee filter and add it to the dashi. Tear the tofu into pieces similar in size to the vegetables.

In a casserole pan over medium heat, heat the sesame oil and add the carrot, daikon, lotus root, and konjac. Stir to coat all the vegetables with oil. Your goal is to cook them until fragrant but not browned. Add the mushrooms and tofu, and stir again. Add the dashi and simmer for 10 minutes, skimming regularly. Add the sake and salt to taste, then cook until the vegetables are tender. Add the soy sauce at the end of cooking. Serve garnished with green onion.



GRILLED MISO TOFU

(Tōfu dengaku)

This very easy recipe is a classic in Japan: they have eaten tofu in this way since the fifteenth century. The tofu is covered with a sweet and savory miso sauce and then broiled or, ideally, grilled. The flavor of the sauce is strong enough to transform the pale tofu. The type of miso used (depending on the region of Japan, it may be white miso, red miso, or any nuance in between) will give a more or less full-bodied result. White miso is the mildest and sweetest, and red miso is the strongest. The version of red miso called *hatchō miso*, popular around Nagoya and made only from soybeans and no barley or other grains, has the advantage of being gluten-free, for those interested.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 press 30 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 7 oz firm tofu • ¼ cup miso paste of choice • 3 Tbsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp mirin rice wine
- 2 Tbsp sake • 2 tsp white sesame seeds

If you use Japanese firm tofu, which has a higher water content than typical firm tofu, wrap it in paper towels and place it between two plates for around 30 minutes to drain. Cut it into slices about ½ inch thick.

Combine the miso, sugar, rice wine, and sake in a small saucepan. Heat over low heat, stirring constantly (red miso is very sticky and will take a while to loosen up – you can dilute it slightly with a small amount of water, if needed). Simmer the mixture for about 3 minutes while continuing to stir.

Preheat a broiler or grill. Place your tofu slices on a broiler pan or in a grill basket, and brush them thickly with the miso sauce on one side. Place them under the broiler or on the grill for 3–4 minutes, or until the miso tofu begins to caramelize and lightly brown in places. Serve sprinkled with sesame seeds.



GRILLED TOFU

(Yakidōfu)

The tofu that the Japanese consider “firm” is actually quite tender. Its delicate texture crumbles easily and it can therefore fall apart when cooked in broth, as is the case with *nabe*, a kind of Japanese “fondue.” When grilled, tofu stiffens up, which is why grilled tofu (*yakidōfu*) is often used in *nabe* instead of uncooked tofu. In addition, if tofu is barbecued, it takes on a particularly pleasant grilled-smoked taste. You can use this tofu in many of the recipes in this book; it will be ideal for herbed tofu canapés (see page 164) or Korean mushroom and tofu hot pot (see page 184).

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 press 1 hr 🕒 cook 10–20 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 large block tofu

- 1 large block firm tofu

Cut your tofu in half crosswise. Wrap it in paper towels and place it between two plates to drain for at least 1 hour.

Preheat a grill or broiler. Place the two blocks of tofu on several skewers or in a grilling basket or place them on a broiler pan and grill or broil them on both sides until their surface is colored, or even slightly blackened (it should not be fully charred, but well grilled).



TOFU FRITTERS WITH VEGETABLES

(Ganmodoki)

Ganmodoki (“*ganmo*” to their friends) come from vegetarian Buddhist cuisine; their name literally means “pseudo-goose” because they are said to taste like poultry. This is not true, but at the same time the monks who gave them this name had no idea, since they did not eat goose. Anyway. These little fritters have an extraordinary texture due to the addition of *yama imo*, or Japanese yam, in the dough. This finely grated root has a unique gluey consistency that gives fabulous flexibility to the donut dough. It is found in Japanese grocery stores. Otherwise, potato can give a result that is somewhat different but close enough. You can serve these fritters as is, in a clear broth, or with Japanese mustard (*karashi*).

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 press 30 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 12 pieces

- 14 oz firm tofu • ½ carrot, grated
- 2 Tbsp Japanese sweet potato or potato, finely grated (into a pulp)
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced • 2 shiitake mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1 egg white • 2 Tbsp black sesame seeds • 1 Tbsp potato starch
- ½ tsp salt • Oil for deep-frying
- Broth, soy sauce, and/or Japanese mustard (*karashi*) for serving

Wrap the tofu in paper towels and place it between two plates to drain for 30 minutes. Pound it in a mortar or mix it until you get a smooth paste. Add the carrot, yam, green onion, mushrooms, egg white, half the sesame seeds, the potato starch, and salt and mix well.

Heat oil for deep-frying to 340–350°F. Form small oval balls of tofu dough, stick a pinch of sesame seeds on top, and immerse them in the oil 4 at a time at most, to prevent crowding. Fry until the fritters are golden brown. Drain on a wire rack.

Serve in small bowls with a little broth or simply with a little soy sauce and Japanese mustard – beware, it is strong!



TOFU

FERMENTED IN MISO

(Tōfu no misozuke)

For those who find tofu bland, here is something to change your mind: by letting it ferment in a miso-based mixture, you can develop aromas and textures similar to those of cheese. Miso-fermented tofu can be enjoyed on its own, in slices with bread and red wine, or used to garnish salads. In Japan, where this recipe came into being – it comes from Fukuoka, and the first written mention dates back to 1782 – it is tasted in small quantities, accompanied by sake, as a delicacy with a rich flavor.

🕒 prep **15 min** 🕒 press **1 hr 15 min** 🕒 aging **2 weeks** 🌱 **vegan**

For 1 block tofu (12 oz)

- 12 oz firm or extra-firm tofu • 8 oz mixed miso paste
- ¼ cup sake • 3 Tbsp mirin rice wine • 1 large square gauze or cheesecloth

Press your block of firm tofu to drain it: place it on a cutting board slightly raised on one side and place another fairly heavy board on top. You can place a pan on top for more weight, and therefore more pressure. Leave it for at least 1 hour, then wrap it in a clean cloth or paper towels for 15 minutes. (You can also use extra-firm tofu, well drained and simply wrapped in paper towels for 30 minutes.) Blot dry the entire surface of the tofu as much as possible, then wrap it in a double layer of gauze or cheesecloth.

In a bowl, mix the miso, sake, and mirin. Choose an airtight glass or clear plastic container barely larger than the block of tofu (ideally, the wrapped tofu will have a mere 1/16 inch margin on each side once placed in the container). Coat the bottom and sides of the container with the miso mixture. Be generous, especially in the corners. Place the wrapped tofu in the container, pressing hard to expel the air. Spread the rest of the miso mixture on top of the wrapped tofu. Make sure that it is fully coated and that there are no air bubbles. Close the container and place it in the refrigerator.

Once a week, check that the tofu does not show any trace of mold on its surface. If there are only a few spots of mold on the outside of the gauze, don't panic; remove them with the blade of a clean knife and sprinkle a little salt on the area. Ideally, avoid handling the tofu; the transparent container allows you to look without touching. After 2 weeks, the tofu will already have taken on flavor and changed color and texture. And after 2 months – that is the pinnacle!

Note Make sure your container is clean and perfectly dry. Work with clean hands or with sterile gloves. If you have any doubts – an unpleasant odor, pungent taste, mold on the surface of the tofu, and so on – start fresh and do not consume the dubious tofu.



SALTY-SWEET FRIED TOFU POCKETS

(Inariage)

In the frozen section of Japanese groceries (and sometimes in other Asian groceries that have a fairly wide selection of products), you find fried tofu called *aburaage*. It is first fried at a low temperature, then in hotter oil, which gives it a spongy texture similar to the puffed tofu that the Chinese call *dòubu* and the Malays call *tau pok*. *Aburaage* has the distinction of being fried in thin slices, resulting in a sort of large pocket. It is used in many Japanese recipes. Some recipes require you to cook it beforehand to obtain seasoned *aburaage*, which is called *inariage*. Here's how to do it.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ traditional dashi 1 hr) 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan

For 12 pieces

- 1/8 oz (3 g) kombu seaweed or 3/4 tsp kombu dashi powder • 1 cup water
- 6 frozen fried tofu pockets (*aburaage*), thawed • 1 qt boiling water • 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp mirin rice wine • 2 Tbsp sake • 3–4 Tbsp soy sauce

First prepare your soup base, or dashi: cut or break the kombu into pieces, and put it in a saucepan with the water. Let steep for at least 1 hour, then heat over low heat, covered. Just before boiling, when small bubbles form on the surface of the kombu, remove the seaweed pieces from the pan. The scented water that remains will be your dashi. If you're in a hurry, you can use instant dashi and just add the powder to the same amount of heated water.

Place the 6 pieces of *aburaage* flat between 2 sheets of plastic wrap and roll with a rolling pin (without pressing too hard). Cut the 6 pieces in half crosswise.

In a heatproof mixing bowl, pour 1 quart of boiling water over the 12 pieces of *aburaage*. Leave them for 2 minutes, then drain in a colander and pour a good amount of cold water over. Squeeze by hand (gently but firmly) to drain the excess water.

In a saucepan, combine the dashi, sugar, mirin, sake, and soy sauce. Add the *aburaage* and place an *otoshibuta* (the small wooden Japanese lids that you put on food), a pan lid that is too small for the pan, or a dessert plate directly on the *aburaage* to weight it down and keep it in the liquid. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook for about 15 minutes, until 90 percent of the liquid is gone. Let cool.

Your *inariage* is now ready for making sushi in a tofu pocket (*inarizushi*), fried tofu noodles (*kitsune udon*), and other dishes.



SUSHI IN TOFU POCKETS

(Inarizushi)

This recipe does not require you to be a sushi master; *inarizushi* is commonly prepared at home to fill the *bentō* lunchboxes of Japanese children. The dish consists of seasoned rice, usually garnished with sesame, seaweed, or other ingredients, served in a small pocket of salty-sweet fried tofu. You can use the ready-made *inarizushi* bags found in Japanese grocery stores, or the homemade version (see page 130), larger in size.

🕒 prep 15 min (+ traditional dashi 1 hr) 🕒 cook 40 min 🌱 vegan

For 12–16 pieces

- 4 Tbsp rice vinegar • 1–2 Tbsp sugar • 1–1½ Tbsp salt • 2 cups sushi rice
- 2¼ cups water or dashi (see miso soup recipe, page 116) • 2 Tbsp white sesame seeds
- 12 pieces homemade *inariage* (see page 130) or 16 pieces store-bought *inarizushi* pockets

For the *hijiki* seaweed

- ⅓ oz (10 g) dried *hijiki* seaweed • 5 Tbsp dashi • 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp soy sauce • 1 tsp sake • 1 tsp mirin rice wine

Soak the *hijiki* in a large bowl of water for about 30 minutes.

Combine the rice vinegar, sugar, and salt to season the rice. Set aside. Rinse the rice and swish it with your hand in clear water several times until it no longer gives up any starch. Drain, then put it in a saucepan and add the water or dashi. Heat over high heat, covered, for 13–15 minutes, then over low heat for 5–6 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand without touching the lid for another 10 minutes. Gently mix with a spatula to aerate the rice without crushing it, while sprinkling it with the seasoned rice vinegar. Let it cool down.

Drain the *hijiki* and mix it with the 5 tablespoons dashi, the sugar, soy sauce, sake, and mirin in a small saucepan, and simmer over medium heat until the liquid has evaporated.

Combine the rice, *hijiki*, and sesame seeds. Press the *inariage* to drain the excess sauce and reserve it in a bowl. Wet your hands with this sauce and press together enough rice (firmly, but without crushing it) to fill a piece of *inariage*. Carefully open an *inariage* pocket and fill it with rice. Repeat until you have used up all your rice and *inariage*. Serve at room temperature. No need for soy sauce, everything is already seasoned.

Note The seaweed that the Japanese call *hijiki* is found in dried form in Japanese grocery stores. It's an ultra-classic ingredient of *inarizushi*. You can replace it with mushrooms, edamame or other legumes, or just use white rice sprinkled with sesame or *furikake*, the Japanese seaweed-and-sesame seasoning blend for rice.



NOODLE SOUP

WITH FRIED TOFU

(Kitsune udon)

Here's an essential Japanese dish: you can eat it all over the country, all year round, and aside from few details it will always be the same. Of course, the broth will be a little more clear in Kansai – this cook will cut his fried tofu into triangles, while his neighbor prefers rectangles – but the recipe maintains a rare consistency at the national level. The fat wheat noodles (*udon*) with seasoned fried tofu (*inariage*) and broth are so popular that you can even suck down a bowl at full speed on the station platform before jumping on the train. For those who prefer it, substitute soba noodles for udon.

🕒 prep 10 min (+ traditional dashi 1 hr) 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 bowls

- 4 portions dried or precooked udon noodles • 8 pieces homemade *inariage* (see page 130)
- 1 qt dashi (see miso soup recipe, page 116) • 2 Tbsp mirin rice wine • 2 tsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 Tbsp salt • 2 green onions, thinly sliced

Immerse the udon in a large pot of boiling water. Heat them through as indicated on the packaging, stirring with chopsticks to separate them. Drain and rinse in cold water to remove the excess starch.

In a small frying pan, heat up the *inariage* in its juices. In a saucepan, combine the dashi, mirin, sugar, soy sauce, and salt. Turn off the heat just before it comes to a boil.

Divide the noodles among 4 bowls, then the hot broth (it will reheat the noodles). Place 2 pieces of *inariage* in each bowl and garnish with a little green onion.



PANFRIED TOFU

WITH NORI

(Tōfu no isobe maki)

This very simple and healthy recipe based on tofu, nori, and soy sauce is surprisingly delicious. It makes a good starter or can be eaten as a main dish with a little rice. If you add to that a small portion of vegetables and some miso soup, you will have a complete Japanese menu according to the rules of the game.

🕒 prep **5 min** 🕒 cook **10 min** 🌱 **vegan** 🍽️ **4 servings**

- 12 oz firm tofu • 3 Tbsp potato starch
- 3 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 Tbsp sugar • 2 Tbsp sake
- 2 Tbsp water • 2 sheets nori seaweed • Vegetable oil

Cut the tofu into slices about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick. Blot dry with paper towels and dust with starch to coat them on all sides.

In a bowl, combine the soy sauce, sugar, sake, and water.

In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the tofu on both sides. Add the sauce and swirl it in the pan, turning the tofu over so that it is completely coated. Remove from the heat.

Cut the nori into strips the entire length of the sheets about 1 inch wide. Take the tofu out of the pan and wrap each piece with a strip of nori. Serve hot with the sauce.



KYOTO-STYLE TOFU HOT POT

(Yudōfu)

This dish is an edifying example of Japanese modesty or culinary snobbery – it all depends on your point of view. Its name literally means “hot water tofu.” This Kyoto specialty consists of tofu cooked in a kombu-flavored broth and served with a few little condiments. And that’s all. Extremely simple and stripped down, this recipe demands very good ingredients – an excellent fresh tofu, competition-level kombu, and best-quality soy sauce.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 soak 2 hr–1 night 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- ¾ oz (20 g) kombu seaweed • ½ cup soy sauce • 2 Tbsp sake • 2 tsp mirin rice wine
- 21 oz medium-firm tofu • 2 pinches salt • 1 small bunch Japanese parsley (*mitsuba*)
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 tsp finely grated root ginger

With a clean cloth, gently wipe the surface of the kombu to remove any impurities – without removing the white powder, which is concentrated umami flavor. In a casserole pan or Dutch oven, place the kombu in 5 cups of water and let it soak for at least 2 hours and up to overnight.

Meanwhile, prepare the sauce by combining the soy sauce, sake, and mirin in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer, turn off the heat, and set aside.

Cut the tofu into 8 large squares and gently place them in the water with the kombu. Lightly salt the water. Heat over medium-low heat until you see the tofu move due to the small bubbles forming in the water. Add the parsley and serve at once with the sauce.

Eat the tofu hot, dipped in the sauce with a little green onion and ginger.

SAUTÉED MINCED TOFU

(Tōfu soboro)

Sautéed minced chicken is a simple and very common preparation in Japan; it is often used to garnish *bentō*. It is also the main ingredient of delicious *soborodon*, a bowl of rice topped with this famous chicken, vegetables, and scrambled eggs. The vegan version of this poultry preparation, which we can call *tōfu soboro* if we compare it to meat, or *iridōfu* if we compare it to a scrambled egg, is surprisingly rich in taste, and its texture does not leave one to imagine that it is tofu. Something to serve to reluctant carnivores.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 portions

- 14 oz extra-firm tofu • ½ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup sake • ¼ cup mirin rice wine • 3 Tbsp sugar
- 2 tsp finely grated root ginger • Vegetable oil • Steamed rice for serving

Heat a frying pan over medium heat and add a little oil. Crumble the tofu with your fingers, add it to the pan, and mix in the rest of the ingredients. Continue to crush and crumble the tofu with a spatula for a few minutes. Add a little water if necessary: the liquid should not completely disappear. Taste, adjust the seasoning if necessary, and serve with rice.

TOFU RICE BOWL

WITH SCRAMBLED EGGS

(Soborodon)

Four colors for a savory bowl: the light brown of sautéed tofu, the bright yellow of scrambled eggs, the bright green of blanched peas, and the neon pink of marinated ginger (*beni shōga*). This vegan version of a classic Japanese chicken dish creates an illusion, both visually and in the mouth, and is prepared much faster than it looks.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 35 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 bowls

- 1½ cups sushi rice • 4 oz snow peas or sugar snap peas • 4 eggs
- 2 tsp soy sauce • 1 tsp sugar • 1 tsp mirin rice wine
- 4 portions *soboro* tofu, still warm in its juices (see page 139)
- 4 tsp red-pickled ginger, julienned (*beni shōga*) • Vegetable oil • Salt

Rinse the rice and swish it with your hand in clear water several times until it no longer gives up any starch. Drain, then put it in a saucepan with just enough water to cover your fingers when you lay your hand flat on the rice. Heat over high heat, covered, for 13–15 minutes, then over low heat for 5–6 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand without touching the lid for another 10 minutes. Gently mix with a spatula to aerate the rice without crushing it.

Cut the peas on the diagonal ⅓ inch thick. Blanch them in a pan of boiling salted water for 20–30 seconds, then drain and immerse them in an ice water bath. Drain and set aside.

Break the eggs into a large bowl and add the soy sauce, sugar, mirin, and a pinch of salt. Take several chopsticks in one hand (5 is a good number) and use them to mix and beat the eggs without incorporating air. Heat a large frying pan over medium heat, add a little oil, and pour in the eggs. With your chopsticks, scramble the eggs as they cook until they are no longer sticky but not too dry.

Divide the rice among 4 bowls, and decoratively arrange the lukewarm *soboro* tofu with its juices, snow peas, and scrambled eggs over the rice. Add a little pink ginger, and serve at once.



SOBA NOODLES

WITH FRESH YUBA

(Yuba soba)

The film that forms on the surface of soy milk when you heat it is called *yuba*. In Japan, most small traditional tofu workshops also sell *yuba*, since the raw material is the same as for tofu. This skin, rich in proteins and vitamins, can be used fresh, tender, and creamy, or can also be found sold in dried form. For this soba (buckwheat noodle) recipe, very popular in Tochigi prefecture, you can use rehydrated dried yuba...but fresh yuba is so much better!

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 35 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 bowls

- 4 tsp sugar • 3 Tbsp mirin rice wine • $\frac{2}{3}$ cup soy sauce
- 1 qt rich soy milk (see page 24) • 4 portions soba noodles
- 1 qt dashi (see miso soup recipe, page 116) • 2 tsp sake
- 1 sheet nori seaweed, cut into matchsticks • 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 tsp wasabi

Combine the sugar and mirin in a saucepan and heat over medium heat, stirring. When the sugar is completely dissolved, add the soy sauce and continue to heat. When it comes to a simmer, remove from the heat and let cool.

Heat the soy milk over low heat in a sauté pan, in order to expose as much surface area as possible to the air. With a pair of chopsticks, collect the film that forms on the surface of the milk as it heats up. If your soy milk is concentrated enough, it will not stop forming this film on the surface as long as you continue to heat it. Place the fresh yuba on a plate, trying to fold it neatly. Form 4 small separate heaps.

Cook your soba noodles as directed on the package. Rinse them thoroughly in cold water so that they don't stick together.

Combine the mirin mixture with the dashi and sake. Heat until simmering. Serve the soba in 4 bowls with the yuba, nori, green onions, and a little wasabi. The sauce, hot or cooled, is normally served in small jugs and poured over the noodles by diners at the table.

Notes For a gluten-free version, use 100 percent buckwheat soba.

You can replace the sauce in this recipe with udon soup (see page 134).



OKARA

WITH VEGETABLES

(Unohana)

Okara is the solid residue that remains after pressing soybeans. After extracting all their juice, or soy milk, you end up with a pulp that is still a little damp (but not too damp), and which is packed with vitamins and fiber. Don't throw it out! It is an appreciated ingredient in tofu-producing countries, and can be used to make a lot of things. This simple dish is one of many recipes to make if you have *l'okara* – which is more and more easily found in outside of Japan, whether in Asian grocery stores or organic markets, in the fresh section.

🕒 prep 10 min (+ traditional dashi 1 hr) 🕒 cook 25 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 1/8 oz kombu seaweed or 1/2 tsp kombu dashi powder • 1 cup water • 2 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 8 green beans • 2 green onions • 1 Tbsp sesame oil • 1 Tbsp neutral vegetable oil
- 1 small carrot, julienned • 4 oz *okara* (see page 24) • 2 Tbsp sake • 1 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp mirin rice wine • 1–2 Tbsp light soy sauce • Salt

First prepare your soup base, or dashi: cut or break the kombu into pieces, and put it in a saucepan with the water. Let steep for at least 1 hour, then heat over low heat, covered. Just before boiling, when small bubbles form on the surface of the kombu, remove the seaweed pieces from the pan. The scented water that remains will be your dashi. If you're in a hurry, you can use instant dashi and just add the powder to the same amount of heated water.

Rehydrate the mushrooms in a bowl of warm water. Cut the green beans in half lengthwise, then in half again crosswise. Blanch them in a pan of salted water for 1 minute. Rinse them in cold water, drain, and set aside. Drain the shiitakes (reserve 7 tablespoons of their soaking water, filter it, and add it to the dashi), remove their stems and cut the caps into slices about 1/16 inch thick. Slice the green onion.

In a pan over medium heat, combine the two oils, add the mushrooms and the carrot, and sauté them for 2 minutes, stirring. Add the okara and brown it with the vegetables for another 1–2 minutes. Add the dashi, sake, sugar, mirin, soy sauce, and a little salt to taste. Mix and adjust the seasoning if necessary.

Simmer for about 20 minutes, mixing from time to time. When the liquid is absorbed, add the beans and the green onion. Mix and let cool. Serve at room temperature. It's even better the next day (keep in the fridge and serve without reheating).

PEANUT TOFU

(Jīmāmidōfu)

Like all nut “tofus”, *jīmāmidōfu* is not, strictly speaking, tofu. It is made from peanuts and has an extremely firm and elastic texture – when you insert a spoon in it, it stays upright on its own. Particularly appreciated in the Okinawa archipelago in the south of Japan, it is traditionally prepared a little like almond tofu, which is quite a laborious process. Similar results are easily obtained with peanut butter, water, and a fabulous natural thickener, kudzu (or *kuzu*, or Japanese arrowroot). Peanut tofu can be eaten salted with soy sauce and wasabi, or sweetened with caramel sauce – but you can be as inventive as you like, try dicing it and adding it to vegetable or fruit salads.

🕒 prep **5 min** (+ chill **1 night**) 🕒 cook **20 min** 🌱 **vegan**

For 6–8 portions

- ¼ cup unsweetened, unsalted peanut butter
- 2⅔ cups water • 5½ Tbsp kudzu root starch • ½ tsp salt

Mix the peanut butter and the water until you get a perfectly homogeneous consistency. Add the kudzu and salt, and mix again. In a saucepan over medium heat, heat the mixture, stirring constantly with a wooden spatula until it thickens. Turn the heat down as low as possible and continue to stir for about 10 minutes, or until the dough has thickened to the point where it does not seem pourable.

Immediately transfer the dough into a rectangular glass mold with moistened sides. Smooth the surface with wet fingers. Let cool to room temperature, then cover with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator until the “tofu” is cool and firm. Cut portions with a knife after wetting the blade, and serve salted as a starter, or sweetened as a snack or dessert with the caramel sauce from the tofu mochi recipe (see page 152).

Notes Kudzu root starch can be found in organic markets, Japanese groceries, and online. It is sometimes called “Japanese arrowroot,” but regular arrowroot will *not* work as a substitute to achieve the same consistency.

For a sweet version of peanut tofu, add 2 tablespoons of honey or agave syrup.

EDAMAME TOFU

(Uguisudōfu)

This fresh edamame (green soybean) tofu is a beautiful pale green. It is not real tofu, although it is possible to make “real” tofu with edamame in the same way as with mature soybeans. However, *usugisudōfu* is easier and faster to make, performs better, and requires less material. Edamame are common in the frozen section of Asian groceries and well-stocked supermarkets; you can replace them with fresh fava beans or lima beans in season.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 35 min 🌱 vegan

For 6–8 portions

- ½ cup frozen edamame, thawed • 2⅔ cups water
- 5½ Tbsp kudzu root starch (see Note, page 145) • ¼ tsp salt • Wasabi and soy sauce, for serving

In a food processor, blend the edamame, water, kudzu, and salt until you get a perfectly smooth mixture.

In a saucepan over medium heat, heat the mixture, stirring constantly with a wooden spatula, until it thickens. Turn the heat down as low as possible and continue stirring for about 10 minutes, or until the dough has thickened to the point where it does not seem pourable.

Immediately transfer the dough into a rectangular glass mold with moistened sides. Smooth the surface with wet fingers. Let cool to room temperature, then cover with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator until the “tofu” is cool and firm. Cut portions with a knife after wetting the blade, and serve as a starter with a little wasabi and soy sauce.

WALNUT TOFU

(Kurumidōfu)

This *Tōhoku* specialty is made from Japanese walnuts (*kurumi*), also called heart nuts, which may be hard to come by in your local market but may be ordered online. Their flavor is much more pronounced than that of regular walnuts, but you can substitute regular walnuts here. Tofu made from regular walnuts will have a more subtle aroma than the Japanese version, but is still very pleasant – at least, if you like nuts and delicate flavors. Like other nut tofus, it can be eaten sweet or savory.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ chill 1 night) 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan

For 6–8 portions

- ½ cup walnuts, finely chopped • 2⅔ cups water
- 5½ Tbsp kudzu root starch (see Note, page 145) • ½ tsp salt

Toast the walnut pieces in a dry pan until they have a pleasant aroma. In a food processor, combine them with half of the water and blend until you get a smooth texture. Rinse down the sides of the workbowl with the rest of the water, add the kudzu and salt, and continue to blend for 1 minute.

Transfer the mixture to a saucepan and heat over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spatula, until it thickens. Turn the heat down as low as possible and keep stirring until the dough has thickened to the point where it no longer seems pourable.

Immediately transfer the dough into a rectangular glass mold with moistened sides. Smooth the surface with wet fingers. Let cool to room temperature, then cover with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator until the “tofu” is cool and firm. Cut portions with a knife after wetting the blade, and serve salted as a starter, or sweetened as a snack or dessert.

WALNUT TOFU WITH PERSIMMON

(Kurumidōfu to kaki)

I've never seen this recipe in Japan, but it must surely exist. The two iconic flavors of fall, walnut and persimmon, are an obvious marriage. The natural sugar of the fruit is enough to make this very simple assembly a dessert in itself. By using both non-astringent persimmons, which are eaten firm, and astringent persimmons, which are eaten overripe, even runny, you can obtain an amazing range of textures.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 portions walnut tofu
- 1 large nonastringent persimmon (such as Fuyu), firm
- 1 large astringent persimmon (such as Hachiya), overripe and squishy
- Fleur de sel sea salt

Place the walnut tofu portions in saucers. Peel the firm persimmon like an apple and dice it. Halve the soft persimmon and scoop out the flesh with a small spoon into a bowl.

In each saucer, arrange one-fourth of the diced firm persimmon around the walnut tofu. Pour over one-fourth of the soft persimmon flesh and juice. Sprinkle with a little fleur de sel, and serve.



SESAME

TOFU

(Gomadōfu)

Sesame “tofu” is the most common of the seed and nut tofus. These are not real tofus but preparations based on oilseeds (sesame, peanuts, etc.) that Japanese people enjoy a bit like silken tofu. Their texture is generally very firm, very dense, and pretty elastic, even a little sticky, and their flavor is delicate but pleasant. They can be eaten as a starter, as a dessert, or as a snack, and they may be accompanied with sweet or savory sauces and condiments.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ chill 1 night) 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 6–8 portions

- ½ cup white or black sesame paste, or tahini
- 2 Tbsp sake • 2⅔ cups water or dashi (see miso soup recipe, page 116)
- 6 Tbsp kudzu root starch • ½ tsp honey or agave syrup
- ½ tsp salt • Wasabi and soy sauce or caramel sauce (see page 152), for serving

Mix the sesame paste, sake, and water or dashi until you get a perfectly homogeneous consistency. Add the kudzu, honey, and salt, and mix again. In a saucepan, heat the mixture over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spatula, until it thickens. Turn the heat down as low as possible and continue stirring for about 10 minutes, or until the dough has thickened to the point where it no longer seems pourable.

Immediately transfer the dough to a rectangular glass mold with moistened sides. Smooth the surface with wet fingers. Let cool to room temperature, then cover with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator until the “tofu” is cool and firm. Cut portions with a knife after wetting the blade and serve salted as a starter, with a little wasabi and soy sauce, or sweet for dessert with caramel sauce.

Note Kudzu can be found in organic markets, Japanese groceries, and online. It is sometimes called “Japanese arrowroot,” but regular arrowroot will *not* work as a substitute to achieve the same consistency.



TOFU MOCHI

(Tōfu dango)

Dango is a sweet confection (that is to say, sweet for Japanese people – therefore hardly sweet to the rest of us) based on rice flour, similar to mochi – white, dense, and elastic. To make the original *dango* (*mitarashi dango*), you need two different types of rice flour; for the tofu version, one is enough. They are shaped into little balls, threaded on skewers, and eaten with caramel sauce. A fun and easy activity, perfect for children.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan

For 6 skewers

- 4 oz extra-fine silken tofu • 2 tsp sugar
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup glutinous rice flour (*shiratamako*)

For the sauce

- 5 Tbsp sugar • 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 Tbsp mirin rice wine
- 4 Tbsp water • 1 tsp potato starch mixed with 1 tsp water

In a mixing bowl, mash the tofu and mix it by hand with the sugar and rice flour. Very gradually add a small amount of water until you get the perfect consistency: a completely smooth, firm paste that does not stick to your fingers.

Form a sausage with the dough and divide it into three parts, then again into three parts, then into two parts. Form small balls by rolling the dough between your palms. It's a bit like playdough – kids love it.

Heat a large pot of water; when it comes to a boil, immerse the balls. When they rise to the surface, count for 1 minute, then take them out using a skimmer and immerse them in a bowl of ice water. Thread the balls onto small bamboo skewers, 3 by 3.

To make the sauce, combine the sugar, soy sauce, rice wine, and water in a small saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring. Add the starch slurry, mix well, and turn off the heat as soon as the sauce has thickened. Serve the *dango* skewers generously brushed with sauce.

Note The sticky rice flour needed for this recipe can be found in Japanese grocery stores. It has nothing to do with Vietnamese sticky rice flour, which cannot replace it. The skewers are even better if you grill or broil them for a few minutes on the barbecue or under the broiler before covering them with sauce.

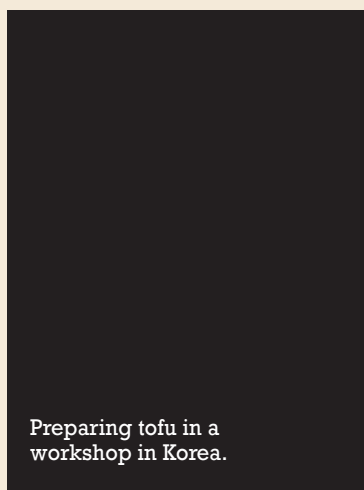




The background of the entire image is a teal color with a repeating floral pattern. The pattern consists of stylized leaves and small flowers. In the center, there is a white rectangular area containing the text.

Korea

두부



Preparing tofu in a workshop in Korea.

A PARTICULAR METHOD

Korean firm tofu is so close to Japanese that you can mistake the two; in general, it is slightly firmer, but its appearance is in all respects similar to that of its Japanese counterpart. On the other hand, its traditional method of preparation is a little more laborious. The soybeans are first soaked for 8–10 hours, then they are ground. This raw soybean paste is placed on a very solid cheesecloth lying flat above a basin, then sprinkled with boiling water; the water and the dough are mixed vigorously, and gradually until soy milk begins to pass through the cheesecloth in droplets. A mousse forms, due to the saponin present in the soybeans. The process is repeated as many times as necessary to extract all the juice from the soybeans and keep only the dry pulp, called *biji*, in the cheesecloth.

The soybean juice, or soy milk, collected in the basin is still raw. It is poured into a traditional large, thick iron pot called a *gamasot*, covered, and heated slowly for about 1 hour. At this stage it is never uncovered, because contact with air causes a solid film, *yuba*, to form on its surface. This protein-rich film, which the Chinese and Japanese love, is not appreciated in Korea, where it is considered as an undesirable effect of heating soy milk. When the contents of the *gamasot* come to a boil, seawater is added to it. It is rich in magnesium chloride, a coagulating agent. Seawater is a common traditional ingredient for making tofu in many countries. However, it has been largely abandoned almost everywhere in favor of magnesium chloride crystals. In Korea, however, it is still widely used among tofu artisans.

With the addition of seawater, the soy milk begins to coagulate in the center of the *gamasot*, revealing a whey slightly tinged with green; at this stage, it is important not to stir, so as not to break up the curd that we want to keep intact and as large as possible. Very carefully, with a large ladle, the curd is scooped up from the center of the *gamasot* with its whey and set aside.

They will be eaten as is, or cooked. This extremely tender, unpressed tofu that bathes in its own whey is one of a kind; the Koreans call it *sundubu*. The rest of the curd will be poured into a wooden mold covered with cheesecloth and pressed until you get a block of firm tofu.

MORE MARGINAL THAN IN CHINA & JAPAN

While tofu is inevitable and omnipresent in China and Japan, it is rarer in Korea. It is an everyday foodstuff, found in all supermarkets and traditional markets, and it appears on the menus of the great majority of restaurants; still, it is not eaten daily and rarely cooked in large quantities. Koreans consume on average three times less tofu than the Japanese. However, Korean tofu is excellent. Artisanal *sundubu* in particular is a delight; tender, supple, it is so mild that it almost seems sweet, highlighting the slight hazelnut flavor of soybeans. This sweetness is due to an ingredient that is usually missing in tofu that has been coagulated with magnesium chloride: salt. Naturally present in seawater, it is a fabulous flavor enhancer for soybeans and a welcome bitterness corrector for the slight bitter flavor of magnesium chloride. A good fresh *sundubu* can be eaten alone, hot or warm, in its whey, with a spoon, without needing absolutely anything. It's simply a treat.

There are fewer types of tofu and tofu products in Korea than in China and Japan. Tofu was introduced on the Korean peninsula between the tenth and twelfth centuries and quickly adopted by Buddhist monks, who practice for the most part a vegetable-based diet (they eat honey and see no harm in it, so you can't qualify them as vegans) or vegetarian diet (some consume dairy products). On the other hand, the rest of the population is very attached to the consumption of meat and seafood; it's difficult today to be a strict vegetarian in Korea unless all your friends are monks. Tofu is appreciated but pales in comparison to the beef, pork, or chicken that the Koreans devour with passion; tofu is often

eaten as a side dish, or it is used as an ingredient in certain dishes that also contain meat products. Outside of Buddhist cuisine, it is rare for a tofu dish not to contain any traces of fish sauce, meat broth, or the like.

SPICY HOT TOFU... OR SUGAR SWEET TOFU

In Korea, tofu (like almost all other foods) is very commonly associated with chile. At first, I thought the chile pepper was used to spice up the tofu. But after a while, I started wondering if the tofu was there to tone down the chile. Korean cuisine has become so hot in recent times that tofu, like rice, seems to be one of the few mild elements of the meal that somewhat dampen the almost permanent fire. Even the Buddhists eat everything spicy. There really is no refuge for diners who can't take it. I still wanted to offer Korean recipes without hot pepper in this chapter, because this use of chiles, which has become systematic fairly recently, seems to me not only exaggerated, but grotesque. Most of the chefs with whom I raised the subject in Seoul and in the provinces also found this current escalation unpleasant.

It's all the more unfortunate to mask the taste of Korean tofu when it is a handcrafted product. I ate very good tofus in China and Japan, which could be eaten alone and enjoyed as is, but the best plain tofu of my life was one I tasted in Korea, in the Chodang district or "tofu village" of the city of Gangneum. The craftsman who prepared it before my eyes, Mr. Kim, advised me to eat his *sundubu* without adding anything. And this fabulous product was enough in itself. In cities like Los Angeles or other places with a sizable Korean population, you should be able to find high-quality *sundubu* at Korean markets or possibly buy it from a restaurant. It may also be labeled "soon tofu" or "extra soft Korean tofu."

TOFU TYPES & USES

FIRM TOFU

Korean firm tofu can take on a fairly large range of textures. Brands often classify these textures by degree of firmness (extra-firm, firm, medium, etc.) or by use (for soups, for frying, etc.). In general, Korean tofu is a little more firm than Japanese tofu and a little less firm than Chinese tofu; for frying or sautéing you will want to press it in order to drain out some of the water and make its texture more dense and solid.

UNPRESSED TOFU

Unpressed soy milk curd is a type of tofu, even if it doesn't look like it. We are used to seeing block tofu, but this type has not undergone any pressing and has not been molded; the curd is clearly visible and bathes in its own whey, looking like little clouds. This extra-tender tofu, called *sundubu* or "soft tofu," is full of water and therefore very low in calories – around 30 to 40 calories per 100 grams (4 ounces). Traditionally, it is made with seawater, whose magnesium chloride serves as a coagulating agent. The salt of the seawater imparts a slightly salty flavor to the tofu, which is very pleasant. Factory-produced *sundubu* is coagulated with magnesium chloride, calcium sulfate, glucono-delta-lactone (GDL), or a mixture of the three, often giving a clearly more gelled and brittle texture. It is compressed in cylindrical or rectangular packages, since the curd tends to agglomerate into a texture similar to that of an extremely soft silken tofu. *Sundubu* is mainly used in soups and stews.



1



2



3



4

Different types of Korean tofu: silken tofu (1), firm tofu (2), unpressed tofu, the famous *sunbubu* (3) and fried tofu pockets (4).

SILKEN TOFU

Silken tofu did not exist in Korea until the twentieth century, but it was established there during the Japanese occupation, from 1910 to 1945. Today it is widely available in supermarkets in the typical Japanese forms. Since the Japanese had an important influence on the production of tofu in Korea, certain distinctions became blurred; silken tofu can be confused or hybridized with unpressed Korean tofu (*sundubu*), creating in-between versions, sold in rectangular packages or tubes. These may be more or less gelatinous – some can hold their shape despite their great fragility. Japanese-style silken tofu can serve as a substitute for *sundubu*, even if these are fundamentally very different products: silken tofu is by definition appreciated for its smooth texture, while *sundubu* on the contrary is prized for its clearly visible curd with a soft, springy consistency.

FRIED TOFU POCKETS

Japanese fried tofu pockets (*inariage* in Japanese, *yubu* in Korean) have been adopted by Koreans and can be used in a variety of ways: they can be cut into strips and sautéed, fried, or added to soups, their spongy texture absorbing broths well. They can also be marinated in a sweet-and-salty sauce to make delicious little rice pockets with multicolored ingredients inspired by Japanese *inarizushi*, called *yubuchobap* in Korean. Ready-to-use *yubuchobap* kits are widely available in Korean and Japanese grocery stores, and even in some general Asian groceries.



DEEP-FRIED STUFFED CHILES

(Gochu twigim)

The Koreans are among the peoples who adore chile; they are able to revel in dishes that would send Europeans to the hospital. To make these delicious stuffed peppers, Koreans use different varieties; some are strong, others are sweet. I chose to use Padrón peppers, a small variety from Spain, as a substitute. Padróns are mostly mild, but one in ten has some heat to it. They are very similar – in looks and in flavor – to Korean *kkwari-gochu*, a.k.a. shishitos, another good choice. You can replace them with mild mini bell peppers, or large hot peppers if extreme spiciness doesn't scare you.

🕒 prep 45 min 🕒 cook 50 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 30–40 pieces

- 30–40 Padrón peppers or other green chiles • Oil for deep-frying

For the stuffing

- 10 oz firm tofu • 1 small carrot, finely chopped • 1 small zucchini, finely chopped
- ½ onion, finely chopped • 1 green onion, thinly sliced • 1 egg • 1 tsp minced garlic • 1 tsp salt

For the coating

- 1 cup flour • 2 Tbsp potato starch • 1 cup ice water

For the sauce

- 4 Tbsp soy sauce • 4 Tbsp rice vinegar • 1 Tbsp lemon juice

If you are using Korean firm tofu, which has a higher water content than typical firm tofu, wrap it in paper towels and let it drain between two plates for 1 hour.

Slit each pepper down its side and remove the seeds. Set aside.

Crumble the tofu in a bowl and mix it with the remaining stuffing ingredients.

Fill all the peppers with stuffing, packing it in well. Prepare the coating at the last minute by briefly mixing all the ingredients with a few strokes of a pair of chopsticks. Lumps can (and should) remain.

Heat oil for deep-frying to about 350°F. Dip the peppers in the coating and fry them in batches of 5 to prevent crowding. When the coating is crisp, transfer to a wire rack to drain. For extra crisp and nicely golden peppers, fry them a second time.

Prepare the sauce by combining the ingredients. Serve the hot peppers with the sauce.



HERBED TOFU CANAPÉS

(Pa ganghwae)

People often say that Japanese cuisine is the prettiest. But the Koreans have a completely exquisite sense of geometry. Their presentations are unlike any other. They like to wrap long foods, even tying knots. *Ganghwae* is the name for dishes in which herbs and stems are wrapped and tied around other foods. In this case, I used tender spring onions (*pa*) for this lovely starter, so it's called *pa ganghwae*. It's extremely easy to do, but makes quite an impression. In addition, it is delicious and super healthy. You can replace the spring onion with other herbs of your choice: cilantro, parsley, chives...

🕒 prep 20 min 🍳 cook 5 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 15 pieces

- 10 oz firm tofu or grilled tofu (see pages 27 and 124) • 1–2 large mild chiles or ¼ red bell pepper
- 2 eggs • 15 tender green onions, chives, or long sprigs of parsley or cilantro • Salt • Vegetable oil

For the sauce

- 2 Tbsp Korean red chile paste (gochujang) • 1 Tbsp sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp sugar • 2 tsp soy sauce • 2 tsp water • 1 tsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp minced garlic • 1 tsp toasted white sesame seeds

If you are using firm, non-grilled tofu, wrap it in paper towels and let it drain between two plates for 1 hour. Cut it into 1 by 2-inch rectangles about ¼ inch thick. Cut the chiles or bell peppers into 1- by ½-inch rectangles.

Beat the eggs with a pinch of salt using a pair of chopsticks, without incorporating air and frothing them up. Pass them through a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer to get a homogeneous mixture. Place a large frying pan over low heat and oil it lightly. Pour in half the mixture and spread it over the entire surface. Cook for 1–2 minutes, until the egg is cooked without browning. No need to flip this “pancake omelet,” it is so fine that it cooks fully by heating on one side. Transfer to a platter and repeat with the rest of the eggs. Cut the “pancake omelettes” to the same dimensions as the tofu.

Blanch the green onions in a saucepan of salted water. As soon as they become flexible and change color, drain and immerse them in an ice-water bath. Separate the green onions to take only one leaf at a time. On each rectangle of tofu, place a rectangle of omelette and a rectangle of chile or bell pepper, then wrap a leaf of green onion around it, making several turns. Tuck in the end of the green onion on the back side of the canapé. Repeat to use up all of the ingredients. Arrange on a serving platter.

Combine all the ingredients for the sauce except the sesame seeds, sprinkle the sesame on top, and serve with the canapés.



PANFRIED TOFU

WITH EGG

(Dubu jeon)

The word *jeon* is often translated as “pancake,” as this is the form that this Korean dish usually has. But sometimes, *jeon* are simply ingredients that are dredged in a mixture of flours, dipped into beaten egg, and then fried. Less crisp than breading – there are no bread crumbs involved – the result is nonetheless quite delicious. Tofu cooked this way, brown on the outside, soft on the inside, is an easy-to-prepare starter or side dish that everyone likes. Enjoy it while it’s hot, dipped in a spicy sauce.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14 oz firm tofu • A few sprigs of dill • ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp rice flour • 1 Tbsp potato starch
- 2 eggs • ½ tsp garlic powder • Salt and pepper • Vegetable oil

For the dipping sauce

- 2 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 Tbsp sesame oil • 1 Tbsp Korean red chile flakes (*gochugaru*)
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced • 1 tsp white sesame seeds

Cut the tofu into 1½- to 2-inch squares a scant ½ inch thick. Place them on paper towels and blot dry. You can also wrap the tofu in paper towels and press between 2 plates to drain, if you prefer a firmer texture.

Cut the dill into small sprigs to garnish the tofu. Mix the two flours and the starch and place on a plate. Beat the eggs without frothing them and pour into a deep plate. Sprinkle a little garlic powder, salt, and pepper over the tofu.

Place a large pan over medium heat and oil generously. Dredge each piece of tofu in the flour mixture, then immediately dip it in the egg, add a sprig of dill on one side, and place it in the pan right away. Repeat to use all the tofu.

Brown tofu on both sides. Let pieces drain on a wire rack or on paper towels while you prepare the dipping sauce by mixing all the ingredients. Serve the panfried tofu hot with its sauce.

Note For a small starter course, you can divide the quantities in half.



CARAMELIZED SESAME TOFU

(Dubu gangjang jorim)

Fans of sweet-and-salty sauces will love this very simple little dish of panfried tofu in a caramelized soy sauce. In Korea, they use malt syrup, which has a strong sweet flavor and gives the sauce a nice sheen, or rice syrup, less sweet and just as shiny. Malt syrup, available in Asian groceries, was made from barley, but nowadays it's often corn-based, so you can also use corn syrup. Or, you can replace these syrups with honey, agave syrup, or even maple syrup if that calls to you.

🕒 prep **5 min** 🕒 cook **10 min** 🌱 **vegan** 👤 **4 servings**

- 7 oz firm tofu • 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 Tbsp Korean malt syrup (*mulyeot*), corn syrup, or rice syrup
- 1 tsp black sesame seeds, toasted • Vegetable oil

Cut the tofu into slices a scant ½ inch thick. Or, if you prefer, cut it into ¾-inch cubes. Place on paper towels and blot dry. Place a frying pan over medium heat, add a little oil, and brown the tofu on all sides.

Lower the heat and add the garlic, soy sauce, and malt syrup. Mix to coat all the tofu pieces with sauce. Serve sprinkled with sesame seeds.

SPICED STEW

WITH VERY TENDER TOFU

(Sundubu jjigae)

This stew – close to a soup, with plenty of goodies in it— is red in color but less spicy than it looks. It is mellowed by the most tender tofu that exists, the Korean *sundubu*. This tofu is actually not even solid, because it is not pressed; the commercial version has an extremely smooth and fragile custard texture. It is found in flexible cylindrical tubes in the fresh section of Korean grocery stores. If you can't find it, replace the *sundubu* with regular silken tofu.

🕒 prep 20 min 🍳 cook 15 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 4 bowls

- 4 dried shiitake mushrooms • 2 cloves garlic, minced • 1 small onion, thinly sliced
 - 2 Tbsp Korean red chile flakes (*gochugaru*) • 1 Tbsp soy sauce
 - 2 cups dashi (see miso soup recipe, page 116) • 1 lb *sundubu* tofu
- 1 bunch enoki mushrooms, roughly separated • 4 oz oyster mushrooms or *shimeji*, separated
 - 1 Tbsp sesame oil • 2 green onions, thinly sliced • Salt and pepper • Vegetable oil

Rehydrate the mushrooms in a bowl of warm water. When they are tender, remove and discard the stems and slice the caps. Reserve 7 tablespoons of the mushroom-soaking water. Place a Dutch oven or casserole pan over medium heat, add a little oil, and quickly brown the garlic, onion, chili powder, and soy sauce while stirring. Add the dashi and mushroom-soaking water and bring to a boil for 2–3 minutes. Season with salt to taste, and mix.

Carefully cut the *sundubu* packaging and try to cut it into thick slices, crushing it as little as possible. Add it to the stew, along with the mushrooms. Simmer for a few minutes, until the mushrooms are tender. Add sesame oil and pepper and serve sprinkled with the green onions.

Note Koreans gladly crack two eggs directly into the pot when serving, to enrich the stew.

STEAMED TOFU

WITH SAUTÉED KIMCHI

(Dubu kimchi)

Kimchi, the fermented cabbage they eat daily in Korea, keeps for quite a while but loses its crispness and becomes acidic at some point. It's usually this "old" kimchi that is sautéed – it's not as pleasant to eat raw, but is very good cooked. It is served with slices of boiled or steamed tofu; this is a favorite *ahnju* – a dishes that accompanies booze. It's also one of the healthiest.

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 8 oz vegetarian kimchi, coarsely sliced • 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 1 clove garlic, minced • 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 tsp sugar
- 14 oz firm tofu • Boiling water, as needed • 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp sesame oil • 1 tsp white sesame seeds • Vegetable oil • Pepper

In a large bowl, combine the kimchi, half the green onions, the ginger, garlic, soy sauce, and sugar. Let stand for 10–15 minutes.

Cut the tofu into 2 blocks. Place them in 1 quart of boiling water and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. (You can also steam them for 5–10 minutes, if you prefer.) Carefully remove the tofu from the water, drain, and cut into slices about ¼ inch thick.

In an frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Sauté the onion for a few moments, then add the kimchi mixture. Sauté until the liquid released by the kimchi is almost completely gone. Remove from the heat. Season with pepper, add the sesame oil, and mix again.

For a starter to be shared, place the stir-fried kimchi in the center of a platter, sprinkled with sesame seeds and the rest of the green onion, and surrounded with tofu slices. Or, if you prefer, you can distribute the tofu and the kimchi directly onto diners' plates.



BROTH

WITH POTATOES & TOFU

(Gamjaguk)

No, Koreans do not make everything spicy. Some preparations are very mild, like this clear soup made with three times nothing - mainly tofu, potatoes and green onion. You can make it a whole meal of it, enriching it with other vegetables, mushrooms, sweet potato noodles, beaten eggs, and even...chile. Well, in fact they really do make everything spicy.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 bowls

- 2–3 medium potatoes • 7 oz firm tofu • 2 green onions
- 1 qt dashi (see miso soup recipe, page 116)
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce • Salt and pepper

Cut the potatoes into half-moons a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Cut the tofu in half lengthwise, then into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices. Slice the green onion very thinly on the diagonal.

Add the potatoes and tofu, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil again and cook for about 5 minutes, until the potatoes are tender but not falling apart. Add the soy sauce and green onion, mix, and serve.



VEGGIE TOFU CAKES

(Dubu yachae jeon)

By mixing tofu, vegetables, eggs, and flour, you get a fabulous dough. You could make it into one large pancake the size of a pan, but smaller sizes are easier to prepare, serve, and eat. What's more, they are very cute. Crispy on the outside, soft on the inside, and dotted with multicolored vegetables, these patties are an effective trick to get your most recalcitrant friends eat tofu and vegetables. If one already likes tofu and vegetables, it's even better.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian

For about 12 pieces

- 1 lb firm or medium tofu • 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 small carrot, coarsely chopped
- ½ zucchini, coarsely chopped • ⅓ cup all-purpose flour • 2 Tbsp rice flour
- 1 Tbsp potato starch • 1 tsp salt • 2 eggs
- 1 red chile, thinly sliced • Vegetable oil • Dipping sauce (see page 166)

In a mixing bowl, crumble the tofu with your hands. It's kinda fun. Mix with the green onion, carrot, zucchini, flours, starch, salt, and eggs. If you use regular tofu, which is firmer than Korean tofu, add a little water to form a thick paste, with a fairly consistent texture but not completely homogeneous.

In frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Dollop a large tablespoonful of dough into the pan and add a slice of chile on top. Repeat with the rest of the dough, in batches. Don't crowd the little cakes together as they will spread slightly.

When the cakes are browned on the first side, flip them over and flatten them slightly with a spatula. Brown on the other side, and serve hot with the dipping sauce.



5-COLOR RICE BOWL

(Bibimbap)

In Korea, the color composition of food is a dietary principle. The presence of five main colors (green, red, yellow, white, and black) within a meal, representing the five elements, is a sign of balance. Bibimbap is really perfect in this respect: it is a complete and healthy dish consisting of a rice base topped with a beautiful variety of colorful ingredients containing all the vitamins, fiber, protein, and minerals that we need. The toppings can change according to taste and season; tofu is not common there, as Koreans prefer beef, but it is easily accommodated. All the elements of the bowl must be mixed before eating, making a meal is both pleasant and playful.

🕒 prep 30 min 🕒 cook 50 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍴 4 servings

- 2 cups sushi rice • 10 oz firm tofu • 7 oz spinach
- 2 cloves garlic, minced • 2 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tsp white sesame seeds, toasted • 2 small zucchini
- 1 large carrot • 6 shiitakes or other brown mushrooms • 2 sheets nori seaweed
- 4 egg yolks (optional) • Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper

For the gochujang sauce

- 1/3 cup Korean red chile paste (gochujang) • 2 Tbsp water
- 1 Tbsp sugar • 1 Tbsp sesame oil
- 2 tsp soy sauce • 1 clove garlic, minced

Rinse the rice several times, then drain. Put it in a saucepan, add 2¼ cups of water, and cover. (The lid must remain in place for the entire cooking process.) Let stand for 10 minutes, then bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as it boils, turn the heat down as low as possible. Cook until all the water has been absorbed, 7–8 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand for 10 minutes, still covered. Aerate the rice by mixing it gently with a spatula, and keep warm.

Blanch the spinach for about 2 minutes in a pot of boiling salted water. Drain and press firmly with a spatula to squeeze out the excess water. Put the spinach in a bowl and add 1 half of the garlic, 1 teaspoon of the sesame oil, 1 teaspoon of the sesame seeds, and salt and pepper to taste. Mix.

(continued)



Cut the zucchini into half-moons and cook briefly over medium heat in a lightly oiled pan with the remaining garlic. Add 1 teaspoon of the sesame oil and salt to taste, and mix.

Cut the tofu into strips 2 inches long and ¼ inch thick. Blot dry with paper towels, salt them, and sauté briefly in a hot oiled pan without letting them color too much.

Cut the carrot into matchsticks and, in an oiled pan over medium heat, cook until tender, without letting it color too much. Season with salt and pepper, and set aside. Slice the mushroom caps and cook them in the same way. Tear the nori sheets into small pieces.

Mix all the ingredients for the gochujang sauce.

Divide the rice among 4 large individual serving bowls, then garnish it artistically with one-quarter of each of the filling elements. Place a raw egg yolk in the middle of each serving, if using, and sprinkle with the rest of the sesame seeds. You can add a little gochujang sauce directly into each bowl, or serve it separately so that diners can add it to suit their taste.

Note In order for the vegetables to keep their color without burning, cook them over fairly moderate heat and cover after 2 minutes.

SUSHI ROLLS WITH TOFU & CRUNCHY VEGGIES

(Kimbap)

The Korean word *kimbap* means “rolled rice with seaweed.” Originally, it was a simple rice roll seasoned with sesame oil and salt. In the twentieth century, under the influence of Japanese cuisine and its famous *maki* sushi rolls, *kimbap* gained a garnish of vegetables, eggs, and meat – but also exists in vegetarian and even vegan versions. Convenient for takeout, it is now the best-selling fast food in Korea; its great strength is that it gets the thumbs-up from all generations. However, it holds a special place in Korean hearts and minds as a childhood treat because it is inextricably linked to *sopung*, the school field trips that all schoolchildren eagerly await.

🕒 prep 1 hr 🕒 cook 50 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 3¼ cups sushi rice • 2½ cups water • ½ cucumber
- 7 oz Korean yellow pickled radish (*danmuji*) • 7 oz firm tofu • 7 oz spinach
- 1 clove garlic, minced • 3½ Tbsp sesame oil • 2 tsp white sesame seeds, toasted
- 2 carrots • 7 sheets nori seaweed • 1 Tbsp rice vinegar • Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper

Rinse the rice several times, then drain. Put it in a saucepan, add the water, and cover. (The lid must remain in place for the entire cooking process.) Let stand for 10 minutes, then bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as it boils, turn the heat down as low as possible. Cook until all the water has been absorbed, 7–8 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand for 10 minutes, still covered.

Transfer the rice to a large bowl and aerate it by gently mixing in 2 tablespoons of the sesame oil, 1 tablespoon of the vinegar, and 1 teaspoon salt.

Cut the cucumber in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, and cut the flesh into strips ¼ inch thick. Sprinkle with salt and let drain. Cut the yellow radish into strips ¼ inch thick.

Cut the tofu into strips a scant ½ inch thick, then brown them in a lightly oiled pan. Season with salt and pepper, and set aside.

(continued)

Blanch the spinach for about 2 minutes in a large pot of boiling salted water, then rinse under cold water, drain, and press them firmly to drain the water. Season with the garlic, ½ tablespoon of the sesame oil, and a sprinkling of sesame seeds, salt, and pepper.

Cut the carrot into 1/16-inch-thick strips. Cook very briefly in an oiled skillet over medium heat, covered. The carrot should not brown. Season with salt and pepper.

Put all the ingredients around your workspace. On a *maki* mat, place a sheet of seaweed even with the bottom of the mat. Take one-seventh of the rice and distribute it in a thin and even layer over about two-thirds of the sheet. The sheet should be covered with rice to the side edges, but the top of the sheet should be left uncovered. Place some of the five toppings one at a time on the rice. Roll up tightly, then wet the end of the seaweed with a little water to adhere the end and close the roll.

Continue to use up the remaining ingredients. When all the rolls are ready, brush them with sesame oil, cut crosswise into rounds a scant 2 inch thick, and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Notes To handle sticky rice more easily, wet your fingers. Warm rice is easier to spread than cold rice, and much nicer to eat!

If you have any leftover toppings, slice them and eat with your *kimbap*.

Don't store *kimbap* in the refrigerator, as the rice will harden. Keep it for up to 2 hours at room temperature, covered, and cut it into slices at the last moment.

Wipe the blade of your knife often as you cut the rolls, for clean cuts.



SPICY BRAISED TOFU

(Dubu jorim)

This tofu braised in a spicy sweet-and-salty sauce, with caramelized onion and sesame, is delicious with rice. The recipe is completely vegan, but it certainly has appeal for carnivores: the dense texture of the tofu and the bold flavors of the sauce sweep away all prejudices about vegetable-based cuisine. Nothing bland, boring, or austere on this plate!

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb firm tofu • 1 small onion, diced • 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp sugar • 1 Tbsp Korean red chile flakes (*gochugaru*)
- ½ cup water • 1 tsp sesame oil • 1 tsp white sesame seeds • Vegetable oil

Cut the tofu in half lengthwise, then into slices a scant ½ inch thick. Place them on paper towels and blot dry. Place a frying pan over medium heat, heat a little oil, and brown the tofu on both sides. Transfer the tofu to a plate, keeping the oil in the pan.

Add a little more oil to the pan if needed, then add the onion, garlic, and the white parts of the green onions. When they are golden, or even a little crispy, add the soy sauce, salt, sugar, chili flakes, and water. Mix well. When the sauce has thickened a little, add the tofu and braise it for a few moments while mixing. Add the sesame oil and the green parts of the green onions, and mix again. Serve hot, sprinkled with sesame seeds.

KOREAN MISO STEW

(Doenjang jjigae)

Doenjang is the Korean equivalent of Japanese miso: a fermented soybean paste. It is used to make soups, sauces, and stews (*jjigae*). *Doenjang* stew is a very common recipe in Korea, particularly appreciated during the cold season. You can put all kinds of ingredients in it; this tofu and vegetable version is a classic that never disappoints. You can easily find *doenjang* in most Asian groceries.

🕒 prep 45 min 🕒 cook 50 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb firm or medium tofu • 1 zucchini • 4 oz daikon radish • ½ onion • 2 green onions
 - ¼ cup fermented soybean paste (*doenjang*)
- 1 Tbsp Korean red chile flakes (*gochugaru*) • 1 qt water (or rice-rinsing water)
- 1 Tbsp instant vegetarian dashi • 2 cloves garlic, minced • 1 Tbsp rice vinegar
 - Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving

Cut the tofu and the zucchini into ½-inch cubes. Cut the daikon into ½-inch squares that are about 1/16 inch thick. Thinly slice the onion and the green onions.

In a Dutch oven or casserole pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil and sauté the soybean paste and chili flakes for a few moments, stirring to prevent burning.

Gradually add the water and the powdered dashi, stirring to dilute the soybean paste. Add the daikon and boil over high heat for 5 minutes. Add the tofu, garlic, onion, and zucchini. Boil for another 6 minutes. Add the green onion and vinegar, cook for another 1 minute, and serve very hot in bowls, accompanied with rice.

Note When you rinse the rice to remove its starch, you get cloudy water called *ssalddeumul*, which can be used in cooking. *Doenjang* stew is eaten with rice, so if you like, reserve the starchy water to make your broth.

MUSHROOM & TOFU HOT POT

(Dubu busut jeongol)

Formerly reserved for the nobility, this fondue has become a popular dish. The pot is served at the table and shared by the guests; this type of meal is particularly warming. This is especially true as the pot is still boiling – the sort of thing you need to withstand the Korean winter chill. Rich in protein, *jeongol* is more nourishing than you might think, and is eaten with other small dishes and rice.

🕒 prep 45 min 🕒 cook 50 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb mixed fresh mushrooms (shiitake, oyster, king oyster, enoki, *shimeji*...)
- 1 carrot • 14 oz firm, medium-firm, or grilled tofu (see pages 27 and 124)
 - 1 large handful bean sprouts (soybean or mung bean)
- 2 Tbsp perilla oil or sesame oil • A few garlic chives • Steamed rice, for serving

For the stock base

- ½ onion, thinly sliced • Shiitake stems • 1 Tbsp instant vegetarian dashi or a large piece of kombu
 - 2 Tbsp Korean red chile flakes (*gochogaru*), or your favorite
 - 7 Tbsp water • 2 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 tsp sugar • 1 tsp salt

Separate mushrooms that are attached at the base. Clean them and trim the bottoms of the stems if needed. Cut the largest oyster mushrooms in half, set aside the shiitake stems and chop the caps, cut the king oyster mushrooms into 1/16-inch-thick strips.

Slice the carrot into 2-inch sections, then cut the sections into 1/16-inch strips. Cut the tofu into squares or rectangles whose sides are 1 or 2 inches long by a scant ½ inch thick. Arrange all these ingredients and the bean sprouts nicely in a Korean hot pot – a good-sized Dutch oven or casserole pan can do the trick, as long as it is not too deep.

In a saucepan, combine all the ingredients for the stock base and simmer for about 10 minutes. In the hot pot, add water to reach the top of the vegetables (without covering them). Bring to a boil, skim, and then add the stock base. When the liquid boils again, lower the heat and simmer for 15–20 minutes. Add more salt if needed. Add the oil and the garlic chives cut into 2-inch lengths. Mix and serve very hot with rice.



LITTLE TOFU POCKETS

WITH MULTICOLOR RICE

(Yubuchobap)

Yubuchobap is the Korean equivalent of *inarizushi* (see page 132), and in my opinion it is even better. In a triangular pocket of fried tofu, you find rice mixed with crunchy vegetables and delicious daikon pickle (*danmuji*). Sweet, salty, tangy, these plump triangles are irresistible. Kids love them; this is what they put in their *dosirak* (Korean *bentō*) for picnics. Already seasoned fried tofu pockets are found in Korean groceries in the fresh aisle, generally sold in packs of 14. If you are a family of 4, buy at least 2...

🕒 prep 45 min 🕒 cook 30 min 🌱 vegan

For 28 pieces

- 1 cup rice • 1 cup water • 1 tsp salt • 2 Tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 medium carrot, diced • 4 oz yellow pickled daikon radish (*danmuji*), diced
- 3 green onions or 1 spring onion, chopped • 2 Tbsp white sesame seeds, toasted
- 2 Tbsp black sesame seeds, toasted • 28 triangular fried tofu pockets (*yubu*)

Rinse the rice several times, then drain. Put it in a saucepan with the water and let it sit for 10 minutes. Cover (the lid must remain in place for the entire cooking process) and bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as it boils, turn the heat down as low as possible and cook until all the water has been absorbed, 7–8 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand for 10 minutes, still covered. Transfer the rice to a bowl and aerate it by mixing gently with the salt dissolved in the rice vinegar.

Mix the uncooked vegetables and the white and black sesame seeds with the warm rice. Gently squeeze the pockets of fried tofu to drain any excess moisture. With a teaspoon, generously fill the pockets with the colorful rice, packing as you go (without forcing it, so as not to tear the fried tofu). Serve at room temperature.

Note Don't put *yubuchobap* in the refrigerator, the rice will dry out and harden! They should be eaten within 2 hours of cooking the rice.



ICED NOODLE SOUP

WITH SOY MILK

(Kongguksu)

Westerners are not used to eating cold soups, and even less so if there are noodles in it. But in Korea, they love it. This becomes understandable when you experience the extreme summer temperatures of this country. Nothing like a broth filled with ice cubes when the heat is oppressive! There are all kinds of noodle soups to eat cool, even iced, but the richest, the smoothest, the most delicate of all is undoubtedly *kongguksu*. It is made with fine wheat noodles in a thick soy milk, sesame, and pine nut broth. It's a real treat. The secret to success is to make your own soy milk with good quality soy – same as making tofu. The more fluid the milk, the lighter the soup will be.

🕒 prep 20 min (+ soak 12 hr) 🕒 cook 25 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 bowls

- 1 cup dried yellow soybeans • ¼ cup pine nuts • ¼ cup white sesame seeds, toasted
- 12 oz fine wheat noodles (*somyeon* or *somen*) • Soy milk • 2 tsp salt
- ½ cucumber, julienned • 1 tomato, quartered • 12 ice cubes

To make the soy milk, soak the soybeans in a large bowl with five times their volume of water overnight. Drain and rinse them, then place them in a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, a casserole pan, or a Dutch oven with 1 quart of water. Cook for 15 minutes over high heat, then cover and simmer for 8 minutes over medium-low heat.

Drain the beans and place them in a blender to mix them. Add 2 cups of cold water, the pine nuts, and the sesame seeds, and blend until you get a perfectly smooth and creamy texture. Add 1 cup of water and blend again. When the liquid seems to stop moving, add another 1 cup of water and mix again. Place in the fridge.

Cook the noodles according to package directions. Rinse them in cold water, stirring them in a colander to remove excess starch. Divide the noodles among 4 large bowls.

Take the soy milk from the refrigerator and add 1 cup of very cold water. Mix until bubbles form. Pour the soy milk into the bowls. Add the uncooked vegetables to garnish the noodles and place a few ice cubes in the soup. Serve with salt alongside – in Korea, everyone adds salt to suit their own taste for this dish. Let diners season their own bowls, mix everything together, and enjoy.

Notes You can replace the tomato with chunks of watermelon – very, very good! Koreans like to add half a hard-boiled egg per bowl. This soup is even better sprinkled with a little toasted black or white sesame seeds – I also like to add a good dose of pepper. Leftover soy milk will keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.



ZUCCHINI-TOFU DUMPLINGS

(Hobak mandu)

Korean dumplings are called *mandu*. You will find almost-identical preparations all along the Silk Road – the Uyghurs call them *manta*, the Kazakhs call them *mänti*, the Turks call them *mantı*, for just a few examples. You can steam them, fry them, or boil them, and more or less all garnishes are possible. Mild and delicate zucchini *mandu* are particularly pleasant to eat in summer. The variety of zucchini used in Korea, which is also found in China, is long with bright green skin, somewhat resembling the trombetta or zucchetto zucchini, very common in the southern French region around Nice. You can use any type of summer squash for this recipe. Dumpling wrappers are available in packages of 40 to 50 in the fresh or frozen departments of Asian grocery stores.

🕒 prep 45 min 🕒 cook 50 min 🌱 vegan

For 40 pieces

- 2 small white zucchini, cut into matchsticks • 1 Tbsp sesame oil • 7 oz extra-firm tofu, crumbled
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 40 round dumpling wrappers • Salt

For the sauce

- 2 Tbsp soy sauce mixed with 2 Tbsp rice vinegar

Place the julienned zucchini in a bowl and sprinkle with 2 teaspoons of salt. Mix well and let drain for 15 minutes. Gently press the zucchini with your hands to extract excess water. Don't worry about saltiness – a lot of the salt will drain off with the water. If not, rinse the zucchini lightly and squeeze again.

In a large frying pan over medium-high heat, heat the sesame oil and sauté the zucchini for a few moments. The goal is not to brown it, but to dry it out and add flavor. Don't let the squash brown. When it no longer releases water, place it in a bowl and let cool. Add the crumbled tofu, green onions, and soy sauce; taste and correct the seasoning if needed. With your hands, toss these ingredients together well to make a stuffing.

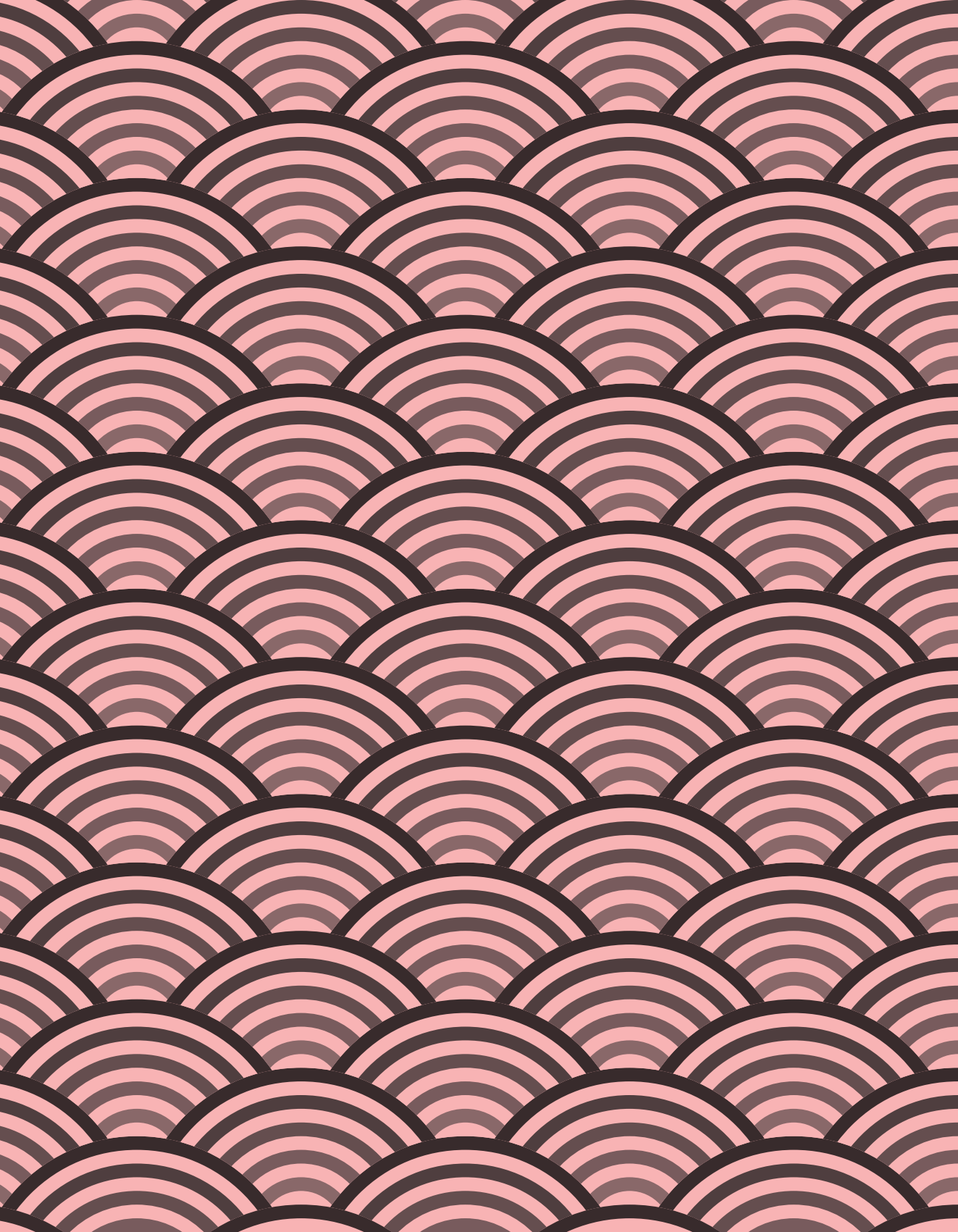
On each dumpling wrapper, place 1 large teaspoonful of stuffing in the center. Wet the edges of the wrapper and close it flat, pressing the edges together firmly to form a half-moon. Repeat to use all the wrappers. As you go, place them on parchment paper, as they might stick to a plate.

Place a sheet of perforated parchment paper in a large steaming basket and heat a couple of inches of water for steaming in a wok. Place a maximum of 10–12 *mandu* in the basket; they should not touch one another. When the water comes to a boil, cover the dumplings and place over the water to steam for 15–20 minutes. Repeat as many times as needed to cook the rest of the *mandu*. You can also stack several baskets – but beware, those at the top do not cook as well as those at the bottom, so you have to rotate them.

Serve the dumplings hot, as they are ready, with the sauce.

Note Be sure to buy wrappers for *gyōza*, *mandu*, and other *guōtiē* – these are egg free. Egg yolk dough is used to make wontons.





Southeast Asia

Đậu hũ

เต้าหู้

Tauhu

เต้าหู้

Tahu

เต้าหู้

Taho



A market in Southeast Asia.

A CHINESE IMPORT

The spread of tofu in Southeast Asia is very poorly documented. We know that it was brought centuries ago by Chinese immigrants – and probably, in some countries at least, by Buddhist monks who came to teach in monasteries – but the exact dates are not known. What we know thanks to linguistics is that tofu was introduced to this region of the world by people from the Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. The terms used to talk about tofu are all similar and clearly derived from a dialect spoken in these regions: it is called *đậu hủ* in Vietnam, *tahu* in Indonesia, *tauhu* in Malaysia and Singapore, *taohu* in Thailand and Laos, *tawhou* in Cambodia, and *taho* in the Philippines.

Nevertheless, these very similar words designate very different products. Over the centuries, each country has developed its own peculiarities in terms of tofu, even if the lines of demarcation are becoming increasingly blurry. The continuous influence of China, then of Japan (which has financed the construction of tofu factories in contemporary times), the ethnic diversity, and the presence of large Chinese communities integrated for multiple generations within these countries make any classification all the more difficult.

A FIRMER TOFU

Still, there are some obvious differences from one country to another: when we talk about *taho* in the Philippines, for example, we're talking about tofu pudding that is eaten sweet with syrup and not the firm tofu, which is more rare here and goes by the name *tokwa*. The similar term *taukwa* pops up in Indonesia and Malaysia, where it designates extra-firm tofu, as opposed to "classic" firm tofu. Furthermore, each country has its own nuances of texture. As a general rule, the farther south you go, the denser the "firm" tofu – which helps it keep longer. More water-rich products quickly go bad

in hotter and more humid climates, especially in the absence of efficient modes of refrigeration. Firmness also ensures that the tofu will hold up well in cooking, especially in stir-fry recipes. For the same reasons, it is also common throughout Southeast Asia to use tofu that comes already fried in a block. It forms a fine puffed crust but remains intact inside, like Japanese *atsuage*.

Traditionally, there is no silken tofu in Southeast Asia, although globalization is gradually changing this situation. Tofu pudding, on the other hand, is very common throughout this region of the world and is still sold by street vendors, mainly in the morning. Other types of tofu that originated in China, such as tofu puffs, have been integrated into daily life by extremely varied populations. In most countries in Southeast Asia, firm (or extra-firm) tofu has long since found a place in local recipes. This is less true in Thailand, where tofu was only used by the Chinese community until the 1930s. It is now readily used in all kinds of recipes as a meat substitute, but it does not appear in traditional Thai dishes, only Thai-Chinese ones. It's a similar story in the Philippines, but even more so: firm (or extra-firm) tofu is not commonly used outside the Chinese community there. It is still that community, centuries after the introduction of this product, that makes it, consumes it, and appreciates it.

VIETNAM: A PARTICULAR CASE

Vietnam was the first country in Southeast Asia to adopt tofu. Since ancient texts were largely lost or destroyed during the wars that ravaged Indochina and then Vietnam for decades in the twentieth century, it is difficult to give a precise date the introduction of tofu as a new product. Some historians, however, situate it between the tenth and twelfth centuries, a period of political stability during which Buddhism became the official religion of the kingdom,

favoring exchanges between Chinese and Vietnamese monks. This centuries-old introduction would explain the particular culture of tofu that has developed in Vietnam, with a large number of varied and unique products, which are an integral part of local cuisine.

Very early on, the Vietnamese adopted tofu as an everyday food, practical and inexpensive, and gave it forms that were not found elsewhere. It used to be freshly made every morning in small neighborhood workshops; no tofu factory existed until the early twentieth century. Many of them used acidified soybean “whey” – obtained by pressing the curds to form tofu – as a coagulating agent. These ancient workshops, their particular production methods, and some of the



products they offered until the end of the colonial era – notably a tofu shaped in logs and not in rectangular blocks, made in a special mold and developing a kind of skin on the outside – are increasingly rare today. In the twentieth century, Vietnamese tofu exceptionalism was somewhat lost, no doubt more because of war than globalization. Its consumption is also decreasing, but it remains significant.

THE FOOD OF POVERTY

In Vietnam as in Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the success of tofu is chalked up to several possible explanations. It is pretty easy to produce, it is nutritious, and above all, it doesn't cost a lot: more than anything, it is the food of the poor. Less expensive than meat, it is a source of protein available at a lower cost, even if it is not being used as a meat replacement. As in China, there is nothing unusual about cooking meat products and tofu together in much of Southeast Asia. Just look at the number of recipes that combine tofu and pork, beef, or seafood, not to mention fish sauce.

During certain religious festivals, however, particularly in the context of Buddhism and Taoism, food austerity is recommended and meat is prohibited. Tofu, *yuba*, and other soy products can replace it, but this is not systematic. Vegetarian stir-fried noodles are usually just made with vegetables; we they don't try to squeeze tofu in everywhere, and the meat can be removed without a substitute being swapped in. Certain vegetarian populations, like some of the Hindus of Southeast Asia – not all, it is complicated – use tofu more widely; this is obvious in Bali, where tofu and tempeh are the main sources of protein for those who do not consume meat products. In Malaysia, the Indian Muslim community has also incorporated this ingredient into hybrid recipes blending elements of South Asian and Southeast Asian cuisines.

In short, it is difficult to generalize when we talk about food practices in such populous and varied countries; the bottom line is that tofu is widely found throughout Southeast Asia, and it is generally a common product, integrated into many recipes, not necessarily a substitute for meat products – but sometimes yes... If Vietnam is the country that has developed the most specific versions of tofu, we find in other nations of the region several particular or recurring types – some of which are available in the West.

TOFU TYPES & USES

EXTRA-FIRM TOFU

There are various textures, more or less flexible or firm, but overall, the tofus from this region of the world are firmer than those from countries farther north, such as Japan, Korea, and much of China. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, extra-firm tofu is called *taukwa* or *tokwa*. Firmer tofu has the advantage of keeping longer, it is denser and therefore more caloric, and it holds its shape very well during cooking. In the Philippines, firm tofu is a product that was introduced centuries ago by the Chinese but it has never really entered into daily life for the rest of the population. In Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, it is much more common and integrated into a large number of typical local recipes. *Mee goreng mamak*, a stir-fried noodle dish typical of the Indian Muslim community in Malaysia, contains extra-firm tofu, squid, and mutton or beef broth, as well as tomatoes, boiled potatoes, and prawn crackers, among other ingredients.

FRIED TOFU

Fried tofu is extremely popular throughout Southeast Asia. Whole blocks are immersed in oil until they form a crust on the outside, which helps them hold up better during subsequent cooking. This

type of tofu is commonly used in well-known stir-fry recipes such as pad Thai; in noodle soups, such as the famous *laksa* of Bogor; in curries...it is suitable for all uses. Fried tofu is often dyed with turmeric or gardenia flowers, which give it a bright yellow color on the outside; the interior remains white.

TOFU PUFFS

Puffed tofu is a staple throughout Southeast Asia. Cut into cubes and fried until it has an airy texture, it absorbs broths and sauces particularly well, and is therefore often added to these types of preparation. Tofu puffs are found, for example, in the Chinese-Thai noodle soup with pink broth called *yen ta fo*; in many recipes of the Chinese communities of Singapore and Malaysia, such as *bak kut teh*, a broth made with pork, spices and medicinal herbs; or in various versions of *rojak*, a typical Indonesian salad that can mix fruit, uncooked vegetables, meat, seafood – and many other amazing things. Tofu puffs are also made into small veggie sandwiches and stuffed donuts sold by street vendors in Singapore and Malaysia. These delicious snacks have been adopted by everyone, including people you wouldn't instinctively associate with tofu, such as Christians and Muslims.

EGG TOFU

Brought by the Chinese, this “tofu” is not really tofu: it is, rather, an extremely thin flan made from eggs and soy milk. It is fragile and its texture tends towards gelatinous, like extra-firm glucon-delta-lactone silken tofu. Impossible to confuse them, however, because they are not at all alike. Egg tofu is yellow and is usually sold in cylindrical tubes. Although it is quite delicate, it is often used in stir-fry dishes, but also in soups and various other preparations.

TOFU PUDDING

Tofu pudding is a “must” in all of South-east Asia. Sold in stalls or by street vendors, especially in the morning, it is more or less firm or smooth depending on the coagulant used, and is always served sweet. In the Philippines, they add a very dark brown sugar syrup called *arnibal* and sago or tapioca pearls; in Thailand, they like it with fruit and milk; in Vietnam, depending on the region, it might be accompanied by jasmine or ginger syrup, coconut water, sugar.... In Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, syrup is often flavored with pandan leaf. Tofu pudding can be enjoyed cold, at room temperature, or a little warmer depending on regional preferences.

FERMENTED TOFU

Traditionally, fermentations are never uniform; these products are linked to particular terroirs, and we find different kinds of fermented tofus throughout Southeast Asia. Chinese *dòufūrǔ* is widely available everywhere (the Vietnamese version is called *chao*), but there are other variations. In the south of Vietnam, for example, there used to be a huge diversity of tofus reminiscent of French goat cheeses, blue cheeses, and others. These artisanal foods, however, are becoming increasingly scarce, as *chao* is easier to make – whether in factories or at home.

TOFU SKINS

Widely used in Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, the film that forms on the surface of heated soy milk, called *yuba* in Japanese and *fūpí* in Mandarin, is generally not integrated into the eating habits of the rest of the population. Vietnam is an exception. Locally called *tàu hũ ky*, this “soy skin” is very common in various dried forms that are rehydrated before going into the pan. It is eaten fried, braised, stuffed – the uses are many and varied.



There is a very wide variety of tofu in Southeast Asia: puffed tofu (1), tofu pudding (2), silken tofu (3), pressed tofu (4) and firm tofu (5).

LEMONGRASS TOFU

(Đậu hũ xào sả ớt)

Prepared this way, tofu can find its place on your plate alongside all sorts of side dishes, or it can garnish a Vietnamese sandwich (*bánh mì* – see page 204), a vegetarian rice noodle bowl (known Stateside as *bún* – see page 202), or really any salad. You can choose to add Sriracha sauce or not, depending on your taste – or dislike – for spicy chiles. In any case, this recipe is very simple, requires no effort, but will transform plain tofu by giving it tangy flavors and a crisp texture.

🕒 prep 10 min 🍳 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14–16 oz firm tofu • 1½ Tbsp minced lemongrass (tender inner white bulb only)
- 1½ Tbsp garlic • 2 tsp Sriracha sauce (optional) • 2 tsp lime juice
- 2 tsp sugar • ½ tsp salt • ½ tsp pepper • 4 Tbsp vegetable oil

Cut the block of tofu crosswise into slices ¼ inch thick. Place them on a few paper towels while you prepare the marinade.

Mix the lemongrass, garlic, Sriracha sauce (if using), lime juice, sugar, and salt and pepper. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil and mix again. Blot the tofu dry with paper towels and place it in a deep plate with this marinade, covering the tofu completely.

In a large frying pan over medium heat, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil. Add the tofu slices and brown them for 2–3 minutes on each side. Use the flavored tofu as desired.

Note For an even more flavorful tofu, which absorbs the marinade especially well, cut it into slices as indicated in this recipe, freeze it for 24 hours in a bag, then take it out of the bag and let it thaw in the refrigerator for 24 hours on a plate covered with several layers of paper towel. Then proceed with the recipe above as directed.

TOFU TERRINE, VIETNAMESE STYLE

(Chả hấp chay)

They love their pork terrine in Vietnam, but a vegan version made with tofu actually exists. The texture and appearance are very similar to the meaty recipe: dotted with black mushrooms and carrots, as well as mung bean noodles (also called cellophane noodles or glass noodles), it's a great starter to share with family or friends. It can be eaten dipped in a mixture of soy sauce and lime juice, or with the dipping sauce that accompanies spring rolls (see page 208).

🕒 prep 15 min (+ soak 20 min) 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

For 1 small terrine

- ½ handful mung bean noodles • 1 Tbsp dried black mushrooms • 7 oz firm tofu
- ½ carrot, grated • 1 tsp fermented tofu, crushed • 1 small shallot thinly sliced
- 1 tsp + 1 Tbsp cornstarch, potato starch, or tapioca • ¼ tsp sugar • ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper • 1 Tbsp water • 1 Tbsp achiote oil

In separate bowls, rehydrate the noodles and the black mushrooms in lukewarm water until they are tender. Drain both, and roughly chop the mushrooms. Set aside.

Drain the firm tofu and mash or mix it until it becomes a paste. Place it in a clean cloth and squeeze to drain the excess water. In a mixing bowl, combine the mashed firm tofu with the carrots, mushrooms, noodles, crushed fermented tofu, the 1 teaspoon starch, the sugar, and the salt and pepper. Mix by hand until you get a homogeneous texture. Pack this mixture well into a small terrine dish – if you don't have one, a small loaf pan or even a glass butter dish can do the trick. Steam for 20 minutes.

After the terrine has steamed for 20 minutes, prepare a jelly by mixing the water, achiote oil, and the 1 tablespoon starch. Mix this jelly well and pour it over the terrine. Spread it over the entire surface, and continue steaming for 7 minutes more. When the terrine cools, the jelly will set.

Serve the terrine in slices. It can be eaten dipped in a mixture of soy sauce and lime juice, or in the dipping sauce that accompanies the spring rolls (see page 208).

Note You can buy achiote oil at Latin grocery stores or online, but it's also very easy to make. Pick up achiote seeds (check the ethnic foods aisle of the supermarket), toast them in a dry pan until fragrant, and then mix with a neutral-flavored vegetable oil and leave to infuse for 3 days. The oil will take on a beautiful orange-red color.

VEGETARIAN NOODLE BOWL

(Bún thịt nướng chay)

In France, they call this “*bò bún*,” and in the US it’s shortened even more to just “*bún*,” but for the Vietnamese, this name doesn’t really make sense. The original salad with rice noodles and beef is called *bún thịt nướng bò* – so *bún bò* would be a better shortening of the name. The vegetarian – and even vegan – versions of this dish is just as tasty, especially if you use lemongrass tofu (see page 200).

🕒 prep 30 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

For the pickled carrots

- 3 carrots, grated • 1 tsp salt • 2 Tbsp sugar • 4 Tbsp rice vinegar

For the sauce

- 6 Tbsp light soy sauce • 6 Tbsp sugar • 3 Tbsp lime juice
- 3 Tbsp rice vinegar • 6 Tbsp water • 4 cloves garlic, minced • 1 red chile, thinly sliced

For the rest

- 7 oz rice vermicelli • 8 escarole leaves, thinly sliced • ½ cucumber, julienned
- 2 small handfuls mung bean sprouts • 4 Tbsp mint leaves, thinly sliced
- 4 Tbsp purple *shiso* leaves, thinly sliced • 14–16 oz lemongrass tofu (see page 200)
- 8–12 small fried vegetable spring rolls (optional)
- 4 Tbsp roasted and crushed peanuts • 4 Tbsp fried shallots • Vegetable oil

Prepare the pickled carrots: in a bowl, mix the carrots with the salt and leave to drain for 10 minutes. Press the carrots by hand to drain them. Add the sugar and vinegar, mix and leave to marinate.

Mix together all the ingredients for the sauce, and set aside.

In a pot of boiling water, cook the rice vermicelli according to package directions. Drain and rinse them thoroughly with cold water. Set aside.

In an oiled pan, brown the spring rolls for a few minutes to heat through, then cut them into two or three pieces. Set aside.

Divide the vermicelli among 4 large bowls or soup plates. Top with the escarole, cucumber, bean sprouts, carrots, herbs, tofu, spring rolls, peanuts, and fried shallots, then drizzle with sauce.



TOFU & VEGGIE SANDWICH

(Bánh mì chay)

The *bánh mì* sandwich is the ultimate symbol of Franco-Vietnamese fusion, bringing together ingredients from both cultures in a baguette to make a fantastic sandwich. The basic recipe contains pork in several forms, but you can replace this with plain tofu or lemongrass tofu (see page 200) for a vegetarian version – or even vegan, if you use mayonnaise without eggs (see page 326).

🕒 prep 30 min (+ marinate 24 hr) 🌱 vegetarian 🍴 4 servings

For the pickled carrot & daikon radish

- ½ daikon radish, grated • 2 carrots, grated • 1 portion sugar
- 1 portion hot water • 1 portion rice vinegar • Salt

For the rest

- 2 baguettes • Mayonnaise • Soy sauce • 1 English cucumber, thinly sliced
- 14–16 oz lemongrass tofu (see page 200) • 1 bunch cilantro
- 2 red chiles, thinly sliced (optional)

Prepare the pickles a day in advance: mix the daikon with 1 teaspoon salt and let it drain for 15 minutes. Squeeze it by hand to drain it. Mix it with the carrots, then pack the vegetables into a jar. Add enough vinegar and water to cover. Dilute sugar in an equal volume of hot water, let cool, and add an equal volume of vinegar and ½ teaspoon of salt. Add this to the jar to cover the vegetables, put on the lid, and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Cut the baguettes in half. Open each half-baguette and brush with mayonnaise mixed with a little soy sauce to your taste. Place a few cucumber slices on top, lemongrass tofu slices, carrot and daikon pickles, cilantro leaves, and a few chili slices, if you like.



BRAISED YUBA

(Đậu hũ ky kho)

Yuba, which English speakers call “tofu skins,” is actually more like “soy milk skin,” since it is made before the soy milk is coagulated and turned into tofu. Dried *yuba* is found in Asian grocery stores in various forms, usually yellow in color: it can be large folded sheets, rolls, knots.... Perhaps these products do not inspire us at first sight, but they are fabulous in cooking: easy to prepare, they are rich in protein and vitamins, and can be used in various ways, giving very interesting textures to vegetarian and vegan dishes. Braised *yuba*, a classic of Chinese cuisine adopted in Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, is a particularly simple and delicious recipe for lovers of sweet-and-salty flavors.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ soak 6 hr) 🍳 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 8 long rolls of dried *yuba* • 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp minced root ginger • ½ cup soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp honey (or vegan agave syrup) • 1½ Tbsp sugar
- ½ tsp chile powder • 5¼ cups water
- 1 tsp ground pepper • Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving • Cilantro leaves, for garnish

Place the dried *yuba* rolls in a suitable container and cover them with water. Let them rehydrate for about 6 hours – the timing may be more or less, depending on their thickness. They have to become completely flexible. Drain and cut into segments about 2 inches long.

In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the *yuba* segments on all sides. Remove from the pan. Add a little more oil if needed, and sauté the garlic and ginger for 30 seconds, stirring, then add the soy sauce, honey, sugar, chile, and water to the pan. Mix and return the *yuba* to the pan.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, turning occasionally, until the liquid is almost completely gone. Season with pepper, taste and add a little salt if needed, and serve over rice, sprinkled with cilantro leaves.



VEGAN SPRING ROLLS

(Gỏi cuốn chay)

Making spring rolls for your guests is guaranteed success. It seems very technical, but it really isn't. It seems very complicated, but it really isn't that either. In fact, what keeps us from doing it more often is just laziness. It takes a little space, it takes a little time. But no wizarding skills demanded, I promise. This vegan version is a treat. Accompanied it with the sauce of your choice: the thick version with savory flavors, or the clear and sweetish version.

🕒 prep 45–60 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan

For 8 rolls

- 2 oz rice vermicelli • 4 oz mung bean sprouts
- 5 oz firm tofu or lemongrass tofu (see page 200)
- 4 stems Asian chives • 8 spring roll wrappers, 7-inch diameter
- 4 large escarole leaves, cut in half • 4 sprigs mint, leaves picked
- 4 sprigs purple *shiso*, leaves picked • ½ cucumber, juliennes • 1 carrot, grated

For a thick, savory dipping sauce

- 3 Tbsp hoisin sauce • 2 Tbsp peanut butter • 1 Tbsp crushed peanuts
- 8 Tbsp hot water • 1 clove garlic, minced • 1 red chile, thinly sliced (optional)

For a clear, sweetish dipping sauce

- 3 Tbsp light soy sauce • 1 Tbsp rice vinegar • 8 Tbsp hot water • 2–3 Tbsp lime juice
- 2–3 Tbsp brown sugar • 1 clove garlic, minced • 1 red chile, thinly sliced (optional)

In a pot of boiling water, cook the rice vermicelli according to package directions (usually about 5 minutes). Drain and rinse thoroughly with cold water. Set aside.

Blanch the bean sprouts in boiling water for 30 seconds–1 minute. Rinse in cold water and set aside.

Cut the tofu into strips a scant ½ inch wide. Cut the garlic chives in half. Arrange all the prepared ingredients close at hand around you, as well as two plates and a large container of warm water.

(continued)



Immerse a spring roll wrapper very quickly in the warm water. It will soften gradually; the main idea is that the whole wrapper has been in contact with the water. Place the wrapper on a plate and place a half-leaf of escarole on it, then some herbs, 2 tofu strips, a little carrot and cucumber, just a few bean sprouts, and a small amount of rice vermicelli. You don't want to overstuff the wrapper to the point where you won't be able to close it without tearing.

Fold in both sides of the wrapper over the filling, then roll it up away from you, keeping the roll fairly tight. (However, do not make it too tight, or the wrapper might tear.) When it is two-thirds of the way rolled, place a garlic chive lengthwise in the roll, letting it extend past the edge a bit, and finish rolling. The roll will seal on its own thanks to the moisture. Place this finished roll on the second plate, and repeat this process to use all the wrappers.

Prepare the sauce of your choice – or both, let's go crazy! – by mixing all the ingredients. Eat the rolls dipped in the sauce.

Note It's a bit time consuming and we don't do it every day, so I advise you to take advantage of your spring roll sessions. Don't just do 8, you'll just be hankering for more, and plus it's better to use up all the wrappers, which are sold in very large packages. Do 12, 20, 30. Let yourself go. Get other people involved, if needed. In any case, we all know very well that there can never be too many spring rolls. No matter how big your group, you will eat them all.

TOFU PUDDING WITH GINGER SYRUP

(Đậu hũ nước đường)

If you like ginger, this is the dessert for you. Tofu pudding, smooth, perfectly silky and tender, brings flan to mind; it forms delicate layers sprinkled with a delicious warm syrup made with fresh gingerroot. This recipe is found in many regions: it is a classic of Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Thai street food among others.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 bowls

- 12 oz root ginger, peeled and thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 1 Tbsp confectioners' sugar • $\frac{1}{3}$ cup palm sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water • 1 lb tofu pudding • Candied ginger, for garnish

In a bowl, mix the ginger slices and confectioners' sugar. Let sit for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, chop and crush the palm sugar.

In a saucepan over low heat, heat the mixture of ginger and confectioners' sugar, stirring constantly, for about 5 minutes. Add the water and the palm sugar and raise the heat to medium. Melt the sugar, stirring; when it is dissolved, lower the heat again and cook for about 6 minutes, until syrupy. Let cool.

Serve the tofu pudding in bowls, drizzled with warm syrup and garnished with slices of candied ginger.

PHILIPPINE-STYLE BRAISED TOFU

(Adobong tokwa)

Adobo is one of the iconic recipes of the Philippines, rich in vinegar, garlic, black pepper, soy sauce, and bay leaf. Everything can be prepared this way, including tofu. It will be anything but bland, braised in a sauce with tangy, salty, and spicy flavors. It's a simple, healthful dish that is quick to cook. Philippine vinegars have amazing flavors and strong acidity. The most common for this recipe are cane vinegar, coconut vinegar, palm vinegar, and white vinegar (which, by the way, is available everywhere).

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14 oz extra-firm tofu • ¼ cup white vinegar
- ½ cup soy sauce • 3–4 Tbsp water • 4 cloves garlic, crushed or thinly sliced
- 1 small red onion, coarsely chopped • 3 bay leaves
- 1 tsp black peppercorns • 1 tsp sugar • Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving

Cut the tofu into cubes about 1 inch square. In wok or a sauté pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil and brown the drained tofu on all sides. Set the tofu aside on paper towels.

In the same wok, combine the vinegar, soy sauce, water, garlic, onion, bay leaves, and peppercorns. Simmer over medium heat for a few minutes, until the sauce has reduced. Add the tofu and sugar, and cook for 1 minute more, stirring to coat all the tofu with sauce.

Serve with rice – adobo sauce with white rice is one of the great joys of life in the Philippines.



TOFU PUDDING WITH SYRUP PEARLS

(Taho)

Taho inevitably reminds me of the Quiapo district of Manila, where the same guy has been selling this sweet dish in the midst of the morning rush, behind the church, for years. *Taho* is found everywhere in the Philippines, but this fellow has something special – probably due to the context. Tofu pudding and tapioca or sago pearls form a pretty pattern in the deep brown sugar syrup called *arnibal*; the textures are fun, the flavors are simple and straightforward. A dessert – or a snack – to drink as much as to eat.

🕒 prep 2 min 🕒 cook 30 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

For the pearls

• 6 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups water • $\frac{1}{4}$ cup raw sugar • $\frac{1}{4}$ cup small tapioca or sago pearls

For the syrup

• $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water • $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raw sugar

• 14 oz tofu pudding

First prepare the pearls: in a large saucepan over high heat, bring the water and sugar to a boil. Add the pearls and stir until it boils again. Turn the heat down as low as possible, cover, and cook for 20–30 minutes, stirring occasionally. The pearls should be translucent with a small white dot in the center. Drain, rinse, and drain again. Set aside in the covered pan.

While the pearls are cooking, prepare the syrup: pour the water and sugar into a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for a few minutes, stirring, until the sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from the heat and let cool.

Steam the tofu in its container for about 15 minutes to warm it up. Divide the tofu and pearls among bowls or glasses in alternating layers, and drizzle generously with syrup.

Note Tofu pudding can be found in the fresh section of well-stocked Chinese and Vietnamese grocery stores – look for “tofu pudding” or “soybean pudding” or “doughua” with glucono-delta-lactone (GDL). You can also prepare it yourself (see pages 34 and 36).



CLEAR SOUP WITH EGG TOFU

(Tom chuet)

This simple and light Thai broth is not exactly a formal recipe; you can add whatever vegetables you want. From one region to another, and even from one family to another, the results will be quite different – if not entirely different. Sometimes you will find in it slices of “egg tofu,” the egg-and-soy-milk custard available in tubes in the fresh section in Asian grocery stores. You can also make this egg tofu yourself (see page 49).

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 2 cloves garlic • 1 small bunch cilantro • 2 green onions
- 14 oz egg tofu • 1 carrot • ¼ napa cabbage • Vegetable oil
- 1 qt water or vegetable stock • 2–4 Tbsp light soy sauce
- ½ tsp ground white pepper • Steamed rice, for serving

Mince the garlic. Pick the cilantro leaves; cut the cilantro stems and the green onion into ¾-inch lengths. Cut the egg tofu into slices a scant ½ inch thick, and the carrot into slices 1/16 inch thick. Roughly slice the cabbage.

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil and fry the garlic. Add the water or vegetable broth, cilantro stems, carrot, and cabbage, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, add the green onions and half the soy sauce, and cook for a few minutes. The vegetables should be tender but not overly soft.

Add the tofu and pepper and simmer for a few more minutes. Add a little more soy sauce if necessary. Add the cilantro leaves, and serve with rice.

Note For a vegan version, replace the egg tofu with soft to medium-firm (flexible) tofu.

EGG TOFU STIR-FRY

WITH THAI VEGGIES

(Taohu song kreung)

This stir-fry dish, topped with a creamy sauce, is focused on egg tofu plus a mix of vegetables. This kind of egg-and-soy-milk custard can be found in the fresh section of Asian grocery stores, in tubes. It can also be prepared at home (see page 49). Don't hesitate to use other vegetables if you do not have the ones called for – this recipe follows the vagaries of the produce market without a problem.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced • 1 small red or green bell pepper, julienned
- 4 oz baby corn, julienned • 2 small carrots, julienned • 4 oz straw mushrooms, halved
- 2 small tomatoes, cut into thin wedges • 14 oz egg tofu, sliced ½ inch thick
 - 4 Tbsp soy sauce • 2 Tbsp vegetarian oyster sauce
- 2 tsp cornstarch, potato starch, or tapioca mixed with ¼ cup water
 - Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving

Heat a wok over high heat and pour a little oil in it. Add the garlic and stir-fry it for about 30 seconds, then add the bell pepper, baby corn, and carrots, and continue stir-frying for 30 seconds–1 minute, stirring constantly or almost. Add the mushrooms, stir and toss again for 30 seconds–1 minute, then add the tomatoes, tofu, soy sauce, and oyster sauce. Cook for another 1 minute or so, stirring and avoiding breaking up the tofu into crumbs.

Reduce the heat to medium. Give the starch slurry a quick stir, then pour this mixture into the wok. Mix well so that all the vegetables are coated with sauce. Cook for 1 minute more to thicken, then serve straight away with rice.

Notes As always with the wok (or even the frying pan), for best results, do not prepare 4 portions at once. Limit yourself to 2 servings at a time. You will need to separate the above ingredients cook in 2 batches if there are 4 of you at the table (it goes quickly, you can eat together).

For a vegan version, replace the egg tofu with medium-firm (flexible) tofu. Straw mushrooms are found canned in Asian grocery stores. Vegetarian oyster sauce is easily found in Asian grocery stores. If you don't have any, you can always replace it with soy sauce.

THAI-STYLE STIR-FRIED RICE NOODLES

(Pad Thai)

This is one of the most famous and appreciated Thai dishes throughout the world, and it's easy to understand why: it is fatty, sweet, salty, and gently spiced, and mixes various textures. In short, it speaks to the child in all of us. Let's grow up a little and prepare our pad Thai ourselves; we can then perceive that it is simple and quick to cook, that it doesn't cost a lot, and that we do not need to go to a restaurant to taste this cherished dish.... Here is a vegetarian version – I didn't use the usual fresh and dried shrimp or the fish sauce, but this dish is still fairly faithful to the original. The recipe is for four, but be sure to prepare each serving individually.

🕒 prep 10 min (+ soak 40 min) 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14 oz flat rice noodles • 1/3 cup tamarind juice • 1/3 cup soy sauce • 4 Tbsp palm sugar
- 4 small shallots, thinly sliced • 4 good handfuls mung bean sprouts
- 1 bunch Chinese chives, cut into 2-inch lengths • 4 Tbsp crushed roasted peanuts
- 4 Tbsp fried shallots • 2 Tbsp red chile flakes, or as needed
- 7 oz pressed tofu, cut into small rectangles • 4 small eggs • 2 limes • Vegetable oil

Soak your rice noodles in a good amount of warm water for about 40 minutes, or long enough to soften them without their becoming overly soft. Heat the tamarind juice and soy sauce just enough to let you dilute the palm sugar easily. Reserve half of the vegetables, which will be served raw with the noodles, as well as the peanuts, the fried shallots, and the chile flakes. Have everything else around you at hand – the cooking will go very quickly.

Heat up your wok pretty well and add a little oil. Fry the shallots. When they are just starting to brown, add the tofu and brown it on all sides, stirring constantly or almost. Add the noodles, 3–4 tablespoons of tamarind-soy sauce per serving, and a good pinch of chile flakes if you like, and continue to stir so that the sauce goes everywhere and the noodles do not stick together.

Push the entire contents of the wok to one side and add a little more oil. Break an egg directly into the oil, scramble it very quickly to break up the yolk, and place the noodles on top. Let cook for 15 seconds, then start mixing everything again. Lower the heat, add some bean sprouts and garlic chives, and stir and toss until the vegetables soften.

Serve the noodles at once, surrounded with raw bean sprouts and garlic chive, a sprinkling of peanuts, fried shallots – and chile flakes, if you want more – plus half a lime, for squeezing.

Note The wok does not like large quantities. Even if you have a very large one, you will not be able to prepare four portions well in one go: some of the ingredients will go soggy, others will burn, and the rest will not be properly cooked. In short, be wise and go serving by serving, possibly two servings at a time, never all four at once (especially with noodles, that would be carnage). I give ingredients for four with this in mind; dividing by two or four is very easy. For a vegan pad Thai, don't add the egg. If, like me, you want mild flavor, omit the raw garlic chive and the extra portion of chili.



TOFU, GALANGAL & COCONUT MILK SOUP

(Tom kha taohu)

The legendary Thai soup with chicken, mushrooms, and coconut milk called *tom kha gai* can be transformed into a vegan dish if you replace the meat with tofu and the chicken stock with vegetable stock. It will be just as excellent. You can add chile according to your preference, from barely there to five-alarm fire.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 box straw mushrooms, cleaned • 1 stalk lemongrass • 6 red Thai chiles • 6 Thai lime leaves
- 3 limes • 1 thumb-sized piece galangal root • 2 cups coconut milk
- 2 cups vegetable stock (fairly concentrated) • 14 oz firm to extra-firm tofu (flexible), cubed
- ¼ cup light soy sauce • 1 handful cilantro leaves • Steamed jasmine rice, for serving

Cut the larger mushrooms in half. Cut the lemongrass into 1½-inch lengths and bruise them; bruise the red peppers; tear up the lime leaves or crumple them. Squeeze the limes. Peel and slice the galangal on the diagonal as thinly as possible.

In a large saucepan over low-medium heat, combine the coconut milk, stock, lime leaves, lemongrass pieces, and galangal. Heat and stir until simmering. Add the mushrooms and tofu, and continue cooking for a few minutes without letting it come to a boil.

Add the chiles and turn off the heat. Gradually add the lime juice and soy sauce, tasting as you go: the soup should be tart and salty, then softened by the roundness of the coconut milk. Adjust the amount of lime juice, coconut milk, and soy sauce if needed. Add the cilantro leaves, and serve with jasmine rice.



TOFU STIR-FRY

WITH GREEN PEPPERCORNS

(Pad cha taohu)

This fantastic dish is prepared in no time flat, and brings happiness to your life: it is full of varied colors and flavors, and if you like green peppercorns, it will satisfy you. This recipe is from a food stall in the middle of nowhere in the Thai countryside, between two pepper fields belonging to the local democratic party. I just “veganized” it by replacing the fish sauce with soy sauce.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 red chiles (or less, or more) • 5-inch piece fresh fingerroot (*krachai*)
- 1 stalk lemongrass • 3 Thai lime leaves • 1/3 cup green peppercorns
- 4 white Thai eggplants • 4 ears baby corn
- 14 oz firm to extra-firm tofu (flexible), cut into cubes or rectangles • 4 oz Thai pea eggplants
- 3 Tbsp light soy sauce • Vegetable oil • Steamed jasmine rice, for serving

Stem the chiles and mash them in a mortar until they are shredded, without quite puréeing them. (Don't get chile in your eyes!) Cut the *krachai* into extra-fine julienne strips – the finest possible – after removing the dry bits. Remove the tough outer leaves from the lemongrass, and mince the tender white heart. Chop the Thai lime leaves as finely as possible. If the green peppercorn bunches are very long, cut them in half or quarters.

Thinly slice the white eggplants. Cut the ears of baby corn in half lengthwise, then in 2 or 3 pieces. Place all your ingredients around you close at hand, the cooking will go very quickly. For optimal results, it is best to proceed in two batches and separate your ingredients in half.

Heat a wok over high heat and pour a little oil into it. Add the tofu and chile at once. Stir almost constantly, browning the tofu for a few moments. Add the *krachai*, green peppercorns, sliced white eggplant, whole pea eggplants, baby corn, and lime leaves, and sauté for 1–2 minutes, stirring and tossing constantly. Add a little water if needed. Season with soy sauce, mix well, and taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve at once with jasmine rice.

Note As always with the wok (or even the frying pan), for best results, do not prepare 4 portions at once. Limit yourself to 2 servings at a time. You will need to separate the above ingredients cook in 2 batches if there are 4 of you at the table (it goes quickly, you can eat together).



RED CURRY TOFU STIR-FRY

(Pad prik gaeng taohu)

Thai curries can be richly sauced or rather dry, depending on how you use the curry paste. This recipe tends towards dry curries; instead of being diluted with coconut cream, the red curry paste is quickly sautéed with tofu and long beans. These delicious beans, quite thick, very long, crunchy and sweet, are not easy to find everywhere, but they can be replaced by standard green beans. As for curry paste, it will taste better homemade with a mortar and pestle, but there are also excellent ones on the market if you're in a hurry.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

For the curry paste

- 6 dried red Thai chiles • ½ tsp coriander seeds
- ½ tsp cumin seeds • 7 cloves garlic, peeled • 3 small shallots
- 1 stalk lemongrass, peeled and thinly sliced • 1 coriander root, thinly sliced • 1 Tbsp galangal root, thinly sliced • Zest of ½ Thai lime • 2 tsp white peppercorns • 1 tsp salt

For the rest

- 6 Chinese long beans or 7 oz regular green beans • 14 oz extra-firm tofu, cubed
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 tsp sugar • 6 Thai lime leaves, bruised • Vegetable oil
- Steamed jasmine rice, for serving

Start by making the curry paste. Rehydrate the chiles in a bowl of warm water for about 10 minutes. In a dry pan over medium heat, toast the coriander and cumin seeds for a few minutes, stirring constantly. Transfer to a mortar, add all the curry paste ingredients, then pound and mix with a pestle until you get a homogeneous red paste. Be careful: the chile can burn your eyes and make you cough!

Cut the beans into bite-sized lengths. Heat a wok over high heat and pour in a little oil. Add the curry paste immediately and fry in the oil, stirring for about 30 seconds. Add the tofu and brown it in the paste for 1–2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the soy sauce, sugar, and a little water if the mixture seems too dry. Add the beans and lime leaves and cook for 30 seconds–1 minute, stirring constantly. Serve over jasmine rice.

Note Thai lime leaves are ideal when fresh, but can be hard to find. The frozen ones are the best alternative – the dried leaves have significantly less flavor.



COCONUT GREEN CURRY

(Gaeng keow wan taohu)

In Thailand, we tend to be instinctively wary of red – beware, hot chile! But the strongest curry is probably the green one. Considered by Thais to be a soft curry (soft in the sense of “sweet”; they are aware that it “provokes”), *gaeng keow wan* owes its color to green chiles, and is traditionally prepared with small, round white eggplants, coconut milk, Thai basil, and Thai lime leaves (also known as kaffir lime leaves). The curry paste does not have to be homemade, especially if you have trouble finding the necessary fresh ingredients: in that case, better a good store-bought curry paste!

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 6 servings

For the curry paste

- 1 tsp coriander seeds • 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 5 oz green Thai chiles • 1 head garlic, peeled • 3 small shallots, peeled
- 1 thumb-sized piece galangal root, thinly sliced • 5 coriander roots, thinly sliced • Zest of 1 Thai lime
- 2 stalks lemongrass, peeled and thinly sliced • 1 Tbsp white peppercorns • 1 tsp salt

For the rest

- 1 cup water • 6 Thai lime leaves, bruised • 21 oz firm to extra-firm tofu (flexible), cubed
- 2½ cups coconut cream • 8 white Thai eggplant, cut into wedges
- 2 red chiles, thinly sliced • 8 sprigs Thai basil, leaves picked • Salt
- Steamed jasmine rice, for serving

Start by preparing the curry paste: in a dry pan over medium heat, roast the coriander and cumin seeds for a few minutes, stirring constantly. Transfer to a mortar, add all the curry paste ingredients, then pound and mix with a pestle until you get a fibrous green paste – it should not be smooth, but the ingredients should be indistinguishable. Be careful: the chile can burn your eyes and make you cough!

In a casserole pan or Dutch oven, combine the water, all the curry paste, the lime leaves, and the tofu. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally, then add the coconut cream. Bring to the boil again, mixing gently, and salt to taste. Add the eggplant and red chile and let it boil for another 2–3 minutes. Turn off the heat, stir in the basil, and serve hot with jasmine rice.

Notes The best curry pastes are made with a mortar and pestle, which takes time and effort. The food processor is a quick and effortless alternative.

Thai lime leaves are best fresh, but may be hard to find. The frozen version is the best alternative – the dried leaves have significantly less flavor.



BRAISED TOFU WITH PINEAPPLE

(Kho manor tawhou)

This Cambodian recipe is most commonly seen with fish, but the tofu version is to die for. If you like sweet-and-sour, you're going to love it. Plus, it is easy and quick to prepare, and does not require impossible-to-find ingredients. Whether you're dining solo or have guests coming, this delicious dish deserves to be cooked.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 3 cloves garlic • 2 stalks lemongrass • 1 small pineapple or 1 can pineapple chunks
- 14 oz extra-firm tofu • 1 tsp sugar • 1 Tbsp soy sauce • ¼ cup vegetarian oyster sauce
- ½ tsp ground black pepper • 7 Tbsp water • Vegetable oil • Steamed jasmine rice, for serving
- Cilantro leaves, for garnish

Chop the garlic cloves. Peel the tough outer leaves of the lemongrass and chop the tender white heart. If you are using a fresh pineapple, peel it and remove the hard core in the center, then cut the flesh into cubes. Cut the tofu into cubes or rectangles ¾ inch to 1 inch square, and blot dry with paper towels.

In a wok or frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the tofu on all sides, then remove from the pan and set aside. Add a little more oil to the pan if needed, then stir-fry the garlic and lemongrass. Add the golden tofu, the pineapple, and the rest of the ingredients; mix and toss until the pineapple is cooked – the sauce should also have thickened a bit.

Serve over jasmine rice, sprinkled with cilantro leaves.

Note Vegetarian oyster sauce is easily found in Asian grocery stores. If you don't have any, you can always replace it with soy sauce.



MULTICOLOR INDONESIAN SALAD

(Gado gado)

Gado gado is to Indonesia what *salade Niçoise* is to Nice: the local salad, composed of many ingredients, which everyone is more than happy to argue about. As Indonesia is a large island chain, it makes sense that *gado gado* has many regional variations; also, Indonesians don't necessarily have to talk about cooking to get into a heated discussion. Whichever ingredients you choose, you will often be told that they should all be blanched or steamed...but that's not true – some are fried, and others can be raw!

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍴 4 servings

- 5 oz firm to extra-firm tofu • 5 oz tempeh • 2 eggs • 4 oz green beans • 4 oz mung bean sprouts
- 7 oz pointed cabbage • ½ English cucumber or 1 small Asian cucumber • 1 carrot
- 7 oz boiled potatoes • 4 Tbsp fried shallots • Vegetable oil

For the sauce

- ⅓ cup peanuts • 3 Tbsp thick sweet soy sauce (*kecap manis*) • 1 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 clove garlic • 1–2 red chiles • ½–⅔ cup coconut milk • Juice of 1 lime

Cut the tofu and the tempeh into cubes or rectangles ¾ inch to 1 inch square, and blot dry with paper towels. In a wok or frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the tofu and tempeh on all sides, then remove from the pan and set aside.

Cook the eggs for 7 minutes in a saucepan of boiling water, then immerse them in cold water to stop cooking. Blanch the beans for 2–3 minutes in a pot of boiling water, then run them under a stream of cold water until they have cooled. Blanch the bean sprouts for 30 seconds in a pot of boiling water, then run them under a stream of cold water until they have cooled.

Shred the cabbage, thinly slice the cucumber, grate the carrots, and roughly slice the potatoes. Peel the eggs and halve or quarter them.

Combine all the ingredients for the sauce in a food processor; add more coconut milk to for a milder flavor, or more lime juice for a more tangy result. Arrange all the salad ingredients flat on a large platter, and serve with the sauce.

Note If you can't find *kecap manis*, you can make it yourself by reducing 2 parts soy sauce to 1 part sugar over low heat.



BALINESE CURRY WITH TOFU & TEMPEH

(Kare tahu)

While Indonesia is not really a vegetarian country, Bali is the exception; the island being mainly Hindu, they eat more tofu there than anywhere else in the archipelago. Tempeh, another product made from soybeans – fermented, in this case – is a staple ingredient. This delicious yellow curry highlights these two ingredients. If you have trouble finding the ingredients you need to make yellow curry paste, you can buy the ready-made version.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

For the curry paste

- 2 shallots • 3 cloves garlic • 1 red chile (or more) • 1 candlenut (*kemir*) or 1 macadamia nut • ½ inch root ginger, freshly minced • ½ inch galangal root, freshly minced
- 1 tsp minced turmeric root • 1 tsp coriander seeds • Salt and pepper

For the rest

- 7 oz Chinese long beans or regular green beans • 7 oz firm tofu
- 7 oz tempeh • 1 stalk lemongrass, thinly sliced (tender inner white bulb only)
- 2 Thai lime leaves • 2 bay leaves • ⅔ cup vegetable stock • ⅔ cup coconut milk
- Vegetable oil • Steamed jasmine rice, for serving

In a mortar with a pestle (or in a food processor), mash and mix all the ingredients for the curry paste.

Cut the beans into 1- to 1½-inch lengths. Cut the tofu and the tempeh into cubes ¾ inch to 1 inch square. Blot the tofu dry with paper towels. You can also drain it a few hours before cooking, wrapped in paper towels.

In a wok or frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a generous amount of oil. Brown the tofu and tempeh on all sides, then remove from the pan and set aside on paper towels.

Pour off all but 2–3 tablespoons of oil from the wok and sauté the curry paste, lemongrass, and bruised lime leaves and bay leaves. Stir-fry for 1–2 minutes. Add the tofu and tempeh, mix well, then pour in the broth and coconut milk. Continue cooking over medium heat until the sauce turns a uniform color. Add the beans, cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook for about 5 minutes. Serve with rice.



BRAISED TOFU & TEMPEH

JAVANESE STYLE

(Tahu dan tempe bacem)

This delicious recipe comes from Yogyakarta, on the island of Java, where they love sweet-and-salty combinations. The sweetness of this dish is balanced nicely by the acidity of the tamarind, and perked up by various spices and aromatics; all these elements, assembled in a bath of coconut water, will reduce by simmering slowly with tofu and tempeh. After a final pass in a hot pan for golden color and crispness, the result will be delicious, savory, and most definitely exotic. For those who dread a bland tofu dish, this is one to savor...

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 1 hr 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 10 oz firm to extra-firm tofu • 10 oz tempeh • 3 shallots, finely minced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced • 3–4 Tbsp palm sugar or brown sugar
- 2 bay leaves • 1½ tsp ground coriander • 1 tsp galangal root powder
- 1 Tbsp tamarind juice • 1 qt coconut water • 1 tsp salt
- Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving
- Thinly sliced fresh chile, for serving

Cut the tofu into 2-inch squares that are ¾ inch thick. Cut the tempeh into triangles of similar dimensions. Combine the tofu, tempeh, and all the remaining ingredients except the oil in a Dutch oven or casserole pan. The coconut water should just cover the tofu and the tempeh. If not, add a little plain water.

Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, until the liquid is reduced by half. Gently flip all the tofu and tempeh pieces, and continue simmering in the same way until almost all of the liquid is gone. Drain the tofu and tempeh pieces.

In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the tofu and tempeh on both sides. Serve hot with rice and thinly sliced chile (if you like spiciness).

TOFU STIR-FRY WITH BALINESE SAUCE

(Tahu goreng bumbu Bali)

Despite its name, this recipe does not come from the island of Bali, but from the eastern side of Java. Balinese sauce, as the Indonesians call it, is popular all over the country. It is commonly associated with hard-cooked eggs, but also goes very well with tofu (fried or not) or tempeh.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 14–16 oz firm to extra-firm tofu • 1 Tbsp tamarind juice
 - 1 stalk lemongrass, crushed and tied in a knot • 2 bay leaves
 - 2 Thai lime leaves, bruised • ½ tsp salt • 2 tsp palm sugar or brown sugar
 - 2 Tbsp thick sweet soy sauce (*kecap manis*) • Vegetable oil • Steamed rice, for serving
- For the spice paste**
- 8 shallots • 2–3 red chiles (or more, or less) • 2 cloves garlic • ¾-inch piece root ginger
 - 5 candlenuts (*kemiri*) or 5 macadamia nuts • ¾-inch piece galangal root

Cut the tofu into 1½-inch cubes. In a mortar with a pestle (or in a food processor), mash and mix all the ingredients for the spice paste.

In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Sauté the spice paste, stirring for about 5 minutes. Add the tamarind juice, lemongrass, bay and lime leaves, salt, and sugar. Mix well. Add the tofu and mix again. Stir-fry for 2 minutes, then add the sweet soy sauce and stir-fry again.

Remove the lemongrass and bay and lime leaves, and serve hot with rice.

Note Before cooking the tofu in the sauce, you can fry it. For this, season the cubes with salt and pepper, dredge with flour, and deep-fry in hot oil until they are golden brown. Drain on paper towels before adding them to the recipe.

SAVORY SPIRAL COOKIES

(Xiàng ěrduǒ)

Depending on the region of the world where they live, Chinese speakers do not all call these cookies by the same name. In Malaysia and Indonesia, they say “elephant ear” cookies. In Taiwan, they mention “pig ears,” elsewhere “cow ears”.... They don’t agree on the animal, but at least they all agree that it’s the ear. Spiral-shaped, these savory cookies – or crackers, or biscuits, whatever you want to call them, even “bear ears” if you like – are common wherever there is a large Chinese community. They’re flavored with fermented tofu, fried, and pretty easy to make.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 15 min (+ freeze 30 min) 🌱 vegan

For 20–30 cookies

• Oil for deep-frying

For the white dough

• $\frac{2}{3}$ cup flour • 3 Tbsp water • 1 pinch baking soda • 1 pinch salt

For the brown dough

• $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour • 2 Tbsp water • $2\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp raw sugar

• 2 Tbsp vegetable oil • $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp white fermented tofu (*dòufuru*), puréed

• 1 tsp five-spice powder • 1 pinch baking soda • 2 pinches salt

In separate bowls, combine the ingredients for each of the two doughs. One at a time, roll them out $\frac{1}{16}$ inch thick with a rolling pin, giving each dough a rectangular shape of the same size.

Brush water over the brown paste just to moisten. Place the white dough on top. Brush the white dough with water just to moisten, and roll the two doughs together lengthwise to make a thick roll. Wrap it in plastic wrap and leave it in the freezer for 30 minutes so that you can cut it more easily.

Heat oil for deep-frying to 340°F and cut the roll into slices about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch thick. Place them on parchment paper as you go, without touching, as the dough can be sticky. In several batches, slide the dough slices into the hot oil and fry until the cookies are golden. Let drain and cool on a wire rack before serving. You can also keep them in an airtight container.



TOFU PUFFS

WITH CRUNCHY VEG & SPICED SAUCE

(Tau pok rojak)

In Malaysian, the term *rojak* means “mixture” and designates in generic fashion several types of amazing salads. In Indonesia, these contain mainly uncooked fruits and vegetables, while in Malaysia and Singapore, they are enriched with crackers, puffed tofu, calamari, and pieces of fried dough. *Rojak* street vendors in Singapore often offer small puffed tofu cubes (*tau pok*) filled with raw vegetables to dip in a “*rojak* sauce” of chile, tamarind, and peanuts. This playful recipe, both fresh and delicious, is perfect we a pre-dinner drink.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan

For 20 pieces

- 4 Tbsp palm sugar • 2 Tbsp white sugar • 4 Tbsp tamarind juice
- 1 Tbsp chile powder or chile paste
- 1 torch ginger flower bud (*bunga kantan*), thinly sliced or 1 tsp freshly minced root ginger
- ¾ cup crushed roasted peanuts • Juice of 2 calamansi lemons or 1 lime
- 2 Tbsp thick sweet soy sauce (*kecap manis*)
- 20 cubes puffed tofu (*tau pok*) • ½ cucumber, julienned • 4 oz mung bean sprouts

Chop the palm sugar and mix it with 2 tablespoons of water; heat the mixture in a small saucepan until the sugar is dissolved. Add the white sugar, tamarind juice, chili powder or paste, torch ginger flower bud or ginger, peanuts, citrus juice, and sweet soy sauce. Mix well and place this sauce in a serving bowl.

Slice the puffed tofu cubes in half without going all the way though, as if making mini sandwich rolls. Stuff them with a mixture of julienned cucumber and bean sprouts. Broil these little cubes under the broiler or in a hot oiled frying pan just to brown them on both sides and warm them, without cooking the vegetables. Serve with the sauce.

Note Puffed tofu cubes are found in the fresh section in Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai groceries.... These are fairly common products within the Chinese community and therefore readily available, even outside of Asia.



TOFU & TEMPEH SATAY WITH PEANUT SAUCE

(Tahu dan tempeh sate bumbu kacang)

In the West, we speak of satay or saté in reference to the famous Indonesian peanut sauce; this is actually a mistake. In Indonesian, the term *sate* designates marinated skewers that are grilled and then served with various sauces. The one that Westerners have focused on is a thick peanut sauce, delicious and rich, hence the association between the word satay and this peanut preparation – which is actually called *bumbu kacang*. Here is the recipe for these delicious skewers, in their tofu and tempeh version, with their fabulous peanut sauce.

🕒 prep 20 min (+ marinate 1–12 hr) 🕒 cook 10–20 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 7 oz firm or extra-firm tofu • 7 oz tempeh • 4 Tbsp fried shallots
- 4 calamansi lemon or 2 limes • Steamed rice, for serving • Vegetable oil

For the marinade

- 4 cloves garlic • 2 Tbsp chopped palm sugar or brown sugar • 2 Tbsp tamarind juice
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 Tbsp ground coriander • 3 Tbsp thick sweet soy sauce (*kecap manis*)

For the sauce

- 3 cloves garlic • 3–5 red Thai chiles (or more) • Boiling water, as needed
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsalted roasted peanuts • 2 Tbsp chopped palm sugar or brown sugar • 2 Tbsp tamarind juice • 7 Tbsp water • 1 Tbsp thick sweet soy sauce (*kecap manis*) • 1 tsp salt

If you are using firm tofu, wrap it in several layers of paper towels and press it between two plates to drain for at least 1 hour. Cut the tofu and tempeh into cubes or 1-inch squares.

In a large bowl, combine the garlic with all the other marinade ingredients. Add the tofu and tempeh and mix to coat all the pieces. Cover and let marinate in the fridge for at least 1 hour or up to overnight, to marry the flavors. Soak bamboo skewers in water during this time, so they won't burn when grilled.

To make the sauce, start by placing the garlic and chiles in a heatproof bowl and cover them with boiling water. Let steep for about 10 minutes, then drain. In a food processor, purée them and add the remaining sauce ingredients, continuing to purée until you get a creamy consistency. Adjust the amount of water if necessary.

Preheat a grill or broiler. Thread about 4 pieces of tofu and tempeh onto each skewer. Brush the skewers with oil and place on the grill for 5–8 minutes per side or under the broiler for about 10 minutes per side, or until you get a nice golden brown color.

Serve with the sauce, fried shallots, and citrus, as well as rice.

Note If you want the tofu to really absorb the flavors of the marinade, use extra-firm tofu, cut it into cubes as indicated in the recipe, and place it in the freezer in a bag for 24 hours. Take it out of the bag and leave it to thaw in the refrigerator for 24 hours on a plate covered with several layers of paper towel. Then continue with the recipe as directed.



SPICY TOFU SAMBAL

(Sambal goreng taukwa)

Sambal is a chili sauce or paste found in Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Brunei. There are dozens of regional variations – with fermented shrimp paste, garlic, sugar, ginger, tomatoes, or lime juice, for example. This simple and well-spiced version gives a kick to extra-firm or pressed tofu, whose dense texture will make you forget that it is a vegan product.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 14 oz extra-firm or pressed tofu • 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 shallots, thinly sliced • 1 small tomato, coarsely chopped
- 2 Tbsp chile paste • 1 Tbsp thick sweet soy sauce (*kecap manis*)
- Vegetable oil • Salt • Steamed rice, for serving

Cut the tofu into cubes or rectangles. In a wok over medium-high, heat $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of oil and fry the tofu until it is browned on all sides. Drain the tofu on paper towels, and pour off all but 2 tablespoons of oil from the wok.

Mash the garlic, shallots, tomato, and chile paste in a mortar or food processor until you have a coarse paste. Heat the remaining oil in the wok and sauté this chile paste for about 10 minutes, stirring, until the smell of garlic and raw chili disappears. Add the fried tofu, stir, and cook for another 1–2 minutes. Serve hot with rice.

LAOTIAN TOFU SALAD

(Larb taohu)

The *larb*, *laap*, *lahb* – I'll pass along all the possible transcriptions – is in itself a symbol of Laotian cuisine. There are variations of this salad of herbed meat in Thailand, Burma, and Yunnan; in Laos, it is prepared with lots of fresh herbs and eaten with sticky rice and raw vegetables. Traditionally, this is not a vegetarian dish at all, but tofu larb is found in some restaurants these days. And it's super good.

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 14–16 oz firm tofu, cut into 1-inch cubes • 2½ Tbsp sticky rice (uncooked)
 - 3 Tbsp soy sauce • 2 Tbsp lime juice • ½ tsp pepper
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced (green part only) • 3 Tbsp minced mint leaves
 - 3 Tbsp minced cilantro leaves • 2 red chiles, thinly sliced
 - 2 shallots, very thinly sliced • Vegetable oil
- Cooked sticky rice, cucumber slices, tomato wedges and/or lettuce leaves, for serving

Blot the tofu dry with paper towels. Heat a good layer of oil in a wok or frying pan over medium-high heat and fry the tofu on all sides. Drain on paper towels and let cool.

Meanwhile, toast the sticky rice in a dry frying pan over medium heat, until it smells fragrant and turns a pretty golden brown color. Then crush the coarse grains of rice to a powder in a mortar or in a blender. Set aside.

Coarsely chop the tofu with a knife or hand chopper. Place it in a bowl and add the soy sauce, lime juice, and sticky rice powder. Mix thoroughly by hand. Add the pepper, green onion, herbs, and chile. Separate the shallot into rings and add them too.

Mix well, add a little soy sauce or lime juice if needed, and serve with hot sticky rice, cucumber slices, tomato wedges, and/or lettuce leaves.

Note You can opt for a raw version, and not fry the tofu before chopping it.





Burma

တိဗုတ်
ပြော



Tofu fabrication in Burma.



A SPECIAL CASE

If one tries to classify Burma conventionally among the countries of Southeast Asia, it is another world. Wedged between India, China, and Thailand, covering almost half the coast of the Bay of Bengal and reaching the Himalayas, Burma presents a disconcerting geographical, climatic, and ethnic variety. Its cuisine (or its cuisines) includes many elements typical of Southeast Asia, but it is equally rich in ingredients that we associate more with the Indian subcontinent. Above all, this nation has its own culture, and dishes that cannot be found elsewhere. In short, it is exceptional enough to deserve a dedicated chapter, especially when we talk about tofu.

Soybean tofu exists in Burma. They call it *pè bya*. It is very firm to extra-firm, and mainly consumed by the Chinese community. The rest of the population does not eat it, and so remains fairly marginal. The tofu that is seen everywhere, the true tofu for the Burmese, called *tohpū*, is a completely different product that does not have the same appearance, taste, or texture, and is not prepared in the same way. It is usually made with pigeon peas in the Shan State, and made with so-called Indian chickpeas (the *desi* type, small with a yellow interior) in the rest of the country – and sometimes the two are mixed. Unless you are very knowledgeable about peas, you will have trouble distinguishing pigeon peas from Indian chickpeas once they are shelled, peeled, and split: they are bright yellow, about the same size, and exactly the same shape.

BRIGHT YELLOW TOFU

Shan yellow tofu and Burmese tofu are also almost indistinguishable, visually or flavor-wise. These two products are both bright yellow (more or less, depending on which peas are used and whether or not turmeric is added), have a perfectly smooth texture, and are extremely pleasant. They are flexible and dense, while offering fabulous unctuousness on the

palate. Marvelous! Their flavors are very similar; they are so rich and buttery, they bring to mind nuts, more than chickpeas. If you are into chickpeas, you should fall in love with Burmese pea tofus. By the way, they have absolutely nothing to do with soy tofu. It's possible to remain completely indifferent to the huge variety of soy tofus that exists in the Far East, find them all completely useless and uninteresting, and simultaneously devote yourself to the cult of yellow Shan tofu.

I specify “yellow” Shan tofu because there is yet another similar product in the same region, which is simply called Shan tofu (*hsan tahpo*). It is white, rice-based, firm and supple, and very much like the “rice tofu” from southwestern China, called *mí dòufu* – it's almost exactly the same. Similarly, the regions bordering Burma in China also have a yellow pea “tofu” called *jīdòu liángfēn*. Culinary traditions don't stop at borders. Often, Burmese tofu will be called Shan tofu, and vice versa. Even if it is actually Shan yellow tofu. Often yellow tofu will be made with a mixture of chickpeas and pigeon peas, and we won't even know what to call it. The basic thing to remember to simplify all this is that in Burma, the tofu is yellow, very good, and made from local peas. Let's not try to classify things too rigidly, especially in a country of such diversity, where more or less everything in the kitchen is artisanal and informal.

TOFU TYPES & USES

YELLOW TOFU

Yellow tofu can be made from pigeon peas or Indian chickpeas, or a mixture of both. Its great distinction, beyond the raw material not being soybeans, is that it does not need to be curdled and pressed. It is obtained by soaking ground or peeled and split peas to hydrate and soften them. They then grind the peas if needed (not needed if they are already ground) with water, and

filter the mixture to get a kind of raw pea milk. They add a little salt and a pinch of turmeric to heighten the yellow color if desired, and simply cook this “milk” by shaking it vigorously. When it has thickened up, they pour it into a mold and let it set. This preparation is very similar to that of Provençal *panisses*, but the result obtained is of incomparable delicacy.

Yellow tofu can be eaten in a salad – it’s excellent this way – or stir-fried, fried, twice fried, fried in chips. As it is very dense and flexible, it can also be cut into extremely thin slices, dried, and then fried to make puffed crackers. Finally, it can be served still hot, before it sets, when it is wonderfully smooth. It can then coat other ingredients – generally noodles – and form a kind of very rich sauce. It is also common to combine this “cream” with fried yellow tofu.

Tofu + tofu = love.

SOYBEAN TOFU

Classic soybean tofu is made by blending and filtering soaked soybeans to extract “milk.” This soy milk is curdled by adding magnesium chloride, calcium sulfate, or a mixture of the two, and the curds are finally pressed to obtain a block of tofu. It is a product that exists in Burma, but it is found only within the Chinese community. It is very firm to extra-firm, which helps it keep longer. Other Chinese tofu foods, such as puffed tofu or fermented tofu, are also available – but marginal. Burma is extremely rich in legumes of all kinds, which overshadow soybeans. And the product that the Burmese call tofu (*tohpu*) is made only with other legumes.



Burmese yellow tofu (4) is generally made from pigeon peas (3). It is excellent fried (1) or cut into thin strips and dried (2) then fried to make puffed crackers.

SHAN COUNTRY YELLOW TOFU

(Won tahpo)

This recipe was shown to me by Ma Kyi Kyi Khawg, a nice lady who prepares her tofu every morning at home to sell it on her little cart. It's not very complicated, although it may seem impressive. It's above all a good workout – it'll keep your arms in shape. When you have done it once, you gain confidence and you can repeat the process without a problem. What's more, yellow Shan tofu is so good that you'll want to try it again. And since you basically can't buy it outside of Burma, it is homemade or nothing! The split pigeon peas needed for this recipe are available in Indian grocery stores, and even Asian grocery stores in general. You can replace them with Indian split chickpeas (*chana dal*) if you can't find them.

🕒 prep 20 min (+ soak 24–48 hr) 🍳 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan

Makes about 21 oz tofu (4–5 portions)

- 7 oz split pigeon peas (*toor dal*)
- ½ tsp salt • 1 pinch ground turmeric

In a large container, soak the peas in five times their volume of water for 24–48 hours. Rinse them several times with clean water, drain, then measure their volume again. Add twice their volume of water. Blend everything (with an immersion blender, ideally) as finely as possible. Pass this mixture through a sieve lined with cheesecloth. When the cloth is full of solid residue, pour a little water on it and squeeze it to collect as much juice as possible. Add the salt and turmeric.

In a cast-iron wok or casserole pan over medium heat, heat 10 cups of water. When it comes to a simmer, pour the pea “juice” into it and stir vigorously and continuously with a wooden spatula. After about 8 minutes, the dough will start to thicken. Continue cooking and don't stop stirring – otherwise it will spatter, and not only will it burn, but it will get all over the walls. When the dough is almost too thick to be pourable, it is ready.

(continued)



Pour it as quickly as possible into a heatproof glass or ceramic mold – a small rectangular baking dish or gratin dish is ideal. Smooth the surface with wet fingers. Let cool to room temperature, then place in the refrigerator for a few hours. Unmold the tofu by placing a plate over it and turning over the mold and the plate together. If it does not come out immediately, you can run the wet blade of a knife along the sides of the dish. Store the tofu on a plate in the refrigerator, wrapped in paper towels or a clean cloth. It will release water over time and become firmer, which is ideal for cooking. I recommend elsewhere to let it drain like this for at least 1 hour before using it in any recipe.

Note If you are kind of useless, a little lazy, or a complete faker, refer to the next recipe, faster, identical at the end, but much simpler at the beginning.

BURMESE TOFU

(Tohpu)

For those who like shortcuts, here is the recipe for Burmese tofu, which is simpler and faster to make than Shan yellow tofu, but with basically identical results. You will only get the characteristic supple, fine, and incredibly smooth texture by using Indian chickpea flour (*chana besan* or *gram* flour), which is easy to find in Indian grocery stores, and even Asian groceries in general – for example, I’ve bought it from a Vietnamese grocery in Antibes and a Philippine market in Cannes! If you use classic Mediterranean chickpea flour, you will end up with something very like the Provençal specialty *panisse*. Very similar to Burmese tofu, *panisses* have a much grainier and less supple texture – more “rustic,” so to speak.

🕒 prep **5 min** (+ soak **2–12 hr**) 🕒 cook **15 min** 🌱 **vegan**

Makes about 21 oz tofu (4–5 portions)

- 1 cup extra-fine Indian chickpea flour • $2\frac{2}{3}$ cups water • $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- 1 pinch ground turmeric

In a mixing bowl, combine the chickpea flour with $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups of water. Whisk or blend if there are any lumps. Pass through a sieve covered with cheesecloth to get an extra-fine consistency. If the flour is fine, this operation will be very quick. Squeeze the cheesecloth to collect all the juice. Add the salt and turmeric, blend, and let stand for 2–12 hours. Sediment will form at the bottom of the bowl.

In a cast-iron wok or casserole pan over medium heat, heat $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups of water. Meanwhile, stir the flour mixture to incorporate the sediment and get a kind of pancake batter. When the water simmers, pour the mixture into it and mix vigorously and continuously with a wooden spatula. After about 8 minutes, your arms will hurt, but the dough will suddenly start to thicken. Continue cooking and keep stirring. When the dough is almost too thick to be pourable, it is ready.

Pour it as quickly as possible into a heatproof glass or ceramic mold – a small rectangular baking dish or gratin dish is ideal. Smooth the surface with wet fingers. Let cool to room temperature, then place in the refrigerator for a few hours.

Unmold the tofu by turning placing a plate on top and turning over the mold and plate together. If it does not come out immediately, you can run the wet blade of a knife along the sides of the dish. Store the tofu on a plate in the refrigerator, wrapped in paper towels or a clean cloth. It will release water over time and become firmer, which is ideal for cooking. I recommend elsewhere to let it drain like this for at least 1 hour before using it in any recipe.

BURMESE TOFU & NOODLE SALAD

(Hsan tohpu thohk)

This salad from the Shan State is a more complete and substantial dish than the basic Burmese tofu salad because it contains rice noodles. Apart from that, we find the same typical flavors – tangy, sweet, salty – and a delightful mixture of textures. This recipe never disappoints and can be arranged to suit anyone's taste. A treat at any time of day, from breakfast to dinner.

🕒 prep **15 min** 🌱 **vegan** 👤 **4 servings**

- 14 oz Burmese tofu (see page 253) • 14 oz rice vermicelli • Boiling water, as needed
- 4 tsp brown sugar • 4 tsp water • 8 tsp peanut oil
- 2 tsp ground turmeric • 4 tsp tamarind juice
- 8 tsp soy sauce • 3 Tbsp crushed peanuts
- 3 Tbsp crushed white sesame • 4 Tbsp minced cilantro • 4 tsp fried garlic

Cut the Burmese tofu into irregular strips about 1½–2 inches long and ¼–½ inch thick. Place the rice vermicelli in a heatproof container and cover it with boiling water. Stir from time to time until the noodles soften. After a few minutes, they should be cooked but not mushy; taste to check, then drain and rinse with cold water, shaking them in the colander.

Meanwhile, make a brown sugar syrup by briefly heating the sugar and water in a small saucepan over low heat until the sugar is completely dissolved. Let cool. Prepare a turmeric oil by very briefly heating the peanut oil in a small saucepan over low heat with the turmeric until the oil has a uniform color.

In 4 bowls or soup plates, divide the tofu strips, rice vermicelli, sugar syrup, turmeric oil, tamarind juice and soy sauce, then nicely arrange all the rest of the herbs and condiments. Everyone should mix their bowl of salad before devouring it.



BURMESE TOFU SALAD

(Tohpu thokh)

This delicious salad is sold all over Burma, prepared quickly in street stands. It is very colorful and perfectly representative of Burmese taste: it includes yellow tofu – rich, pleasantly smooth, and not bland at all – as well as crunchy raw cabbage and fresh cilantro in a slightly spicy, tangy, sweet salty sauce, finished with turmeric oil. Fried shallots are essential and give it crispness and character. The cabbage is not always involved, but it would be a shame to skip it, both for taste and texture.

🕒 prep 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb Burmese tofu (see page 253) • 4 tsp brown sugar • 4 tsp water • 3 Tbsp peanut oil
- 2 tsp ground turmeric • 4 tsp chickpea flour • 4 oz sweet cabbage, thinly shredded
- 4 Tbsp minced cilantro • 2 tsp red chili flakes • 8 tsp soy sauce
- 4 tsp tamarind juice or lime juice • 4 Tbsp fried shallots

Cut the Burmese tofu into irregular strips about 1½–2 inches long by ¼–½ inch thick.

Make a brown sugar syrup by briefly heating the sugar and water in a small saucepan over low heat until the sugar is completely dissolved. Let cool. Prepare a turmeric oil by very briefly heating the oil in a small saucepan over low heat with the turmeric until the oil has a uniform color. Let cool. Quickly toast the chickpea flour in a dry pan over medium heat, stirring so that it colors without burning.

Mix the tofu strips with the shredded cabbage, cilantro, chili flakes (skip these if you don't like it spicy), soy sauce, brown sugar syrup, tamarind or lime juice, turmeric oil, toasted chickpea flour, and fried shallots. Divide among 4 bowls or soup plates.

You can prepare a little more of each of the condiments and serve them at the table so diners can adjust the seasoning of their salads to their taste.



BURMESE TOFU CURRY

(Tohpu gyet)

A Burmese breakfast favorite, this very quick curry is quite simple but rich in flavor. Not a cacophony of various spices, but just a few easy-to-find fresh ingredients are enough to quickly make a healthy and nutritious dish that will appeal to as many people as possible. The amount of chili can obviously be adjusted according to individual preferences. Serve with basmati or jasmine rice. Guaranteed success! And for food lovers who don't mind an extra step, the tofu can be panfried before being added to the curry.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 3 shallots • 3 cloves garlic • 2 tsp minced root ginger
- 6 Roma tomatoes • A few sprigs of cilantro • 2 green onions
- 1 green chile • 1 lb Burmese tofu (see page 253)
- 1 tsp chile powder • 1 tsp ground turmeric • Peanut oil
- Salt • Sugar, if needed • Steamed rice, for serving

Finely chop the shallots, garlic, and ginger. Dice the tomatoes. Cut the tofu into rectangles or squares about 1½ inches square, ½ inch thick. Coarsely chop the cilantro, including the stems, and chop the green onion and chile.

Heat a wok or large frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Sweat the shallots until they are translucent, stirring almost all the time. Add the garlic, ginger, the white part of the green onions, the chile powder, and the turmeric, and stir-fry for a few more minutes, continuing to mix and toss.

Add the tomatoes and green chile, season with salt, mix well and continue stir-frying in the same way for a few minutes. Taste: if the tomatoes seem too acidic, you can add a little sugar. Add the tofu and cook for about 2 minutes more, stirring. Taste and adjust the seasoning if needed. Serve the curry with rice, sprinkled with cilantro and the green part of the green onions.

Note I recommend Roma tomatoes for this recipe, as they are similar to the varieties used in Burma.



FRIED TOFU, BURMESE STYLE

(Tohpu gyaw)

Anyone who likes fried *panisses* will be absolutely crazy about fried Burmese tofu. The crispy crust contrasts even more with the light and silky interior, with its characteristic taste of butter and hazelnut. It's hard not to buy a truckload of them when you pass a stand on a Burmese street. But you have to elbow your way in, the fans are legion...and it's not hard to see why.

🕒 prep 2 min + (soak 1–12 hr) 🕒 cook 10–20 min 🌱 vegan

For 12 pieces

- 14 oz Burmese tofu (see page 253) • 2 tsp sugar • 2 Tbsp water
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 red chile, thinly sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced • 2 Tbsp tamarind juice or citrus juice
- 2 Tbsp minced cilantro (optional) • Oil for deep-frying

For best results, you need a very firm tofu. Wrap your block of tofu in several layers of paper towel and place it on a plate, weighted down with another plate. Leave it in the fridge for at least 1 hour and up to overnight or even 24 hours.

You can prepare the sauce in advance: heat the sugar with the water in a small saucepan until it is dissolved. Mix it with soy sauce, chile, garlic, tamarind juice, and cilantro. If you don't like chile, don't use it; ditto with cilantro. You can, optionally, replace the tamarind with lime or lemon juice.

Cut your tofu into rectangles 3½–4 inches long by 1–1½ inches wide and about ¾ inch thick. In the middle of each rectangle, make a notch or two about 2 inches long. Place the tofu rectangles on paper towels and gently blot them with another sheet to remove excess moisture.

Heat 1¼ inch of oil in a large sauté pan or wok to about 350°F. Add half of the tofu rectangles and fry on each side for about 2 minutes, until they are golden brown. Place on a wire rack and repeat to fry the rest of the tofu. Serve hot and eat with your fingers, dipped in the sauce.



BURMESE TWICE-FRIED TOFU

(Hnapyan gyaw)

This very crispy fried tofu is the perfect accompaniment to an aperitif. Admittedly, it is not the most diet-conscious, but boy is it good! Accompanied with a tangy and spicy sauce, these little golden triangles go down very easily. Be careful, however, not to gobble down too many – they are quite dense – or you won't have room for the rest of the meal.

🕒 prep 2 min (+ soak 1–12 hr) 🕒 cook 10–20 min 🌱 vegan

For 15–20 triangles

- 14 oz Burmese tofu (see page 253) • 2 tsp sugar • 2 Tbsp water
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce • 1 red chile, thinly sliced • 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp tamarind juice or citrus juice • 2 Tbsp minced cilantro (optional) • Oil for deep-frying

For best results, you need a very firm tofu. Wrap your block of tofu in several layers of paper towel and place it on a plate, weighted down with another plate. Leave it in the fridge for at least 1 hour and up to overnight or even 24 hours.

You can prepare the sauce in advance: heat the sugar with the water in a small saucepan until it is dissolved. Mix it with soy sauce, chile, garlic, tamarind juice, and cilantro. If you don't like chile, don't use it; ditto with cilantro. You can, optionally, replace the tamarind with lime or lemon juice.

Cut the pressed tofu into 1- to 1½-inch triangles about ½ inch thick. Place the triangles on paper towels and gently blot them with another sheet to remove excess moisture.

Heat 1¼ inches of oil in a large frying pan or wok to around 340°F for relatively slow frying. Place half of the triangles in the oil and let them fry for about 2 minutes on each side, until they are golden. They should not brown. If they do, the oil is too hot.

Drain the triangles on paper towels and place them on a rack. Repeat to fry the rest of the triangles. When they are ready, fry the first half a second time in the same way. Again, the tofu should color nicely and become crisp without browning. Do the same with the rest of the tofu. Serve hot and eat with your fingers, dipped in the sauce.



SHAN NOODLES WITH WARM TOFU CREAM

(Tohpu nwe)

They do gladly eat this dish for breakfast in the Shan State – it makes a great start to the day – but it's not the sort of venture you begin the minute you wake up. It is not very complicated to make, but a little time-consuming, and it's best to be wide awake for it. So, tackle it for a weekend brunch, lunch, or dinner, and you will not regret it: it is a wonderful dish. There are so many textures, from meltingly soft to the crunchy, so many flavors, from sweet to salty, it's fabulously comforting without being heavy, it sticks to the ribs but it's also digestible.... Absolutely worth a try.

🕒 prep 20 min (+ soak 2 hr) 🍳 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1½ cups extra-fine Indian chickpea flour (*chana besan* or *gram* flour) • ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric • 3 shallots • 3 cloves garlic • 2 tsp minced root ginger
- 4 Roma tomatoes • 14 oz rice vermicelli (or thin, flat rice noodles) • Boiling water, as needed
- 4 tsp brown sugar • 4 tsp water • 4 Tbsp fried shallots or 4 tsp fried garlic
- 1 tsp ground paprika • 4 tsp crushed toasted sesame seeds • 4 tsp crushed toasted peanuts
- 4 pinches red chile flakes • 4 Tbsp soy sauce • 4 Tbsp mustard pickles, thinly sliced
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced • 1 lime • Peanut oil • Salt

In a mixing bowl, combine the chickpea flour with 2 cups of water. Whisk or blend if there are any lumps. Add the salt and turmeric, blend, and let stand for 2 hours. Sediment will form at the bottom of the bowl.

Finely chop the shallots, garlic, and ginger. Dice the tomatoes. Place the rice vermicelli in a heatproof container and cover with boiling water. Stir them from time to time until they soften. After a few minutes, they should be cooked but not mushy; taste to check, then drain and rinse with cold water, shaking them in the colander. Divide them among 4 large bowls or soup plates, and set aside.

(continued)



Make a brown sugar syrup by briefly heating the sugar and water in a small saucepan over low heat until the sugar is completely dissolved. Set aside.

In a wok or large frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little peanut oil. Sweat the shallots until they are translucent, stirring almost continuously. Add the garlic, ginger, paprika, and turmeric, and stir-fry for a few moments. Add the tomatoes and salt and continue tossing and stirring for a few moments. Remove from the heat, cover to keep warm, and set aside.

In a cast-iron wok or casserole pan over medium heat, pour in half the chickpea flour batter without mixing it first. Stir vigorously and continuously with a wooden spatula while it heats. When it begins to thicken, stir the rest of the batter in the bowl to loosen the sediment that has formed at the bottom. Add the remaining batter and continue to stir for a few moments. When it has a nice consistency of heavy cream, immediately pour it over the noodles in each of the bowls.

Quickly top with the tomato mixture and all other ingredients: sesame seeds, peanuts, chile flakes, brown sugar syrup, soy sauce, green onion, fried shallots, mustard pickles, and a dash of lime juice per bowl. Serve at once. Everyone will mix the contents of their bowl while the tofu is warm and still creamy. It will coat the noodles deliciously and bind all the ingredients. The longer you wait, the more it will stiffen up. It's good that way too, but much better warm.

Notes Mustard pickles are found in Chinese and Vietnamese groceries; they are sold in brine in bags.

You can add a few vegetables to add more crunch to this dish: raw mung bean sprouts or shredded sweet green cabbage, some blanched bok choy leaves...

BURMESE TOFU CRACKERS

(Tohpu gyauk kyaw)

Watch out! Here's the snack to end all snacks: Burmese tofu, made into puffed crackers or chips. Honestly, if you don't like them, that's because you don't like life. You can buy these little snacks at street stands in Burma, or eat them at a table in tea shops. They have the advantage of being very good cold, and can therefore theoretically be kept on hand, but do not expect to keep them long. You'll eat them all. And then you will start again, and you will eat them all again.

🕒 prep 10 min (+ optional drying 12 hr) 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 large bowl of crackers

- 10 oz Burmese tofu (see page 253) • 2 tsp sugar • 2 Tbsp water • 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 red chile, thinly sliced • 1 clove garlic, minced • 2 Tbsp tamarind juice or citrus juice
- 2 Tbsp minced cilantro (optional) • Oil for deep-frying

For best results, you need a very firm tofu. Wrap your block of tofu in several layers of paper towel and place it on a plate, weighted down with another plate. Leave it in the fridge for at least 1 hour and up to overnight or even 24 hours.

Cut the tofu into slices, as thinly as possible. If you want to make ultra-crisp and lightly puffed crackers, place the tofu slices on a wire rack and let them dry in the sun or near a heater until they are completely dry, about 12 hours. They will curl nicely. If you want to make chips, skip this step.

You can prepare the sauce in advance: heat the sugar with the water in a small saucepan until it dissolves. Stir in the soy sauce, chile, garlic, tamarind juice, and cilantro. If you don't like chili, don't use it; ditto with cilantro. You can, optionally, replace the tamarind with lime or lemon juice.

Heat oil for deep-frying to 340–350°F and fry your tofu slices, dried or not, like chips. Do this in several batches to prevent crowding, and keep a sharp eye out: it goes very quickly – it only takes about 30 seconds. When the tofu is nicely browned and crisp (for the chips), or well puffed, golden, and crispy (for the crackers), use a skimmer to scoop it out of the oil and let drain on paper towels or a wire rack. Serve with the sauce alongside, and dip the chips in them before gobbling them up.



A pink rectangular area with a repeating floral pattern of small flowers and leaves, set against a black background with a larger floral pattern.

India

टोफू
लोअंप

SO MANY PEAS, BUT NO SOYBEANS

China and India may share a border, but their cultures are decidedly different. South Asia produces huge amounts of legumes – chickpeas, lentils, and more – but became interested in soybeans only very recently. While soybeans were probably introduced to India around 1,000 years ago and adopted on a small scale by a few northern populations, the country really started producing soybeans only about 40 years ago. Until recently, therefore, there was no tofu in South Asia. It was found, of course, in Chinese communities, but it did not break out – just like in Europe.

In the 1970s, things changed. Seeing the potential of soybeans – this “miraculous” legume, according to farmers in the United States – India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal started growing it in large quantities. Their goal was to use it to resolve the food crisis of their poorest populations. However, they had to find uses for these unknown beans that appealed to the public. What seemed most promising to them at first was soy milk, which they intended to use to enrich the diet of babies and children. New soy products targeting the large vegetarian and vegan populations in South Asia were also developed, but their popularity only spread among the most wealthy and educated classes.

While South Asians saw the potential of soybean oil, soybean flour, and soy milk, they struggled with tofu. Soybean curd posed two major problems: it could not compete with paneer, fresh cheese made from cow’s or buffalo’s milk, since these two foods were very similar, but tofu seemed almost blasphemous to Indians. There was something insulting about the claim that tofu could replace a precious product made from sacred animals.

“SOY PANEER”

For the past thirty years, tofu, or “soy paneer” as it is often called, has been presented as the vegetable alternative to cow’s milk cheese. In many recipes, it is a perfect substitute: they are the same color, have similar consistency and flavors, can be cut into cubes.... The Western desire to make tofu a substitute for meat, and in particular in steak, seems much more far-fetched.

Tofu production will probably never outpace that of paneer in South Asia, but this alternative has its advantages and potential for development. Soybean cultivation is easier and more profitable than cattle farming, and the transport of soybeans is less constrained than that of milk. In just a few decades, India has become the world’s fifth largest producer of soybeans. For the time being, tofu is mainly produced for an affluent urban clientele; the main selling points are the 100 percent plant-based aspect of the product, health, and thinness, tofu being much less fatty than paneer. Soybeans, which were envisioned in South Asia as a solution to provide much-needed calories for the poor, have become a weight loss solution for the rich.

Tofu is found more and more often in place of paneer in mass-distributed food products. Many curries sold in India for reheating in the microwave now contain tofu. As elsewhere, we can assume that the growth of the South Asian tofu market will continue in the years to come. On the following pages you will find some delicious recipes that substitute tofu for paneer, such as those offered by a growing number of Indian bloggers and culinary authors.



In India, tofu is increasingly replacing paneer made from milk.

SPICED TOFU PAKORA

(Tofu pakora)

Pakora is a delicious fritter that can be found under various names across the Indian subcontinent. They usually have vegetables encased with a chickpea dough, but can also be found with paneer filling. Tofu replaces this fresh cheese to perfection in this recipe, which is by no means bland, boring, or austere: on the contrary, it is festive, delicious, and rich in spice – without setting your mouth on fire. Serve with a green chutney.

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 7 oz flexible medium to firm tofu or firm to extra-firm tofu
 - Oil for deep-frying
- Pakora batter**
 - ½ cup + 1 Tbsp Indian chickpea flour (*chana besan* or *gram flour*) • ½ tsp chile powder
 - ¼ tsp ground turmeric • 1 tsp puréed root ginger
 - 1 tsp garlic purée • 1 Tbsp hot oil
 - 2 Tbsp minced cilantro • 1 pinch baking powder • 1 pinch salt
- Spiced tofu seasoning**
 - ¼ tsp ajwain seeds • ½ tsp chile powder • ½ tsp garam masala
 - ¼ tsp ground cumin • ¼ tsp ground coriander
 - ½ tsp dried mango powder (*amchur*) • ¼ tsp ground turmeric
 - ½ tsp *chaat masala* • Salt

In a large bowl, combine all the ingredients for the batter. Add 5¼ cups of water and mix until you get a homogeneous mixture. Set aside.

In a small bowl, combine the ingredients for the spiced tofu seasoning.

Cut the tofu into 1-inch cubes or rectangles, blot dry with paper towels, and mix them gently with the spiced tofu seasoning. You can also lay the tofu cubes flat and sprinkle them on all sides if you are afraid of breaking them.

Heat oil for deep-frying to about 350°F. Dip each spiced tofu cube in the batter and drop it in the oil. Do this in batches without crowding, and let the fritters fry until browned on all sides. Let them drain on a rack or paper towels. Serve warm.

TOFU CURRY WITH BELL PEPPERS

(Kadai tofu)

Curries can be rather dry or more saucy; this one is on the dry side. It is close enough to its model, *kadai paneer*, that the two could be confused – except that this unorthodox version is vegan. Rich with juicy peppers, onions, and tomatoes, it doesn't require such an insane variety of spices as some other Indian recipes – and all the ingredients in it are extremely easy to find pretty much everywhere. You can, of course, adjust the amount of chile for a less spicy version.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 25 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1½ Tbsp coriander seeds • 2–3 dried red chiles • 14 oz crushed tomatoes (fresh or canned)
 - 1 large red onion, minced • 1 tsp puréed root ginger • 1 tsp puréed garlic
- 1 large green bell pepper, julienned • 1 green chile, split • ½ tsp garam masala
- 12 oz firm to extra-firm tofu, cubed • 2 Tbsp cilantro leaves, minced • Vegetable oil • Salt
 - Steamed basmati rice, naan, and/or roti, for serving

Mash or blend the coriander seeds and the dried chiles until you get a coarse powder. Mix in the crushed tomatoes. Set aside.

In a frying pan or sauté pan over medium heat, heat a little oil. Sweat the onions until they are translucent. Add the ginger and garlic purées and brown them for a few moments, stirring, then add the spiced tomatoes. Fry, stirring, until the mixture looks like a paste and the oil begins to separate.

Add the bell pepper and continue cooking for 3–4 minutes, then add the green chile and about ½ cup of water. Mix well. When the bell pepper is halfway cooked, add some salt and the garam masala. Stir in the tofu. Cook for about 2 minutes more, then remove from heat and add the minced cilantro. Serve with basmati rice, naan, and/or roti.

VEGETARIAN BUTTER CHICKEN

(Tofu makhani)

The original version of this Punjabi dish, called *murgh makhani*, is better known as “butter chicken” outside of India. This is the Indian curry that everyone loves: its rich, creamy sauce is very mild, and appeals to both adults and children. Its looks might deceive you: it is mouthwateringly gorgeous, but surprisingly easy to make. Here is a vegetarian version based on *paneer makhani*, but with tofu as a cheese substitute.

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 25 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

For the sauce base

- 1 Tbsp butter • ¼ tsp cumin seeds • ½ tsp puréed root ginger
- ½ tsp puréed garlic • 1 large red onion
- 6 large cashew nuts (or 10 medium) • 1 tomato, diced • 1 green chile, minced (optional) • Salt

For the rest

- 2 Tbsp butter • ½ tsp cumin seeds • 2 cardamom pods • 2 or 3 cloves
- 2 bay leaves • ½ tsp puréed garlic • ½ tsp puréed root ginger
- 10 oz tomato purée • 1 tsp red chile powder • ½ tsp ground turmeric • 1 tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp ground coriander • 12 oz firm to extra-firm tofu, cubed • ¼ cup cream
- A few cilantro leaves • Salt • Steamed basmati rice, naan, and/or roti, for serving

Start with the sauce base: in a frying pan or casserole pan over medium heat, melt the butter. Sauté the cumin seeds and the ginger and garlic purées. Add the onion and cashews and brown. Add the tomato and green chile and continue cooking until the tomato is tender. Remove from the heat, let cool, stir to get a smooth paste, and set aside.

In the same pan, melt the butter and add the cumin, cardamom, cloves, and bay leaf, then the garlic and ginger purées. Sauté for 1–2 minutes, stirring, then add the sauce base and the tomato purée and mix well, cooking for 2 more minutes. Add the chile powder, turmeric, garam masala, ground coriander, and salt to taste and cook for a few more minutes, stirring. Pour about ¼ cup of water into the mixture to get a nice consistency of a slightly-too-runny sauce. Mix well, bring briefly to a boil, then add the tofu and cream and cook for another 3–4 minutes.

Serve sprinkled with cilantro leaves – you can also add a dash of cream – with basmati rice, naan, and/or roti.



TOFU & SPINACH CURRY

(Palak tofu)

As unavoidable as chicken tikka masala in Indian restaurants in Europe or Stateside, *palak paneer*, or puréed spinach with fresh cheese, is a refuge for vegetarians. Only guess what: the restaurant version we are served is quite remote from the original, which is very spicy as it is full of fresh green chiles. Add them or don't, according to your preferences. I have, of course, replaced the paneer with tofu, making it a vegan dish.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 large bunch spinach • 3 green chiles (or more, or less) • 1 tomato, peeled • 2 sprigs cilantro
- 12 oz firm to extra-firm tofu, cubed • 1 onion, thinly sliced • ½ tsp puréed root ginger
- ½ tsp puréed garlic • ½ tsp ground cumin • ½ tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp ground turmeric • Vegetable oil • Salt
- Steamed basmati rice and/or Indian breads, for serving

Rinse your spinach well. In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat 2 tablespoons of oil, add the green chiles, and sauté for 1 minute. Add the spinach, reduce the heat to medium-low, and stir and cook until completely wilted. Let cool, and then use a food processor to blend the spinach, tomato, and cilantro sprigs until you get a fairly smooth paste. Add a little water if needed.

Blot the tofu cubes dry with paper towels. In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the tofu cubes on all sides, then remove from the pan and set aside. Add more oil if needed and sweat the onion until it is translucent. Add the ginger and garlic purées, mix well, and cook for 1 minute. Add the ground cumin and coriander, and let cook for 1 minute more while mixing.

Add the spinach purée, turmeric, and salt to taste and mix well. Add a little water and cook, covered, for 4–5 minutes over low heat. Add the tofu cubes and mix to coat them with sauce. Cover again and cook for a few minutes, until you get a thick sauce. Serve hot with basmati rice and/or naan, roti, paratha...



TOFU CURRY

WITH GREEN PEAS

(Matar tofu)

Matar paneer, a curry of fresh cheese with peas, is, like *palak paneer* (with spinach), a typical safety dish for vegetarians in Indian restaurants. You can make dry or more saucy versions; it is rich in a very creamy sauce. Here, the paneer has been replaced with tofu and the recipe does not contain cream, making a vegan dish, but you can always add a few spoonfuls at the end of cooking for an even more delectable curry. It will still be vegetarian, along the same lines as tofu *makhani* (see page 274).

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 25 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

For the sauce base

- 1 tsp minced root ginger • 3 cloves garlic, minced • 1 large onion, minced
- 2 large tomatoes, diced • ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- 6 large cashew nuts (or 10 medium) • A few cilantro leaves • Vegetable oil • Salt

For the rest

- 1 small cinnamon stick • 2 cardamom pods • 1 small bay leaf • 1 tsp chile powder
- 1 tsp garam masala • ½ tsp ground coriander • 5 oz peas, blanched fresh or frozen
- 10 oz firm to extra-firm tofu, cubed • Vegetable oil • Salt
- Steamed basmati rice and/or Indian breads, for serving

Start with the sauce base: in a casserole pan or sauté pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Sauté the ginger and garlic for 1 minute. Add the onions and sauté them until they start to brown. Add the tomatoes, turmeric, and salt to taste; sauté for 2–3 minutes, then lower the heat, cover, and cook until the tomatoes are tender. Add the cashews, remove from the heat, let cool, and then mix everything thoroughly. Set aside.

In the same casserole pan, sauté the cinnamon, cardamom, and bay leaf in a little oil. Add the sauce base, chile powder, garam masala, and ground coriander, and sauté, mixing until the oil separates from the sauce. Add the peas and 1 cup of water; mix well to get a nice loose sauce. Add a little more water if needed. Simmer to thicken, stirring constantly. Season with salt to taste. Add the tofu, cook for 2 minutes, covered, and serve with basmati rice or Indian breads.



BLACK PEPPER TOFU CURRY

(Tofu kalimirch)

This recipe is little known outside India, although it's pretty great – at least, if you like pepper. That is the dominant spice in this well-spiced curry. Pepper has the advantage of waking up paneer, and it does the same for tofu. Thrills guaranteed! You can adjust the amount of pepper according to your tolerance and preferences.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

Roasting spice blend

- ¼ tsp fennel seeds • ¼ tsp cumin seeds
- 2 cloves • 1 star anise pod • 1 cardamom pod
- 1 small cinnamon stick • 1 bay leaf

For the rest

- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced • 1 tsp minced root ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed • 1 green chile, split • ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- 1 Tbsp coarsely ground pepper • 1 small tomato, puréed
- 12 oz firm to extra-firm tofu, cubed • A few cilantro leaves, thinly sliced
- Vegetable oil • Salt • Steamed basmati rice and/or Indian breads, for serving

In a dry small frying pan, roast the spice blend, then grind it in a mortar or spice grinder. Set aside.

In a sauté pan or casserole pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the onions until golden. Add the ginger, garlic, and green chile, and sauté for a few moments. Add the turmeric, roasted and ground spice mixture, half of the black pepper, and salt to taste, and sauté for a few minutes.

Add the tomato purée, mix well, cook for a few moments, then add the tofu cubes. Let them simmer for about 5 minutes, turning them regularly so that they brown on all sides. When the tofu is coated with spices, add the rest of the pepper, mix, and garnish with cilantro leaves. Serve hot with basmati rice or Indian breads.

TOFU TIKKA MASALA

Chicken tikka masala, darling of Indian restaurants worldwide, has uncertain origins. It may have been invented in Britain in the 1960s by a Bangladeshi or Pakistani cook. There is not one recipe, but thousands of variations; their only common point is generally to contain chicken tikka. Here is a vegetarian version of this dish, using tikka tofu instead of chicken.

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 tsp cumin seeds • 1 large red onion, minced
- 1½ tsp puréed garlic • 1½ tsp puréed root ginger
- 3 tomatoes, diced • 1 tomato, puréed • 1 tsp chile powder or ground paprika
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric • 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cumin • A few cilantro leaves, minced
- 1 tsp garam masala • 10 oz tofu tikka (see page 282) • Vegetable oil
- Salt • Steamed basmati rice and/or Indian breads, for serving

In a sauté pan or casserole pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Sauté the cumin seeds, then add the onion and sauté until golden. Add the garlic and ginger purées, and sauté for another minute.

Add the diced tomatoes and a pinch of salt, lower the heat, and cook, covered, until the tomatoes are tender. Add the tomato purée, chile powder, turmeric, coriander, cumin, and ½ cup of water; mix, cover, and cook for about 4 minutes, until oil separates from the sauce.

Add the cilantro leaves and garam masala and cook for a few more minutes, then add the tofu, mix well, and let heat through for a few moments. Serve with basmati rice or Indian breads.

Note For the smooth and creamy sauce served in restaurants, add a little cream to the curry and stir it on before adding the pieces of tofu.

TOFU

TIKKA

Chicken tikka is undoubtedly the Indian recipe that is most integrated into worldwide eating habits. These pieces of marinated and skewered meat can be replaced by paneer for vegetarians, and paneer can be replaced by tofu, without anyone being the wiser. There are an infinite number of variations on this recipe; here is a general version for everyone, grilled in the oven.

🕒 prep 15 min (+ marinate 2 hr) 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 red bell pepper • 1 green bell pepper • 1 red onion • 10 oz firm to extra-firm tofu, cubed
- 8 oz Greek yogurt • ¼ cup Indian chickpea flour (*chana besan* or *gram flour*)
- 1 tsp puréed root ginger • 1 tsp puréed garlic • 1 tsp ajwain seeds
 - 1–3 tsp chile powder • ½ tsp ground turmeric
 - 1½ tsp ground coriander • 1½ tsp ground cumin
 - ½ tsp garam masala • 1½ tsp dried mango powder (*amchur*)
- 1½ tsp *chaat masala* • 1½ Tbsp oil • 1 lemon or lime • Salt • Mint chutney or sauce of choice

Cut the bell peppers and half of the onion into squares the same size as the tofu cubes. Reserve the rest of the onion. Mix the yogurt, chickpea flour, and all the aromatics and spices in a bowl. Add the tofu and vegetable squares to the marinade. Mix well using your hands. Let marinate for at least 2 hours in the refrigerator.

Take the mixture out of the fridge and let come to room temperature, then arrange the vegetables and tofu on skewers. Preheat the oven to 425–450°F – you can also choose to use the broiler or grill.

Place the skewers on a broiler pan or grill rack and brush with oil. Let them cook for 15–20 minutes, turning them halfway through cooking so that all the sides are golden brown.

Serve the vegetables and tofu with freshly squeezed lemon, the rest of the thinly sliced raw onion, and a mint chutney or sauce of your choice. You can also use this tofu to make tikka masala tofu (see page 281).







Elsewhere



AN ANCIENT ENCOUNTER

Europeans encountered tofu very early on. Since the sixteenth century, they saw this product – which they often qualified as “cheese” – during travels in Asia. Those who tasted it were pleasantly surprised. Italian traveler Domingo Navarrete reported in 1665 during his stay in China: “It is eaten raw, but more often boiled and garnished with herbs, fish, and other things. Eaten on its own, it is tasteless, but very good embellished as described, and excellent fried in butter. There is also dried and smoked [tofu], or tofu mixed with caraway seeds, which is best of all. [...] If I am not mistaken, the Chinese in Manila make it, but no European eats it because they have never tasted it...” Here is the rub. Aside from a few curious explorers, most Europeans who settled in Asia, in trading posts, colonies,

and the like, had no desire to become familiar with tofu.

The Western reception of tofu has been chilly, and we have continued to snub tofu for several centuries. Several attempts to present this product to French, British, and other audiences were generally unsuccessful. It was not until the end of the twentieth century that tofu really began to establish itself in Western markets. The taste for Far Eastern cuisines and vegetarian dishes has enabled tofu to be taken a little more seriously, even if it still suffers from a bad image. Some see it as an immutable, tasteless white block with nothing to teach us in the kitchen; it is often reserved for vegetarians, implying that the only reason to eat tofu is because you're forced to do so by a specific diet.

A VEGETARIAN PRODUCT

It was with the hippie revolution that the vegetarian movement began in the West. The latter has been more successful in the United States and Britain than in my native France. For us, it was still difficult to find vegetarian options in restaurants even a short time ago. And despite the presence of Asian communities, especially in Paris, tofu has remained an unusual food. It didn't really catch on outside of these communities; some vegetarians consumed it, marginally, but the general public certainly did not want to eat it – at least those who knew of its existence. Until the late 1990s, there were few organic and health food stores, and few Asian grocery stores and restaurants. Tofu was not everywhere; far from it. And the one we sold in French shops was pretty bad, creating a lasting image of an inedible product.

Quite suddenly, in the early 2000s, tofu became much more common. The craze for Japanese cuisine in France made it known thanks to one dish in particular: miso soup with wakame and tofu. It is certainly not the most interesting use of tofu, but this soup became so popular and common in France that it has had the credit of making this ingredient known to the masses. At the same time, the number of vegetarians and vegans exploded, as did the market for organic and health food. Today, tofu is easily found everywhere, but not everyone eats it, and few people know what to do with it. It is still, for a large part of the population, “a vegetarian thing” that one mainly uses as a substitute for meat, instead of taking proper advantage of its innate characteristics. This is a mistake: it is the best way to be frustrated while eating tofu, and never learning its value in the kitchen. Tofu can be a source of joy, even for inveterate carnivores – I have seen them amazed and ecstatic while trying an *agedashi tōfu* (see page 114), or a *shēng cài bāo* (see page 52)...

In carrying out a small survey just among people around me, I realized that in France, tofu was even more closely associated with meatless diets than in Asia. It is still rare here that it is served in restaurants that don't specialize in Asian or “Asiatic” cuisines. But the fact that it is widely present in numerous organic markets and ordinary supermarkets has finally given it an image as a French product. Many people who consume tofu in France do not even think of going to Asian grocery stores to buy it.

GOOD TOFUS?

The quality of tofu available in France is better than it used to be, at least as far as firm tofu is concerned. The selection is much wider than it was twenty or even ten years ago, bringing a greater diversity of products and pushing quality up. Prices have come down. Nowadays, there is no longer any reason to make tofu at home, except for pleasure. As an activity it can be fun, but it takes time and space and is definitely not profitable. It's a little like making your own bread: you can do it if you like, but it will require a lot of effort for a result that may not be equivalent to the products made by professionals. Some specific tofus, on the other hand, are not easily found, especially outside large cities. Tofu pudding and Japanese-style silken tofu, for example, are much more difficult to find than firm tofu, so there are good reasons to want to make them yourself.

Although we find some very well-made tofus in regular shops today, not all are good. Firm tofu should always be sold in the refrigerated section, bathing in its whey inside a tray; unfortunately, you can also find a shelf-stable version. This tofu, which keeps for a very long time without any refrigeration, is as far from the real tofu as is cheese that can be kept for six months out of the fridge. It is generally abnormally rigid, with a strange coarse texture and an

equally suspect color tending towards beige, even light brown. The texture is unpleasant on the palate, the taste is nonexistent at best, unpleasant at worst, and there is not much to do with it in the kitchen.

But that's not surprising, when you think about it: just as you wouldn't expect to find world-class croissants in a supermarket in a random Chinese village, you can't expect to find the best tofu in a Western supermarket. A mass-produced product in a country that doesn't have the generational know-how, the culture, or the raw material to do it properly will never compete with the achievements of small specialized artisans, born into the culture that invented it, with access to the best ingredients available. It's not even the same thing. It's such a different product that you can't compare them. An artisanal tofu in China or Japan and an industrial French tofu are a world apart – literally.

TOFU TYPES & USES

Most US supermarkets will carry at least one or two types of tofu, usually Chinese-style block tofu and Japanese-style silken tofu. Block tofu will be found in refrigerated cases near the produce or dairy, while silken tofu is more likely found in the Asian foods aisle. Although tofu is made from cooked soybeans and is pasteurized before sale, “raw” tofu should be kept refrigerated for freshness. Many stores also offer marinated cooked tofu.

Towns and cities with an Asian population will have supermarkets and Asian markets with much wider options: seasoned or flavored tofu, tofu skins and sheets, tofu noodles, ready-fried tofu in cubes or slabs, pressed and baked slices of tofu, and so on. Small jars of fermented tofu are also available, usually in red or white varieties, which are used more as a condiment thanks to their intense flavors.

Since tofu is so widely seen as a meat substitute in the West, our markets will also carry an array of soy-based “meat substitutes” that are sometimes designed and flavored to look and taste like meat products.

BLOCK TOFU

Block tofu is widely available and familiar. It comes in several textures: soft, medium, firm, and extra-firm.

Soft block tofu has a mild, milky flavor and a delicate texture similar to Jell-O. Pressing it is not recommended, as it is easily crushed. Its texture, so reminiscent of desserts, makes it a good vehicle for sweet flavors. It may be blotted dry and used raw, or puréed, or it can be deep-fried for an interesting texture contrast (think deep-fried ice cream).

Medium tofu is the next step up in firmness. It still has a relatively high water content and visible curds, and will break if handled roughly. Medium tofu is well suited to gentle cooking methods such as braising or baking.

Firm tofu is the basic, standard tofu used in many Western recipes. It is more flexible and holds up better to handling. It can be pressed to drain, sliced, battered or crusted, and will stand up to all kinds of frying, from deep-frying to panfrying or stir-frying. It's also a good choice for baking and boiling.

Extra-firm tofu is compact, with tight curds and a lower water content. It has a chewy texture that works well in hearty savory dishes. When you're hankering for crispy fried tofu, choose extra-firm tofu.

SILKEN TOFU

The next most common form of tofu in the West, silken tofu can also be found in a range of styles. Not as many as in Japan! But it is widely sold in soft, firm, and extra-firm versions.

1



2



3



4



5



The variety of tofu available in the West is immense: silken tofu (1), tofu in sausage form (2), tofu flavored with herbs (3), firm tofu (4), and smoked tofu (5).

Soft silken tofu is droopy and smooth. It's perfect for making dressings, sauces, and smoothies. It may appear in vegan recipes as an egg or yogurt substitute.

Firm or extra-firm silken tofu is firm only in comparison to soft silken tofu. They are made from more concentrated soy milk, and still retain a puddinglike texture. More forgiving than soft silken tofu, they may be handled enough to batter and lightly fry. They also give creamy body to desserts.

FLAVORED TOFU

Five-spice tofu, also known as dry tofu or tofu gan, is a dry, dense tofu that has been coated with seasonings (usually Chinese five-spice blend) and baked, giving its surface a dark brownish-purple color. It requires no prep, working well in dishes where you want a chewy texture and flavorsome taste, like a noodle dish or curry.

Another common extra-firm flavored tofu is smoked tofu, which is wrapped in tea leaves before smoking, giving it a caramel-brown color and evocative flavor. Like dry tofu, it requires no prep and can simply be sliced and tossed into your stir-fry or other preparation.

As interest in tofu grows, we Westerners are seeing more flavored baked tofus appear on the market: teriyaki, sesame ginger, tamarind, and Sriracha, to name a few. My best advice is to taste and see what you prefer!

LACTO-FERMENTED TOFU

From its name, you might think that lacto-fermented tofu has something to do with milk. This is not the case! It simply means tofu that has been fermented with probiotic microorganisms that then produce lactic acid. It's a process akin to making sauerkraut, or cheese. The fermentation adds flavor and supports gut health. However, the cultured tofus that we find here in the West are often a pale reflection of Asian fermented tofu. They do not have a suspicious appearance or a strong smell, and they barely taste different from fresh tofu... Here, these products are often presented as a vegan alternative to cheese, without going any further, and it is recommended to use them as is, in salads.

ABURAAGE & INARI

Inari are sweet- and salty fried tofu pockets, made of deep-fried tofu called *aburaage*. These are cousins of Japanese *atsuage*: the big difference is that *atsuage* is fried as a block and not in thin slices. *Aburaage* and *inari* are both sold pressed flat, and may be cut and stuffed with rice to make a simple style of sushi called *inarizushi*. They also make a nice addition to soups.

TOFU-BASED PRODUCTS

Sausages, steaks, and other meat substitutes that are tofu based are common in organic stores. Since this is the role tofu is often relegated to – that of a substitute, and not an ingredient in its own right – this is not surprising. Some of these products are quite good and original, others are much less successful. In any case, they have little to do with the meat they are supposed to replace, other than their appearance.

ASIAN TOFUS

In Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asian groceries, you will find all the other products described in the corresponding pages of this book. Some have no equivalent among domestic brands – like puffed tofu, flexible tofu, tofu pudding, yuba, and so on. So you have to go seek them out, and it's an opportunity to get to know other types of tofus, other textures, and other pleasures even within the realm of tofus that we already know, such as block tofu and silken tofu. You will see that a firm Vietnamese tofu is not at all the same as its Japanese counterpart. That a Japanese puffed tofu is decidedly different from its Chinese equivalent. All this is great fun and opens up many possibilities in the kitchen. Armed with this book, you should not lack inspiration to accommodate all of these varied products.

TOFU-OLIVE CANAPÉS

To accompany an aperitif, you could just serve olives, or you could do something else with them. This slightly more elaborate preparation hardly takes ten minutes; tofu softens the strong flavors of olives and capers, and gives them a creamy texture, perfect for spreading. You can use green or black olives according to your taste, as well as the bread of your choice.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan

For about 12 pieces

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup pitted green olives • 1 Tbsp capers • 4 oz firm tofu
- 1 Tbsp dried basil • 1 tsp red wine vinegar • 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 12 small slices whole-wheat baguette • 5 pitted green olives, cut into rounds, for garnish

In a food processor, coarsely chop the olives and capers, then add the cubed tofu, half of the dried basil, the vinegar, and the olive oil; blend again, briefly or for longer, depending on your desired texture.

Toast the bread slices and spread them with the olive mixture. Sprinkle with the remaining dried basil, and garnish each with an olive round.



CRISPY DEEP-FRIED TOFU

These little fritters, ideal for serving with an aperitif, will disappear quickly. They aim to please: super crispy on the outside, soft inside, richly flavored, and very tasty; it's hard to stop eating them. Served with sauce that can be more spicy or less so, tangy or sweet, they can also be served as kid's snack, or used to garnish a salad.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 20 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1½ cups oatmeal flakes • 10 oz medium-firm to firm tofu (flexible)
- 1 tsp puréed garlic • 1 tsp puréed root ginger • ½ cup water
- ½ cup chickpea flour • Salt and pepper • Oil for deep-frying
- Lemon juice, ketchup, Sriracha sauce, or other sauce of choice

In a food processor, in batches, coarsely blend the oats. The goal is not to reduce them to a powder, but crushed flakes. Spread on a plate and set aside.

Cut the tofu into rectangles ¾ inch by 1¼ inches. Sprinkle with a little salt and pepper. You can also add ground spices of your choice, if desired.

In a bowl, mix the garlic, ginger, water, and chickpea flour; season with salt to taste. Dip each piece of tofu in this paste, coating generously. Then roll them one by one in the oatmeal.

Heat oil for deep-frying, and in batches to prevent crowding, fry the tofu until golden brown on all sides. Drain on a rack or paper towels, and serve hot or warm with lemon, ketchup, Sriracha, or your favorite sauce.



VEGAN TZATZIKI

Replacing Greek yogurt with blended tofu is super easy, and may even go unnoticed! This simple trick allows you to put together an excellent vegan tzatziki for anyone who consumes no milk.

🕒 prep 15 min (+ salt 30 min) 🌱 vegan

For 1 large bowl

- 1 Lebanese cucumber or ½ cucumber • 2 cloves garlic
- 4 Tbsp olive oil • 1 bunch dill • A few sprigs of mint, leaves picked
- 1 lb medium-firm or tender (flexible) tofu or extra-firm silken tofu
- Juice of 1 lemon • Salt

Scrub or peel your cucumber, slice it in half lengthwise, and scoop out the seeds with a spoon. Coarsely grate it, add ½ teaspoon of salt, and mix by hand. Let drain for at least 30 minutes in the fridge.

Finely chop or grate the garlic and combine it in a bowl with the olive oil steep. Roughly chop the dill. Finely chop the mint leaves.

In a food processor, blend the tofu until quite smooth. If you find its texture too thick compared to that of Greek yogurt, gradually add very small amounts of water, continuing to blend until you find the ideal consistency. Add half of the lemon juice, the garlic olive oil, and the herbs and blend.

Firmly but gently squeeze the grated cucumber over a colander to extract excess moisture. You can also squeeze it in a clean cloth, that's even easier. Add it to the prepared tofu. Season with salt to taste, adjust the flavor with a little lemon juice or oil if needed, and serve chilled.

WHEAT-FREE TABBOULEH

Since tofu is considered an alternative to meat by Westerners, they often use it as a substitute for meat, simply swapping it into a dish to make a vegan version. However, do not hesitate to try something different. For example, leftover minced extra-firm tofu reminded me of crushed bulgur. So even though I don't like to simply consider tofu as a substitute for other things, it did work very well to create a wheat-free tabbouleh, perfect for anyone avoiding gluten.

🕒 prep 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 oz extra-firm tofu • 1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, leaves picked
 - A few mint leaves or ½ tsp dried mint
- 2 spring onions • 2 medium tomatoes, finely diced
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice • 1½–2 Tbsp olive oil • Salt

With a hand chopper (it's really better!), chop the tofu, parsley leaves, and mint leaves. Chop or slice the spring onions. In a deep plate, mix all these ingredients with the tomatoes, lemon juice, olive oil, and salt to taste.

TOFU

WITH CHILLED APPLE-MUSHROOM BROTH

Tofu, especially when tender, is always good in broth – at least that's my opinion. This broth doesn't need to be hot; it can even be iced and the dish can almost play the role of a salad. Silken tofu, smooth and melting, seems right at home in this clear little soup, tangy, slightly sweet, and rich in mushrooms with nicely varied textures and flavors. Serve very fresh as a starter.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1½ cups vegetarian dashi (see miso soup recipe, page 116) or mushroom-soaking water
 - ¾ cup apple juice • 3 Tbsp light soy sauce • ½ bunch *shimeji* mushrooms
- ½ bunch enoki mushrooms • 11 oz extra-firm silken tofu • A few leaves frisée lettuce
 - A few leaves radicchio • 1–2 slices dried porcini mushroom
 - 2 very fresh button mushrooms, thinly sliced
 - 1 Tbsp sesame oil • Salt and pepper

Combine dashi, apple juice, and soy sauce. Taste and season this broth with salt to taste. Place in the fridge or freezer to cool.

Separate the *shimeji* and cut off the ends of the stems; roughly separate the enoki and cut off the bottoms of their stems as well. Blanch the enoki for about 1 minute in a pot of lightly salted boiling water. Drain, run them under cold water, and drain again. Blanch the *shimeji* for about 4 minutes in a pot of lightly salted boiling water. Drain, run them under cold water, and drain again.

Gently unmold the tofu onto a plate and cut into slices about ¼ inch thick. Arrange 3 or 4 slices in each of 4 bowls. Add the *shimeji*, enoki, and a few hand-torn leaves of frisée and radicchio to the bowls.

In a mortar with a pestle or in a spice grinder, blend or grind the dried porcini mushrooms to a powder.

Ladle the chilled broth into the bowls over the tofu. Add a few slices of raw button mushroom; finish each with a dash of sesame oil, a little salt and pepper, and a few pinches of dried porcini powder.



PINK RADISH VELOUTÉ

This velouté is eaten hot or well chilled, depending on the season – both are excellent. It is a healthful and light starter, and is easy and quick to make. Recommended after a period of excess, whether you ate like a glutton for a few days or have a wicked hangover.

🕒 prep 20 min 🌱 vegetarian 👤 4 servings

- 2 bunches pink radishes • 1 spring onion
- 1 knob butter • 7 oz boiled potatoes
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water • 7 oz firm silken tofu
- Salt and white pepper

Trim and clean the radishes. Reserve two of them for the garnish. Roughly chop the white part of the spring onion. In a frying pan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the radishes and onion, season with salt, and stir and roll them in the butter for about 3 minutes. Stir constantly so that they soften without browning. If necessary, you can lower the heat, cover the pan, and cook a little longer.

Mix the radishes and onion, the potatoes, the water, and the silken tofu. Season with pepper and additional salt if needed. If you want a chilled velouté, let it sit in the fridge or freezer for a few moments. If you want it hot, reheat it over low heat in a saucepan.

Serve sprinkled with some chopped green part of the spring onion and a few radish slices.

Note For a gourmet version, add 1 teaspoon of fresh cream per bowl. For a vegan version, replace the butter with vegetable oil.



WHITE ASPARAGUS, CRÈME FRAÎCHE & TOFU

This recipe was completely inspired by a wonderful dish created by Tatiana Levha at Le Servan restaurant. It was very beautiful, all white with its asparagus, *tosazu* cream, and small cubes of tender tofu. It was mild but its flavor was incredibly deep, thanks to the dashi and *katsuobushi*; he was delicious, well-balanced, so good. And above all, it was a smart dish: tofu was not used as a substitute for anything else or placed there for no obvious reason. It was perfectly in place in this mixture of French and Japanese flavors and textures. Here's something close to this inimitable dish.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 4 starters

- 2 bunches white asparagus
- 10 oz flexible medium tofu • Salt and pepper • 1 tsp kombu powder

For the sauce

- ¼ cup crème fraîche • 2 tsp rice vinegar • 2 tsp mirin rice wine
- 1 tsp soy sauce • 1 tsp light soy sauce

Peel the asparagus spears and cut off the bases of their stems. Cook them in boiling salted water for 10–15 minutes, depending on their size, until they are tender but not mushy. While they are cooking, combine all the sauce ingredients in a saucepan with ½ teaspoon of kombu powder and heat over low heat, stirring until the sauce simmers.

Cut the tofu into ½-inch cubes. Drain the asparagus and cut into 1–1¼ inch pieces. Mix them with the sauce and the tofu. Season with salt and pepper to taste and sprinkle with additional kombu powder. Serve warm (it's good cold too).

LACTO-FERMENTED TOFU

There are many methods of fermenting tofu, but most of them are quite tricky because they require the step of spontaneous fermentation in the open air. By immersing the tofu in brine (just like feta), you take much less risk. The transformation is not as radical as that of Chinese fermented tofu (*dòufuru*), but home-made lactofermented tofu is slightly salty and tangy, and its texture changes over time; it's a good way to flavor it to your liking.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ press 1 hr) 🕒 ferment 10 days+ 🌱 vegan

For one 12-oz jar

- 7 oz firm tofu, plain, herbed, or smoked
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup 6% brine ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup water + 1 tsp coarse salt)
- Aromatics of choice: lemon zest, rosemary, bay, chile... • Fine salt

Wrap the tofu in paper towels and drain it between 2 plates for 1 hour. Blot dry with paper towels. Cut it into cubes or slices and sprinkle them lightly with fine salt. Place the aromatics and spices of your choice at the bottom of a 12-oz jar, then add the tofu. If it is sliced, place it in the jar vertically. If it's in cubes, pack it in well.

Prepare your brine by dissolving the salt in the water. Pour it over the tofu and place a weight (a small glass or porcelain dish, or a plastic food bag filled with brine...) on the tofu and other ingredients to keep them immersed in the brine. Be careful not to fill the jar completely; Keep an inch or more free, because the brine may overflow during fermentation. You can use a larger size jar if it seems easier. Leave to ferment in a cool place, away from light, for 10 days. If mold forms on the surface of the liquid after 1 week, you can gently remove it with a clean spoon – since the tofu is submerged below, it will not be touched. Sprinkle a little salt on the area that seems problematic.

You can start taste-testing your tofu after 1 week, and continue the fermentation if you wish.

Note The container and all utensils used must be clean and perfectly dry. Work with clean hands or wear sterile gloves. If in doubt – if you detect an unpleasant odor, a pungent taste, mold on the surface of the tofu, etc. – do not consume your tofu. For faster fermentation, you can add a little sauerkraut or kimchi juice to the brine; their bacteria will kick-start the fermentation process.

SOY-GINGER LACTO-FERMENTED TOFU

When tofu is fermented in brine, the change in its appearance and texture is not dramatic, but add a little soy sauce and it will be! Under the effect of a classic soy sauce (such as Kikkoman), the tofu turns brown and takes on a meltingly soft texture in no time. It also absorbs more salt, and therefore becomes a condiment to be used sparingly, rather than an ingredient to be used in large quantities. Mashed into a purée, it can add flavor to rice, salad dressings, and stir-fried vegetables, just like *dōfuru*.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ press 1 hr) 🕒 ferment 10 days+ 🌱 vegan

For one 16-oz jar

- 10 oz plain firm tofu • $\frac{2}{3}$ cup 6% brine ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup water + 1 tsp coarse salt)
- 3–4 Tbsp soy sauce • 3 thin slices root ginger

Wrap the tofu in paper towels and drain it between 2 plates for 1 hour. Blot dry with paper towels and cut it into cubes. Place the ginger at the bottom of the jar, then pack in the diced tofu.

Prepare your brine by dissolving the salt in the water. Stir in the soy sauce, then pour this mixture over the tofu and place a weight on its surface to keep it immersed in the brine (a small glass or porcelain dish, or a plastic food bag filled with brine...). Be careful not to fill the jar completely. Keep an inch or more free, because the brine may overflow during fermentation. Leave to ferment in a cool place, away from light, for 10 days. If mold forms on the surface of the liquid after 1 week, you can gently remove it with a clean spoon – since the tofu is submerged below, it will not be touched. Sprinkle a little salt on the area that seems problematic.

You can start taste-testing your tofu after 1 week, and continue the fermentation if you wish.

Note The container and all utensils used must be clean and perfectly dry. Work with clean hands or wear sterile gloves. If in doubt – if you detect an unpleasant odor, a pungent taste, mold on the surface of the tofu, etc. – do not consume your tofu. For faster fermentation, you can add a little sauerkraut or kimchi juice to the brine; their bacteria will kick-start the fermentation process.



VEGAN GREEK SALAD

This would be sacrilege in Greece, but visually, you don't notice a thing. All the ingredients for the authentic Greek salad are here, except the sheep's milk feta, which has been replaced with fermented tofu. It has a texture quite similar to that of feta, although less creamy. Served sliced atop the salad, as is done in Greece, it's a perfect imposter for the famous cheese.

🕒 prep 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 3 tomatoes • 1 medium red onion • 1 small bell pepper
- 1 Lebanese cucumber • 1 handful Kalamata olives
- 3–4 Tbsp olive oil • 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 7 oz lacto-fermented tofu, plain or herbed (see page 303)
- 1 tsp dried oregano • Salt

Cut the tomatoes into quarters. Chop the red onion, seed and chop the bell pepper, and cut the cucumber into half-moons $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. In a large, deep plate or salad bowl, combine the tomatoes, onion, bell pepper, cucumber, and olives. Season with salt to taste, then drizzle with 3 tablespoons each of olive oil and vinegar. Toss.

Serve the salad topped with slices or cubes of fermented tofu, sprinkled with dried oregano, and finished with a drizzle of olive oil.



SESAME-BREADED TOFU

To give tofu flavor and a crisp texture, nothing like breading it. It remains tender in its golden envelope, and it can be flavored at will: add spices, herbs, seeds, or nuts of your choice to the breading...I used pepper and sesame, but don't hesitate to change up this recipe and invent your own flavor profile. You can also use this breaded tofu to garnish wraps (see page 310) or a tasty mango and avocado salad (see page 312).

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍴 4 servings

- 1 lb medium-firm to firm tofu • 3 Tbsp cornstarch or potato starch
- 1 large egg, or 2 small • 3 Tbsp panko or other bread crumbs
- 2 tsp black sesame seeds • 2 tsp white sesame seeds
- ½ tsp onion powder • ½ tsp garlic powder
- Salt and pepper • Vegetable oil • Lemon juice or sauce of choice

If you're not in a hurry, you can start by draining the tofu for 30 minutes–1 hour, or soaking it in a bath of hot salt water for 15 minutes. Cut it into cubes or slices and blot dry with paper towels.

Spread the starch on a plate. In a deep plate, beat the egg(s) and season with salt and pepper. Spread the bread crumbs mixed on another plate and mix in the two sesame seeds.

Sprinkle the tofu cubes or slices with salt, pepper, onion powder, and garlic powder. Be generous. Dredge each piece in the starch, then dip it in the egg and coat with bread crumbs. Heat a frying pan over medium-high heat, add a generous splash of oil, and brown the breaded tofu pieces on all sides.

Serve at once with lemon juice or the sauce of your choice.



SUMMER VEGGIE & SESAME-BREADED TOFU WRAP

Wraps became common in France quite suddenly; these large wheat pancakes rolled up with various fillings are nothing more than burritos or *dürüm*, even if they are not presented as such. They are as practical to pack as a lunch and eat on the go as sandwiches, and can also be a nice accompaniment to an aperitif: if you cut the roll into slices, like Japanese maki sushi roll, you get cute bites to share. Here's a simple and delicious idea for stuffing your wraps: sautéed summer vegetables and breaded tofu.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 4 rolls

- 1 red bell pepper • 1 yellow bell pepper • 1 zucchini
- 4 green onions or 2 spring onions • 4 large wheat tortillas or other wraps
- 8 strips of tofu breaded with sesame (¾ inch by 3 inches) • Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper
- Dipping sauce of choice (optional)

Cut the peppers lengthwise into strips a scant ¼ inch thick. Do the same with the zucchini. Remove the outer leaves from the green onions, and cut them in half lengthwise. If you are using spring onions, quarter them in the same way. The goal is to get strips to garnish the wrap.

In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Sauté the green onions or spring onions briefly. Season with salt and pepper and set aside on a large plate. Do the same with the zucchini, the yellow pepper, and the red pepper.

On a wheat tortilla, arrange the breaded tofu on the side closer to you, a third of the way up the tortilla. Add 2 strips of green onion, a few strips of zucchini, and a few strips of bell pepper. Do not put too much, or the roll will not hold, and compact this filling well to form a large strip that occupies only the first third of the tortilla.

If you plan to eat these rolls like sandwiches, leave a few inches of space on the sides to fold up the edges of the patty (just like rolling a spring roll). Fold the sides of the patty over the filling, then roll forward, tightening the filling securely. Cut the rolls in half, or keep them whole and wrap them to pack and eat later.

If you plan to cut the roll into slices, no need to fold the sides, but you will have to roll even tighter. Cut the roll with a sharp knife into ¾-inch pieces, and serve on a plate with the sauce of your choice (they are also very good on their own).



MANGO-AVOCADO SALAD

WITH SESAME-BREADED TOFU & CHIMICHURRI

Sesame-breaded tofu goes with everything. Its crispness, reminiscent of croutons, makes it a perfect addition to salads, like this one. Super tasty, sweet-and-salty, and perked up with a delicious South American-style herb sauce, it's a real treat.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

For the sauce

- 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar • 2 Tbsp thinly sliced cilantro
- 1 Tbsp thinly sliced flat-leaf parsley • 1 tsp thinly sliced fresh oregano
- 3 Tbsp olive oil • A few drops of Tabasco • Salt

- 1 head romaine lettuce • 2 avocados, diced
- 1 large mango, pitted and cubed • ½ red bell pepper, cut into strips
- 1 spring onion, thinly sliced • 10 oz sesame-breaded tofu (see page 308), cut into cubes

In a bowl, combine all the ingredients for the sauce.

Slice the romaine leaves into ¾-inch strips. Place them in a salad bowl and add all the other ingredients. Place the breaded tofu cubes last to keep them crisp. Just before serving, pour the sauce over the salad and toss.



VEGAN POTATO SALAD

Here's an excellent potato salad for summer meals or picnics, and it's 100 percent vegan. No one will notice this if you don't talk about it; it is as good and delicious as a classic one studded with bacon. This dish is proof that tofu is not boring in itself: it all depends on what you make of it!

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 20 min (+ rest 30 min) 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4–6 servings

- 5 oz vegan mayonnaise (see page 326) • 21 oz waxy potatoes
- A few sprigs of dill • A few cornichons
- 2 green onions or 1 spring onion • 1½ Tbsp cider vinegar
- 1 tsp whole-grain Dijon mustard • Salt and pepper

Start by preparing the vegan mayonnaise. Keep refrigerated while you make the rest of the salad.

In a saucepan, cover the potatoes with salted water; bring to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes, until they are tender. Drain and leave them in the colander, covered with a clean cloth, to steam for 10–15 minutes. Then uncover and let cool for another 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the rest of the salad: coarsely chop the dill, cut the cornichons into rounds, and chop the green onions.

In a salad bowl, combine the mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, dill, pickles, and green onions. Season with pepper and mix. Set aside in the refrigerator.

When the potatoes are cool enough to handle, cut them into 1-inch pieces. Add them to the salad bowl, and mix the potatoes with the sauce. Taste and adjust the seasoning if needed, and place in the refrigerator again for at least 1 hour. Mix again before serving.

MEDITERRANEAN- MARINATED TOFU

This very simple marinade is just one example of the countless possibilities that tofu offers. Freezing the tofu beforehand helps it absorb the flavors especially well. The neutral flavor of tofu lends itself to all types of marinades, whether you're looking for something spicy, sweet-salty, Asian, Indian... In summertime, this Mediterranean version is particularly pleasant in salads.

🕒 prep **30 min** (+ freeze **12 hr**) 🌱 **vegan**

For 1 block tofu

- 10 oz firm tofu • 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp brewer's yeast • 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp tomato paste • 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper

A day ahead, drain the block of tofu and wrap it in cheesecloth or a clean towel. Place it on a plate in your freezer, and let freeze for at least 12 hours.

The next day, place the tofu under a stream of hot water to peel off the cloth, and immerse it in a pan of boiling salted water for about 10 minutes, or until completely thawed.

Drain it carefully, then wrap it in paper towels to blot dry. Let drain for at least 15 minutes, then unwrap it and cut into ½-inch cubes.

Mix the vinegar, yeast, oil, tomato paste, and salt and pepper to make the marinade and place the diced tofu in it, making sure all the pieces are coated. Leave to marinate for 5 minutes. Your tofu is ready to be used in a salad, grilled, sautéed, etc.

WATERMELON SALAD WITH MARINATED TOFU

Watermelon salad makes everyone happy in summer. To wake up this watery and very sweet fruit, nothing works so well as green onion and mint – a marriage that has become classic. Mediterranean-marinated tofu, with its balsamic vinegar and tomato flavor, is just what you need to perfect this refreshing starter.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb cubed watermelon • 1 small red onion
- 10 oz Mediterranean-marinated tofu (see page 315)
 - A few sprigs of fresh mint, leaves picked
 - Olive oil • Salt and pepper

If needed, cut the watermelon into generous pieces that are still small enough to take a bite. Finely chop the onion. Place the watermelon pieces in a bowl with the onion, marinated tofu, and coarsely chopped mint leaves. Season with salt and pepper, drizzle with olive oil, and toss.

Note You can use the marinated tofu raw, or fry it for a few moments in its marinade.



TOMATO & TOFU SALAD WITH DATE DRESSING

This sweet-and-savory date sauce goes perfectly with small tangy tomatoes, and semi-firm tofu has a consistency reminiscent of mozzarella; this salad is an ideal starter for the middle of summer. If you hate cilantro – it happens – you can replace it with fresh basil.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 2 dates • 14 oz mixed-variety tomatoes
- 10 oz flexible medium-firm tofu • 1 shallot
- A few sprigs of cilantro • 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce • 3 Tbsp olive oil

Soften the dates by letting them soak in a bowl of hot water while you prepare the other ingredients. Cut the tomatoes into quarters and dice the tofu. Chop the shallot, pick the cilantro leaves, and divide all these ingredients among 4 plates.

Drain the dates and combine them in a food processor with the vinegar, soy sauce, and olive oil. Blend until you get a smooth sauce. If it seems too thick, you can thin it with a little oil or water. Drizzle it over the plates.



ENDIVE SALAD

WITH MISO-FERMENTED TOFU

Fermenting tofu in miso (*tōfu no misozuke*, see page 128) gives an astonishing result: like a cheese, tofu changes texture and taste over time, becoming more and more tender, salty, and strong. You can eat it with bread or rice and use it as a condiment, but it also works in salads. Endives complement this tofu like nothing else, with nuts and a little whole-grain mustard sauce as a bonus.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 endives • 4 oz miso-fermented tofu (see page 128) • 1 Tbsp cider vinegar
- 1 tsp whole-grain Dijon mustard • 1 Tbsp water • 2 tsp brewer's yeast
- Salt and pepper • 3 Tbsp olive oil • ¼ cup shelled walnuts

Cut the endives as desired: some prefer large pieces, others like very thin slices, or you can leave the leaves whole as “boats.” Cut the fermented tofu into small cubes. Coarsely crush the nuts, and place everything in a bowl.

Separately, mix the vinegar, mustard, salt (a few pinches, taking into account that the ripened tofu is already salted), water, brewer's yeast, and pepper to taste. Add olive oil in a thin stream while whisking, to create an emulsion. Pour this dressing over the salad, and toss just before serving.

Note You can adjust the quantities according to your taste and add a sliced or diced apple, always a welcome addition to an endive salad!



ARUGULA, FIG & SMOKED TOFU SALAD

Oh, beautiful salad! Freshness, a touch of bitterness, smokiness, sweetness, and a tangy counterpoint.... This very quick and simple starter is a delight. One hundred percent vegetable, it has a rich range of flavors and textures, but it is also a mine of minerals, vitamins, and protein. You can prepare it all year round by replacing the figs with other seasonal fruits (grapes, pears, plums, etc.).

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 6 purple figs • 7 oz smoked tofu
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar • 5 Tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper • 4 oz arugula • 2 oz watercress
- 2 oz mâche

Cut the figs into quarters and the tofu into thin slices. Mix the vinegar and salt, then add the oil, beating for a moment with a fork to make a quick emulsion. Season with pepper to taste.

In a salad bowl, combine the arugula, watercress, and mâche (obviously well rinsed and spun dry), then the tofu and the figs. You can also arrange the salad flat on a large, shallow platter. Drizzle with dressing, and toss at the last minute.



WARM SALAD

OF BUCKWHEAT, ROASTED CARROTS & LACTO-FERMENTED TOFU

This main-course salad is not complicated to make, does not require ingredients that are difficult to find, and constitutes a healthy and balanced meal on its own. You can eat it warm or cold, prepare it in advance and take it on a picnic or to work, try it with different dressings if you are inspired.... All kinds of variations are possible.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 35 min 🌱 vegan 🧑 4 servings

- 3 carrots (orange, yellow, purple...) • 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced • 1½ cups kasha (toasted buckwheat groats)
- 7 oz lacto-fermented tofu (homemade, page 303, or store-bought)
 - 2 Tbsp pomegranate molasses or lemon juice
 - 3 Tbsp olive oil • 4 oz baby spinach leaves
 - Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut the carrots into strips; put them in a bowl and mix with a little salt, a little vegetable oil, the cumin seeds, and the thinly sliced shallots. Spread them in a single layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet and cook for about 35 minutes, turning them halfway through cooking. Check from time to time; depending on the vegetables, cooking time may take longer or shorter.

Meanwhile, cook the kasha: bring a pan of salted water to a boil and cook the grain for about 5 minutes, until it is tender. Drain, and cover if you want to keep the kasha warm.

Cut the tofu into cubes. Prepare the dressing by mixing pomegranate molasses and a little salt and pepper, then lightly emulsify with olive oil, pouring it in gradually while you whisk.

In a large bowl, combine the spinach, tofu, roasted carrots, and kasha. Drizzle with dressing, toss, and it's ready.



VEGAN MAYONNAISE

Containing no eggs, this mayonnaise will necessarily taste a little less rich than the traditional kind, but it looks very much like it. Lovers of American- or Japanese-style white mayonnaise won't even realize the subterfuge. Very firm, it has a perfect texture, a discreet color, and a familiar taste.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 bowl

- 4 oz firm silken tofu • 2 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp mustard • 1 cup vegetable oil • Salt

In a food processor, blend the tofu, lemon juice, and mustard until the mixture is nice and smooth. Continue to blend while gradually adding the oil, little by little. The mixture should thicken like a classic mayonnaise. Season with salt, and mix again.

VEGAN TARTAR SAUCE

There are many variations on tartar sauce; the ingredients are not always the same, and it is assembled in different ways. While the traditional emulsion in a mortar has its charm, the version I offer is less technical. It's simply a mayonnaise base, enriched with fresh herbs and condiments.

🕒 prep 10 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 bowl

- 2 cornichons • 2 tsp capers • 3 sprigs chervil • 3 sprigs parsley
- 5 leaves tarragon • 3 chives • 1 bowl vegan mayonnaise (see above)

Chop the pickles and the capers, and mince the herbs. Gradually add the herbs and condiments to the mayonnaise, mixing gently.

TOFU NUGGETS

There are countless ways to fry tofu. This tofu nugget recipe is very simple and will appeal to food lovers. The corn flour fritter dough is light and well flavored with spices and herbs, making delicious little tofu bites that are both crisp and tender.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 15 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb firm or extra-firm tofu • 1 scant cup corn flour
- 2½ Tbsp + 3 Tbsp cornstarch • ⅔ cup water
- 1 tsp salt • 1 tsp sugar • ½ tsp powdered garlic
- ½ tsp pepper • ¼ tsp paprika • ¼ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp mustard • Oil for deep-frying • Salt • Dipping sauce(s) of choice

Tear the tofu block in half with your hands, then in half again, and so on until you get pieces that are about 1–1½ inches square and about ½ inch thick. Blot dry them with paper towels and sprinkle them with a little salt.

Mix the corn flour, the 2½ tablespoons of cornstarch, the water, the salt, the sugar and all the spices and herbs. The dough should be very thick. Place the 3 spoonfuls of cornstarch on a plate.

Heat oil for deep-frying to 350°F. Roll the tofu pieces in the starch, then dredged them in the fritter dough, and fry them in the oil (in batches without crowding) until they are golden. Drain them on a rack and serve hot with the sauces of your choice.

VEGAN PISSALADIÈRE

Pissaladière is my passion – like most people in Nice. This onion tart has a sweet flavor, due to the very slow cooking of the onions, which caramelize without turning brown. It also normally has a salty and strong, almost spicy side, which comes from *pissala*, the sauce of fermented anchovies that we add to it. Chinese fermented tofu (*dōufuru*), is an amazing substitute. And so as not to lose the taste of the sea, you can even use a piece of seaweed. Yes, it's a funny idea. But it works.

🕒 prep 30 min 🕒 cook 2 h 45 🌱 vegan

For 1 tart (14 inches in diameter)

- 8 oz bread dough • Flour, as needed • 1/3 oz (10 g) kombu • 2 lb cipolline or yellow onions
- 1 Tbsp sugar • 2–4 cubes fermented tofu (*dōufuru*) • A few dried thyme sprigs
- 1 bay leaf • 10–15 Niçoise olives • Olive oil • Salt and pepper

Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to your bread dough by kneading it on a floured surface. Let sit, covered with a cloth, while the onions are being prepared.

In a mortar or small food processor, grind the kombu to a powder.

Thinly slice the onions. In a sauté pan or casserole pan over medium heat, heat 5 tablespoons of olive oil. Sweat the onions, uncovered. When their liquid has evaporated, season with pepper and sugar and add the fermented tofu, kombu powder, thyme sprigs, and bay leaf. Mix well. Add salt carefully: kombu and fermented tofu are already quite salty.

Cook over very low heat (as gently as possible!), covered, stirring occasionally. The onions should not brown at all, but form pretty light blond compote.

When the onions seem almost ready, after 1½–2 hours, preheat the oven to 425°F. Roll out the dough thinly with a rolling pin, so that you can fill your tart mold and form a small rim. Place the dough in the oiled and floured mold, and pierce here and there with a fork.

Remove the bay leaf, kombu, and thyme sprigs. Place the hot onion mixture on the dough. Spread in an even layer with the back of a spoon, and sprinkle with black olives. Put in the oven, lower the oven temperature to 400°F, and cook for 35–45 minutes, until the dough is golden and the onions nicely caramelized on the sides.

Note There are as many pissaladière dough recipes as there are families from Nice. Some people prefer an olive oil bread dough, others like pie dough; some like it thin, others thick, crisp, or brioche-like.... Store-bought bread dough has the advantage of requiring no effort. Rolled out thin and cooked in a very hot oven, it gives a very respectable result, I find. In a bread – or pizza – oven, it's even better!



EGGPLANT

STUFFED WITH SMOKED TOFU

This recipe is largely inspired by the eggplants that my mother prepares among *les petits farcis* - a Niçoise specialty of meat-stuffed vegetables like squash, tomatoes, mushrooms, eggplants, even onions. By replacing the ham from the original recipe with smoked tofu, we lose nothing, in my opinion; we even gain something, as the smoky flavor of the tofu blends perfectly with the eggplants.

🕒 prep 30 min (+ drain 1 hr) 🕒 cook 45 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 small Italian eggplants • 1 tomato • $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh bread crumbs • $\frac{3}{2}$ Tbsp milk
 - 2 cloves garlic • 1 spring onion • $\frac{2}{2}$ Tbsp pine nuts
- 1 egg • 4 oz smoked tofu • A few basil leaves • $\frac{1}{3}$ cup grated Parmesan
 - Dried bread crumbs • Olive oil • Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper

Cut the eggplants in half lengthwise, salt them, and steam, skin side down, for 5–10 minutes depending on their thickness. Place them, face down this time, on a cutting board that is raised on one side so that they drain for at least 1 hour.

Seed the tomato and chop it coarsely, collecting the juices. Soak the bread crumbs in the juices, adding a little milk to completely soak the bread.

Mince the garlic and the onion. In a frying pan over medium heat, heat a little vegetable oil and sauté the garlic and onion for about 3 minutes. Transfer to a mixing bowl and set aside. Toast the pine nuts and add them to the onions.

Carefully scoop out the cooked eggplant flesh with a spoon, leaving about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of flesh along the skin. Roughly chop the scooped-out flesh, the tofu, and the drained bread crumbs and add them to the onion bowl, along with the diced tomatoes, the egg, a few chopped basil leaves, and the cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste and mix well. Add a little milk to bind the stuffing if necessary.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. In an oiled dish, place the eggplant shells, skin side down, and fill them generously with the stuffing. Sprinkle with a few more bread crumbs, drizzle with a little olive oil, and cook for about 35 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 350°F and continue cooking for 10–20 minutes.

Note For a vegan version, omit the Parmesan, and replace the egg with 3 ounces of silken tofu and the milk with nondairy milk like soy, almond, or oat.



VEGAN LEEK TART

When I was little, my mother's leek pie was everyone's favorite. However, we had very disparate tastes. Her recipe was vegetarian, but I wondered if a vegan version with tofu could come close. I was amazed. No one would guess that this tart does not contain milk, eggs, or cheese.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 1 h 🌱 vegan

For 1 tart (11-inch diameter)

- 3 leeks • 1 onion • ¼ cup cashew nuts
- 7 oz firm or extra-firm tofu • ½ cup water • Salt and pepper

For the dough

- ¼ cup olive oil • ¼ cup sunflower oil
- ½ glass hot water • 1¼ cups flour • ½ tsp salt

Remove the tough outer leaves from the leeks, cut them in half lengthwise and rinse them well. Slice them into ¾-inch lengths, keeping a good portion of the pale green (it's good, the green!). Cut the onion in half and cut into ¼-inch slices. Combine the onion and leeks and steam them together for about 20 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350–400°F and prepare your dough by blending all the ingredients in a food processor. Spread it by hand in a greased and floured tart mold. Prick with a fork, and bake for 5 minutes in the center of the oven.

In the food processor, blend the cashews and tofu to a very fine meal, and add the water. Blend again. Combine this mixture with the steamed onions and leeks. Take the dough-lined tart mold from the oven, and pour the tofu and leek mixture into it, spreading it evenly over the dough. Return to the oven and bake for about 35 minutes, until golden.



VEGAN SHAKSHUKA

There are many variations on this comforting dish in North Africa and the Near East; the general idea remains that of simmered vegetables, generally peppers, tomatoes, and onions, with a poached egg served in the center. My vegan version of this recipe is simple: the eggs are just an optical illusion, replaced with tender tofu and olive oil. It's very good, with the tofu bringing a little sweetness to this boldly flavored dish.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 45 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 3 Tbsp peanut oil • 1 onion, diced • 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2–3 red bell peppers, diced • 3 very ripe large tomatoes, diced
- 1–2 sugar cubes • 2 Tbsp tomato paste • 1 Tbsp harissa
 - 1 tsp cumin seeds • 10 oz medium-firm tofu
- 4 tsp olive oil • A few parsley leaves • Salt and pepper

In a shallow casserole pan or cast-iron skillet over medium heat, heat the peanut oil and sweat the onions. Add the garlic, then the peppers, and brown them for a few minutes. Add the tomatoes, sugar, tomato paste, harissa, cumin seeds, and salt and pepper to taste, and simmer for at least 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Blend the tofu until you get a smooth, thick texture, like Greek yogurt. Season with salt to taste.

When the vegetables have melted together and start to caramelize, use the back of a spoon to make 4 small wells and place the tofu in these hollows. Then make a small well in each pile of tofu, and pour in the olive oil. Let it heat another 2–3 minutes on low heat, then serve hot, sprinkled with a little pepper with a few parsley leaves.



ORANGE-BRAISED TOFU & FENNEL

Tofu is delicious when braised, and fennel is too; all that remained was to put them together. I added oranges—fennel and citrus fruits always go well together—as well as almonds and pistachios, just to be greedy. Served with rice or polenta, it's a complete dish, packed with vitamins and very tasty.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 25 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 2 oranges • 4 small bulbs fennel • 1 red onion • 1 lb firm tofu
- 1–2 Tbsp potato starch • ½ cup dry white wine
- 2 Tbsp honey or brown sugar • 2 Tbsp pistachios, blanched and peeled
- 2 Tbsp almonds, blanched and peeled • Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper

Supreme the oranges: Slice off the peels with a knife, then cut along the inner walls of the membranes to free the segments. When all the segments are removed, squeeze the remaining membrane over a bowl to collect the juice.

Cut off the fennel stems and reserve the fronds, if available. Cut the bulbs in half lengthwise, then each half into 4 wedges. Do the same for the onion. In a large frying pan over medium-high heat, heat the oil, then brown the fennel and onion on all sides. Season with salt and pepper, add about ½ cup of water, cover, and simmer over low heat for 15 minutes. Stir from time to time and check the water level; it must evaporate gradually. If it is not evaporating, remove the lid from the pan. If it evaporates too quickly, add a little more water.

While the fennel and onions are cooking, cut the tofu into ¾-inch cubes and blot dry with paper towels. Sprinkle them with a little salt and cover them with a light dusting of starch. In another oiled frying pan, brown the tofu on all sides.

Uncover the fennel and onion; if necessary, continue cooking until tender. If there is still a little water left, turn up the heat to dry out the pan. Deglaze with the wine, stirring to scrape up any brown bits from the pan bottom, then add the orange juice and honey. Add the tofu cubes, season with salt and pepper again as needed, and stir. Braise gently over medium heat. When the liquid has largely disappeared, the fennel should be very tender. Add the pistachios and almonds, and stir again. Serve hot, scattered with the orange supremes and a few fennel fronds.



ROASTED BUTTERNUT WITH SAGE, TOFU, PECANS & COFFEE

Anne Caron, voted best coffee bean roaster in France in 2017, made me love coffee. With her and the excellent chef Marion Bouillot, we seriously thought about interesting ways to use coffee in the kitchen, and they notably proposed using good ground coffee beans like a spice, to jazz up some dishes. The combination proves particularly magical with some ingredients, such as chestnut or butternut squash. So, here's a vegan dish combining coffee, squash, and tofu – it sounds incongruous but actually not at all, it's delicious.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 35–45 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 butternut squash • Salt • 2 cloves garlic, minced
- A few sprigs of fresh sage, leaves picked or torn • A few pinches ground coffee
- 20 pecans • 7 oz firm or medium tofu • 2 Tbsp olive oil • Zest of 1 lemon • Sunflower oil

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Peel the squash and scoop out the seeds, then cut it into slices about ½ inch thick. Coat these slices with salt, garlic, sunflower oil, and fresh sage leaves. Arrange them in a single layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet and roast for 20 minutes. Turn the slices over and continue roasting until they are tender, 15–25 minutes. Sprinkle with a little freshly ground coffee just before they are finished cooking.

While the squash is cooking, break the pecans in two or three pieces and toast them quickly in a dry pan. Crumble the tofu with a fork and mix it with the olive oil. Season with salt to taste.

Serve the warm squash sprinkled with the tofu in its oil, pieces of pecan, and lemon zest.



GREEN PEAS WITH SMOKED TOFU

Smoked tofu is so rich in flavor that it cannot sneak by unnoticed. I personally prefer to use it in small quantities, as one would use bacon, because otherwise it could overpower the other aromas in a dish. We often associate the smoky taste of cured pork with peas, lentils, beans, or sauerkraut, and this tofu naturally finds its place with these ingredients.

🕒 prep 25 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 4 oz smoked tofu • 2 hearts of Little Gem lettuce • 2 shallots
- 1 lb peas, fresh or frozen • A few mint leaves • 1 cup water or vegetable stock
- Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper

Cut the tofu into thin slices; you can keep them like this, or cut them into smaller squares. Cut the lettuce hearts lengthwise into quarters or eighths. Thinly slice the shallots.

In a casserole pan over medium heat, heat a little oil and sauté the shallots. Add the lettuce hearts and the tofu, and brown them on all sides. Add the peas, mint, salt and pepper to taste. Stir and add the stock; bring to a boil then lower the heat, cover, and cook for 15–20 minutes, until the peas are tender.

Note Frozen peas require less water and cook faster, especially if they are petite peas. Adjust the amount of water or stock and taste after 10 minutes. As soon as they are tender, it's ready!



VEGAN STUFFED MUSHROOMS

A beloved classic, revisited in a vegan version. The aroma of smoked tofu and its firm texture lend themselves perfectly to this recipe. Add the mushroom umami, and you get a delicious result; there is actually no need for cheese or meat. It's also a dish that is very rich in protein. Eat as a starter or main course, accompanied with a full salad, for example.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 35 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 8 mushrooms for stuffing • Juice of ½ lemon • 2 shallots
- 2 cloves garlic • Thyme
- 1 bay leaf • 4 oz smoked tofu • 4 oz firm silken tofu
- Bread crumbs • Vegetable oil • Olive oil • Salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Slice off the mushroom stems and coarsely chop them. Bring a pan of salted water to a boil, add the lemon juice, and blanch the mushroom caps for 3 minutes. Drain and place them gill sides down on a cutting board raised on one side to let them drain completely.

Chop the shallots and garlic. In a frying pan over medium heat, heat a little vegetable oil. Add the shallots and garlic and sweat them without browning, about 3 minutes. Add the chopped mushroom stems, thyme, bay leaf, and salt to taste, and cook until the mushrooms have released their liquid and it has almost completely evaporated. Remove from the heat. To the pan, add the smoked tofu and the silken tofu. Mix well, and season with pepper and with salt again if needed.

If the mushroom caps are still very damp, wrap them in several layers of paper towel for a few minutes.

Oil an overproof dish, place the mushroom caps on it gill sides up, and fill them with the stuffing. Sprinkle with bread crumbs and drizzle with olive oil. Put in the oven and bake for about 35 minutes, until the stuffed mushrooms are golden.

PANFRIED TOFU WITH BARBECUE SAUCE

This recipe starts off in an odd fashion, since it asks you to freeze the main ingredient. The tofu will spend a night in the freezer, a technique similar to that of “thousand-layer” tofu (see page 56), except that it is then boiled – the Japanese call it “overnight tofu,” or *ichiyadōfu*. Once thawed in a boiling water bath and well drained, the tofu absorbs sauces admirably well. So it will do wonders in a pan with barbecue sauce. I’ll let you choose the one you like: most store-bought barbecue sauces are completely vegan and do not contain ethically scandalous ingredients. It would therefore be a shame to deprive yourself of them.

🕒 prep 10 min (+ freeze 1 night) 🔥 cook 25 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 21 oz firm tofu • 8 Tbsp barbecue sauce
- ¼ cup water • Vegetable oil

The night before, drain the block of tofu and wrap it in cheesecloth. Place it in your freezer on a plate and let it freeze for at least 12 hours.

The next day, place the tofu under a stream of hot water to peel off the cloth and immerse it in a pan of boiling water for 15 minutes for a large block, or until completely thawed.

Drain it carefully, then wrap it in several layers of paper towel. Let it sit for at least 15 minutes, then unwrap it and cut it into slices the size of a cutlet. Blot them dry with paper towels and brown them in an oiled pan over medium heat on both sides.

Add the barbecue sauce and water to the pan and braise the tofu for a few moments, turning it over and making sure it is completely coated with sauce.

Note You can leave the tofu in the freezer this way for up to 2 weeks. You can also use firm tofu without freezing it first, but it won’t be quite as good.

TOFU BURGER WITH BARBECUE SAUCE

Tofu simmered with barbecue sauce is the ideal centerpiece for a vegetarian burger. A little crisp lettuce, juicy tomato, melted cheese, a few pickle rings, sesame bun, and voilà, you have a complete sandwich, very hot and quite delicious. Much less fatty and caloric than the original, it would be almost a healthy dish ... if it were not served with a (essential) mountain of fries.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegetarian

For 4 burgers

- ½ red onion • 1 large tomato • 4 lettuce leaves (any type)
 - 1 large dill pickle
- 4 pieces panfried tofu with barbecue sauce (see page 343)
 - 8 slices cheese (Emmental, Cheddar...)
 - 4 hamburger buns • Ketchup

Thinly slice the red onion. Separate the rounds and put them to soak in a bowl of cool water.

Cut the tomato into ¼-inch-thick slices. Coarsely slice or quarter the lettuce leaves. Thinly slice the pickle.

Prepare the panfried tofu with barbecue sauce, turn off the heat, and cover each piece of tofu with 2 slices of cheese, directly in the pan. Let them melt slightly with the residual heat. Meanwhile, briefly toast the buns.

To assemble the burgers, place the bottom bun on a plate, add a splash of ketchup, the lettuce, the panfried tofu with barbecue sauce covered with cheese, the pickle slices, 2–3 onion rings, 2 tomato slices, and finish with the top bun.



PASTA

WITH VEGETARIAN BOLOGNESE

For some strange reason, the French decided to associate spaghetti with Bolognese sauce. Traditionally, this is not done in Italy: Bologna is known for its wide-cut fresh egg pasta, such as tagliatelle and pappardelle. The famous ragù alla bolognese suits them well, it must be admitted. In its original meaty version, however, this dish remains particularly heavy. You get amazing results by swapping out the meat for tofu – and your stomach will say thank you...

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 45 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍽️ 4 servings

- 7 oz plain extra-firm tofu (or 4 oz plain tofu + 4 oz smoked tofu)
- 1 onion, diced • 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced • 1 carrot, diced
- 1 small celery rib, diced • 3½ Tbsp red wine • 14 oz Pomi tomato passata or tomato purée
- 3 Tbsp tomato paste • 2 bay leaves • ½–⅔ cup vegetable stock
- 1 lb fresh pappardelle (or 12 oz dried pasta of choice)
- A few parsley leaves • Olive oil • Salt and pepper • Parmesan

Roughly chop the tofu with a knife, hand chopper, or food processor. Keep some texture. In a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven or casserole pan over medium heat, sweat the onion in a little oil. Add the garlic, carrot, and celery, season with salt, and continue cooking for a few moments, turning very often. Add the minced tofu, mix well, then pour in the red wine. Cook uncovered, stirring, until there is no more liquid.

Add the tomato passata or purée, tomato paste, bay leaf, and stock, season with salt and pepper to taste, and continue cooking over very low heat. From now on, the sauce will start to spit – the magic of the sizzling tomato. It's messy, it hurts, so partially cover your pot with a lid but leave it ajar. Uncover and mix from time to time.

After 30 minutes, check the seasoning; add salt and pepper if necessary. After 45 minutes, the sauce should have reduced and taken on a thick consistency. Add a little olive oil, mix well, and keep warm.

Cook your pasta according to package directions in a large amount of salted water. Drain and serve covered in a ladleful of sauce with a little minced parsley and grated Parmesan.



SPINACH & TOFU LASAGNA

Lasagna, those sheets of pasta dough that are baked in the oven, are usually made with eggs. However, it is possible to find eggless durum wheat lasagna sheets. The dried version is available everywhere, while the fresh version can be more difficult to find. No problem: the dry pasta works very well in this recipe. Just thin out the béchamel sauce to give the pasta enough water to cook. The tofu replaces the typical ricotta – they look very similar – and the béchamel used here is vegan.

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 45 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 lb fresh spinach • 10 oz medium-firm tofu • 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 10–12 sheets lasagna, fresh or dried • Salt and pepper

For the béchamel

- 5 Tbsp olive oil • 2 Tbsp flour
- 2 cups soy milk • Salt, pepper, and nutmeg

Blanch the spinach in boiling salted water for 1 minute. Drain and squeeze it in the colander to extract excess water. Coarsely chop on a cutting board. In a food processor or blender, blend the tofu to get a thick cream, and mix it with the spinach and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

In a saucepan over medium-low heat, heat the olive oil, then add the flour. Stir quickly with a wooden spoon for about 1 minute, until you get a thick and homogeneous roux. Gradually add the soy milk while stirring; work out any lumps. Season with salt and pepper and add a good sprinkling of nutmeg. Continue stirring over low heat until the mixture thickens, about 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning if needed. This is your béchamel.

Preheat the oven to 350–400°F. Grease a rectangular lasagna pan and pour a thin layer of béchamel over the bottom. Add a layer of lasagna sheets, a layer of spinach tofu, then a layer of béchamel. Do this three to four more times: the last layer of lasagna sheets should be covered with spinach tofu and béchamel sauce. Bake for 30 minutes. Then turn off the oven and bake the lasagna in the residual heat for 10 minutes more.



SPAGHETTI WITH TOFU-ARTICHOKE CREAM

Blended tofu is great for sauces because it provides a texture close to that of cream (when it is tender) or ricotta (when it is firm). So it is very welcome in vegan pasta recipes. Paired with baby artichokes of spring and autumn, it is a real pleasure. Digestible, low in fat, and rich in protein, here is a spaghetti dish that is richly sauced, but surprisingly healthy.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 35–45 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 6 baby artichokes • 1 lemon • 2 cloves garlic, halved
- 5 oz firm silken tofu • 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 12 oz spaghetti • Vegetable oil • A few parsley leaves • Salt and pepper

Trim the artichokes: cut the stems, remove the tough outer leaves, then cut off the leaf tips halfway down the artichoke to keep only the tender part of the remaining leaves. Pass the blade around the base to cut away any hard bits. Quarter each artichoke, remove the fuzzy choke, and immediately immerse them in a pot of boiling salted water to which you have added the juice of half the lemon.

With a skimmer, remove half of the artichokes from the water after 2 minutes. Place them in a cold water bath with a dash of lemon juice, drain, and set aside.

Drain the rest of the artichokes after 6–8 minutes of cooking, when they are tender. Just before removing them from the water, add the halved cloves of garlic to quickly blanch them – unless you like the taste of raw garlic. Mix the tender artichokes and garlic with the silken tofu, olive oil, and the rest of the lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and add a little more oil or lemon if desired.

Heat a very large pot of salted water for cooking pasta (the only way to cook it right is to use 1 quart for every 4 ounces of pasta). Cook the pasta according to package directions.

While they cook, cut the reserved parboiled artichokes into slices. In a frying pan over medium heat, heat a little oil and brown the artichoke slices on both sides.

Briefly heat the tofu and artichoke sauce, stirring. Drain the pasta and mix it with this sauce. Serve sprinkled with the golden artichoke slices and the parsley leaves.



LENTILS WITH SMOKED TOFU

There's nothing really surprising about marrying lentils and smoked tofu; they go very well together. Just add a few little onions and carrots to get a nourishing dish that is very good for vegetarians and vegans: it is rich in iron and other minerals, protein, vitamins, antioxidants, fiber...in fact, it is good for everyone. And particularly appropriate for diabetics and athletes, thanks to the very low glycemic index of lentils.

🕒 prep 10 min 🕒 cook 30 min 🌱 vegan 🍽️ 4 servings

- 1 large carrot • 6–8 pearl onions or 1 large onion
- 7 oz smoked extra-firm tofu • 8 oz green Puy lentils
- 1 clove • 1 bouquet garni • Vegetable oil • Salt and pepper

Cut the carrot into rounds a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Thinly slice the onion; if you are using pearl onions, you can cut them in half or keep them whole. Cut the tofu into little chunks, like bacon lardons.

In a frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil. Brown the onions and tofu. In a casserole pan, combine the lentils with three times their volume of cold water. Add the carrots, onions, tofu, clove, and the bouquet garni, cover, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to maintain a good simmer and cook for 20–25 minutes, stirring from time to time.

When the lentils are tender, season with salt and pepper to taste, stir, and serve hot.

Notes To make a bouquet garni, tie together a handful of flat-leaf parsley, thyme sprigs, and a bay leaf or two. You can also wrap them in a cheesecloth bundle. Remove at the end of cooking.

Always salt the lentils at the end of cooking; if salt is added too early, their skins toughen up.



STRAWBERRY PROTEIN SMOOTHIE

Smoothies are a trap: they are sold as healthy drinks, when it would be healthier to just eat fruit. By blending fruit, we lose the benefit of insoluble fiber, and what remains in the glass is water, some vitamins, and a lot of fructose. For anyone who wants to consumer more fruit without eating it, here's what a truly healthy smoothie looks like. And no, no need to put spinach in it for it to be healthy...

🕒 prep 5 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 glasses

- 1 lb strawberries • 7 oz extra-tender silken tofu (*sundubu*)
- 1 dash lemon juice • 1 pinch salt • 2 tsp agave syrup or sweetener of choice

In a blender, combine all the ingredients except the agave syrup and blend. Taste and adjust the sweetness if needed, then blend again. Thin the smoothie with a little cool water if necessary. Drink right away; fruits don't hold, especially not in the fridge. If you like your smoothies very cold, add a few ice cubes.

PEAR-MATCHA SMOOTHIE

Commercial smoothies are very rich in fructose and low in vitamins. And truth be told, even homemade smoothie recipes are often incredibly caloric and absurd from a dietary viewpoint. It is possible to limit the devastation, however. This drink made with extra-tender Korean tofu (*sundubu*) is a perfectly reasonable smoothie, rich in protein, relatively unsweetened, and loaded with antioxidants thanks to matcha tea. It contains as much caffeine as a cup of coffee, so swap it in at breakfast.

🕒 prep 5 min 🌱 vegan

For 4 glasses

- 2 organic pears • 1 organic green apple • 5 oz extra-tender silken tofu (*sundubu*)
- 1 dash lemon juice • 1 pinch salt • 2 tsp matcha tea
- 2 tsp agave syrup or sweetener of choice (optional)

Core the pears and the apple, but keep the skins on. In a blender, combine them with the rest of the ingredients, except the agave syrup, and blend. Gradually add about 1/3 cup of cool water to thin the very thick drink. Sweeten to taste as needed, and blend again. You could also add a few ice cubes.

Note You can replace the *sundubu* with soft silken tofu and add a little water.



TOFU FRENCH TOAST

Tofu panfried with egg is a common dish in Asia, but it is always salty. I wanted to make a sweet version, more along the lines of French toast. With “normal” tofu, whose surface is rather smooth, you need potato starch if you want the sweet coating to stick; with previously frozen tofu (see thousand-layer tofu recipe, page 56), that’s another story. Riddled with tiny holes like the crumb of good country bread, it absorbs the liquid, for a delicious result.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ drain 30 min) 🕒 cook 10 min 🌱 vegetarian 🍴 4 servings

- 1 lb thousand-layer tofu (see page 56) • ¼ cup milk
- 2 eggs, beaten • ½ cup sugar • ½ tsp salt
- 4 tsp butter • Confectioners’ sugar

Wrap the thousand-layer tofu with paper towels and let it drain for at least 30 minutes. Cut it into slices ¼ inch–½ inch thick. Blot dry with paper towels.

Stir together the milk, beaten eggs, sugar, and salt. Pour this mixture into a deep plate.

Place the tofu slices in the egg mixture to soak them. In a frying pan over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add the tofu slices, in batches to prevent crowding, and panfry until golden brown on both sides. Serve hot, sprinkled with confectioners’ sugar.



HAZELNUT, CHOCOLATE & SILKEN TOFU TART

Firm silken tofu lets you to make amazing desserts. This is the case with this tart, rich in chocolate and hazelnuts. The dough is crisp, the chocolate filling is melting, and the combination is quite delicious. Turns out, vegan cuisine and tofu are not synonymous with austerity.

🕒 prep 20 min (+ chill 12–24 hr) 🕒 cook 30 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 large tart

- 12 oz extra-fine firm silken tofu • 12 oz dark chocolate • ½ cup hazelnut butter
- ½ cup almond milk • Fleur de sel sea salt

For the dough

- ½ cup + 1 Tbsp margarine • 2 Tbsp water
- 1¼ cups ground hazelnuts • 1 cup flour
- 3 Tbsp sugar • 1 pinch salt

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Prepare the dough: in a saucepan, heat the margarine and the water. Turn off the heat and add the ground hazelnuts, flour, sugar, and salt. Mix until you get a homogeneous dough. Grease a tart mold and spread the dough in it by hand. Pierce here and there with a fork and bake for about 30 minutes, until the dough is cooked and golden. Remove from the oven and let cool.

Meanwhile, prepare the chocolate filling: put the tofu in a food processor and blend it into a homogeneous cream. Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler or in the microwave, then stir in the hazelnut purée, almond milk, and tofu. Mix well.

Fill the tart shell with the chocolate mixture and place in the refrigerator for 12–24 hours to set the chocolate filling. Serve sprinkled with a little fleur de sel.



VEGAN CARAMEL FLAN

This vegan caramel flan is very easy to make and really looks like its counterpart made with eggs and milk. Thanks to silken tofu and agar-agar, the texture is perfect. Be careful, however, to choose extra-firm (or at least firm) silken tofu – the softer versions won't give you a proper flan consistency.

🕒 prep 5 min (+ chill 2 hr) 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan

For 4–6 ramekins

- 2 cups soy milk • 1 Tbsp agar-agar powder
- 5 oz extra-firm silken tofu • 2 Tbsp sugar • 1 pinch salt

For the caramel

- ½ cup sugar

Pour the soy milk into a bowl and sprinkle it with the agar-agar. Mix with a whisk and let stand for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, get your ramekins ready and close at hand. In a small saucepan, melt the sugar for the caramel over low heat, stirring until it begins to take on an amber color. Pour it immediately into the ramekins – do this quickly, it solidifies quickly when you stop heating it. Let cool.

Return to your soy milk: heat it over medium heat, stirring, until it comes to a boil, then reduce the to low and continue stirring for 5 minutes, until the agar-agar is completely dissolved. Remove from the heat.

In a food processor, combine the soy milk with the tofu, sugar, and salt, and blend until you get a perfectly smooth texture. Pour into the ramekins on top of the caramel. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 2 hours.

To unmold the flans, immerse the bottom of each ramekin in boiling water for 30 seconds, place a dessert plate over it, then turn the ramekins and plates over together.

ALMOND “TOFU” WITH CHERRIES & BLACK PEPPER

Cherries and almonds go well together, everyone knows. We think less about combining cherries and black pepper, and yet it's a happy marriage. The pepper brings out both the sweetness and the acidity of the fruit; add to that the sweet bitterness of almond tofu, and you have a light, amazing dessert, perfect for celebrating the brief cherry season. You can also use frozen cherries, provided they are really good quality.

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 5 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 7 oz cherries • ¼ cup sugar • 2 Tbsp water
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 14–16 oz almond tofu (see page 95)

Cut the cherries in half and remove the pits. Combine the sugar, water, and lemon juice in a small saucepan and heat over low heat, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Add the cherries and the pepper, mix then turn off the heat. Let cool or chill.

Cut the almond tofu into small cubes and place in cups or dessert bowls. Top with cherries and sprinkle with syrup.

VEGAN LEMON CAKE

In some recipes, silken tofu is the ideal ingredient to replace eggs. This is the case with this lemon cake, which seems very traditional except that it is entirely vegan. The substitution does not prevent it from rising, baking perfectly normally, and tasting like cake. No, it's true!

🕒 prep 15 min 🕒 cook 45–55 min 🌱 vegan

For 1 loaf cake

- 4 oz firm silken tofu • $\frac{2}{3}$ cup nondairy milk • $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
- 5 Tbsp oil • 3 Tbsp lemon juice • Zest of 1 lemon
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour • $\frac{2}{3}$ cup cornstarch • $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp baking powder • 1 pinch salt

Icing

- 1 scant cup confectioners' sugar • 2 Tbsp hot water
- 1–2 Tbsp lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a loaf pan. In a food processor, blend the tofu until you get a smooth paste, and add the vegetable milk, sugar, oil, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Mix until the sugar is dissolved. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix until you get a smooth batter.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and cook for 45–55 minutes, until the cake is golden and a knife blade inserted in the center comes out clean.

Let cool and turn out the cake. Prepare the icing by mixing the icing sugar with the hot water. Add the lemon juice, mix again, and pour over the cake.



LIGHT COFFEE MOUSSE

Originally, my idea was to make a vegan coffee cream. But when I blended silken tofu, magic occurred: its texture become aerated, resulting in an amazing mousse. It is not firm like egg-rich chocolate mousse, and contains fewer small air bubbles; it is delicate, very light, very fresh. The hazelnuts give it a little crunch, and the chocolate is an indulgent touch.

🕒 prep **5 min** (+ chill **3 hr**) 🌱 **vegan** 🍽️ **4 servings**

- 12 oz extra-fine firm silken tofu
- 1 Tbsp instant coffee or 2 Tbsp freeze-dried coffee • 3 tsp agave syrup

For decoration

- 16 crushed toasted hazelnuts • 1–2 oz dark chocolate, grated

In a food processor, blend all the ingredients until you get a perfectly homogeneous mixture. You can also whip the preparation after mixing it: if you use a hand blender, you can incorporate as much air as possible for a light and fluffy mousse. Pour into 4 ramekins and refrigerate for at least 3 hours.

Serve sprinkled with hazelnuts and grated chocolate.



VEGAN APRICOT CLAFOUTIS

Frankly, I didn't think this clafoutis could work. Silken tofu subs in well for creamy desserts, but I wasn't sure if it would make a batter that would hold together while remaining meltingly tender, without turning into flan, cake, or porridge. Above all, I was afraid that it would not be a clafoutis that was good enough for real foodies. I was wrong. I ate it all.

🕒 prep 20 min 🕒 cook 50 min 🌱 vegan

For one 11-inch diameter plate

- 1 lb apricots • 6 Tbsp flour • 3 Tbsp ground almonds
- 1 pinch salt • ¼ cup brown sugar • 1 Tbsp almond paste
- 5 oz firm silken tofu • 2 Tbsp almond cream • ½ cup nondairy milk

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease and flour a baking dish. Cut your apricots in half and remove the pits.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, almond powder, salt, and sugar. In a mixer or food processor, blend the almond paste, tofu, almond cream, and nondairy milk. Add the liquid mixture to the dry ingredients little by little, mixing until you have a homogeneous batter. Add a little milk if necessary.

Place the apricots in the prepared baking dish and pour the batter over them. Bake for 20 minutes at 400°F, then reduce the heat to 350°F and continue cooking for 30 minutes more.



TOFU PUDDING WITH RED FRUIT COULIS

Tofu pudding is eaten with a lot of different accompaniments in Asia, from ginger syrup to herb jelly, but all are a far cry from the flavors we are used to in France. For a more typical French flavor profile, I've paired a tangy and sweet red fruit coulis with this extremely delicate, smooth and tender type of tofu, for a delicious "fusion" dessert. The coulis also works well with silken tofu, although its texture will be less refined than that of tofu pudding.

🕒 prep 5 min 🕒 cook 30 min 🌱 vegan 🍴 4 servings

- 8 oz fresh or frozen red fruits (gooseberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, red currants)
- 3–4 Tbsp water • $\frac{1}{3}$ cup brown sugar • 28 oz tofu pudding

Combine the berries with the water in a saucepan and heat over low heat for 15 minutes, stirring regularly. When the fruit is cooked, strain the juice by passing it through a chinois or other fine-mesh strainer, using a spatula to press and squeeze out the last drop of juice.

Cook this juice with the sugar in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring for about 15 minutes, until it has thickened.

Serve the tofu pudding in bowls, covered with hot or chilled coulis.

Note You can find tofu pudding in the refrigerator case section of Chinese groceries – look for “tofu pudding,” “tofu flan,” or “*douhua*” made with glucono-delta-lactone (GDL) – or, prepare it yourself (see pages 34 and 36).

VEGAN CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

This mousse contains only three ingredients – all vegan, if you can believe it – and yet it is rich and creamy. This miracle is made possible by dark chocolate and silken tofu, which, used together, can make sinful desserts. This one, extremely easy and quick to prepare, is the simplest version of the concept.

🕒 prep **15 min** (+ chill **1 hr**) 🌱 **vegan** 🍽️ **4 servings**

- 4½ oz dark chocolate
- 14 oz extra-firm silken tofu
- 3 Tbsp maple syrup

Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler or in the microwave. In a mixer or food processor, blend the silken tofu and maple syrup until you get a smooth cream, then stir in the chocolate and continue blending until the mixture is perfectly homogeneous. Pour into ramekins or bowls and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Serve chilled.

Note You can add all kinds of yummy toppings to the mousse: chocolate shavings or coconut flakes, toasted sesame seed, rounds of sliced banana...

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