

Get Talking Tofu Cooking

Photography:
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It's centuries old, a five-star food packed with nutrients and it's a food we've never tasted it! But we're about to change that.

They knew a thing or two in the Far East, where tofu was first created. This incredibly adaptable food is packed with protein, is cholesterol free, low in saturated fats and rich in the essential good fats we all need - especially omega-3. It also contains plenty of

Smoked Tofu, Puy Lentil and Spinach Salad with Apple and Tamari Dressing

Serves 4

100g Puy lentils, washed
1 tsp vegetable bouillon powder
1 bay leaf
220g smoked tofu, sliced in strips
200g baby spinach leaves
1 avocado, thinly sliced

12 cherry tomatoes, halved
50g green pitted olives
50g beansprouts, washed
4 tbsp sunflower seeds
1 tbsp tamari (very strong soya sauce)
sunflower oil (for roasting sunflower seeds)
fresh chives, chopped, for garnish

for the apple and tamari dressing:

200ml apple juice
50ml tamari
2cm cube of fresh ginger
1 tbsp apple juice concentrate

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F/160°C/Gas Mark 2.
2. Toss the sunflower seeds in a dash of sunflower oil, 1 tablespoon of tamari, place in a shallow pan and roast for a few minutes or until brown and crisp.
3. Cover the washed Puy lentils with water, stir in the vegetable bouillon powder and add the bay leaf, bring to the boil and simmer for 25-35 minutes until the lentils are just cooked. Drain the lentils, remove the bay leaf and set aside.
4. For the dressing, mix the apple juice, apple juice concentrate and tamari in a jug. Grate the ginger or squeeze it gently in a garlic press and add the juice from this to the dressing.
5. Serve the salad on individual plates. On each plate make a bed of spinach leaves, top with a few spoonfuls of Puy lentils, some smoked tofu, decorate with slices of avocado, cherry tomatoes and green olives, sprinkle with beansprouts and tamari-roasted sunflower seeds. Pour on the dressing and garnish with the chopped chives.
6. Serve with wholewheat bread.

Adapted from *Green World Cookbook* by Rachel Demuth - available from VVF, £15.00 (plus £3.00 p&p)

Fruity Tofu C

200g vegan digestive biscuits
Jordan's Luxury Crunch
or similar cereal)
75g vegetable margarine
50ml soya milk
350g silken tofu
200g vegan cream cheese
food stores or large Tesco
1 tbsp vegetable oil
1-2 tbsp golden syrup
1 tsp vanilla essence
½ tsp lemon or orange es
2 tsp arrowroot



calcium, iron and a some of the B-vitamins. As a bonus, it contains health-promoting phytoestrogens - compounds that help to balance your hormone levels.

Tofu - and all soya products for that matter - is unique in the plant world in that its protein is equivalent to that of meat or dairy and contains all the eight amino acids that make up protein's building blocks.

So what is it? Essentially, it's ground up soya beans that have been soaked in water for several hours. Don't let that destroy the magic - read on! The resulting mash is filtered through cloth to produce soya milk which is then boiled with a setting agent, usually calcium sulphate. When it cools and solidifies, the liquid is drained off leaving curds, which are pressed into blocks of tofu.

There are two basic types depending on how much liquid is retained in the curd. Silken tofu is soft - and, well, silky - and is mostly used for making creamy products such as mayonnaise and dips. Firmer tofu holds its shape better and can be cubed and added to stir fries, stews and soups.

Tofu is precooked and one of the most versatile foods around and absorbs flavours from the foods it's cooked with. You can buy it plain, smoked or marinated from the chilled food sections in supermarkets and healthfood shops. Tofu can be used as a substitute for meat, eggs and some dairy products but is excellent in its own right.

Here's three topping tofu treats to tempt your taste buds!

Cheesecake

biscuits (or HobNobs, or Quaker Harvest Crunch

(eg Swedish Soft from health or Sainsbury's Free From)

essence (optional)

150g fruit topping (eg fresh or defrosted frozen raspberries or strawberries)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F/180°C/Gas Mark 4.
2. Grind the biscuits (which will be used as the base for the cheesecake) until there are no large lumps left. Melt the margarine and mix in the biscuit crumbs. Spread in a greased flat tin and bake in the oven for 5 minutes.
3. Put all of the other ingredients, except the fruit, in a liquidiser and blend thoroughly until smooth. Remove the crumb mixture from the oven and pour the filling over the base.
4. Bake in the oven at the same temperature for 20 minutes. Remove and leave to cool.
5. Top with fruit topping and chill before serving.



Sticky Tofu Stir Fry

Serves 4

for the veg:

- 1 tbsp sesame or sunflower oil
- 4 spring onions, sliced
- 1 red pepper, roughly chopped
- 2cm cube fresh ginger, finely chopped
- ½ tsp Chinese Five Spice
- 100g carrots, cut in to julienne strips
- 6 baby corn, quartered
- 50g mange tout, halved
- 100g mushrooms, sliced
- 100g beansprouts

for the tofu:

- 1 tbsp sesame or sunflower oil
 - 450g firm tofu
 - 1 tbsp sukiyaki sauce
 - 2cm cube fresh ginger, finely chopped
 - 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
 - ½ tsp Chinese Five Spice
 - 1 tsp coriander seed, ground
 - 1 tsp paprika
 - 1 tbsp ketchup
 - 1 tsp brown sugar
 - juice of ½ a lime
 - 2 tsp sesame seeds
 - 15ml orange or pineapple juice
 - 1 tbsp hoi-sin sauce
- to serve: rice or noodles

1. Prepare all of the veg and leave to one side.
2. Rinse and drain the tofu and chop each block into 16 cubes.
3. Heat the oil for tofu in a non-stick frying pan and add the tofu. Keep the tofu moving regularly and gradually add all the tofu seasoning ingredients. Once it is nicely browned, sticky and shiny remove from the heat and leave to one side.
4. Cook your rice or noodles according to pack instructions.
5. In a wok or large frying pan, heat the oil for the veg and add all of the ingredients, except for the mushrooms and beansprouts. Stir-fry for a few minutes, then add the mushrooms and fry until they are browned. Add the beansprouts and stir for a further minute.
6. Serve over the rice or noodles.