

Smittenaar Compendium of Culinary Euphoria, vol. 4

# Tofu



Tofu - these dishes have the most explosive flavours and toothsome textures of all the recipes Peter and I have published. Not the usual reputation tofu has, but it really is a great canvas on which to paint a landscape of flavour. The result tastes and looks great, and fun to cook, too, as Peter's photos of the dishes and the process will make abundantly clear. Get yourself off to an Asian supermarket, and give tofu a try.

~Richard

# Recipes

Mapo dofu

Stuffed tofu

Spicy tofu skin ribbons

Hot and sour tofu

Steamed silken tofu with ginger syrup

Soy seasoned tofu

tofu with kimchi and pork belly



# Mapo dofu



serves 4

1 block of tofu (500g)

6 spring onions

3T oil

200g minced beef

3T chili bean paste

1T black fermented soybeans

2 cloves garlic, minced

1" ginger, minced

2t ground chili

250ml water or chicken stock

1t sugar

1T soy sauce

3T potato flour mixed with 4T water

1t ground sichuan pepper

Cut the tofu into cubes (with ~2cm sides) and steep in hot water. Slice the green onions at an angle. Rinse the black beans, add the ginger and garlic.

Fry the beef until browned. Add the chili paste and ground chili, stir well, and add the garlic, ginger, and beans. After stirring for a minute or so, add the water, sugar, soy sauce, and tofu.

Simmer for 5min and add the green onion. When these are cooked, slowly pour in the potato flour mixture, stirring vigorously without pulverising the tofu, until the sauce has thickened. Mix in the sichuan pepper and serve.



Mapu dofu mapu dofu mapu dofu. This is pretty much the dish which got me into Sichuan cuisine, and it's still a favourite. Lots of big flavours going on, so just serve it with some steamed green leafy veg, or some such.



# Stuffed tofu

Let me say first of all, this is easier than you think it is. Carving out the pockets in the tofu seems fiddly at first, but is surprisingly simple. As for the end result, the mild, slightly savoury broth and the plain, slightly crisped tofu contrast wonderfully with the assertive, strongly flavoured pork filling. Looks good, and tastes good, too.



- serves 4*
- 1 block of tofu (500g)
  - 1T chopped sichuan preserved vegetable
  - 1 green onion, finely chopped
  - 2t grated ginger
  - 1/8t salt
  - 2T chili oil sediment
  - 2t light soy sauce
  - 2t dark soy sauce
  - 1t vinegar
  - 1t sesame oil
  - 1t flour
  - 200g minced pork
- 250ml chicken stock  
1T oyster sauce  
thick slice of ginger, bruised
- 1 green onion, sliced into rings  
1t sesame oil  
1t potato flour



- Cut the tofu into 16 triangles and set onto tea towel to dry out. Mix together the filling.
- Carve out small pockets from the tofu. (Slice down one side at first and curve sharply towards the other side near the bottom. Flip the triangle and repeat down the other side. Scoop out the tofu centre.) Stuff the tofu triangles with the filling (~2t each).
- (You can mix the leftover stuffing and tofu you carved out together, and fry them up as little patties, serving them with soy sauce.)
- Fry the triangles in 4T oil, meat side down first, until golden brown on all sides. Drain on paper towels.
- Simmer the sauce ingredients, together with the tofu pieces, for 8min. Move the tofu to a serving dish, remove the ginger slice. Add 1t sesame oil and 1t potato flour to the sauce to thicken it, add the green onion rings, and pour over the tofu. Serve right away.



# Spicy tofu skin ribbons

This is what noodles should taste like – the texture is sublime, chewy and slightly springy, too. The sauce is a classic combination of ingredients and works perfectly well, the sugar adding some caramelisation to the ribbons.

Serve it with green onions to keep the focus on the tofu skin, or with the leafy greens for a meal in a bowl, noting that the slightly bitter greens with their moisture do take away a bit from the pure salty-oily-hot-sour-chewy-springy goodness of the classic dish.

*serves 4*  
1 packet of tofu skin, 230g  
1T sugar  
4T soy sauce  
1T vinegar  
2t sesame oil  
3T chili oil  
3 green onion, sliced diagonally or 400g sliced Chinese leafy greens



Cut the tofu skin into narrow strips. Mix the seasonings together, except the green onion.

Fry the tofu skin in two batches with 1-2T oil each, making sure to get a bit of a scorch on them.

Toss with the seasonings, return to the pan, and fry for 2min. (If using, add the leafy greens and fry until just wilted.) Taste, and if the ribbons are still too rubbery, add 2T water and repeat the process. Mix in the green onion and serve.



# Hot and sour tofu

I've really started enjoying sour flavours over the last six months or so. If you've got a pantry stocked with Chinese condiments and such, then this dish comes together in no time at all, and it is so very satisfying.

The sichuan preserved vegetable is sold as such (mystery veg, rather better than mystery meat, at least) in Chinese supermarkets. The Chevra or Bombay mix you should be able to get at any supermarket or, failing that, your local corner store.

Gently simmer scoops of the tofu. Mix other ingredients together, add the drained tofu, mix gently, and scatter over the garnishes.



- serves 4*
- 300g silken tofu
  - 1T vinegar
  - 1T soy sauce
  - 2T chicken stock
  - 2T chili oil, with 1T sediment
  - 1t sesame oil
  - 2 spring onions, sliced
  - 1/2t garlic, chopped
  - 3T Sichuan preserved vegetable, chopped

- Garnish:
- 3T Sichuan preserved vegetable, chopped
  - 2 spring onions, sliced
  - Handful of chevra mix (Bombay mix)

# Steamed almond and orange silken tofu with ginger syrup

If you enjoy tofu, then this is an interesting dessert to try. I like to make it occasionally, but I can't quite pin down the appeal.

- serves 4*
- Soft silken tofu, 250g
  - 1t orange essence
  - 1t almond essence
  - 2T sugar
  - 2T water
  - 1t grated ginger

Blend the tofu together with the essences, simmer the water, sugar, and ginger together into a syrup and blend in also. Pour into a bowl, steam until set (~15min).



# Soy seasoned tofu (Doobu Jorim)

Salty and toothsome tofu. Pan-frying the tofu gets you a crispy coating over a soft, velvety interior. The salty, sour, sweet sauce thickens on the fire and then coats, almost glazes the pieces of tofu. Bold & impressive flavours and textures here.



serves 4  
4T soy sauce  
1t grated garlic,  
1/2 t red chilli powder  
1T sesame seeds  
1T sugar  
4 green onions, chopped finely  
1T rice vinegar  
1/2t sesame oil  
1 block of tofu (500g)  
6T flour  
3+2T cooking oil  
optionally, extra sesame seeds and  
chopped green onions for garnish



Mix all the sauce ingredients together. Heat a frying pan with the first 3T of oil. Cut the tofu into 18 slices (into thirds, halve, and into thirds again). Spread out over tea towel and pat dry.

Dredge the tofu slices in the flour and place in the pan. Fry until the bottoms are crispy and golden brown (check after 5 minutes or so). Add the additional 2T oil, flip the tofu slices individually with a fork, and fry the other side until golden brown.

Spoon all the soy seasoning onto the tofu slices and simmer until liquid is mostly gone. Gently transfer the tofu to a serving plate and, if desired, garnish with green onion and sesame seeds.

# Tofu with kimchi and pork belly

Tofu, kimchi, and pork belly. They're all good by themselves, they're excellent together. That's pretty much it.



Cut the tofu into matchbooks and let soak in the hot, salted water.  
Chop the kimchi into 1" pieces and season with the sugar and chili pepper.

Fry the pork belly, letting the fat render, until browned and slightly crispy. Add the garlic and chili, add the kimchi, and fry for 5min. Add the green onion.

Mound the kimchi on a plate, arrange the tofu around it, sprinkle latter with black sesame seeds.



*serves 4*

1 block of tofu (500g)

1 1/2t salt

2 cups boiling water

500g cabbage kimchi

1t sugar

2-3t chili powder

200-250g pork belly, without skin, cut into 3mm thick and 4cm long pieces (alternatively, get thinly sliced pork belly to begin with)

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 chili, chopped into rings (optional)

kimchi pickling liquid, if any

3 green onions, cut into rings

1/2t sesame oil

toasted black sesame seeds, for garnish (optional)





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The food



The photos