

Tofu

Tofu is one of the ultimate convenience foods – quick and easy to use in a wide variety of dishes. It is highly nutritious and easily digested. Tofu is made by coagulating fresh soymilk to form curds, in much the same way that cottage cheese is made from cow’s milk. The curds are pressed to expel excess liquid and then formed into blocks of tofu.

Kinds of Tofu

There are many varieties of tofu, but in most supermarkets you will find either regular tofu, which comes in refrigerated tubs, or silken tofu, which is available in aseptic packages on the shelf. Depending on how much water is expelled, the tofu will be soft, firm, or extra firm. In many recipes you can use any of the types of tofu that you prefer. Firm or extra firm regular tofu is excellent for grilling or pan frying because it holds its shape well. Silken tofu is wonderful in dips, spreads, and smoothies because it has a creamy texture.

Tofu Nutrition

Tofu is high in soy protein and rich in many nutrients. Tofu that has been coagulated with calcium sulfate will be very high in calcium – check the Nutrition Facts label. The amount of water in the tofu will also affect the nutritional value because the more water there is in a piece of tofu, the less soy there is.

3 oz. piece	calories	protein	fat	carbohydrate	fiber	isoflavones
firm tofu	123	13.4 g	7.4 g	3.6 g	2 g	25 mg
firm silken tofu	53	5.9 g	2.3 g	2 g	0.1 g	28 mg
soft silken tofu	47	4.1 g	2.3 g	2.5 g	0.1 g	29 mg

Storing Tofu

Tofu is perishable and should be used by the date stamped on the package. Regular tofu needs to be refrigerated. Once the package has been opened, store the tofu in clean water in the refrigerator and use within a few days. Aseptically packaged tofu can be stored on the shelf but, once it is opened, it must also be refrigerated and used within a few days.

Tips for Using Tofu

- Cut blocks of regular tofu in serving size pieces and let them sit briefly in your favorite marinade. They will soak up the flavor. You can grill, bake, or pan fry the slices.
- Regular (not silken) tofu can be frozen. When defrosted, it will have a chewy, meatlike texture. Thaw the frozen tofu in the refrigerator, a tub of cold water, or the microwave. Press out the excess liquid and crumble the tofu to use with or instead of ground meat in casseroles, tacos, or stews.
- Purée silken tofu to use as a base for your favorite dips and spreads. Mix it with your favorite seasonings and stir in some low-fat sour cream or mayonnaise if you wish.
- Make a wonderful shake by blending silken tofu with juice and frozen berries. Yum!

Vegetarian Lasagna

Your favorite ready-made or homemade sauce works well in this lasagna that was designed for minimum preparation time.

2 jars (26 oz. each) of prepared spaghetti sauce
1 lb. lasagna noodles, uncooked
1 lb. regular tofu, mashed
4 cups part-skim mozzarella cheese
1 cup water
grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

- Preheat oven to 350°.
 - Cover bottom of baking pan (9-inch x 13-inch or 10-inch x 15-inch) with portion of sauce. Put a layer of uncooked lasagna noodles on top of sauce. Add another layer of sauce on top of noodles, then a layer of tofu and then a layer of cheese. Continue layering noodles, sauce, tofu, and cheese, ending with cheese.
 - Use 1 cup water to rinse the sauce jars and pour the mixture around outside edge of the baking pan.
 - Cover with foil and bake at 350° for 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes, until noodles are tender. Uncover and bake for an additional 15 minutes to allow the sauce to thicken.
 - Let the lasagna stand for 10 minutes before cutting and serving. If desired, sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese.
- Note: Vegetables may be added to the sauce. Fat content can be reduced by replacing some of the cheese with fat-free mozzarella or with soy cheese.

Yield: 12 servings

393 calories, 16 g fat (5.9 g sat fat), 42 g carb, 22 g pro (6 g soy pro)

Exchanges: 1-1/2 starch, 1 milk, 1 vegetable, 1 lean meat, 2 fat

Recipe from *Tofu in the American Kitchen*, which may be ordered at www.soyfoodsillinois.uiuc.edu.

Frosty Strawberry Shake

1-1/2 cups orange juice, chilled
1 pkg. (12.3 oz.) silken tofu, chilled
1 banana
8 oz. individually frozen strawberries (do not thaw)
1 to 2 Tbsp. honey or sugar (optional)

- Put orange juice, silken tofu and banana into blender container and whirl until smooth. Add frozen strawberries and blend well, stopping to scrape down sides as needed. Sweeten if desired.

Yield: 4 servings

Serving Size: 1 cup

142 calories, 3 g fat (0.4 g sat fat), 7 g pro, 24 g carb

Exchanges: 1-1/2 fruit, 1 lean meat

Recipe from *Simply Soy: A Variety of Choices*
(<http://www.soyfoods.com/SimplySoy>)

Breakfast Bagel Spread

1 pkg (12.3 oz) silken tofu
3 Tbs honey
1 tsp vanilla
1/8 tsp cinnamon
1 can (8 oz) crushed pineapple, very well drained
1/2 cup chopped pitted dates

- Combine silken tofu, honey, vanilla and cinnamon in a blender container and whirl until smooth, stopping to scrape down sides of container as necessary.
- Put tofu mixture into a small bowl and stir in the pineapple and dates. Serve with bagels, muffins, pancakes or other breakfast breads, or spread on apple slices. This is also good on graham crackers for a snack or dessert.

Yield: 2 cups

Serving size: 1/4 cup

100 calories, 1 g fat (0 g sat fat), 3 g pro, 20 g carb

Exchanges: 1-1/3 fruit, 1/2 lean meat

Recipe from *Simply Soy: A Variety of Choices*
(<http://www.soyfoods.com/SimplySoy>)

Chinese Noodles

1/3 cup hoisin sauce*
1 Tbs lower-sodium soy sauce
1 Tbs rice vinegar
8 oz firm tofu, in 1/2" cubes
8 oz angel hair pasta, broken in half and cooked
2 tsp dark sesame oil
1 cup snow peas, in 1" pieces
1 cup small broccoli florets
1 cup carrots, in thin half rounds
1/2 cup onion, in thin half rounds
1 Tbs sesame seeds (optional garnish)

- In a small bowl whisk together the hoisin sauce, soy sauce and rice vinegar. Reserve 2 Tbs. Pour the rest over the tofu and sauté the tofu in a nonstick frying pan until the tofu is glazed. Set aside.

- Toss the cooked pasta with the sesame oil. Add the reserved marinade and toss again.

- Steam or microwave the snow peas, broccoli, carrots and until crisp tender. Add them along with the tofu to the pasta and gently mix. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired. Serve hot or cold.

**Chinese hoisin sauce, a soybean-based cooking and dipping sauce, is available in Asian groceries and many supermarkets.*

Yield: 8 servings

Serving size: 1 cup

183 cal, 4 g fat (0.6 g sat fat), 8 g pro, 30 g carb

Exchanges: 1-1/2 starch, 1 vegetable, 1/2 medium-fat meat

Recipe from *Simply Soy: A Variety of Choices*
(<http://www.soyfoods.com/SimplySoy>)