

Tofu: Nutritious and Versatile

*Jaime Schwartz, R.D., Research Assistant, Family & Community Health Sciences &
Debby Zigun, Former Mercer County Family & Community & Health Sciences Educator*

What is Tofu?

Tofu (pronounced TOEfoo), also known as soybean curd, is a white, soft, custard-like food. It was first used in China around 200 B.C. and legend has it that the first batch of tofu was created by accident. Tofu is a staple of the Asian diet and has gained popularity in America, especially with vegetarians who substitute it for meat in recipes.

How is Tofu Made?

Soybeans are soaked in water until soft and then drained. Next they are pureed, mixed with water, steam cooked and strained to remove pulp. Soy milk results and a curdling agent, such as vinegar, lemon juice, calcium sulfate, or magnesium chloride, is added which causes the soy curds to float to the top. The curds are gently scooped off and ladled into a container lined with cheese cloth. A small weight is placed on the lid of the container and allowed to sit for several hours. The result is a block of tofu.



How is Tofu Used?

Tofu, in much of Asia, is like the potato in the United States. Just as the potato can be eaten

whole, mashed, cut into cubes, mixed with other ingredients, and prepared a number of ways, tofu can be served in these same ways. Tofu is bland and almost tasteless, but it acts like a sponge and soaks up flavors. There are two categories of tofu:

- Firm tofu is dense and solid. It holds up well in stir fry dishes, soups, or on the grill and also can be scrambled, pickled, smoked, baked, or barbecued.
- Silken tofu is made using a heating process that results in a creamy, custard-like product. It is an ideal additive for dressings, sauces, and in dairy-free versions of ice cream or cheese cake. It is best eaten raw or used in soups, most notable miso soup. Silken tofu also works well in pureed or blended dishes. It may be found in American grocery stores under the name Soft Tofu.

Where and How is Tofu Purchased?

Tofu is usually found in the produce section of the grocery store. However, in some stores it can be found in the dairy or deli section. It is also available in many health food stores. Tofu can be purchased in several forms:

- Solid in water-filled tubs or vacuum packs
- Fresh in bulk from water-filled tubs
- Sealed brick-shaped packages
- Powder

How Should Tofu be Stored?

Tofu should be kept refrigerated and used before the expiration date on the package. After opening a packaged tub or purchasing fresh tofu, the tofu should be rinsed with fresh water and patted dry before using. Leftover tofu should be immersed in water and stored in a covered container. The water should be changed daily and the tofu should be used within one week. Tofu also can be drained, wrapped in foil or plastic, and frozen. Frozen tofu can be stored for up to five months. Thawed tofu has a caramel color with a chewy and meaty texture that readily soaks up marinade sauces and is great for the grill. While most tofu has a short shelf life, silken tofu that is sold in foil packages is ultra-pasteurized and has a very long shelf life.

What is Tofu's Nutritional Value?

Tofu is rich in high-quality protein. In fact, it is a 'complete' protein, which means it contains all nine amino acids the body cannot make but must have to build and repair tissues. It is also a good source of B-vitamins and iron. When the curdling agent used to make tofu is calcium salt, the tofu is an excellent source of calcium. Tofu is low in saturated fat and contains no cholesterol. The softer the tofu, the lower the fat content. Tofu is also very low in sodium.

Check the NUTRITION FACTS on the food label.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/5 block (90g)	
Servings Per Container 5	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 80	Calories from Fat 35
%Daily Value *	
Total Fat 4g	6%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%
Polyunsaturated Fat 2g	
Monounsaturated Fat 1g	
Cholesterol 0mg	
Sodium 10mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 2g	0%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 9g	18%
Vitamin A 0%	• Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 15%	• Iron 6%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet

FIRM TOFU
 INGREDIENTS: WELL WATER, ORGANICALLY GROWN SOYBEANS*, CALCIUM SULFATE, MAGNESIUM CHLORIDE (NIGARI), A NATURAL COAGULANT. *ORGANICALLY GROWN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ORGANIC FOODS ACT OF 1990.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/5 block (90g)	
Servings Per Container 5	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 50	Calories from Fat 20
%Daily Value *	
Total Fat 2g	3%
Saturated Fat 0g	3%
Polyunsaturated Fat 1.5g	
Monounsaturated Fat .5g	
Cholesterol 0mg	
Sodium 10mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 2g	1%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 0%	• Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 6%	• Iron 4%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet

SILKEN TOFU
 INGREDIENTS: WELL WATER, ORGANICALLY GROWN SOYBEANS*, CALCIUM SULFATE, MAGNESIUM CHLORIDE (NIGARI), A NATURAL COAGULANT. *ORGANICALLY GROWN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ORGANIC FOODS ACT OF 1990.

What are the Health Benefits of Soybeans?

A group of plant hormones, called phytoestrogens, are thought to contribute many health benefits, including:



Photo Credit: Peter Nitzsche, Soybean Field

- Lowering the risk of heart disease by reducing the blood levels of the "bad" LDL cholesterol while maintaining levels of "good" HDL cholesterol.
- Reducing the risk of osteoporosis, a disease associated with reduced bone density and increased bone fractures.
- Lowering rates of breast cancer and prostate cancer.
- Reducing menopausal symptoms including mood swings, hot flashes, and thinning vaginal tissue.

Based on studies of Asian eating habits, as little as two ounces of soy foods daily can provide these benefits.

Tips for Introducing Tofu to Your Family

- Substitute pureed silken tofu for sour cream, cream cheese, ricotta cheese or mayonnaise in recipes.
- Add chunks of firm tofu to soups and stews.
- Crumble tofu and add it to chili sauce or meatloaf.
- Blend tofu with melted chocolate chips and sweetener to make a chocolate cream pie.
- Create tofu burgers with mashed tofu, bread crumbs, chopped onions, and seasonings.
- Blend dried onion soup mix into silken tofu for a cholesterol-free onion dip.
- Puree tofu with fruits and vegetables to make a good first protein food for infants.

Key Points to Remember about Tofu:

1. Tofu is tasteless alone so it adapts to any dish and takes on that unique flavor.
2. It should be used before the expiration date on the package. Once opened, store it in a water-filled container and use within one week.
3. It is a terrific source of protein and has a lot less fat, saturated fat, and no cholesterol compared to meat, poultry, and fish.
4. Benefits of eating tofu and other foods made from soybeans include reduced risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, certain cancers, and menopausal symptoms.

5. Tofu is versatile! Not only can tofu be used as an entree, but it also works well in dips, salad dressings, and even desserts.

Tofu Recipe Ideas!

Chocolate Mousse

- 1 cup chocolate chips
 - 1 package (10.5 ounces) silken firm tofu
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - 1 cup sliced strawberries
1. Melt chocolate chips in a double boiler or microwave. Set aside.
 2. In a blender or processor, blend tofu and vanilla until smooth.
 3. Add melted chips and blend until creamy.
 4. Pour over sliced strawberries.
 5. Chill until firm.

Serves 4 (274 calories)

Variations: Other fruits can be substituted. Try pouring the filling into a pie crust.

Ranch Vegetable Dip

- 1 package (10.5 ounces) silken tofu
 - 1 ounce package ranch-style salad dressing mix
 - ¾ cup reduced-calorie mayonnaise
1. Add all ingredients to a blender or food processor and mix.
 2. Chill before serving. Serve with fresh vegetables.

Serves 8 (111 calories)



Stir-fry Vegetable and Tofu

- ¼ cup low-sodium soy sauce
- ¾ cup water
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon oil or cooking spray
- 1 slice fresh ginger or ¼ teaspoon powdered ginger
- 1 clove garlic, sliced
- 1 package (10.5 ounces) firm tofu, cut in 1-inch cubes
- ½ cup sliced onion
- 1 cup chopped cabbage
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1½ cups cut broccoli
- crushed hot peppers

1. Combine soy sauce and water. Stir in cornstarch. Set aside mixture.
2. Spray a large frying pan with cooking spray or oil. Heat oil on high until hot.
3. Add ginger and garlic. Stir-fry for one minute.
4. Add cubed tofu and stir-fry until light brown. Remove tofu from pan and set aside.
5. Add vegetables and stir-fry 5 minutes. Add tofu to the pan.
6. Stir cornstarch mixture and pour over vegetables. Stir-fry until sauce thickens.
7. Add crushed hot peppers to taste.
8. Serve with rice.

Serves 4 (138 calories)

Variations: Vegetables can be changed to meet your preferences.



Chili

- 2 packages firm frozen tofu, thawed
- ¼ teaspoon oil
- 1 large onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon hot pepper sauce (optional)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 3 cups tomatoes
- 4 cups cooked kidney beans

1. Thaw tofu, press and crumble. Set aside.
2. Place oil, onion, and garlic in a skillet and saute until onions are tender.
3. Add tofu and saute another few minutes.
4. Place all ingredients in a large pot and simmer on low heat for one hour. Stir frequently.

Serves 4 (417 calories)

Silken Shake

- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 package silken tofu
- 2 cups cranberry juice
- 3 cups strawberries

1. Combine all ingredients until smooth in a blender.
2. Chill well.

Serves 2 (298 calories)

Variation: Any fresh or frozen fruit can be substituted for the strawberries.

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