

How to Love Tofu

...and why you should.

Given the choice between a juicy steak, a nice piece of fish or a few cubes of tofu, which would you choose? Let's put it this way...for most Americans, it's *not* the tofu.

If you've told yourself that you don't like tofu—or can't figure out how to add it to your diet—you're missing out on an amazingly healthy, delicious and economical food. Don't believe it? *Consider this...**

FACT #1: It's a protein powerhouse. Tofu is one of the highest-protein plant foods on the planet. Made from soybeans, the highest-protein bean there is, tofu gives you 21 g of protein per cup. It's also one of the few nonanimal food sources that is considered a complete protein, meaning it offers all of the essential amino acids needed in your diet.

Tofu is also a great source of calcium with 300 mg to 450 mg per cup when it's made with calcium sulfate, which provides more calcium than the other commonly used coagulating agent magnesium chloride (known as "nigari").

FACT #2: It tastes good...really. Tofu's neutral taste has gotten a bad rap. But this is what makes tofu so versatile in recipes—it soaks up the flavors of whatever sauce or other ingredients you toss it with.

FACT #3: Cost-wise, tofu is a cheaper calcium source than yogurt and a cheaper protein source than meat or fish. It's also an excellent meal stretcher, meaning that you can mix it with more expensive proteins—think two parts beef to one part tofu for burgers—without affecting the taste. And if you're still not convinced that you should

*Avoid tofu if you are allergic to soy or have kidney stones. Talk to your doctor first if you take medication for a thyroid condition.

Hollandaise-style ►
sauce made with tofu.

at least give tofu a try, take a look at the scientific evidence.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS: Regular tofu consumption has been linked to a decreased risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and other conditions, especially when this plant-based protein replaces part or all of the animal protein in a diet.

TOFU VARIETIES

When adding tofu to your diet, here are three main types, which vary mostly in water content...

• **Soft (or "silken") tofu** has the highest water content and makes an excellent dairy replacement in smoothies, dips and creamy sauces such as hollandaise.

• **Firm tofu** comes in block form and keeps its shape in stir-fries and curries.

• **Extra-firm tofu**, with its low water content, can be marinated, then grilled, roasted or stir-fried.

EXAMPLES: Marinate large steak-like slices, then grill and serve alone or on a salad. Or marinate cubed tofu, then stir-fry with veggies.

GO FOR NON-GMO: The vast majority of American soybean crops are genetically modified. But until more is known about the potentially harmful, long-term effects of genetic modification, I suggest you err on the side of caution and use non-GMO tofu whenever possible. Look for the "Non-GMO Project Verified" seal on packages...or simply buy organic—GMOs are not allowed in organic farming.

FOR EXTRA CONVENIENCE: You can now enjoy many tofu selections *as is*—no cooking required. More and more grocery stores now carry ready-to-eat baked tofu in bold flavors such as Italian or smoked...and a wide array of tofu-centric frozen



entrées and breakfast burritos. *Good brands:* SoyBoy, Wildwood SprouTofu and Twin Oaks. These companies all make organic, non-GMO, ready-to-eat tofu products. Check online for where to buy.

To start loving tofu, here's a delicious, super-easy recipe...

HOLLANDAISE-STYLE SAUCE

Try this recipe on eggs, poached salmon or roasted asparagus.**

- 4 ounces (about ½ cup) of silken tofu, drained
- 2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice, ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 Tablespoons plain unsweetened almond milk
- 1 Tablespoon tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ⅛ teaspoon sea salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cayenne

Puree all ingredients in a blender for one minute. In a small saucepan, simmer uncovered on medium-low heat. Stir occasionally until heated, then serve. *Servings:* Four. **BLH**

**Reprinted with permission from "Tasteovers by Jackie" by Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN.

Bottom Line/Health interviewed... Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN, a registered dietitian, classically trained chef and the author of *The With or Without Meat Cookbook* (American Diabetes Association) and *1,000 Low-Calorie Recipes* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). Her blog, "Tasteovers by Jackie" (JackieNewgent.com/recipe-blog) features healthy makeovers of favorite indulgences.



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