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Tomato Braised Tofu Shiitakes & Greens

Naturally Delicious Recipes • Janice Feuer-Haugen

Equally delicious served warm over rice, as the main element of a Buddha bowl, or served cold as a lettuce wrap or salad. The braising liquid—rich with mirin (Japanese fermented rice cooking wine), fresh ginger, garlic, soy and tomato—builds savory and fragrant flavor notes deep into the tofu. Enjoy Tomato Braised Tofu Shiitakes and Greens as a most deliciously satisfying, nutritious, protein-rich, plant-based entrée, side or snack.

Healthy Tofu?

It has been so many years since I ate tofu. A few months ago, I began feeling the need to add a bit more protein in my diet. I stopped, rather than pass by the recipe in my huge recipe binder that inspired Tomato Braised Tofu Shiitakes and Greens. After reading the recipe and looking into the health benefits of tofu, I decided to give tofu another try.

I discovered that nutrient-rich soy foods have an abundance of B vitamins, calcium, potassium, magnesium, and complete and high-quality protein.

Note: As soybean crops are usually both genetically modified and contaminated with pesticides, whenever possible, purchase organic tofu made from organic soy beans.

Soy is also known for having a high concentration of isoflavones—a milder plant form of estrogen. Thus, there is concern that soy foods may cause high-estrogen-based diseases, such as breast cancer, thyroid problems, and dementia. However, recent studies show that when consuming unprocessed forms of soy, and minimally processed tofu, the opposite may be true.

Here is what the Harvard Chan School of Public Health says about soy:

“There are many factors that make it difficult to construct blanket statements about the health effects of soy. Soy is a nutrient-dense source of protein that can safely be consumed several times a week, and is likely to provide health benefits—especially when eaten as an alternative to red and processed meat.”



Healthy Shiitakes?

Shiitakes are the second most widely cultivated mushroom variety in the world, second only to the common button and cremini mushrooms. Traditionally, shiitakes are used both as a culinary and a medicinal mushroom in Japan and in traditional Chinese medicine.

The name comes from the Japanese words *shii*, meaning “from a hardwood tree” and *take*, meaning “mushroom.” Thus, to say “shiitake mushrooms” is redundant.

Fresh shiitake, unlike dried rehydrated shiitakes, have a rich, almost buttery flavor and silken texture. Both, though, are a perfect example of umami, the fifth taste of “deliciousness.” Their presence adds flavor, texture and nutrition to soups, stir-fries and stews and salads. Nutritionally, shiitakes are a rich source of protein, fiber, minerals, and vitamins B1, B2, B12, C, D and niacin.

“If you’re looking for a superfood to support your immune system health and act as an overall health tonic, shiitakes... are a top choice. As a bonus, they impart a savory umami flavor to virtually any meal they touch.”

—GreenMedInfo Research Group



Recipe on next page...

Tomato Braised Tofu Shiitakes & Greens

This recipe can easily be doubled or tripled, or more. (Inspired by and adapted from a recipe I was given by good friend and excellent cook, Meira Dor, a very long time ago.)

- ☞ Serve warm over rice or as the main element in a Buddha bowl over your favorite grain or noodles. For the Buddha bowl, include fresh and cooked vegetables, and top with a sprinkling of Toasted Pumpkin, Sunflower, Sesame Seeds from the May/June 2021 issue.
- ☞ Serve chilled, wrapped in a leaf of lettuce, or as a salad on a bed of baby arugula or lettuce.
- ☞ Whereas lettuce wraps are fresh and quick, grain or Buddha bowls require more thought, as you combine layers of flavor, color, texture and comfort in each bowl.

*Makes 4-8 servings
Total time about 90 minutes*

INGREDIENTS

- 1 16-oz. pkg. firm organic tofu
- 1 teaspoon olive or avocado oil
- ½ tablespoon olive or avocado oil
- 1 medium onion, ¼-inch dice (about 2 cups)
- 2 cups celery, ¼-inch dice
- 1–2 large cloves of garlic, passed through a press
- 2 packed tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- ½ cup soy sauce
- Scant ¼ cup lite seasoned rice vinegar
- 3 tablespoons *mirin* (fermented-rice cooking wine)
- Scant 1 tablespoon *silan* (date syrup) or maple syrup
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 ½ cups water
- 4 ounces shiitakes, stems removed, caps quartered (3 ¾ cups)
- ½ pound Earthbound Farms Power Greens or other young mixed greens



Shiitake caps



Pressing the tofu



Baked tofu



Garnish vegetables

INSTRUCTIONS

1) With a medium heavy pot, lightly press the block of tofu in a paper towel or dish towel on a plate for about 10 minutes to remove excess liquid. This allows the tofu to take on the vibrant flavors of the braising liquid. Note: unless you prefer chewy tofu, press the tofu no longer than 10 minutes.

2) Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Line a rimmed baking pan with parchment paper. Cut the tofu into approximately ¾-inch pieces. Gently toss the tofu with the 1 teaspoon of oil and a pinch of salt directly on the baking pan. Then spread the tofu out in one layer on the prepared pan. Bake for 30 minutes, turning once after 15 minutes. When golden, remove from the oven and set aside.

3) While the tofu is baking, heat the ½ tablespoon of oil in a Dutch oven over medium low heat. Stir in the diced onion, cover the pan, and cook for 7 minutes.

4) Raise the heat to medium. Stir in the crushed garlic and celery. Cook uncovered for 5 minutes.

5) Stir in the minced ginger, tomato paste, soy sauce, rice vinegar, mirin, silan or maple syrup, cinnamon stick, bay leaf and the water. Bring the mixture to a boil. Stir in the cooked tofu and quartered shiitakes.

6) Lower the heat back to medium-low so the liquid simmers. Cook uncovered until the sauce is reduced by half, about 30 minutes.

7) If you are making Buddha bowls, prepare the fresh or lightly cooked vegetables while the braising liquid is reducing.

8) When the liquid has reduced, remove the bay leaf and cinnamon stick. Then, stir in the power greens. Cover the pot. Cook about 3 minutes, or just until the greens are tender.

9) Serve *Tomato Braised Tofu Shiitakes and Greens* hot, warm or chilled from the fridge. ■

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