

WHAT IS TOFU?

For anyone who does not know the correct pronunciation of tofu, it is pronounced **TOE** foo. Really gets your taste buds goin', doesn't it? Sorry, the other descriptions sound equally as bad. I mean you could call it bean curd if you want, but see what I mean? Tofu by any other name, would still be one of the most versatile, not to mention nutritious and healthful foods there is. If I may paraphrase *one more* time, "Well, Forrest, ya got 'cha deep-fried tofu, and ya got 'cha sautéed tofu, broiled tofu, baked tofu, marinated teriyaki tofu, tofu in short pants . . ." Tofu is really cool.

Do you realize how good tofu is for you?



I am asked so many questions about tofu, and how it's made. Well, let's see ... Little Miss Muffit sat on a tuffit, eating her curds and whey, when along came a ...

No, I have not completely lost my mind yet, I think. Curds and Whey? That's what tofu is! After all these years you finally discover that stuff Miss Muffit was politely eating while sitting on her tuffit, was T O F U! Okay, well it could have also been cheese, since they are processed virtually the same way.

Tofu is made from soybeans. You cook the beans, and the beans render "milk" to which you add a solidifier like nigari, (magnesium-chloride) which is extracted from deep sea water or *calcium sulfate. The solidifier forms curds (the little tofu cakes you buy in the store) and the liquid beneath the forming

curds is called whey. This is much like the process of making cheese from milk. Then you have to press it, and strain it, and it is better to just purchase it from the market, because otherwise, it's a lot of work. And who needs more work!?

I need to point out that firm tofu contains the following per serving, which is approximately four ounces, or 1/5 slice of the block:

80 calories 4 grams fat 7 grams protein 2 grams carbohydrates
*Calcium sulfate is an excellent source of non-dairy calcium.

Saturated fat is approximately 0.5 %. **Unsaturated fat** content is a little over 3%. Extra firm tofu contains the most calories and fat. Less firm=more water content=less fat and calories! As you can see, over 3/4 of the fat content is unsaturated fat which is actually good for you. Plus, low-fat tofu is now becoming more readily available. And always be sure you are buying non-GMO (non genetically modified) organic tofu. It will be properly displayed on the packaging.

***TVP** ON THE OTHER HAND, (textured vegetable protein), is defatted, dehydrated soy

flour which contains virtually zero fat. This is due to a process performed to extract the vegetable oil from the flour. It also provides excellent fiber and protein, and contains vitamins A, B6, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, iron, and amino acids, as in tofu. TVP contains approximately 82 calories per half cup serving, cooked.

Hard to beat, isn't it? But the best news of all is that soy products are cholesterol free, can help lower your cholesterol and help to fight off some forms of cancer.

BULGUR WHEAT contains per 1/2 cup cooked serving 75 calories and relatively no saturated fat. It also contains protein, fiber, potassium, calcium, and amino acids.

COUSCOUS is made from semolina wheat and contains 107 calories per 1/2 cup cooked serving and contains relatively no fat. It also contains potassium and calcium.

****NUTRITIONAL YEAST FLAKES** is a food yeast grown from molasses. (Not to be confused with Brewer's Yeast)- contains approximately 60 calories per 2 heaping tablespoons. Nutritional Yeast Flakes contain all the essential amino acids, and the following is just the tip of the iceberg per serving: approximately 8 grams of protein, 7 grams of carbohydrates, is rich with vitamins: B1, B2, B6, B12, folic acid, and has about 7 fat calories. Talk about a super-food!

TVP, Couscous, and Bulgur almost double in volume when cooked or rehydrated, so keep in mind if you want one cup of prepared TVP you will only need to measure out 1/2 cup dry mixture, as with Bulgur and CousCous.

*Can usually be found in the natural foods section of upscale grocery stores. It can always be found at health food stores.

** In general, this can only be found at a health food or whole foods store.

WHERE CAN I BUY TOFU?

You can find tofu in the produce section at just about grocery store these days. It's not just limited to your specialty shops anymore, although a larger variety can be found there.

Its texture ranges from silken, silken soft, and silken firm with a custard-like consistency due to higher water content. This type is best for making dips, desserts, and sauces. You can also purchase it in soft, firm, and extra firm. I seem to prefer the firm as opposed to the silken for the majority of my recipes. The packages are always clearly marked as to the texture of the tofu.

Most major supermarket chains now have tofu. If yours doesn't, then have the manager order it. That's always fun. Have you ever tried to explain tofu to someone who hasn't a clue, or doesn't understand what in the WORLD you are talking about? Good luck!

A WORD ABOUT SOY MILK

Many people are trying to cut back on dairy products, and I, for one, should follow their lead. I eat way too much cheese, but I love it. I do, however, drink a lot of soymilk. It's great on cereal, for making smoothies, or just for a nice afternoon snack with peanut butter crackers. But as far as baking, it just won't do! I have ruined more recipes cooking with soymilk, rather than whole milk. I have even tried a half milk-half soymilk combination, but have not yet found a suitable substitute. If you know of one, please let me know.

HOW DO I STORE TOFU?

Fresh tofu is usually packaged in water in a plastic tub/container. You can store it in the refrigerator in its original packaging until you're ready to use it. Be sure to notice the expiration date on the package. Once you remove the tofu from its original packaging to prepare it, you will need to store any unused tofu in a container, filling it with fresh tap water and changing the water on a daily basis.

If you want to purchase a bunch of tofu at once, you can freeze it. First remove it from the packaging, discard the water and completely drain tofu on paper towels or a wire rack. Place the tofu in a freezer proof plastic bag or container. You can even slice it, or cube it before freezing. You can also freeze it after you have cooked it. **Be sure to allow the tofu to completely thaw, and drain on paper towels before frying it.** If you are preparing a casserole, it's okay to add the unthawed tofu, because no preparation will be necessary, as it will thaw upon cooking.

Another thing I want to point out to you, is that the texture of tofu will change after it has been frozen. It will become a little "spongy" and tougher, which makes it great for soaking up marinades. It also makes for a better barbecued "burger," because it has become much firmer. Once frozen, tofu also changes to a golden/ amber color, so don't freak out, this is normal.

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

The following is a list of some of the many nutritional benefits you will receive from tofu:

- A great source of non-dairy calcium
- Lactose Free, dairy free and cholesterol free
- Contains vitamins A, E, B6, iron, potassium, protein and amino acids
- Proven to lower cholesterol due to Linoleic Acid
- Helps prevent heart disease

-*Contains phytoestrogens, which help deter breast cancer, prostate cancer and other types of cancer as well.

- It's even said that phytoestrogens may help to alleviate hot flashes in women somewhat, but since this is an extremely weak form of estrogen, it should not be used to replace any estrogen therapy you currently use. If that were true to the extent of needing nothing *other than* soy to alleviate this problem, then I should think the whole menopausal population would be consuming soy. **

Did you know that in Japan, Japanese men smoke twice as many cigarettes as Americans, yet their lung cancer rate is HALF that as in the USA? This is said to be attributed to the fact that Japanese men consume TWICE the amount of tofu in comparison to Americans!

* Source of reference pertaining to phytoestrogens and cholesterol obtained from *The American Institute for Cancer Research Newsletter*, fall 1995- Issue 49

A WORD ABOUT ORGANIC LABELING

To GMO or not to GMO- that is the question . . .

The term "Organic" is sometimes misunderstood. Basically because everything we eat *is* organic. But if you would like to know what it means in regard to food labeling, and whether food is genetically altered or non genetically altered, (gmo-vs-non gmo) which is a growing concern among many people, there are few websites dedicated to enlighten us all. The following is a link, which will take you to FDA guidelines and regulations regarding bioengineering of foods and labeling thereof:

<https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm059098.htm>

If you don't have a computer, you can use the one at your local library, or you can get the information by writing to:

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857-0001
1-888-463-6332

Not known for being single-minded, here is another view on this subject:

<https://www.organicconsumers.org/press/organic-consumers-association-responds-fda-push-voluntary-gmo-labeling-and-safety-claims>

Organic Consumers Association
6771 South Silver Hill Drive, Finland MN 55603
218-226-4164 · Fax: 218-353-7652

** Strictly based on my own opinion.