

# Health Insights Today

A SERVICE OF CLEVELAND CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE

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## The Great Soybean Controversy: Part III Ways to Enjoy Soy (with Recipes)

By Daniel Redwood, DC

*Part I of this series on soy summarized current scientific data on soy, focusing on what is currently known about its effects on cancer and heart disease. Part II explored two misleading media narratives, addressing unfounded but widely circulated concerns that despite its many beneficial effects, consuming normal quantities of soy might also have adverse effects on memory and masculinity. In this final installment of our three-part series, we look at ways to prepare and use soy products in ways that are healthful and enjoyable.*

**O**ne cardinal rule of nutritional counseling is that unless a food is enjoyable, most people will not consume it on a long-term basis no matter what health benefits it promises. Because soybeans (like beans of all types) are quite nutritious but have a bland taste, finding appealing soy recipes is a necessity.

Fortunately, over the past several centuries Asian (and now Western) cooks have solved this problem. Combining soy products such as tofu or tempeh with a variety of vegetables and grains, and adding spices including worldwide favorites like garlic and ginger, we have readily available answers to soy's taste challenges.

### Tofu and Tempeh

The United States is the world's largest producer of soybeans, yet most Americans have little familiarity with the ingenious Asian culinary inventions, tofu and tempeh. As William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi wrote in their 1970s classic, *The Book of Tofu*, it is as if most people in the world's largest wheat producing nation had never heard of bread.

### So what are these soyfoods?

**Tofu** is essentially a soy-based version of cheese, formed by coagulating soy milk and then pressing the curds into blocks. **Tempeh** starts with whole soy beans rather than soymilk, preparing them through a process that includes soaking, cooking and fermentation. Because tempeh is denser than tofu (due to its lower water content), its protein levels per portion are higher, at 18 grams per serving compared to 10 for tofu. With the World Health Organization recommending 56 grams of protein a day for average-sized men and 48 for women, these soy foods are highly valued sources of plant-based protein. Aside from their protein content, the soybeans that form the basis of tofu, tempeh and soy milk also are a good source of fiber, calcium, and vitamins B and E.

**Soymilk** is produced by soaking dry soybeans and grinding them with water. During preparation, it is brought to a boil, thus inactivating its trypsin inhibitor. Heating at or near the boiling point is continued for a period of time, 15-20 minutes. The protein content of soymilk is equivalent to that of cow's milk. Health-conscious people should be aware that, like all other foods, soymilk can be made better or worse by adding helpful or harmful substances. On the positive side, some soymilk is fortified with additional calcium and/or other vitamins and minerals. On the negative, the addition of sugar to many soymilk products diminishes their overall health benefits. The best choice is *unsweetened* soymilk. This is not the same as "plain" soymilk, which does contain added sugar and is marketed as "plain" in comparison to flavored soymilks which have vanilla or chocolate flavoring in addition to added sugar.

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March/April 2010, Volume 3, Issue 2

Page 2

## Soy Recipes

As someone who has eaten soy products regularly for many years, I want to provide a few of my favorite recipes. Aside from adding soymilk to 100% whole grain breakfast cereals at least a few times a week, I find that tofu and tempeh can be prepared in a variety of delicious ways.

### SWEET GINGER TOFU

*This is not only my all-time favorite tofu recipe, but my favorite recipe of any kind. Combined with a whole grain such as brown rice or soba noodles, and a steamed vegetable (broccoli, green beans, or any other), it forms the basis of a satisfying and filling meal. Preparation time (before placing in the oven) should not be more than ten minutes.*

#### Ingredients:

- ¼ cup naturally brewed soy sauce
- ¼ cup mirin (rice cooking wine)
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons minced ginger root
- 2 tablespoons light sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 pound firm tofu, rinsed, patted dry, and sliced ½ inch thick (a typical block of tofu yields 8 slices)

#### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a bowl, combine the soy sauce, mirin, vinegar, maple syrup, ginger, oil and garlic. Lay the tofu slices in a baking dish that can hold them in a single snug layer. Pour the marinade over the tofu. (This can be marinated or put straight into the oven).
3. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the tofu is nearly dry and well-browned.
4. Serve hot or cold.

From *The Modern Vegetarian Kitchen* (Harper Collins, 2000), by Peter Berley, with permission from the author.

### TEMPEH TANTRUM BURGERS

*Excellent on a whole grain bun with dijon mustard and/or ketchup.*

#### Ingredients:

- 8 ounces tempeh, cut into ½-inch dice
- ¾ cup chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- ¾ cup chopped walnuts
- ½ cup old-fashioned or quick-cooking oats
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano

# Health Insights Today

A SERVICE OF CLEVELAND CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE

March/April 2010, Volume 3, Issue 2

Page 3

½ teaspoon dried thyme  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
Dijon mustard  
4 whole grain burger rolls  
Sliced red onion, tomato, lettuce and avocado

## Directions:

1. In a medium saucepan of simmering water, cook the tempeh for 30 minutes. Drain and set aside to cool.
2. In a food processor, combine the onion and garlic and process until minced. Add the cooked tempeh, the walnuts, oats, parsley, oregano, thyme, salt and pepper. Process until well blended. Shape the mixture into 4 equal patties.
3. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the burgers and cook until cooked thoroughly and browned on both sides, about 7 minutes per side.
4. Serve desired amount of mustard onto each half of the rolls and layer each roll with lettuce, tomato, red onion and avocado as desired. Serve immediately.

From *1000 Vegan Recipes* (John Wiley and Sons, 2009), by Robin Robertson, with permission from the author. See more recipes at Robin Robertson's website, [www.globalvegankitchen.com](http://www.globalvegankitchen.com)

## TEMPEH AND VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

*Broccoli, red bell pepper and tempeh are a dynamic team, not only because they're immensely nutritious ingredients but also because they look and taste great in this spicy stir-fry.*

## Ingredients:

8 ounces tempeh  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 teaspoons cornstarch  
3 cups small broccoli florets  
2 tablespoons canola or grapeseed oil  
3 tablespoons soy sauce  
2 tablespoons water  
1 tablespoon mirin  
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper  
2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil  
1 medium red bell pepper, cut into ½-inch slices  
8 ounces white mushrooms, lightly rinsed, patted dry and cut into ½-inch slices  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
3 tablespoons minced green onions  
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

# Health Insights Today

A SERVICE OF CLEVELAND CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE

March/April 2010, Volume 3, Issue 2

Page 4

## Directions:

1. In a medium saucepan of simmering water, cook the tempeh for 30 minutes. Drain and pat dry, and set aside to cool. Cut the tempeh into ½-inch cubes and place in a shallow bowl. Season with salt and black pepper to taste, sprinkle with cornstarch, and toss to coat. Set aside.
2. Lightly steam the broccoli until almost tender, about 5 minutes. Run under cold water to stop the cooking process and retain the bright green color. Set aside.
3. In a large skillet or wok, heat 1 tablespoon of the canola oil over medium-high heat. Add the tempeh and stir until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove from the skillet and set aside.
4. In a small bowl, combine the soy sauce, water, mirin, crushed red pepper and sesame oil. Set aside.
5. Reheat the same skillet over medium-high heat. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of canola. Add the bell pepper and mushrooms and stir-fry until softened, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic, green onions, and ginger and stir-fry for 1 minute. Stir in the soy sauce mixture and stir-fry until the tempeh and vegetables are hot and well coated with the sauce. Serve immediately.

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**Daniel Redwood, DC, is Associate Professor at Cleveland Chiropractic College–Kansas City and Editor-in-Chief of *Health Insights Today* and *The Daily HIT*.**