

# Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

---

## COOKING WITH FIRM TOFU

June 2020

*Kristen Johnson, PhD, RDN, Assistant Professor and Nutrition Specialist  
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences*

Tofu is a lean protein food that is made from soybeans. Tofu is low in calories and saturated fat and provides nutrients like protein, calcium, iron and potassium. In addition to vitamins and minerals, soy products have isoflavones, compounds found in some plants, which have health benefits. The American Institute for Cancer Research encourages consumption of soy products because they are rich in nutrients and plant compounds that promote good health. Research does not suggest that eating soy products increases risk for breast cancer survivors. Research is mixed about whether or not eating soy products reduces cancer risk, in general.



Tofu comes in a variety of textures including firm and silken tofu. Firm tofu has a mild flavor and can take on the tastes and flavors of the foods to which it is added. Firm tofu can be added to a variety of dishes like salads, sandwiches, grain bowls and stir fry and pasta dishes. You can use this publication to find several recipes for cooking with firm tofu. Experiment with firm tofu to add a delicious punch of protein, vitamins and minerals to your favorite recipes.

## SAUTÉED TOFU

Servings: 4

16 ounces firm tofu

1 tablespoon olive oil

Wash hands with soap and water.

Drain the tofu and press to remove excess water. To press the tofu, use a tofu press or place the tofu on a plate and wrap loosely with a paper towel. Place a baking sheet or cutting board on top of the tofu. Place a heavy pan or kettle on top of the baking sheet or cutting board. Allow the tofu to sit in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes to press out excess water. Removing excess moisture from the tofu allows the tofu to become browned and crisp.

When most of the moisture has been removed from the tofu, cut the tofu into small, ½-inch cubes.

In a medium pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat.

When the oil is warm, add the tofu to the pan. Cook the tofu until the tofu is browned and crisp on the bottom.

Flip each piece of tofu and allow to cook until browned and firm.

Repeat until all sides are browned.

Serve as a dish by itself or added to salads, sandwiches, wraps, stir fries, grain bowls and other mixed dishes.

Nutrition information per serving: 99 calories; 8 g total fat (1 g saturated fat); 1 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 8 g protein; 1 g total sugars (0 g added sugar); 8 g protein; 123 mg calcium; 0 mcg Vitamin D; 136 mg potassium; 1.3 mg iron; 9 mg sodium.

## SPICED TOFU CRUMBLES

Servings: 5

8 ounces firm tofu, drained  
1 ½ tablespoons olive oil  
1 cup quinoa, cooked  
½ medium onion, scrubbed and diced  
2 cloves garlic, diced  
1 ½ teaspoons cumin  
1 teaspoon chili powder  
½ teaspoon dried oregano  
1 teaspoon garlic powder

Wash hands with soap and water. Crumble tofu by hand until the tofu is fine crumbles.

In a medium pan, heat the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the onions and garlic and sauté until the onions are translucent.

Add the tofu crumbles, quinoa, cumin, chili powder, oregano and garlic powder to the pan. Cook until the mixture is warmed.

The tofu crumbles can be served as a filling for tacos, burritos, quesadillas or the Tofu Taco Bake recipe listed below. The tofu crumbles make a great base for a protein bowl topped with a variety of toppings like beans, low-fat cheese, avocado, guacamole, salsa and other toppings.

Nutrition information per serving: 136 calories; 8 g total fat (1 g saturated fat); 10 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 1 g total sugars (0 g added sugar); 7 g protein; 96 mg calcium; 0 mcg Vitamin D; 89 mg potassium; 8 mg sodium.

## TOFU TACO BAKE

Servings: 12

Non-stick spray

Two 15.5-ounce cans low-sodium pinto beans, drained and rinsed

¼ cup water

½ teaspoon cumin

2 ¼ cups salsa

10 small corn tortillas

2 ½ cups spiced tofu crumbles (see recipe above)

1 ¼ cups shredded, reduced fat cheddar cheese

Optional toppings: salsa, guacamole, diced avocado, lime juice, low-fat sour cream or plain yogurt, hot sauce

Heat the oven to 350 F. Wash hands with soap and water. Evenly coat a 13-by-9-inch pan with non-stick spray.

In a medium bowl, mash the pinto beans with a fork until smooth. Add the water and cumin to the pinto beans and stir to combine.

Spread ¼ cup of salsa in a thin, even layer in the bottom of the 13-by-9-inch pan. Place 5 tortillas on top of the salsa, making sure that the bottom of the pan is fully covered by the tortillas. It may help to tear some tortillas in half to cover evenly.

Spread half of the bean mixture in an even layer on top of the tortillas. Sprinkle half of the tofu crumbles evenly across the bean mixture. Spread one cup of salsa evenly on top of the tofu crumbles.

Repeat using the remaining tortillas, beans, tofu crumbles and salsa. Sprinkle the top of the dish evenly with cheddar cheese.

Bake for 30 minutes or until the cheese is melted and the sauce is bubbling. Serve with optional toppings if desired.

Nutrition information per serving: 200 calories; 5 g total fat (1 g saturated fat); 28 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 3 g total sugar (0 g added sugar); 12 g protein; 164 mg calcium; 0 mcg Vitamin D; 406 mg potassium; 547 mg sodium.

## GINGER MARINATED TOFU

Servings: 4

16 ounces firm tofu, drained

1 tablespoon corn starch

1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ teaspoon ground ginger

¼ teaspoon black pepper

Non-stick spray

Heat the oven to 400 F. Wash hands with soap and water.

Drain the tofu and press to remove excess water. To press the tofu, use a tofu press or place the tofu on a plate and wrap loosely with a paper towel. Place a baking sheet or cutting board on top of the tofu. Place a heavy pan or kettle on top of the baking sheet or cutting board. Allow the tofu to sit in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes to press out excess water. Removing excess moisture from the tofu allows the tofu to become browned and crisp.

When most of the moisture has been removed from the tofu, cut the tofu into small, ½-inch cubes.

In a medium bowl, combine the corn starch, olive oil, soy sauce, ginger and black pepper.

Add the drained tofu to the bowl and toss, ensuring that the tofu is coated evenly with the sauce.

Marinate the tofu for 15 minutes in the refrigerator.

Evenly coat a sheet pan with non-stick spray and spread the tofu evenly across the pan.

Cook the tofu for 20 minutes, or until the bottom is browned and crisp.

With tongs, turn the tofu over and cook for another 20 minutes, or until the tofu is browned and crisp on the other side.

Serve the ginger marinated tofu as a lean protein dish by itself or added to stir fry dishes, salads or grain bowls.

Nutrition information per serving: 140 calories; 11 g total fat (2 g saturated fat); 4 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 8 g protein; 127 mg calcium; 0 mcg Vitamin D; 140 mg potassium; 1.3 mg iron; 154 mg sodium.

## TOFU GRAIN BOWL

Choose a grain base:

brown, white or basmati rice  
whole wheat noodles

rice noodles  
linguini

quinoa

Add one or more lean proteins:

ginger marinated tofu  
edamame  
garbanzo beans

sautéed tofu  
black beans

eggs  
peanuts

Add one or more toppings:

broccoli  
cauliflower  
water chestnuts  
squash

carrots  
snap peas  
zucchini  
orange segments

celery  
mushrooms  
asparagus  
pineapple chunks

Add a sauce (optional):

low-sodium soy sauce  
hot sauce

ginger dressing  
lime juice

peanut sauce

References:

American Institute for Cancer Research. AICR Food Facts. Foods that Fight Cancer. Soy. Accessed 12 May, 2020 at: <https://www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/food-facts/soy/#research>



**UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU**

D 118 06/20 20-0233 Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.