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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

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DEEP-FRIED AND FROZEN *TOFU*:

**Bruneian Potato, Fried *Tofu*, and Spinach Salad
with Sprouts and Peanut Sauce**

Deep-Fried Beancurd with Sweet Thai Sauce

**Molded and Chilled *Risotto* with Vegetarian Tuna Sauce *made with*
Vegetarian Slow Cooker *Risotto* with Parmesan Cheese**

Vietnamese *Tofu* Lettuce Wraps

Today you can buy *tofu* in almost any grocery store or natural food store. This was not the case in the 1970s on Long Island when we first committed to a vegetarian lifestyle. *Tofu* was available in Chinese groceries or Chinese restaurants in water-filled pails. There was no such designation as “soft,” “firm,” “extra firm,” or “silken.” You took what you could get and when you could get it. Ray would often stop at a restaurant close to work to buy *tofu* and, on occasion, because they did not have enough for their anticipated dinner crowd, they would tell him to stop back tomorrow. When he brought it home, we had to drain and press the small cakes overnight to get the soybean cakes firm enough to use for stir-frying or deep-frying.



A number of different coagulants are used to curdle soy milk to produce non-silken *tofu*. Calcium sulfate is generally preferred because it contributes calcium to a non-dairy vegetarian dish. The resultant curds are pressed into blocks. Silken *tofu* results from the coagulation of soy milk without curdling. This latter kind of *tofu* is made with seawater in Korea and in Japan. Nutritious by-products of *tofu* manufacture are also available but usually only in Asian groceries; *tofu* skin is a useful, dried product as is okara which is often used in soy meat analogue products.

The process of making and marketing *tofu* is no longer a cottage industry. This form of the nutritious soybean offers the vegetarian cook not only a fabulous protein source, since all essential amino acids are complemented in this magnificent bean, but also offers a product that can be used to make recipes as diverse as soy “mayonnaise” and soy “tuna.” The blandness of *tofu* is not a negative because it will take on the flavors to which it is exposed presenting a magnificent opportunity for creativity to soar.

There is a small paperback book in my library which I bought in the 1970s that purported to teach the reader everything about cooking with soy beancurd. Of course, this “hippie age” publication is just a curiosity today, including its unfounded admonition to “never freeze *tofu*.” We now know that freezing *tofu* will change the texture giving you another blank canvas to consider. Both freezing and deep-frying change the texture of the soft, custardy *tofu*. These two techniques, which have been around since the late 1970s as documented in a book written in 1981 by fellow Rochesterian Christina Clark, can help expand your *tofu* repertoire.

BRUNEIAN POTATO, FRIED *TOFU*, AND SPINACH SALAD WITH SPROUTS AND PEANUT SAUCE

TPT - 6 hours and 41 minutes;
5 hours = *tofu* draining period;
1 hour = chilling period

Cold vegetable platters such as this can be found in cuisines throughout the island nations of Southeast Asia. In a hot climate such a salad not only stimulates the taste buds but also delivers concentrated nutrition.

1 package (12.3 ounces) *extra firm silken tofu*

6 tablespoons *high heat safflower or sunflower oil*

3 ounces baby spinach—well-washed and trimmed

1 head baby *bok choy*—well-washed, trimmed, and chopped

2 tablespoons water

1 medium potato—boiled, chilled, and cut into bite-sized chunks

1 cup mung bean sprouts—very well-washed and any brown tips removed*

DRESSING;

2 garlic cloves—*very finely* chopped

2 tablespoons freshly ground, *unsalted, additive-free* peanut butter—smooth or chunky, as preferred—*brought to room temperature*

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice

2 tablespoons water

2 teaspoons *tamari* soy sauce

2 teaspoons *light* brown sugar

Pinch ground red pepper (cayenne), or to taste

Wrap soybean curd cakes in a cotton tea towel and place on countertop. Place bread board or other flat weight on top. Allow to drain for 2 hours. Remove weight, unwrap bean curd, rewrap bean curd in a dry cotton tea towel, place again on countertop and again press with weights—this time for 3 additional hours. Unwrap bean curd. Pat it dry. Cut into 1/2-inch cubes.

In a deep skillet or wok set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, heat oil. When hot, fry cubes of *tofu* until lightly brown on all sides. Remove from oil to paper toweling to drain excess oil.

In a large saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine spinach, *bok choy*, and water. Cook for about 6 minutes, or until vegetables are wilted. Drain well. Place in the middle of a large platter.

Pile bean sprouts next to the steamed greens.

Arrange cooked potatoes at one end of the platter. Arrange fried *tofu* at the other end of the platters. Place in the refrigerator to chill thoroughly—at least 1 hour.

In the container of the electric blender, combine *very finely* chopped garlic, peanut butter, lime juice, water, soy sauce, brown sugar, and ground red pepper (cayenne). Blend until smooth. Pour over the chilled vegetables.

Serve at once.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Notes: *Since sprouts can often deliver both bacteria and molds to your plate, be very sure to check carefully before using, i. e., smell for mold and look for any decay. If you think they are relatively clean, then rinse very well before using.

This recipe can be halved or doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 7.1 g.; FAT = 8.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.9 g.;
CALORIES = 144; CALORIES FROM FAT = 51%

DEEP – FRIED BEANCURD WITH SWEET THAI SAUCE

TPT - 30 minutes

You do not have to scare yourself to death with the daunting task of preparing a Chinese banquet but you can stick your toe into eastern entertaining by preparing this appetizer which you can follow with a big, complex stir-fry.

2 firm, low-fat beancurd cakes (tofu)

SWEET THAI DIPPING SAUCE;

2 1/2 tablespoons tamari soy sauce*
2 tablespoons Thai sweet chili sauce*
2 tablespoons raspberry sauce**
1 tablespoon garlic oil
2 teaspoons very finely chopped fresh gingerroot
Pinch Korean ground red pepper***

High-heat safflower or sunflower oil****

**1 scallion—white and light green portions—trimmed,
well-rinsed, and thinly sliced**

Cut the beancurd cake in half the long way. Cut each half crosswise into eight pieces. Place on paper toweling and pat dry.

Place a dinner plate on a warming tray heated to MEDIUM. Set a small bowl, suitable for dipping, in the middle of the plate. In the bowl, combine soy sauce, Thai sweet chili sauce, raspberry sauce, garlic oil, *finely* chopped gingerroot, and Korean ground red pepper. Using a wire whisk, combine thoroughly.

Pour about 1/2 inch of oil into a wok or 1/4-inch of oil into a large, deep skillet set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat. Fry slices of beancurd, a few at a time, until crisp and browned. Transfer to *dry* paper toweling to dry. Scatter on plate around dipping bowl.

Scatter scallion slices over.

Serve at once. Provide paper napkins and little cocktail forks for dipping.

Adequate for 6 people
as an appetizer course



Notes: *Several brands of *tamari* soy sauce and Thai sweet chili sauce can be found in most Asian groceries.

**A very useful product called Raspberry Enlightenment can be ordered from Penzey's Spices at Penzeys.com. It is a sweet raspberry sauce, thickened with tapioca.

***Korean ground red pepper, also available in most Asian groceries, can often be too hot for Western taste. Start with a pinch and work up to your tolerance level. Ground red pepper (cayenne) can be substituted, if necessary.

****Instead of throwing out the oil after you have used to deep-fry or have it go rancid in your cupboard before you use it again, allow it to cool, remove any bits of food that might still be in the oil by pouring it through a fine sieve several times, pour the filtered oil into a freezer container or canning jar with a tightly-fitting lid, and freeze until you need it again. I have used frozen oil for deep-frying as much as six months later.

This recipe can be halved, when required.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 7.0 g.; FAT = 5.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 5.5g.;
CALORIES = 98; CALORIES FROM FAT = 53%

MOLDED AND CHILLED RISOTTO WITH VEGETARIAN TUNA SAUCE

Risotto Tonnato

TPT – 21 hours and 12 minutes
[22 hours and 33 minutes if you have to prepare the *risotto*];
8 hours = overnight *tofu* freezing period;
8 hours = *tofu* pressing period;
2 hours and 21 minutes = *risotto* cooking period;
2 hours = *risotto* molding period

Based on a classic cold summer dish of sliced cold veal with tuna sauce, popular in both Lombardy and the Piedmont, this beautiful vegetarian entrée is not nearly as complicated as it might seem. If you have tried the previous two recipes or the recipe for “Soy ‘Tuna’ Salad” which appears on pages 66-67 of Volume II of my international cookbook, “A World-wide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America’s Immigrant Soul,” then you already know how to change the texture of tofu through freezing. The freezing and pressing time periods can easily be planned into any schedule. You can save time with the overnight tofu freezing if you keep a couple of packages of silken tofu in the freezer.

Unlike risotto “the classic way,” the slow cooker risotto will demand much less of your time. The creamy risotto that results, when molded, is a perfect foil for the tuna sauce.

TOFU “TUNA” SAUCE PREPARATION:

1 package (10.5 ounces) extra firm silken tofu

1/4 cup calorie-reduced or light mayonnaise

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 teaspoons tamari soy sauce

1/2 teaspoon kelp powder or ground sea vegetable

2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon chopped preserved capers

Pinch chili powder

**1 recipe VEGETARIAN SLOW COOKER
RISOTTO WITH PARMESAN CHEESE
(Risotto alla Parmigiana) [see recipe which follows]**

5 pitted black olives—sliced

Freeze the package of *tofu* overnight.

In the morning, bring the frozen *tofu* to room temperature. Remove the frozen *tofu* from the package and wrap it in several cotton tea towels. Place a bread board on top and allow the *tofu* to drain for an additional 8 hours. Change the towels when they become too wet. Refrigerate, wrapped in towels, until required.

Turn the block of soy beancurd into a mixing bowl. Using a fork, shred the *tofu* into tuna like shreds. Set aside briefly.

In a small bowl combine mayonnaise, olive oil, soy sauce, seaweed powder, lemon juice, capers, and chili powder. Using a small wire whisk, blend until smooth. Add to shredded *tofu*. Fold gently so as not to destroy the texture of the *tofu*. Refrigerate until required.

Turn the cooked *risotto* into an oiled mold of choice*. Pack it down well. Refrigerate for at least two hours. Unmold onto a chilled platter or plate. Spoon some of the prepared *tofu* “tuna” sauce over. Turn the rest into a small serving bowl. Garnish the *risotto* mold with olive slices. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve. Return leftovers to the refrigerator.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Note: *I often halve the *risotto* for the two of us and make individual molds. Leftover “tuna” sauce makes a nice *pita* filling for lunch the next day.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.9 g.; FAT = 9.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.8 g.;

CALORIES = 112; CALORIES FROM FAT = 76%

**VEGETARIAN SLOW COOKER RISOTTO
WITH PARMESAN CHEESE**

Risotto alla Parmigiana

TPT - 1 hour and 21 minutes
[slow cooker: about 1 hour]

Risotto is best if it is made using short-grained Arborio rice, grown in the northern Italian agricultural provinces of Piemonte, Toscana, and Lombardia. Rice grains taken from this area of Italy were brought to the United States by Thomas Jefferson in 1787, in a jacket pocket it is said, in violation of the stringent Italian law of the period. Those small grains became the seeds of the ultimately successful rice-growing industry of the American South. However, the American varieties of rice found in most grocery chain stores should not be substituted for the short-grained, stubby Italian rice, if you want the best tasting risotto. Making risotto the classic Italian way is tedious and, as a consequence, I found myself making it less and less until I converted my favorite risotto recipes to a slow cooker method. The rich, creamy texture is almost as perfect as the labor intensive recipe I used to use.



4 cups vegetarian stock of choice
1/2 cup dry white wine

2 teaspoons butter
2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
3 shallots—peeled and finely chopped

1 cup short-grained, Italian Arborio rice*

1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese**

Preheat slow cooker to HIGH.

Place saucepan containing stock and wine over *MEDIUM* heat. Bring the liquid to the simmer.

In a large skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, heat the 2 teaspoonfuls of butter and oil. Add *finely* chopped shallots. Sauté until shallots are soft and translucent, *being careful not to allow shallot to brown*. Turn the sautéed shallots with residual oil and butter into the bowl of the slow cooker. Using a basting brush, spread the oil around, coating the sides of the slow cooker bowl.

Add rice and 1/2 cupful of *hot* stock–wine mixture. Using a wooden spoon, *stir constantly*, until the rice absorbs all of the stock and there is a crackling sound. *Be careful not to allow the rice to stick to the bottom of the bowl*. Then, add another 1/2 cupful of *hot* stock and, again, *stir constantly* until the rice absorbs all of the broth. Add remained of stock–wine mixture. Stir well. Cover and cook for about 1 hour, or until all of the liquid has been absorbed. Stir occasionally and add more liquid, if necessary.

Stir in grated Parmesan cheese.

Turn into a heated serving bowl, stir in grated Parmesan cheese, and keep warm on a warming tray until ready to serve.

Yields 8 servings
adequate for 4 people

Notes: *Short-grained *Arborio* rice is available in Italian groceries, food specialty stores, natural food stores, and from specialty mail order firms.

**Use the very best, aged, genuine *parmigiano-reggiano* cheese. There is no substitute!

This recipe can be halved, when required. Timing and the amount of liquid may have to be adjusted, depending on your slow cooker.

Although *risotto* is at its creamiest best if served within minutes of its preparation, leftovers, reheated in a double boiler, are often the next day's lunch for *risotto* lovers.

1/8 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.2 g.; FAT = 4.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 6.8 g.;
CALORIES = 74; CALORIES FROM FAT = 49%

VIETNAMESE TOFU LETTUCE WRAPS

TPT - 17 hours;

8 hours = overnight *tofu* freezing period;

8 hours = *tofu* pressing period

When tofu is frozen and pressed, the resultant texture is so entirely different from the packaged silken tofu that some people will think you are serving shredded chicken or flaked fish. I make a tofu "tuna" mixture from this and use it to replace tuna in the classic Italian white bean and tuna salad. Vietnamese lettuce wraps offer another opportunity to work soy protein into a menu in a spicy and most appealing way.

1 package (10.5 ounces) extra firm silken tofu

GARNISHES:

Grated carrot

Chopped fresh mint

Finely chopped peanuts

Hoisin sauce

Jalapeño chili sauce

SAUCE:

1 tablespoon tamari soy sauce

1 tablespoon Bragg Liquid Aminos seasoning*

2 tablespoons hoisin sauce

1/2 teaspoon Thai sweet chili sauce, or to taste

1 tablespoon safflower or sunflower oil

**4 medium scallions—trimmed, well-washed, and sliced
in 1/4 inch slices**

**1/2 medium red, yellow, or orange bell pepper—cored,
seeded, and sliced into 2-inch matchstick pieces**

2 garlic cloves—finely chopped

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh gingerroot

4 ounces canned water chestnuts—drained and chopped

12 large butter lettuce leaves—well-washed and dried

Freeze the package of *tofu* overnight.

In the morning, Bring the frozen *tofu* to room temperature. Remove the frozen *tofu* from the package and wrap it in several cotton tea towels. Place a bread board on top and allow the *tofu* to drain for an additional 8 hours. Change the towels when they become too wet. Refrigerate, wrapped in towels, until required. Dice *tofu*. Set aside until required.

Assemble garnishes and set aside until ready to serve.

In a small bowl, combine soy sauce, liquid aminos, *hoisin* sauce, and *jalapeño chili* sauce. Stir to combine well. Set aside until required.

In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add scallion slices, pepper matchsticks, and *finely* chopped garlic and gingerroot. Sauté for about 7-8 minutes, or until vegetables begin to soften.

Add diced *tofu* and chopped water chestnuts. Cook, stirring frequently, for about 4 minutes more.

Add prepared sauce ingredients. Transfer to a serving bowl.

Arrange lettuce leaves on a platter. Set out the garnishes in small bowls.

Allow diners to assemble their own lettuce wraps by spooning some of the *tofu* mixture onto a lettuce leaf, rolling the leaf, transferring it to a salad plate, and garnishing it as preferred.

Yields 12 servings
adequate for 6 people

Notes: *I have found Bragg Liquid Aminos, a soy-based seasoning, to be not only a soy sauce alternative but a perfect vegetarian substitute for the ubiquitous fish sauces found throughout Southeast Asia. *Tamari* soy sauce may be substituted if you have not yet found a source of liquid aminos.

This recipe can be halved; the extra pressed *tofu* can be used for another recipe.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.4 g.; FAT = 1.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 5.0 g.;
CALORIES = 47; CALORIES FROM FAT = 36%



*I hope these recipes have given you some useful ideas
and the urge to experiment
Next month I plan to post some more unusual culinary uses
for the tomato. Please do drop by,*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.