



**T**hroughout East Asia and in some places in the United States, tofu has been the most popular way to serve soybeans. Tofu, also known as soybean curd, is a soft cheese-like food that comes from the coagulated protein in soymilk. The highly versatile tofu is a popular ingredient in food manufacturing and has multiple uses in home cooking.

# Tofu

## IN THE MARKET

Numerous flavors and textures of tofu are available in supermarkets, natural food stores, health food stores, food cooperatives and buying clubs. Tofu comes baked, smoked, marinated, and crumbled. There are many frozen entrees containing tofu, including stuffed manicotti and pizza. Freshness is key to buying high quality tofu, so check the expiration date stamped on the package. Fresh tofu smells slightly sweet.

## RETAIL SUPPLIERS

**American Soy Products/Eden Foods** – Soyfine Dried Tofu, Soyfine Spray dried tofu

**Sunrise Soy Foods** – Pete’s Super Firm and Super Firm Italian Tofu, Pete’s Tofu2Go Dessert Tofu

**Vitasoy** – Azumaya and Nasoya

**White Wave** – Tofutown Tenders, Fresh Tofu and Baked in a variety of flavors

## GIVE ME FIVE

1. Mix tofu with frozen vegetables for quick stir fry, then serve over soy penne or rontini.
2. Grill kabobs made with marinated tofu chunks, vegetables, and pineapple.
3. Make a Mexican wrap with zesty flavored baked tofu, black soybeans and Cojack cheese.
4. Use tofu to replace mayonnaise and sour cream in Vitamin-A rich spinach dip.
5. Make protein-rich smoothies with tofu, soymilk and any fresh, canned or frozen fruit.

## IN THE KITCHEN

Fresh tofu is great baked, broiled, barbecued, grilled, fried, boiled, or steamed – flavored to your liking of course. Flavored ready-to-eat tofu in the refrigerated section saves times! Freezing marinated tofu enhances the flavors, thus making it an excellent addition to chili, pot pies and lasagna. Many companies offer simple, creative Tofu recipes on their web site or packages. Visit [www.soyfoods.org](http://www.soyfoods.org) to locate web sites for several companies that make tofu.

Handle packaged tofu as you would any perishable dairy product and check the label for a ‘Use By Date.’ Freeze tofu no more than 6 months. Japanese-type silken tofu may be aseptically packaged, allowing it to remain shelf-stable up to nine months without refrigeration. Once opened, it should be refrigerated and used within five to seven days. Tofu packaged in water should be kept refrigerated until used. Once opened, any unused tofu can be stored in the refrigerator covered in water. Change the water at

least every other day. Tofu will last a week, but discard any tofu that exceeds the expiration date on the package.

Tofu not used within a week can be frozen. Drain all water and wrap the tofu in plastic, foil or freezer wrap and store in the freezer for up to five months. Frozen tofu becomes chewy, spongy, and beige-colored.

## NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Tofu contains high quality protein and iron. Tofu made with calcium based coagulants can be an excellent source of calcium. Tofu may also be fortified with B-vitamins, other vitamins, and minerals, just check the product label for the nutrient content. Important bio-active components, including isoflavones, found naturally in soybeans are being studied in relationship to relieving menopausal symptoms, such as hot flashes, maintaining healthy bones, and preventing prostate, colorectal, and breast cancers.

Nutrition Facts 1/2 cup tofu (with calcium sulfate and nigari) provides:		
Calories	88	% Daily Value
Total Fat	5 g	8%
Saturated Fat	<1g	5%
Total Carbohydrates	2g	1%
Protein	10 g	20%
Cholesterol	0mg	0%
Sodium	15 mg	1 %
Dietary Fiber	1 g	4%
Calcium	250 mg	25%
Potassium	186 mg	5%
Phosphorus	152 mg	15%
Folate	24 mcg	6%
Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17 (2004)		
Average Total Isoflavones	32 mg	
Source: USDA-Iowa State University Database on the Isoflavone Content of Food 1999-2002; Tofu, firm, prepared with calcium sulfate and nigari.		
Exchanges: 1/2 cup = 1 medium fat meat/meat substitute		
Source: Exchange List for Meal Planning, 2nd edition, 2002.		
The American Diabetes Association/The American Dietetic Association		

Tofu is a healthy, high-quality protein source that contains all essential amino acids for growth. Soyfoods are a good source of essential fatty acids and contain no cholesterol and little or no saturated fat.

In addition to the quality of soy protein, scientists have found that soy protein may help reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering blood cholesterol and increasing the flexibility of blood vessels. The FDA has approved a health claim stating that “25 grams of soy protein in a daily diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol can help reduce total and LDL cholesterol that is moderately high to high.”

## THE MAKING OF TOFU

In the Orient, the art of tofu making requires special beans and special care. The ancient Chinese method begins with washing, soaking, and grinding soybeans in water. The resulting slurry is filtered to make soymilk that is heated. A natural mineral coagulant, such as calcium or magnesium salt, turns the soymilk into curds that when pressed release the whey from tofu.

The firmness of tofu changes depending on the amount of water to soybean ratio, the type and amount of coagulants, and the amount of whey removed. Firm tofu results from breaking and pressing most of the whey from the curds. The softer, silken tofu results from coagulating the soymilk directly in the package and not removing any whey.