TOFU, OR NOT TOFU...  

By Kate Sherwood

If tofu’s not a staple around your kitchen because you have no idea what to do with it, are you in for a treat. And if you’re still not convinced after trying these three dishes, you can always use a pound of shrimp or chicken the next time. 🍛

Got a question or suggestion? Write to Kate at healthycook@cspinet.org.

Coconut Peanut Tofu

Total Time: 30 minutes

14 oz. extra-firm tofu, drained  
2 Tbs. canola oil  
½ cup thinly sliced shallots  
1 jalapeño, seeded and minced  
2 tsp. brown sugar  
¾ cup light coconut milk  
1 Tbs. Thai fish sauce  
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice  
¼ cup salted peanuts, chopped  
2 cups cooked brown rice  
1 lb. steamed sugar snap peas

This Thai-inspired dish is the perfect balance of savory, spicy, sweet, and tart. No fish sauce? You can substitute 2½ Tbs. of lower-sodium soy sauce.

Cut the tofu into 12 three-quarter-inch-thick slabs. Blot well with a paper towel. • In a large non-stick pan, sauté the tofu in 1 Tbs. of the oil until golden brown, 3-5 minutes per side. Remove the tofu. Sauté the shallots in the remaining 1 Tbs. of oil until they start to brown, about 3 minutes. Stir in the jalapeño, sugar, coconut milk, fish sauce, and lime juice. Simmer for 1-2 minutes. • Pour the sauce over the tofu and garnish with the peanuts. Serve with rice and snap peas. • Serves 4.

Per Serving: Calories 410; Total fat 19 g; Sat fat 4 g; Protein 18 g  
Carbs 45 g; Fiber 8 g; Cholesterol 0 mg; Sodium 420 mg

Ma Po Tofu

Total Time: 20 minutes

14 oz. extra-firm tofu, drained  
2 Tbs. canola oil  
5 cloves garlic, minced  
¼ tsp. red pepper flakes  
¼ cup finely chopped cashews  
½ cup orange juice  
3 Tbs. lower-sodium soy sauce  
1 tsp. corn starch  
2 scallions, sliced  
2 cups cooked brown rice  
6 cups steamed broccoli florets

Ma Po is a Chinese recipe for tofu in a savory sauce with ground pork. We used roasted unsalted cashews instead.

Cut the tofu into 12 three-quarter-inch-thick slabs. Blot well with a paper towel. • In a large non-stick pan, sauté the tofu in 1 Tbs. of the oil for 2 minutes per side. Remove the tofu. Sauté the garlic in the remaining 1 Tbs. of oil for 1 minute. Add the red pepper flakes and cashews and sauté for 1 minute. • In a small bowl, whisk together the orange juice, soy sauce, corn starch, and ½ cup of water. Add to the pan and simmer until thickened, about 3 minutes. • Pour the sauce over the tofu and garnish with the scallions. Serve with rice and broccoli. • Serves 4.

Per Serving: Calories 380; Total fat 18 g; Sat fat 2 g; Protein 18 g  
Carbs 40 g; Fiber 7 g; Cholesterol 0 mg; Sodium 440 mg

Sesame Tofu

Total Time: 20 minutes

14 oz. extra-firm tofu, drained  
¼ cup sesame seeds  
2 Tbs. canola oil  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tsp. grated ginger  
1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar  
2½ Tbs. lower-sodium soy sauce  
1 Tbs. brown sugar  
1 tsp. corn starch  
2 cups cooked brown rice  
6 heads sautéed baby bok choy

A mix of white and black sesame seeds looks dramatic, but all white would work just fine.

Cut the tofu into 12 three-quarter-inch-thick slabs. Blot well with a paper towel. Spread the sesame seeds on a plate and press the tofu into them. • In a large non-stick pan, sauté the tofu in the oil until the sesame seeds are golden brown, about 3 minutes per side. Remove the tofu. • In a small bowl, whisk together the garlic, ginger, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, corn starch, and ½ cup of water. Add to the pan and simmer until thickened, about 2 minutes. • Pour the sauce over the tofu. Serve with rice and bok choy. • Serves 4.

Per Serving: Calories 360; Total fat 17 g; Sat fat 2 g; Protein 17 g  
Carbs 37 g; Fiber 6 g; Cholesterol 0 mg; Sodium 460 mg