



Tofu Lemon Piccata

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 15 / **Cook Time** 18 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

slice: to cut into thin pieces using a sawing motion with your knife.

knife skills: Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

sauté: to cook or brown food in a pan containing a small quantity of butter, oil, or other fat.

coat: to apply a covering of flour, breadcrumbs, oil, sauce, or batter to food before baking or frying.

soak: to immerse a hard food for a certain amount of time in a liquid to soften it.

brown: to cook food until it turns brown, crisper, and more flavorful from the heat of an oven, a pan, or the oil it is cooked in.

Equipment

- Nonstick skillet
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Paper towels
- Dry measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Citrus juicer (optional)
- Heat-resistant spatula
- Plate
- Liquid measuring cup

Ingredients

Tofu Lemon Piccata

- 1 block extra-firm tofu, drained ******(for SOY ALLERGY sub 16 oz mushrooms)******
- 1/4 C all-purpose flour ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 1/4 C gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour OR cornstarch)******
- salt and ground black pepper to taste
- 2 T olive oil
- 2 lemons, divided
- 1 handful fresh parsley + more for garnish
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 1/2 C vegetable broth OR 1 small vegetable bullion cube ****** + 1 1/2 C water
- 1 to 2 T capers, drained + more to taste
- 2 T butter ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 2 T dairy-free/nut-free butter)******

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Soy: For 1 block extra-firm tofu, substitute 16 oz of mushrooms. Check vegetable stock or bouillon labels for possible allergens and, if necessary, use water only.

Gluten/Wheat: For 1/4 C all-purpose flour, substitute 1/4 C gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour OR cornstarch. Check vegetable stock or bouillon labels for possible allergens and, if necessary, use water only.

Dairy: For 2 T butter, substitute 2 T dairy-free/nut-free butter.

Instructions

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tofu tip

One easy step will remedy most of your tofu-related tribulations: When you get home from the grocery store, drain your tofu, put it in a plastic resealable bag, and stick it in the freezer. (You can slice the tofu before freezing if you want it to thaw faster.) Freezing changes the texture of tofu drastically and almost magically. When ice crystals form, they create small holes in the tofu, making it far spongier, firmer, and chewier than before. No amount of draining, patting dry, or pressing tofu can minimize sogginess as much as freezing does. Thaw the tofu prior to cooking.

cut + pat

Have your kids cut **1 block of extra firm tofu**, drained, into 8 to 12 slices. You can do this by cutting the block of tofu in half width-wise, then cutting each half-block into thin rectangular slices. Pat the tofu dry with paper towels.

measure + coat

Have kids measure out **1/4 cup flour** on a plate. Season it with **salt and black pepper**. Have kids coat all sides of the tofu slices with the flour.

slice + chop + mince + squeeze

While you preheat a nonstick skillet with **2 tablespoons of olive oil** over medium heat, ask your kids to slice **6 to 7 fresh thin lemon slices from 1 lemon**, **chop or tear 1 handful of fresh parsley**, and **mince 3 garlic cloves****. Ask your kids to squeeze the juice of **1 lemon**. Set everything aside.

sauté + brown

Sauté the tofu slices in the nonstick skillet until they are browned and a bit crisp on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer the tofu to a plate and set aside. Turn the skillet to low.

pour + evaporate

Carefully pour **1 1/2 cups vegetable broth** and then add the **minced garlic**. Cook until the garlic is slightly browned and 1/4 of the broth is evaporated, about 4 to 6 minutes.

soak + melt

Add the **lemon juice** and **1 to 2 tablespoons capers**, drained, to the skillet. Return the tofu to the skillet and let the tofu cook in the liquid for about 1 minute on each side. This will allow the tofu to soak in the flavor of the liquid. Then transfer the tofu back to the plate. Add **2 tablespoons of butter** and the **fresh lemon slices** to the skillet to complete the sauce. When the butter melts, pour the sauce over the tofu.

garnish + taste

Garnish with the **chopped fresh parsley**. Taste it! Does it need more salt? More lemon? More capers? Serve with **Herbed Pasta Bundles**. Tofu Lemon Piccata and pasta are a perfect duo! "È squisito" (EH skwee-ZEE-toh) or "It's delicious" in Italian!

Featured Ingredient: Capers!

Hi! I'm a Caper!

"We're those cute little green things you see on top of lox and bagels or in chicken piccata. Did you know that we're actually pickled flower buds?! We can add a bit of salt and tang to your dish!"

History & Etymology

Capers are the edible flower buds of the caper bush. They originated in countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea thousands of years ago.

The Greeks and Romans used capers in medicine and food. Evidence for the use of capers is found in ancient tombs and ancient writings.

Italy, Spain, and Morocco produce the most capers in the world.

The word "capers" is from the late Middle English, from the French "câpres" or Latin "capparis," from the Greek "kápparis."

Anatomy

The caper bush, or *Capparis spinosa* species, is part of the Brassicales order. Members of that flowering plant order include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, mustard, radish, and more.

Some taxonomists believe there are several separate species of the caper bush, and others say instead that there are many subspecies due to the creation of natural hybrids over thousands of years.

The plants require an arid or semi-arid climate. They are able to adjust to adverse conditions.

If the caper bush flower buds are not harvested to be pickled, they continue to flower and produce a caper berry. The large flowers are white with long purple stamens. The fleshy leaves are dark green and somewhat rounded and are also edible.

Caper sizes can range from 7 mm to 14 mm. Nonpareil capers are the most petite and most delicate at 7 millimeters (about 1/4 inch in diameter) and what is most commonly sold in grocery stores. (By the way, "nonpareil" comes from the French and means "without equal" or "unrivaled.")

How to Pick, Buy & Eat

Before they bloom, the flower buds are picked by hand in the early morning while tightly closed.

Caper berries, the mature fruit of the caper bush, are similar to the caper buds but are larger and milder. Both are pickled in either salt or vinegar after harvesting.

Capers are packed in brine and have a salty taste. They also have a tangy flavor, similar to a green olive. You can find them in a jar in the grocery store in the same aisle as olives and pickles.

Capers can be used as a garnish or seasoning. They pair well with lemon sauces. They are often added to smoked salmon and other fish dishes. Lox, thin slices of brined salmon, is topped with cream cheese and capers.

Mediterranean dishes often use capers as an ingredient. The Italian dishes, spaghetti puttanesca and chicken or veal piccata, include capers. You can add them to any dish that would benefit from a bit of salty, tangy flavor.

Nutrition

Capers have a good amount of riboflavin (B2) and vitamin K. They are low in carbohydrates and fat but high in sodium due to the pickling brine.