

Sticky Fingers Cooking®



Japanese Tofu Crispy Katsu

By Dylan Sabuco

Prep Time 5 / **Cook Time** 10 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

mix: to thoroughly combine two or more ingredients until uniform in texture.

pan-fry: to fry in a pan in a small amount of fat.

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).

Equipment

- Cutting board + kid-safe knife
- Large mixing bowl
- Small bowls
- Spatula
- Whisk
- Measuring spoons
- Liquid measuring cup
- Wok or large sauté pan
- Grater
- Blender (or pitcher + immersion blender)

Ingredients

Japanese Tofu Crispy Katsu

- 1 block, firm tofu ******(for SOY ALLERGY sub 1 eggplant)******
- 1/4 C vegetable oil (possibly more for larger skillet)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp ginger, ground or fresh
- 4 T cornstarch
- 4 T panko breadcrumbs ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free panko breadcrumbs)******
- 1 egg ******(for EGG ALLERGY sub 1 T flax seed + 1/4 C water—more info below)******

Food Allergen Substitutions

Japanese Tofu Crispy Katsu

Soy: Substitute 1 eggplant for tofu in Katsu.

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free panko breadcrumbs for panko in Katsu.

Egg: For 1 egg in Katsu, substitute 1 T flax seed + 1/4 C water, well mixed. Soak flaxseeds in warm water for 5 minutes or until fully absorbed and thickened.

Instructions

Japanese Tofu Crispy Katsu

slice + measure

Slice **1 block of firm tofu** into 1/4-inch thick, rectangular slices. Set the sliced tofu on a plate or cutting board lined with paper towels. The paper towels underneath the tofu will absorb some of the water that was sealed in the package with the tofu. Wet tofu doesn't turn golden brown! Measure the **1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, 1 teaspoon ginger, 4 tablespoons cornstarch, and 4 tablespoons panko breadcrumbs** in one small bowl. Whisk the dry breading ingredients together.

crack + scramble

Crack **1 egg** into a different small bowl and whisk to scramble the egg.

bread + fry

Heat **1/4 cup oil** in a large sauté pan over medium heat (may need a few tablespoons more oil depending on skillet size). While the oil is heating, dip each piece of tofu into the egg (be sure to shake off any excess drips of egg), then dip the egg-covered tofu into the panko mixture (again, shake off any excess panko).

Once all of the tofu is breaded, start carefully laying the tofu in the pan. It will sizzle for 5 minutes on each side before turning golden brown. When golden brown, remove from the pan and serve alongside the Broccoli Fried "Rice" (see recipe).

Featured Ingredient: Tofu!

Hi! I'm Tofu!

"I'm also called "bean curd" because Tofu (TOH-foo) is made from soybeans. I'm a great substitute for meat and eggs in many recipes, while my spongy texture absorbs the flavors of a dish's marinade, sauce, or seasoning!"

History & Etymology

Sources disagree on when the making of tofu began. Some say it was discovered about 2,000 years ago in China during the Han dynasty, and some say it was closer to 1,000 years ago. Legend says that Prince Liu An found the process for making tofu during the Han dynasty. Whether he did or the invention was just attributed to him, the Han dynasty tofu may not have resembled what we have now.

Another theory for tofu's discovery is ascribed to the addition of impure sea salt to a boiled soybean mixture that caused the concoction to curdle. Some also believe the credit goes to borrowed milk-curdling techniques from the Mongolians or East Indians.

Zen Buddhist monks introduced "Chinese tofu" to Japan in the late 8th century, where it was used as a replacement for meat and fish. Chinese immigrants brought tofu to Southeast Asia sometime between the 10th and 11th centuries.

In the United States, tofu was first mentioned by Benjamin Franklin in letters written to two different people. He had tried it in London and referred to it as Chinese "cheese" made from soybeans.

The first tofu factory in the United States was established in 1878. The oldest currently running tofu company is Ota Tofu in Portland, Oregon, founded in 1911.

The word "tofu" comes from the Japanese "tōfu," from the Chinese "dòufu," from "dòu" ("beans") and fǔ ("rot").

How to Select & Eat

The types of tofu you can buy are silken or soft, medium (regular or medium-firm), firm, and extra firm. Silken or soft tofu has not been pressed and has a higher moisture content than firmer tofu. It is similar to yogurt or pudding or a soft, early cheese. You can use it to make smoothies or as a replacement for eggs. Medium tofu is a popular type, referred to as just "tofu" on some labels. It has a porous texture that is good for mopping up sauces.

Firm tofu has been drained and pressed but still has a high moisture content. Its outside texture is similar to raw meat, and when you press it, it will bounce back. The inside is similar to a firm custard. Firm tofu is

versatile to cook and can be pan-fried, deep-fried, or stir-fried.

Extra-firm tofu has had a larger amount of liquid pressed out, and its texture is closer to fully-cooked meat. Therefore, it is a suitable replacement for meat and can be pan-fried, deep-fried, or stir-fried. You can also serve it cold or add it to soup. Extra-firm tofu does not absorb liquid as well as firm tofu, so if you use a marinade, choose medium or firm tofu.

Tofu benefits from being frozen before cooking. Freezing tofu removes more of the liquid and gives it a stronger, firmer, and more meat-like texture. When you cook with frozen tofu, it will not fall apart as easily. Freezing also helps tofu to last longer, and it works with most forms but may be more difficult with the silken type.

To freeze tofu, drain the liquid from the package, then remove the block and gently squeeze out any remaining liquid with a paper or kitchen towel (you do not need to press it). Cut it into the size needed for your recipe. If you will be using a portion of a tofu block, separate what you are using, then put the pieces, not touching, on a tray covered with plastic wrap. After the tofu freezes, in about five hours or overnight, you can transfer it to a freezer-safe airtight container or bag. Frozen tofu may not need to be thawed before cooking, depending on your recipe. If you want to thaw it first, let it sit in the refrigerator for a few hours or overnight, or if needed more quickly, run warm water over it.

Nutrition

Tofu is high in protein, which makes it a great meat substitute. Firm tofu has more protein than silken or soft tofu. It also has a higher fat content.

Tofu is considered a complete protein, containing all nine essential amino acids.

Tofu has a good amount of calcium, iron, potassium, and manganese. It can help strengthen bones, lower cholesterol, and prevent coronary heart disease.

People allergic to soy should not consume tofu, which is made from soybeans.