

Hainanese Baked Tofu

Swick

Serves 3 to 4 | Active Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 2 hours

Step 1: Making the Court Bouillon

- 2 stalk lemongrass
- 3/4 cup diced shallots*
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger, roughly chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, smashed
- 2 pandan leaves, tied into knot
- 4 green onions
- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 2 star anise
- 1 tsp Szechuan peppercorns*
- 8 cups (2 its) cold water

Cut off the white and light green part of the lemongrass. To bring out more of the flavor, cut it in half and then smash it with the back of a knife.

Next prepare the shallots, ginger, and garlic and tie the pandan leaves into knots. Lastly, gather the remaining ingredients.

Note: For the shallots, use any leftover pieces from making the Fried Shallots. For the Szechuan peppercorns, if you do not have any, black and/or white peppercorns can be used but note that the flavor will be slightly different.

To make the court bouillon, add all of the ingredients to a pot, including the water. Bring the liquid to a boil and then reduce the heat and let simmer for about 45 for approximately an hour, this will allow the ingredients time to infuse into the water.

When ready, the liquid should have a rich and deep flavor to it — and it should have reduced by almost half. Keep in mind that tofu is very plain so this flavorful liquid is what is going to season it.

Step 2: Marinating the Tofu

- 1-454 gr package extra firm tofu, sliced into 12 pieces

Once the court bouillon is ready, strain it. To slice the tofu, cut it in the middle widthwise and then cut each half into half again and then cut each quarter into thirds — of course, this will depend on how the tofu was portioned and packaged in the first place.

Place the tofu into a flat container and pour the strained liquid otop. Let the tofu soak in the liquid overnight — or at least for a couple of hours.

Note that you can easily marinate 2 packages of tofu and have the rest for leftovers.

Step 3: Frying the Tofu

- 2 to 3 tbsp shallot oil*

Before you start, preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).

To fry the tofu, heat a large frypan over medium-high heat and then add the oil, followed by the tofu. Let fry on each side until golden brown.

*Note the shallot oil is from the Fried Shallots. If needed, peanut oil can be used instead.

Step 4: Baking & Finishing the Tofu

- 2 to 3 tbsp Hainanese Paste
- 2 to 3 tbsp Garlic-Soy Sauce

Once done frying, layer the tofu into a casserole dish and then spoon a bit of the Hainanese Paste and the Garlic-Soy Sauce onto each piece of tofu and then bake for 15 minutes, or until the tofu has fully heated through and just starts to color around the edges.

Step 5: Serving the Dish

- cucumber
- tomato
- cilantro

Serve the dish with all of the recipes below as well as slices of fresh cucumber and tomato. The cucumber and tomato add a wonderful crisp and refreshing contrast to all the other flavors going on in the dish.

To finish, drizzle a bit more of the Garlic-Soy Sauce over the dish and serve with all the sauce and garnish with fresh cilantro if desired.

Chef's Notes

This Hainanese Baked Tofu is generally used/served as part of the following dishes/recipes:

Hainanese Paste – this can be made ahead of time and frozen.

Hainanese Rice Pilaf

Hainanese Roasted Cauliflower

Garlic-Soy Sauce – you will want to double or triple this recipe.

Singapore Chili Sauce – this can also be made ahead of time and frozen.

Scallion-Ginger Sauce

Fried Shallots

This Hainanese dish has its origins in the culinary traditions of Hainan and has since become popular throughout Southeast Asia.