

TOFU WITH GREEN GARLIC, GREEN ONIONS + WHITE SHOYU

By Michelle McKenzie

I teach culinary classes to urban youth at a San Francisco high school. This past summer, we were fortunate enough to gain a beautiful school garden (well, five actually!), and I've been busy finding ways to highlight the families of vegetables we harvest each month. When our crop of spring alliums arrived in early March, my students and I devised this recipe to showcase their strong and pungent, yet decidedly bright flavor. These young chefs like their food on the spicy side, adding more serrano chiles than I can bear; I've dialed it down a bit below, but feel free to make it as hot as you like. Please be picky about your choice of tofu. I am not a huge fan of cooking with packaged soy products. They tend to taste of cardboard or bean concentrate, two things low on my list of favorite flavors. But Hodo Soy's (a Bay Area company) firm tofu is an exceptional product and an exception to my rule. Just like good olive oil and fresh spices, seek out the best you can find! And what is white shoyu? It's a type of soy sauce, and I'm currently obsessed with the stuff. It imparts flavor without color, and I find it more nuanced and delicate than the more common soy sauce. With asparagus arriving at the markets this week, I've already made plans to sauté the skinny spears in butter in white shoyu. I can't wait. (You can learn more about the process of making this product here:

[HTTP://WAIMPORTS.COM/PRODUCT+LINES/TAKUMI+SHOYU](http://waimports.com/product+lines/takumi+shoyu))

Serves 2

- 1/2 cup grape seed oil (or canola oil)
- 3/4 pounds firm tofu, patted dry and cut into 1" cubes
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 4-inch knob of ginger, peeled + finely chopped
- 2 serrano chiles, stemmed, seeded and finely chopped
- 3 bunches (about 12 stalks) green garlic, trimmed and cut into 2" pieces
- 5 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup white shoyu (or other soy sauce)
- 1 tablespoon brown rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- coarsely ground black pepper, to taste
- sea salt, to taste
- steamed rice, for serving

1. Dry tofu well – this is very important. In a medium bowl, toss tofu with cornstarch and a big pinch of salt.
2. Heat oil in an enameled or well-seasoned cast iron pan (or non-stick skillet) over medium-high heat. Fry tofu until browned all over, about 3 minutes per side. You may have to do this in batches; if you overcrowd the tofu, it won't brown properly. Drain tofu on paper towels and set aside. Discard all but about 1 tablespoon oil. Return skillet to medium heat and add the butter.
3. Add ginger, chiles, green garlic, shallots, and a pinch of salt; cook until soft, about 10 minutes.
4. Stir in white shoyu (or soy sauce), brown rice vinegar, sugar, and freshly cracked pepper to taste, .
5. Return tofu to skillet; cook, stirring, until warmed through, about 2-4 minutes. Toss gently with a wooden spoon until tofu is well coated in the somewhat sticky sauce.
6. Stir in scallions; cook a minute or two more – just until the scallions soften slightly. Serve over steamed rice.