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Homemade Soy Milk

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Recipe information

Yield Makes about 5 cups

Ingredients

6 ounces dried soybeans, non-GMO or organic preferred (such as [Laura Soybeans](#))

6 cups water, filtered or spring preferred, plus more as needed (not including water for soaking)

Preparation

Soak the beans:

Step 1

Put the dried beans in a colander and rinse under tap water to remove any surface dirt. Transfer the beans to a bowl. Add water to cover by 2 to 3 inches, then set aside to soak at room temperature. The soaking time varies by season, and below is a rough estimate of the time required depending on the air temperature:

Step 2

80°F: 8 hours

70°F: 10 hours

60°F: 13½ hours

50°F: 17½ hours

Step 3

Test the beans to determine their readiness. Squeeze one between your fingertips and it should split apart into two long halves. The beans are sufficiently soaked if the surfaces of the halves are flat with an even buttercup yellow color *and* if you can easily break one of the halves crosswise. If the surfaces are concave and/or darker in the middle than at the edge, and if halves bend in a rubbery manner, soak longer. Adequately soaked beans are easier to grind. Drain and rinse the soaked beans in a colander.

Step 4

Note: It is possible, but not easy, to oversoak the beans. If you see bubbles or foam on the surface, discard the water, then use the beans. Each 6 ounces of dried beans weighs about 14 ounces (and measures about 2¼ cups) after soaking.

Step 5

DO AHEAD: When soaking the beans in advance, transfer the drained beans to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 5 days; discard or keep the soaking water refrigerated in a separate container, if you like. Refrigerating the beans in the soaking liquid is fine for 2 days; beyond that, the flavor may be compromised. If the beans look suspect, rinse them before using; throw out the soaking liquid if it smells funky. Regardless, return both beans and liquid to room temperature before proceeding. Soaked soybeans can be frozen but the soy milk and tofu produced from them are not as superlative as those produced from soaked, unfrozen beans.

Render the soy milk:

Step 6

Set up your soy milk making equipment. For the straining station, put a 3- or 4-quart pot in the sink and place the colander (or mesh strainer) inside it. Put the soy milk pressing cloth (thin [unbleached muslin](#) works well) in the colander, letting its edges drape over the rim. Have your pressing tool (a potato masher is what I use) nearby. If you don't have muslin, a nut milk bag could be substituted.

Step 7

Put a 5-quart pot (nonstick is great for easy cleanup!) on the stove. Kickstart the cooking process by heating 3 cups of water in the pot over high or medium-high heat. If the water comes to a boil before you've ground all the beans, lower the heat and cover the pot; raise the heat once you've added the ground beans.

Step 8

Meanwhile, use a blender to grind the soybeans with 2 cups of water. Run the blender on the highest speed for 1 to 2 minutes to yield a thick, smooth, ivory white puree — a beany milkshake. (If you scale up this recipe, grind in several batches. To rinse out the blender container, add ½ cup of water and run the blender for 10 to 15 seconds. Pour into the larger pot and scrape out any residual bits.

Step 9

Cook the soybean mixture, stirring the bottom frequently with a wooden spatula to avoid scorching, until frothy foam forms and begins to rise, 3 to 6 minutes. This can suddenly sneak up on you, so monitor the pot. Look for a very thick layer

of foam that resembles softly whipped egg whites. When you see the foam rise like a beer head, turn off the heat and remove the pot from the heat to prevent boiling over. Stir the pot a few times and wait for the foam to deflate a bit.

Step 10

To strain out the milk, pour the hot mixture into the pressing cloth, pausing when the colander is full and waiting for the milk to pass through before adding more from the larger pot. Scrape out any soybeans remaining in the pot.

Step 11

Gather up the pressing cloth and twist it closed into a sack. It will be hot; it's fine to wait a few minutes for the contents to cool slightly. Use your pressing tool to mash the sack against the colander and extract more soy milk.

Step 12

Extract additional milk via a second pressing. Open up the pressing cloth and spread the solids (lees) out. Add ½ cup of water to the lees; stir to combine into a polenta-like mixture. If the lees are still steaming hot, let them cool for 3 to 5 minutes. When you are able, twist the cloth closed and wring out more soy milk. Open up the pressing cloth, and transfer the soft white lees to a bowl. Let cool before using, refrigerating or discarding. Remove the colander and pressing cloth to reveal the soy milk in the smaller pot.

Recook the soy milk:

Step 13

Soybean protein needs to be cooked for a certain amount of time to ensure that it is fully digestible. Bring the smaller pot of soy milk to a gentle simmer over medium-high or high heat, stirring the bottom frequently with a wooden spatula. When bubbles percolate at the surface, lower the heat slightly to maintain that pace of gentle cooking for 5 minutes, minding the pot and stirring. If a light film forms at the top, remove it (eat it with a bit of soy sauce as a super delicate fresh tofu skin!). Should the milk scorch, your tofu will have a certain rustic smoky taste, as if it were made over a wood fire. After this second cooking, the soy milk is ready to be used for cooking or drinking. Enjoy warm or chilled.

Step 14

To quickly cool the soy milk, I move the pot to a cool burner, blast the exhaust and occasionally stir the pot for about 15 minutes to aerate and prevent a skin from forming; then I transfer the milk to Mason jars to store. You can leave the pot unattended to cool, but the hot milk will form a skin, which is delicious.

Step 15

NOTE: *Don't discard the crumbly soft lees from the pressing cloth after you've wring out all the soy milk! What you may consider the dregs is a valuable food source. Called dou fu zha or xue hua cai, okara, and biji in Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean, respectively, the lees are loaded with dietary fiber and nutrients. The lees can be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for several months; thaw it at room temperature or in the refrigerator before using. Add some to a Korean hot pot, and you'll thicken it into a creamy chowderlike consistency. Season and sauté them with vegetables for unohana, an old-fashioned Japanese favorite. Or bake cookies or make doughnuts with okara for a modern hybrid twist. Lees can also be used as a meat extender for dishes from many different cuisines.*



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