



caramel-cooked tofu

GLUTEN-FREE
OPTION
SERVES 2 TO 4
20 MINUTES

The Vietnamese technique of caramel cooking is most often applied to chicken, but it works equally well to produce a deeply flavored tofu that is lacquered with a sweet, salty, and fragrant sauce. The traditional method requires you to make the caramel sauce separately, but Chef John of the blog Food Wishes came up with this simpler technique, which allows you to create the sauce right in the pan with your main ingredient.

Feel free to add a small amount of vegetable to this stir-fry. Sliced fresh bamboo shoots are excellent. For something that takes a few minutes, like broccoli, cook it separately first and then add it at the end. More tender items such as red bell peppers can be added at the same time as the white onion.

This recipe will serve two hungry adults with nothing but rice as an accompaniment, or more diners as part of a larger spread.

- 1/4 cup rice wine or dry sherry
- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- 1/4 cup soy sauce (use a wheat-free version for gluten-free)
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 pound extra-firm tofu, patted thoroughly dry and cut into 2 x 2 x 1/3-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced white onion
- 4 to 8 dried small red chiles (optional)
- 5 scallions, white and light green parts only, thinly sliced

- 1 Whisk together the rice wine, rice vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, garlic, ginger, and sugar until the sugar dissolves.
- 2 Heat the oil in a large, heavy skillet (preferably cast iron) over high heat. Lay the tofu squares in the skillet in a single layer (or as close to a single layer as possible). Fry until golden brown on one side, about 4 minutes.
- 3 Flip the tofu and immediately pour in the sauce; add the white onion and chiles, if using. The sauce will sputter and begin to caramelize. Keep a close eye on it, and move the tofu around a little bit to let the sauce get under it. Continue cooking until the sauce has thickened and becomes a fairly thick glaze coating the tofu, about 4 minutes more.
- 4 Serve immediately, topped with the scallions.