

Weeknight Soy Sauce-y, Peanut-y Tofu

By Nicholas

A very simple but very forthright tofu stir-fry. The key is not to fuss with the tofu too much (that and to press the tofu if possible). It'll brown far better if left unmolested. About the peanuts: a traditional Chinese recipe -- which this in no way is -- would use raw peanuts. If you want that slightly legume-y taste, use that; if you want the more American taste of roasted peanuts, use that. The leftovers here are splendid, which is why I use a couple blocks of tofu.

Serves 4, generously The Tofu Part:

- 2 blocks of tofu, extra firm or firm
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- 3/4 cups unsalted peanuts, whole or halved, roasted or raw (see above)
- Cooking oil

The Sauce Part:

- 3/4 cups soy sauce
 - 2 tablespoons Shaoxing wine
 - 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
 - 1 tablespoon molasses
 - A touch of lemon or lime
 - 1/2 teaspoon roasted sesame oil
1. If you have time, press the tofu. (Place it under a weighted cutting board for a half-hour, letting the liquid run off or get absorbed by paper towels.) Dry it off. Then slice it into small cubes, in the 1/2-1-inch range.
 2. In a wok or a large frying pan, heat a tablespoon of the oil on medium-high. Then add the onion and saute, stirring occasionally, until golden brown. Scrape it out of the pan and reserve for later.
 3. While the onion is browning, stir together the sauce ingredients. Taste. It should be sweet and salty and a little bitter, too. Adjust until the flavors are aligned to your taste. You might want more molasses or more Shaoxing wine; you might need a squeeze or two of lemon or lime for more acidity.
 4. When the onion is done, add a couple tablespoons of oil to the wok or pan and increase the heat to high. Add the tofu and immediately toss it with the hot oil. Then leave it alone. Let it sit for a few minutes, longer than seems wise. Once the tofu begins to brown, stir it to brown the remaining sides. It should take around ten minutes total. A minute before it is done, add the ginger and briefly saute it. Then spread the browned onions and peanuts on top and add the sauce. Gently stir, so that everything soaks in the sauce, and let the liquid reduce for a few minutes. Reduce until the sauce is as thin or thick as you like. Then turn off the heat, drizzle the sesame oil on top, and serve.