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Strawberry Spinach Salad with Orange Poppy Seed Dressing

Ingredients:

For the orange poppy seed dressing and tofu:
 1 Pound extra-firm tofu
 1/2 cup orange juice concentrate, thawed
 1/4 cup olive oil or grapeseed oil
 1/4 cup minced shallots
 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
 2 tablespoons agave nectar or pure maple syrup
 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
 1 tablespoon poppy seeds
 3/4 teaspoon sea salt
 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

For the spinach salad:
 6 cups fresh spinach (or other salad greens, such as baby mixed greens, arugula, red leaf lettuce, Boston lettuce, butter lettuce)
 2 cups sliced strawberries
 1 cup blueberries
 1 large red onion, sliced into thin half-moons

For the spiced pecans:
 1.5 cups raw pecan halves
 2 tablespoons maple syrup
 or agave nectar
 1 heaping tablespoon Sriracha
 1/2 teaspoon liquid smoke
 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt (such as Maldon)

Directions:

To make the pecans: Preheat the oven to 325°F. In a 13 x 9-inch metal or ceramic baking dish, combine the pecans, maple syrup, Sriracha, and liquid smoke. Stir until the nuts are completely coated. Sprinkle with salt.

Roast the nuts for 16 to 18 minutes, stirring occasionally, until a sticky glaze forms. Remove from the oven and immediately transfer the nuts to a lightly oiled sheet of parchment paper or aluminum foil, and use a fork to break apart any clumps of nuts. Once completely cool, store the nuts in a tightly covered container. Use within 2 weeks.

Press the tofu. Meanwhile, whisk the dressing ingredients together in a bowl. Slice each piece of tofu into four rectangles and then slice each rectangle into two triangles. When you're done, you'll have a bunch of little tofu triangles!

Preheat the oven to 400°F and lightly oil a 9 x 13-inch ceramic baking dish. Lay the tofu triangles in the pan, pour half of the dressing over the tofu, and bake for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, flip each piece over, and brush with the marinade from the bottom of the dish. Return to the oven and bake another 15 to 20 minutes, or until the tofu is golden. Set aside to cool while you prepare the rest of the salad.

Wash, spin dry, and tear the spinach into bite-size pieces. Transfer to a big serving bowl and add the fruit, onions, pecans, and tofu triangles. Pour on the remaining dressing and toss well. Summon your salad-loving cohorts and eat!

From Salad Samurai: 100 Cutting-Edge, Ultra-Hearty, Easy-to-Make Salads You Don't Have to Be Vegan to Love by Terry Hope Romero. Reprinted courtesy of Da Capo Lifelong Books.

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