



THE SOYFOODS COOKBOOK

10 SIMPLE RECIPES AND CULINARY REFLECTIONS FROM JAPAN

Featuring tofu, edamame, soymilk, miso,
soy sauce, and more!

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SOY, CULTURE, & HEALTH: A CULINARY EXCHANGE



Soy has been a staple of the Japanese diet for centuries, showing up in comforting bowls of miso soup, crisp sheets of yuba (tofu skin), creamy soy-based dressings, and more recently, even protein-packed convenience snacks. During our recent trip to Japan—hosted by The Soyfoods Council, U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), North Dakota Soybean Council, and U.S. Soy—we had the opportunity to experience this firsthand.

As two U.S. registered dietitians, we traveled alongside colleagues, Patricia Bannan, MS, RDN and Lorena Drago, RDN, CDN, CDCES to explore how soy is made, how it's enjoyed, and how deeply it's woven into daily life in Japan. We toured tofu, miso, and natto (fermented soybeans rich in beneficial bacteria and commonly eaten at breakfast) production facilities; shared multi-course kaiseki meals that featured soy in surprising and elegant forms; enjoyed bento-style breakfasts with tofu; visited a school lunch program where soybeans were seamlessly added to chili; and tasted protein-rich flavored tofu bars sold in supermarkets and convenience stores.

We also had the honor of presenting to a group of over 50 Japanese dietitians on plant-based trends in the U.S., the persistence of soy misinformation on social media, and practical ways to encourage soy consumption using familiar dishes—like blended tofu-pork meatballs and creamy chocolate tofu pudding.

This cookbook is a direct extension of that exchange. The 10 recipes we've developed are inspired by what we saw, tasted, and learned in Japan—and are designed for U.S. dietitians to easily prepare, share, and recommend to clients. From smoothies and salads to savory entrées, every dish celebrates the versatility, accessibility, and health benefits of soy.

In Japan, adults consume an estimated 30 to 50mg of isoflavones per day—the amount found in roughly two cups of soymilk, 1 cup of edamame, or one cup of tofu. In contrast, daily intake in the U.S. remains under 3mg. Bridging that gap doesn't require a drastic dietary shift. Simple meals using ingredients already available in most U.S. supermarkets—like edamame, tofu, miso, soybean oil, and soymilk—can help clients incorporate more soy in a way that's both familiar and flavorful.

Our goal with this cookbook is to bring that message home: soy is not just safe to eat—it's nourishing, versatile, and adaptable. Whether you're a dietitian, health educator, or simply someone looking to eat more plant-forward meals, we hope this collection sparks inspiration, conversation, and connection across cultures.

WHY SOY?

HEALTH BENEFITS AT A GLANCE



- Heart Health: Soy protein may help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol when part of a diet low in saturated fat.
- Bone Health: Some studies suggest soy isoflavones may support bone density in postmenopausal women.
- Menopause Symptom Relief: Isoflavones in soy may help ease hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms.
- Reduced Risk of Breast Cancer Recurrence: Consuming soy foods is linked to a lower risk of recurrence in breast cancer survivors.
- Gut Support: Fermented soy foods like miso and natto offer beneficial bacteria that support digestive health.
- Plant-Based Protein: Soy is a complete protein that supports muscle maintenance, especially during aging.

Dietitian Tip:

Clients don't need to overhaul their diets to enjoy these benefits. Just one to two servings of soy per day—including a cup of soymilk, ½ cup edamame, or a few slices of tofu—can go a long way

**SOYFOODS
ARE A
GREAT
ADDITION
TO YOUR DAY**

SCHOOL LUNCH FIELD TRIP: SAVORY & SWEET



One of the most memorable moments from our culinary journey through Japan was a visit to a middle school in Tokyo, where we had the opportunity to tour the kitchen, meet with school dietitians, and experience school lunch firsthand. The meal was thoughtfully prepared by foodservice professionals and then served to the students—by the students themselves—as part of a longstanding tradition that teaches responsibility, respect, and gratitude for food.

That day, lunch included a hearty chili con carne with cooked soybeans served over rice, a crunchy potato salad tossed with colorful vegetables, and for dessert, slices of perfectly ripe pineapple.

Fruit for dessert was something we encountered often throughout our trip—served with care and naturally sweet.

Our school lunch experience inspired the pineapple soymilk smoothie and the Japanese Curry with Edamame recipes in this cookbook. Both are satisfying, nutrient-rich, and reflect the balance and simplicity we saw in Japan's approach to food.



JAPANESE CURRY WITH EDAMAME

In Japan, “Japanese curry” (kare) refers to a comforting dish of meat, vegetables, and rice simmered in a thick, flavorful sauce. The key to making this recipe is the curry roux—a shelf-stable block made from curry spices, flour, and fat—that melts right into the pot to create the dish’s signature flavor and texture. In this version, lean ground beef (or chicken or turkey) is simmered with onion, carrot, and edamame for extra color and nutrition. You can find curry roux in Asian markets or online. It’s sold in mild, medium, and hot varieties, so you can choose the spice level you like best.

Makes 6 Servings

Ingredients

1 tablespoon soybean oil
1 pound lean ground beef, chicken, or turkey
1 onion, diced
2 carrots, diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1½ cups frozen shelled edamame, thawed
¼ cup grated Granny Smith or tart apple
1 tablespoon honey
2 cups water or low-sodium vegetable stock
4 ounces (half of a large packet) curry roux
3 cups cooked rice
Optional: Japanese pickles

Directions

1. In a medium-sized pot over medium-high heat, add the oil. Add the meat and cook, stirring and breaking up the large pieces, until mostly cooked through.
2. Add the onion and carrot and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, 1 minute.
3. Add the edamame, apple, honey, and water. Mix together and bring to a boil.
4. Lower to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes.
5. Turn off the heat, and stir in the curry roux until it dissolves.
6. Turn the heat to low and simmer until the mixture thickens, about 10 minutes. Serve with rice and pickles, as desired.



PINEAPPLE SOYMILK SMOOTHIE

When it comes to plant-based milks, soy is our go-to. It has 7 to 8 grams of protein per cup, which is the closest you'll get to dairy milk. Plus, fortified soymilk is a great source of calcium and vitamin D, two nutrients many people fall short on. It also comes in a variety of flavors—plain, vanilla, even chocolate. For this smoothie, we used plain unsweetened soymilk so the natural sweetness from the pineapple and banana can really shine.

Makes 2 Servings

Ingredients

1 cup plain fortified soymilk
¼ cup 100% orange juice
Juice of 1 lime (about 2 tablespoons)
1 cup frozen pineapple chunks
½ ripe banana, sliced and frozen
½ teaspoon vanilla extract, optional

Directions

1. Place the soymilk, orange juice, lime juice, pineapple, banana, and vanilla as desired in a blender and blend until smooth and creamy.
2. Taste and adjust flavor and texture with more frozen pineapple for thickness, more lime for brightness, or a touch of honey or maple syrup if extra sweetness is desired.





We attended a Japanese tea ceremony where we each had an opportunity to dress in a traditional Kimono.

From left to right: Abbie Gellman, Lorena Drago, Patricia Bannan, Liz Weiss, and Linda Funk (from The Soyfoods Council)



During our trip to Japan, we toured miso, tofu, and natto production facilities. As you can see, attention to safety and sanitation was a priority! Can you spot Abbie, Liz, Lorena, and Patricia in the crowd?

CRISPY TOFU WITH MISO GLAZE

While in Japan, we talked often about our favorite “bites” from the trip. One that stood out was a dish of Deep Fried Tofu with Miso that we ate at Tokyo Shiba Tofuya Ukai, a restaurant that specializes in traditional Japanese tofu. The dish was crisp on the outside, tender on the inside, and bathed in a savory-sweet miso glaze. That “bite” led us to create this homemade version. Serve as an appetizer, use as a salad topper, or make it part of a meal with steamed rice and a vegetable such as baby bok choy, green beans, or sautéed greens.

Makes 2 to 3 Servings

Ingredients

For the miso glaze:

- 1 tablespoon white miso paste
- 1 tablespoon hot water
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

For the tofu:

- One 14 to 16-ounce block firm or extra-firm tofu, drained
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons soybean oil
- 1 green onion, trimmed and thinly sliced
- 1 to 2 teaspoons sesame seeds, optional



CRISPY TOFU WITH MISO GLAZE

Directions

1. To make the glaze, place the miso and hot water in a bowl or jar and stir or whisk until well combined. Add the maple syrup, rice vinegar, sesame oil, soy sauce, and ginger and stir or whisk until well combined. Transfer to a small bowl, and set aside.
2. To prepare the tofu, slice crosswise into 8 even slabs (about ½-inch thick), then cut each slab in half to create 16 small rectangles.
3. Fill a medium-size saucepan with water. Add the salt, and bring to a boil. Carefully add the tofu, bring back to a boil, and boil gently for 5 minutes. Drain and let cool, about 5 minutes. Transfer the tofu on a clean kitchen towel or paper towels and pat dry.
4. Place the cornstarch in a shallow bowl. Toss with the tofu pieces until evenly coated.
5. Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tofu in a single layer and cook until golden and crispy, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Remove tofu to a plate.
6. Heat the miso glaze in the microwave until warm, 20 to 30 seconds. Drizzle over the tofu, or serve on the side. Garnish with the green onion and the sesame seeds, as desired.

Tip: The reason we use the method of boiling the tofu first is to firm it up so it holds its shape and doesn't fall apart.

This quick step also helps the pieces soak up sauces and seasonings, delivering better texture and flavor in every bite.



EDAMAME HUMMUS

Traditional hummus starts with chickpeas, but here we change things up with frozen shelled edamame for a fresh twist and a hint of Eastern flair. Edamame is a nutritional powerhouse, packing about 9 grams of protein and 4 grams of fiber in just $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Blended with lemon juice, zest, and spices, this creamy dip is perfect with crisp veggies, crunchy pita chips, or spread on a sandwich.

Makes 4 Servings

Ingredients

8 ounces frozen shelled edamame, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups
1/4 cup tahini
1/4 cup water
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
1 lemon, juiced (about 3 tablespoons)
1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
3 tablespoons soybean or extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
Suggested serving: Sliced cucumbers, celery, carrots, pita chips.

Directions

1. Boil the edamame in salted water for 4 to 5 minutes or microwave, covered, for 2 to 3 minutes. Drain and cool.
2. Place the edamame, tahini, water, lemon zest and juice, garlic, salt, cumin, and coriander in the bowl of a food processor and process until smooth. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in 2 tablespoons of the oil and mix until absorbed.
3. Transfer the mixture to a bowl, stir in the parsley, and drizzle with the remaining oil. (Total Yield: $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups.) Serve with the suggested dippers, or refrigerate, covered, up to 1 day.



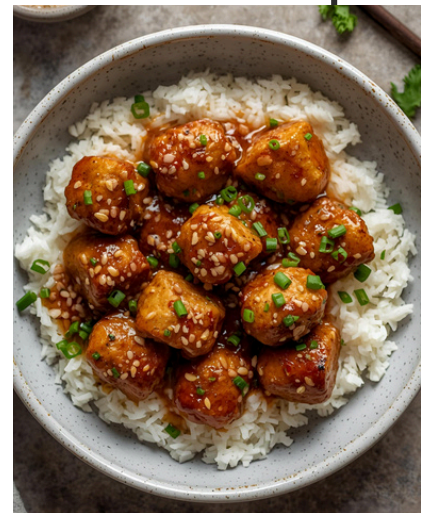
TOFU PORK MEATBALLS

Our tender meatballs are a delicious example of flexitarian eating, where plant and animal proteins come together in one dish. By mixing firm tofu with ground pork, you use less meat while keeping all the juicy flavor and satisfying texture. (Use lean ground beef, turkey, or plant-based grounds if you prefer.) Seasoned with ginger, chives, and soy sauce, these meatballs deliver a savory punch that tastes just like the inside of a dumpling—perfect served with rice or tucked into lettuce wraps.

Makes 16 Meatballs

Ingredients

4 ounces extra firm tofu, cut into slices or broken into pieces
1 pound ground pork
1-inch piece ginger, peeled and grated
1 large egg, beaten
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons chopped chives
1 tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 teaspoon cornstarch
Soybean oil for stove-top pan frying



Directions

1. Place tofu in cheesecloth or paper towels and squeeze out excess water. Transfer to a large bowl.
2. Add the pork, ginger, egg, salt, pepper, garlic, chives, soy sauce, and cornstarch to the bowl. Mix until combined.
3. Form into 16 meatballs.

To cook:

Option 1: In a large cast iron skillet over medium-high heat, add oil to cover bottom of pan. Add meatballs and cook 3 to 4 minutes on one side until golden brown. Turn over and cook 3 to 4 minutes then transfer to paper towels to drain excess oil.

Option 2: Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place meatballs onto prepared baking sheet and cook 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown.

EASY MISO SOUP WITH GREENS

Miso soup is traditionally made with dashi—a Japanese stock prepared from kombu (dried kelp) and bonito flakes (shaved, dried tuna). It's also made with miso, a savory fermented soybean paste, wakame (a type of dried seaweed), and tofu. For convenience, we used instant dashi powder to create the same deeply savory broth, and instead of the seaweed, we added baby spinach for an easy, supermarket-friendly twist. The result is a comforting bowl with classic flavor, plant-based protein, and tender greens.

Makes 3 to 4 Servings

Ingredients

4 cups water
1 tablespoon dashi powder
½ block firm or soft tofu (7 to 8 ounces), cut into ½-inch cubes
1 packed cup baby spinach, roughly chopped
2 tablespoons white or yellow miso paste
1 green onion, trimmed and thinly sliced

Directions

1. Place the water in a medium saucepan over high heat and bring to a gentle simmer. Lower the heat to maintain the simmer, and stir in the dashi powder until dissolved.
2. Add the tofu and simmer gently, 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Turn off the heat. Place the miso paste in a small bowl or measuring cup. Ladle in a few tablespoons of the hot broth and stir until the miso is dissolved and smooth.
4. Return the mixture to the pot and stir gently to combine.
5. Stir in the spinach until just wilted, about 30 seconds. Ladle into bowls and garnish with sliced green onion just before serving.

Tip: For a heartier bowl, double the spinach or add a few dried shiitake mushrooms (rehydrated and sliced) along with the tofu.



FROM TOKYO CONVENIENCE TO TOFU PROTEIN BARS



One of the first places we visited in Japan was—believe it or not—7-Eleven. Just steps from our hotel, it became a regular stop during the trip. In Japan, 7-Eleven is more than a convenience store. It's a trusted destination for quick, nutritious, and surprisingly fresh meals and snacks. From creamy egg salad sandwiches on milk bread and perfectly chilled fruit cups to miso soup, rice balls, and bento boxes, many of the offerings are a dietitian's dream.

Among the most memorable finds: tofu bars. Packaged for on-the-go eating, they came in sweet and savory varieties—think edamame and hijiki seaweed or chocolate cake-flavored versions. Each one was high in protein, satisfying, and completely different from anything we'd seen at home.

Later in the trip, we toured the tofu manufacturing facility where the bars are made and saw firsthand how soybeans are transformed into versatile, shelf-stable snacks designed for modern eating.

That experience inspired this Tofu Protein Bar recipe. Made with firm tofu, soy nut butter, plant-based protein powder, and sweet mix-ins, including mini chocolate chips and dried fruit, it's a nod to Japanese convenience with a homemade twist. Rich in protein and easy to stash in your fridge, it's proof that sometimes the best ideas come from just around the corner (store)!



TOFU PROTEIN BARS

Here in the U.S., you can't find the tofu-based protein bars we sampled at 7-Eleven in Japan just yet, but you can make your own version at home. These bars are built with a base of tofu, soy nut butter, and protein powder, plus mix-ins like mini chocolate chips, chopped nuts, and dried fruit. Each bar delivers 8 grams of protein. Slice, store in the fridge, and enjoy when you're on the go—or warm one in the microwave for 10 to 20 seconds and pair with a cup of hot tea for an afternoon pick-me-up.

Makes 12 Servings

Ingredients

1 cup quick-cooking or old-fashioned oats
¼ cup plain protein powder (soy or plant-based blend)
½ teaspoon salt
⅓ cup dried cranberries or raisins
One 14-ounce block firm tofu, drained and patted dry (not pressed)
2 large eggs
½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup soy nut butter
¼ cup walnuts, roughly chopped
¼ cup mini chocolate chips

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray an 8×8-inch baking dish or pan with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.
3. Place the oats into the bowl of a large food processor and process until finely ground. (The yield will be 1 scant cup.) Transfer to a large mixing bowl and stir in the protein powder and salt.
4. Place the dried fruit in a small bowl, cover with hot water, and let soak for 10 minutes. Drain well, pat dry with paper towels, and then roughly chop.
5. Place the tofu, eggs, brown sugar, nut butter, and vanilla into the bowl of the food processor and process until smooth.
6. Stir the tofu mixture into the dry ingredients until well combined. Mix in the cranberries, walnuts, and mini chips.
7. Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan. Bake about 25 minutes, or until the center is set and the edges pull slightly from the sides. Let cool before cutting into 12 bars. Store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or freeze for longer storage.





Prior to our Tokyo adventure, a few of us took a pre-trip to Kyoto, where we stayed at a ryokan, a traditional Japanese guest house. The breakfasts there were a delight for the senses. As adventurous foodies, we were thrilled by the array of offerings. Each morning, a beautiful bento box arrived filled with savory bites, including sashimi, pickled vegetables, tofu, and braised beef. The meal also included steaming bowls of dashi or miso soup with vegetables and meat or fish, a tender rolled omelet, and a perfectly cooked piece of fish. It was nourishing, artful, and unforgettable—an experience that made breakfast feel like a celebration.

EDAMAME, CUCUMBER, & SEAWEED SALAD

During our travels in Tokyo, one of the highlights was visiting some of the city's dazzling department store food halls. Counters overflowed with everything from jewel-like salads to delicate pastries—so beautifully displayed it was hard to choose what to eat first. Inspired by that experience, we created this fresh and colorful salad. For a taste of Japan, we added strips of roasted and salted seaweed, sold in small, snack-size packs at most supermarkets. These paper-thin sheets are dark green, shiny, and lightly crisped from roasting, and when cut into thin strips, they add a savory, salty crunch.

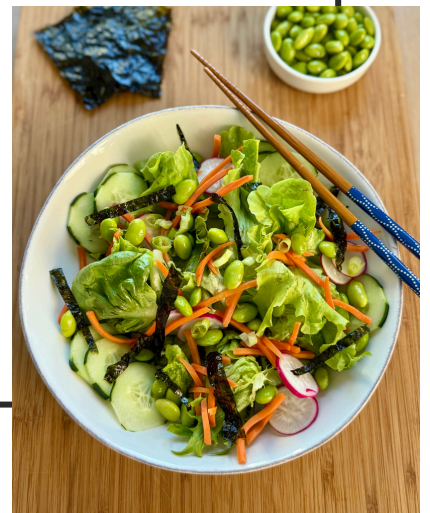
Makes 4 Servings

Ingredients

6 cups mixed salad greens (baby spinach, romaine, or a spring mix)
4 radishes, trimmed and thinly sliced
1 cucumber, peeled or unpeeled, thinly sliced
1 cup cooked shelled edamame
1 cup shredded carrots
1 green onion, trimmed and thinly sliced
6 sheets roasted and salted seaweed snack, cut into thin strips

Directions

1. Arrange the greens, radishes, cucumber, edamame, carrots, and green onion in a large salad bowl, on a platter, or plate individually for a composed salad.
2. Top with the sliced seaweed.
3. Drizzle with your favorite salad dressing or try our Miso Dressing on the following page.



MISO DRESSING

Miso is a traditional Japanese fermented soybean paste that adds rich umami depth to soups, sauces, and dressings. Umami—often called the “fifth taste” alongside sweet, salty, sour, and bitter—is that savory flavor you also find in mushrooms or aged cheese. In this easy recipe, we used red miso paste (picked up during our tour of a miso factory), but white or yellow miso works just as well. Tangy and slightly acidic, this dressing perks up any salad (especially the one on the previous page) with a savory kick.

Makes About 1 Cup

Ingredients

½ cup soybean oil
¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1½ tablespoons Dijon mustard
1½ tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
1½ tablespoons red miso (note: can use white miso, if preferred)
1 shallot, finely chopped

Directions

1. Place the oil, vinegar, mustard, soy sauce, miso, and shallot in a mason jar, an empty jam jar, or container of choice. Shake to combine; mix well with a fork to break up miso throughout.
2. Shake well before serving.

Tip: This miso dressing can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 1 month. Sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes prior to using.



SILKEN CHOCOLATE PUDDING

Who knew tofu could turn from a humble block into a silky, luscious dessert? For this recipe, we blend silken tofu with melted dark chocolate for a pudding that's rich and creamy yet lower in sugar than most traditional puddings or mousse. With the bonus of plant-based protein and isoflavones—naturally occurring compounds in soy linked to whole-body health—it's a special treat you can feel good about from the first spoonful.

Makes 6 Servings

Ingredients

One 16-ounce block silken tofu, drained
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
8 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, roughly chopped
6 tablespoons water
3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

1. In a food processor or blender, blend tofu and sugar together.
2. Place chocolate, water, cocoa powder, and vanilla in a microwave safe bowl and heat in 30 second increments until melted together. Be sure to mix between each increment. (Note: Can also use a double boiler)
3. Pour chocolate mixture into food processor or blender and puree till smooth.
4. Divide into 6 ramekins and chill for at least one hour. Serve with whipped cream, coconut whipped cream, or creme fraiche.



THANK YOU!



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