

Meat Substitutes

Tofu, made from soybeans, is a hearty and very malleable food. Think of it as a blank slate, an excellent substitute for fish, chicken, cheese, cream, eggs, and mayonnaise. Tofu packed in water should be drained before using.

Tofu can be either soft or hard. Soft, or silken, tofu blends into a smooth cream and is excellent in desserts. Hard, or firm, tofu retains its shape, and can be sliced or crumbled. All tofu is about 40 percent fat (except for low-fat versions).

Firm or extra-firm tofu can be drained and then pressed firmly with a cloth to remove excess water. Crumble, slice, or dice it, and add it to the skillet for a spin with your favorite vegetables and seasonings.

Marinate tofu the way you would chicken or fish—with herbs, citrus juice, cracked black pepper, vinegar, tamari, soy sauce, or wine. Cook marinated tofu in a sprayed skillet, under the broiler, or on a sprayed grill until it is nicely browned on both sides.

Try freezing a drained block of tofu in the freezer. After it thaws, frozen tofu soaks up marinades easily since it becomes more porous in the freezing process. It also changes slightly in consistency, becoming chewier.

Seitan is a wonderful substitute for chicken or beef, and comes in both flavors. Derived from wheat in a process that extracts the gluten or wheat protein, it slices and dices easily without falling apart, and is delicious plain.

Tempeh is a form of fermented, unprocessed tofu; it is remarkably nutritious. It usually comes in hard bricks that can be sliced or chopped, then added to stir-fries or chilies.

TVP, or texturized vegetable protein comes in the form of crumbles, and can be found dried in the bin section or frozen in the vegetarian section of the grocery store. Use TVP in place of ground beef or sausage. To reconstitute dried TVP, mix it with an equal portion of hot water before seasoning and sautéing. Frozen TVP is referred to as meatless grounds or meaty crumbles, and is generally already lightly seasoned.



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Seasonings/Sweeteners

Salt: Instead of salt, season with lime juice, lemon juice, low sodium tamari, Bragg's Liquid Aminos, vinegars, tomato juice, soy sauce, and vegetarian Worcestershire sauce.

Sweeteners: Replace ordinary sugar with agave nectar, pure maple syrup, Sucanat, turbinado sugar, blackstrap molasses, unrefined dark brown sugar, xylitol, fruit juice, mashed bananas, or applesauce.

Dairy and butter: Try sliced bananas and fruit and no-oil-added nut butters on toast in place of butter. Use blended Silken Lite soft tofu in recipes in place of sour cream and milk.