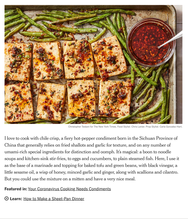

Tofu and Green Beans With Chile Crisp

By Sam Sifton

Total Time 35 minutes
Rating ★★★★★ (4,004)
Notes Read 542 community notes

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I love to cook with chile crisp, a fiery hot pepper-condiment born in the Sichuan Province of China that generally includes oils on fried shallots and garlic for texture, and on an ample number of umami-rich special ingredients for distinction and oomph. It's magical: a boon to noodle soups and kitchen sink stir-fries, to eggs and cucumbers, to plain steamed fish. Here, I use it as the base of a marinade and topping for baked tofu and green beans, with black vinegar, a little sesame oil, a wisp of honey, minced garlic and ginger, along with scallions and cilantro. But you could use the mixture on a mitten and have a very nice meal.

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INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

3 tablespoons chile-crisp condiment, plus more for serving

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1½ tablespoons Chinese black vinegar

1½ teaspoons sesame oil

1 teaspoon honey

2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced

2 tablespoons chopped scallions

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

1 (14-ounce) package extra-firm tofu, drained and sliced crosswise into 8 (½-inch-thick) slabs

¾ pound green beans

1 tablespoon neutral oil, like canola or grapeseed

White rice, for serving

1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger

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Ingredient Substitution Guide

Nutritional Information

PREPARATION

Step 1
Heat oven to 450 degrees. In a baking dish or casserole, whisk together the chile crisp, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, honey, garlic, ginger, scallions and cilantro.

Step 2
Add the tofu slices to the dish, and coat them with the sauce, then allow to marinate for as long as it takes to heat the oven and trim the green beans.

Step 3
Add the green beans to a large sheet pan, then drizzle the neutral oil on top and toss to coat. Slide the green beans to the side of the pan, and arrange the slices of tofu in an even layer in the center of the pan. Pour remaining marinade over the tofu, and place in oven.

Step 4
Roast until the green beans start to blister, 20 to 23 minutes. Serve immediately with rice and extra chile crisp on the side.

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COOKING NOTES

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Randy 4 years ago
I've been using jars and jars of Trader Joe's "Chili Onion Crunch" that I now realize is a knockoff of the chile crisp described here. I used red wine vinegar, soy sauce, tofu, shrimp, rice, ...
Is this helpful? 811

SLCatherine 4 years ago
"Best tofu I've ever had!" declared hubby, and I agree: it's perfection! Instead of fussing with towels and plates and weights to drain the tofu, I took another's tip (from a Japanese cooking show) and microwaved the sliced tofu in a bowl for three minutes on high. Amazing how much water drained out, leaving the tofu with perfect texture to soak up the delicious marinade.
Is this helpful? 759

Leslie 4 years ago
Bon Appetit has a great recipe for chile crisp, you can make it at home yourself without any special equipment and it's not behind a paywall. It takes around 30 minutes to make and lasts for months.
Is this helpful? 484

David 4 years ago
Sifton mentions in the accompanying article (which you should read if you don't know about the chili crisp), that he includes ginger, but it's not listed in the recipe as 4/17/20. I almost left the ginger out, but I'm glad I didn't. I used a lot more than a tablespoon of chile crisp because I like it cranked. I'm so glad I did. It adds a sweet flavor and necessary dimension. Also, be sure to pile the chunky marmalade on top of the tofu as it will just burn on the baking sheet. Amazing and simple recipe!
Is this helpful? 339

Rich Herald 4 years ago
As a long-time user of Lao Gan Ma chili crisp, I was curious to try the Trader Joe version. For anyone who knows the full, rich, umami-laden flavor of LGM, the TJ stuff is far inferior and not worth buying.
Is this helpful? 343

Jay Eisenberg 4 years ago
Wonderful recipe, but a 450 degree oven is too hot! Twenty minutes at 400 is plenty. You can use firm tofu instead of extra firm. Also, replace the string beans with broccoli tossed with a mix of vegetable and sesame oil.
Is this helpful? 249

world vegetarian 3 years ago
This might work for you! For years I've used a clean, dry cotton kitchen towel to wrap up my tofu and leave it on the drain board. Then into the wash and no waste, no trash.
Is this helpful? 197

G 4 years ago
Not at all. I've been using Lao Gan Ma chili crisp as my COVID coping food (I'm actually pretty distraught to see it here! It's already hard enough to find family sick jars on Amazon!!!) and I consider it milder than all my other hot sauces. I put it on stir fried veggies (esp asparagus), freezer dumplings, and - best of all - on top of a sunny-side up egg on sprouted grain toast.
Is this helpful? 199

Renee 4 years ago
I cooked this and thought it was really good but could use some ginger. Then I read through it again and noticed that he mentions ginger in the introduction but it didn't get into the recipe. Add ginger!
Is this helpful? 197

Nathan T. 4 years ago
Note: I am a huge Bittman fan and trust his advice to use what you have on hand.
1. I used Chile Crunch (Chile crunch.com).
2. I used an Indian mash-up of Ginger and Garlic paste - I noticed that many chefs have moved to paste.
3. I am missing Chinese black vinegar, I used red wine vinegar.
4. I used Bragg Aglet in place of the honey. (lower glycemic).
5. Since cilantro tastes like soap to me I used a combo of parsley and basil from my aero garden. It all turned out really well. Sorry.
Is this helpful? 91

Julia, London 7 months ago
I've taken to making a big batch of just the tofu, and keeping it in the fridge for lunches. Take a wrap—I favour a protein version— smear it with crunchy peanut butter, top it with some shredded lettuce and half a grated apple, and finish with a couple of the tofu slices, cut into smaller pieces. Incredible perfection— crunchy from the peanut butter, sweet and juicy from the apple, and complex, spicy and savoury from the tofu.

Rasha Horazech 4 years ago
I love the fly by ing chili crisp condiment Sam describes in his condiment review. It was given a jar of it as a sample and it's now a staple in my kitchen. I just had it on my egg & avocado toast this morning!
Is this helpful? 99

Chuds 4 years ago
Cheap balsamic vinegar. Do NOT use your good stuff as it will be too sweet. If not that, then Sherry vinegar.
Is this helpful? 67

Anne Marie 4 years ago
I made this almost exactly as written, except I didn't have cilantro. A couple notes:

1. I used tofu that had been previously frozen, which gave it a nice spongy texture to absorb the sauce.
2. The green beans needed some flavor - salt or a splash of soy sauce after they come out of the oven would be really helpful.
3. Even though the chili crisp sauce is fairly spicy when raw, the final baked product had almost no bite to it.

This was great. Will probably make another version of it again.
Is this helpful? 54

BW 4 years ago
Chili Crisp is amazing! Cooks Illustrated posted a delicious recipe for chili crisp this Feb - as soon as I finish one jar (max ~3 weeks) I make a new one. It doesn't need MSG, and you can doctor it as you like.
https://www.cooksillustrated.com/recipes/12400-chili-crisp-bao-pan-mi
It's easy to make and adding it to just about anything (Asian flavored) makes it spicy with mushrooms and herbs, for example) takes your meal to a completely different level.
Is this helpful? 44

renee 4 years ago
How fiery is fiery - does the condiment burn your mouth? Now for me then.
Is this helpful? 39

Christy 4 years ago
This was good and I'll make it again, but instead of scooping the remaining marinade on before baking, I'll save it and drizzle on top after it bakes. The marinade that ran off the tofu bordering burnt, and the whole dish ended up with a sort of hot, one-dimensional, overly cooked taste. It needed something acidic/sharp/uncooked. I did put some Szechuan peppercorn on at the end. Especially if you are using Trader Joe's chili crisp, which is pretty mild overall. I would recommend doing this.
Is this helpful? 42

Andy 4 years ago
Great "Chile Crisp" recipe in July, 2018 Bon Appetit (https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/chile-crisp) to make it from scratch.

Final tofu topping was also great on bread. Great dish that can be adapted to several other foods like shrimp, pork, chicken even pasta.
Is this helpful? 27

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