

Turkey and stuffing (minus the turkey)

Here's the basic idea. I never measure anything, so don't take these amounts as set in stone. I encourage you to taste, adjust, and experiment as you go. If this is the main course, with a few sides, I think this should feed 10.

What you need

5 lbs firm tofu

Basting sauce:

1/4 cup water

3 Tbs miso paste

1/2 cup soy sauce

2-3 Tbs frozen orange juice concentrate (regular orange juice can work, too. If you use that, use 1/2 cup of o.j. and eliminate the water. Mix miso in the o.j.)

3 Tbs NYF

1/4 cup sesame oil

Stuffing & gravy:

6 cups stale bread, cubed (or fresh bread that's been cut in cubes and then baked at 300 degrees for a few minutes until hard/crispy)

About 1/3 cup canola oil, vegetable oil, or butter

8 oz mushrooms, sliced

6 stalks celery, sliced or diced

1 large onion or 2 smallish ones, diced

1 med carrot, diced

Other veggies or dried fruits for the stuffing if you want to get fancy

Salt

1/2 cup soy sauce

3 Tbs sesame oil

1/2 cup NYF

4 cups vegetable broth, water with bouillon dissolved in it, or water with some salt and spices in it

2-3 tsp. dried sage

2 tsp. Italian seasoning (oregano, marjoram, rosemary, basil)

Maybe some water

Maybe some flour or cornstarch

Kitchen stuff to make sure you have around:

Colander

About 3 feet of cheesecloth

Turkey baster

Baking pan with sides or a large pie pan

What to do:

Mash the tofu to about the consistency of tofu scramble. Line a colander with 2 layers of the cheesecloth, letting some hang over the sides (enough to cover the top of the tofu so it's wrapped up). Cram the mashed tofu into the colander and make a level top. Cover the tofu with the hanging cheesecloth and cover with a plate. Put a heavy pot -- or small child -- on the plate and press the tofu in the sink for a few hours (maybe 3). Water should start dripping out of the colander as a result of the pressing. If it doesn't, adjust the plate and/or add more heavy stuff so it's pushing down on the tofu properly.

Now start working on the basting sauce, stuffing and gravy. Combine the basting sauce ingredients and mix well. A blender or a whisk and some elbow grease will do the trick.

For the stuffing, heat about 3 Tbs of the oil or butter in the bottom of a big pot. Sauté the celery and onion until both are browned and tender. Remove about half of this veggie mixture and reserve for the gravy. Add the sage and Italian seasoning and a few pinches of salt and sauté for about 10 seconds. Pour in 2 cups of the vegetable broth or water and then add the bread. Toss the bread around until coated and moist. Adjust amount of broth/water or seasonings if necessary.

At about this time, you should preheat the oven to about 400 degrees.

In that same big pot or a saucepan, heat another 3 Tbs oil or butter and sauté the carrots until tender. Add the mushrooms and sauté until tender. Add the cooked celery and onion, then 2 cups of broth or water, soy sauce, and sesame oil. Simmer for a few minutes, until all the veggies are good and soft. Add the NYF and puree in a food processor or blender (or even with a potato masher). If you need to thicken it, add NYF or some cold water that's been mixed with flour or cornstarch and simmer for a minute. Add broth/water or more water with cornstarch to achieve desired consistency.

Going back to the pressed tofu, carefully scoop out the middle of the mound, leaving a hollowed out shell that's about 1 inch thick. Reserve the scooped out tofu. Put the stuffing in there. Seal off with the reserved tofu and pat everything down lightly.

Now comes the fun part! It's time to turn the tofu turkey out onto a baking pan

Grease a baking pan with sides or a pie pan that's bigger than the mound of tofu and stuffing. Put the pan on top of the colander with the tofu and stuffing, then quickly turn it over and place on the counter. Tap the colander and shake if necessary until the "turkey" comes out. Peel off the cheesecloth.

Baste the tofu turkey with the basting mixture and bake in the 400-degree oven for about 1 ½ hours, basting every 20-30 minutes. Do not let it dry out. It's ready when the tofu feels firm and somewhat dry. It's okay if a few cracks form, but don't allow too many or the thing will bust open and bleed stuffing. Remove the "bird" and feed to your guests.

To serve, slice the "turkey" like a pie and top with gravy. You can serve leftovers in a sandwich, over rice, or even cold for breakfast!

Copyright 2007 by Rhea Kennedy