

CHAOTIC GOOD TEMPEH

SMALL BATCH · FRESH · CHICKPEA-BASED

What makes fresh tempeh different?

Our tempeh is never pasteurized or frozen. Live mycelium cultures remain active right up until you cook it — delivering deeper flavor, better texture, and higher nutrient bioavailability than commercial block tempeh.

Chickpea base — naturally soy-free.

Every recipe in this book was developed with Chaotic Good's chickpea tempeh. That means the whole book is naturally soy-free at the tempeh level. Tamari appears in some marinades — easy swaps noted throughout.

40 recipes. 5 sections.

Breakfast · Lunch · Dinner · Snacks & Sides · Sauces & Basics. Every recipe includes technique notes and allergen swaps so you can adapt confidently.

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FERMENTED WITH INTENTION · COOKED WITH CURIOSITY

CHAOTIC GOOD TEMPEH

FRESH TEMPEH DAY

FRESH TEMPEH HOME COOK RECIPE BOOK

40 Recipes for Your Kitchen

Breakfast · Lunch · Dinner · Snacks & Sides · Basics

Recipes developed for Chaotic Good chickpea tempeh — fresh, never pasteurized, naturally soy-free. All allergen substitutions noted. Techniques apply to any quality fresh tempeh.

Print at home on standard 8.5×11 paper · Landscape · Saddle-stitch binding

ABOUT TEMPEH — ORIGIN, NUTRITION & WHY FRESH IS DIFFERENT

Origin. Tempeh is a fermented food with roots in Central Java, Indonesia, where it has been a dietary staple for centuries. Unlike tofu, which is made from soy milk, tempeh is produced by culturing whole beans with *Rhizopus oligosporus* or related mold species. The mycelium binds the beans into a firm, sliceable cake. Traditional Javanese tempeh is made fresh, wrapped in banana leaves, and sold within days of fermentation. The industrialized, vacuum-packed version most Western cooks know is a distant approximation of this original.

Nutrition & bioavailability. Fermentation transforms tempeh's nutritional profile in meaningful ways. The fermentation process breaks down phytic acid — an anti-nutrient that binds minerals like zinc, iron, and magnesium and limits their absorption. In fresh tempeh, this reduction is substantially greater than in pasteurized commercial block tempeh, because live cultures continue working up until the point of cooking. Protein digestibility also improves: the mycelium pre-digests some of the complex proteins, making amino acids more accessible. Fresh tempeh is a genuinely complete protein source with high fiber, B vitamins, and prebiotic compounds that support gut health.

Fresh vs. commercial. Pasteurization kills the live cultures — it extends shelf life but eliminates the biological activity that makes fresh tempeh distinct. Fresh tempeh browns faster, holds its shape better under heat, and has a cleaner, nuttier flavor with none of the bitterness that leads many first-timers to blanch or steam commercial tempeh before cooking. Chaotic Good Tempeh is made in small batches from chickpeas (naturally soy-free), fermented to order, and never frozen or pasteurized.

AGE & FLAVOR NOTE

Fresh tempeh changes character across its life. Days 1–3: mild, clean, slightly grassy — ideal for delicate preparations like scrambles and salads. Days 4–7: flavor deepens, nuttier and more savory — best for searing, frying, and bold marinades. Past day 7: intensely funky with visible white bloom — excellent for smoky bacon strips and heavily spiced applications. All recipes note preferred age where it matters.

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TECHNIQUE REFERENCE — COOKING FRESH TEMPEH

THE SEAR **SEAR**

Best for: planks, slabs, sandwich proteins · Pan: cast iron or stainless

Prep: Slice fresh tempeh ¼" thick. Pat dry if marinade was wet. Room temperature before cooking — cold tempeh stalls the sear.

Heat: Get the pan genuinely hot before adding oil. Medium-high on most stovetops. Add neutral oil — thin film only.

Cook: Lay slices flat. Do not move them for 3–4 minutes. You are building a crust — the tempeh will release naturally when it's ready. If it sticks, it's not done. Flip once. 2–3 more minutes.

Glaze (optional): With 30 seconds left, pour marinade or glaze directly into pan. Toss quickly. Pull immediately — sugars burn fast.

Fresh tempeh sears in roughly half the time of commercial tempeh. No pre-steaming needed — ever.

THE FRY **FRY**

Best for: cutlets, thick planks, chicken-fried applications · Oil depth: 1"

Oil temperature: 350–365°F. Use a thermometer. Below 340°F the tempeh absorbs oil and turns greasy. Above 375°F the coating browns before the interior heats through.

Dredge technique: Wet batter (oat milk + hot sauce) then seasoned flour. For extra crunch: wet → flour → wet → flour again (double dip). Press the coating firmly onto the tempeh.

Batches: Don't crowd the pan — temperature drops and you steam instead of fry. Work in batches of 3–4 pieces. Rest on a wire rack, not paper towels (paper traps steam and softens the crust).

Hold time: Wire rack in a 250°F oven keeps fried tempeh crispy up to 20 minutes while you finish batches.

TECHNIQUE REFERENCE CONT.

THE CRUMBLE **CRUMBLE**

Best for: tacos, bolognese, taco salad, hash · Pan: large skillet, medium-high heat

Break it right: Use your hands to break fresh tempeh into ½"–¾" irregular pieces. Chickpea tempeh crumbles cohesively — press and pull actively, don't just pinch. Aim for varied sizes: some fine, some chunky.

Medium-high heat: Oil in skillet, heat to medium-high — shimmering, not smoking. Single layer of crumbles — do not stir for 3–4 minutes. You want caramelized, deeply golden edges. Toss and cook 2–3 more minutes.

Season at the end: Add dry spices after crumbles are browned. Add 1–2 tbsp water with spices — creates steam that blooms the spices and helps them coat evenly. Cook 2 more minutes.

THE STEAM

Best for: cold salads, dips, anywhere you want neutral, absorbent texture

How: Place tempeh block or slices in a steamer basket over 1" of simmering water. Cover and steam 12–15 minutes.

Why: Steaming opens the pores of the tempeh, making it highly absorbent for dressings and marinades. Used in cold salads where you want the dressing to penetrate, not just coat the surface.

Cool completely: Warm tempeh breaks emulsified dressings (mayo-based especially). Steam and then rest at room temperature 20–30 min before combining with cold ingredients.

MARINADE TIMING

Fresh tempeh marinates fast. The active mycelium and open pore structure mean flavor penetrates in minutes, not hours. Over-marinating in acidic or salty liquids breaks down the surface and can make planks mushy.

Planks/slabs (sear/fry): 10–20 minutes maximum.

Cubes (roasting): 20–30 minutes.

Crumbles (taco/hash): Toss and cook immediately — crumbles don't need advance marinating.

Bacon strips (thin-sliced): 30–45 minutes maximum.

Cold salads (steamed): Toss warm tempeh in dressing as it cools — absorption is passive and ongoing.

SPICY TEMPEH BREAKFAST SAUSAGE PATTIES**BREAKFAST**

MAKES ~8 PATTIES · 30 MIN ACTIVE + 2 HR REST

8 oz fresh tempeh, finely crumbled · ¼ white onion, very finely minced · 4 cloves garlic, minced · 1 tsp brown sugar · ½ tsp salt · 1 tsp black pepper · 1½ tsp dried sage · 1½ tsp dried thyme · 1½ tsp smoked paprika · 2 tbsp fresh rosemary, minced · ⅛ tsp nutmeg · ¼ tsp cayenne · ¼ tsp red pepper flakes · 1 tbsp vegan Worcestershire · 1 tbsp olive oil (+ more for pan)

1. Crumble tempeh into bowl — pieces very small, pea-size or smaller. Mix in all remaining ingredients thoroughly with clean hands.
2. Cover and refrigerate 2 hours minimum (overnight ideal) — flavors bloom and mixture firms for easier shaping.
3. Shape into 8 round patties ~½" thick. Press firmly, handle gently.
4. Medium heat, thin film of oil. Cook 3–4 min until deeply browned. Gently flip, 3–4 more min. Don't rush — the crust holds the patty together.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

Make a double batch and freeze cooked patties between parchment. Reheat from frozen in skillet with a splash of water and a lid — 4 minutes, done.

BREAKFAST

SMOKY MAPLE TEMPEH HASH BREAKFAST SANDWICHES**BREAKFAST**

SERVES 3–4 · 25 MIN

Tempeh hash: 8 oz fresh tempeh, shredded on box grater · 1 tbsp tamari · 1 tbsp maple syrup · 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar · 1 tsp smoked paprika · ½ tsp ground coriander · ½ tsp fennel seeds · ½ tsp dried basil · ¼ tsp cumin · 1½ tbsp avocado or neutral oil · 1 shallot, minced · 2 cloves garlic, minced · kernels from 1 ear fresh corn (or ½ cup frozen, thawed)

Build: 3–4 English muffins, toasted · 1 avocado · 3 tbsp cilantro, minced · juice + zest of ½ lime · 5 oz fresh spinach or arugula · sriracha mayo (vegan mayo + sriracha)

1. Grate tempeh on large holes of box grater — increases surface area for caramelization.
2. Toss shredded tempeh with tamari, maple syrup, ACV, and all spices. Let sit 5–10 min.
3. Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high. Sauté shallot and garlic 2 min. Add seasoned tempeh. Cook 7–10 min stirring every 2 min until caramelized bits form. Add corn in last 2 min.
4. Mash avocado with lime juice, zest, cilantro, salt.
5. Toast muffins. Smashed avocado on bottom half, hash, greens, sriracha mayo on top. Eat immediately.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free). English muffins → GF English muffins (wheat-free). ✓ Chaotic Good Tempeh is chickpea-based — naturally soy-free at the tempeh level.

BREAKFAST

SAVORY TEMPEH BREAKFAST HASH **BREAKFAST**

SERVES 3-4 · 30 MIN · ONE-PAN

8 oz fresh tempeh, cubed ½" · 1 tbsp tamari · 1 tsp sesame oil · 1 tbsp rice vinegar · 2 cloves garlic, minced · 1 tsp maple syrup · 1 tsp smoked paprika · 1 tsp chili powder · ½ tsp cumin · 1½ tbsp neutral oil · 2 cups waxy potatoes, ¼"-½" dice · 1 cup sweet potato, same dice · 1 red bell pepper, diced · ½ yellow onion, diced · 2 cups kale, stems removed · salt + pepper · avocado + hot sauce to serve

1. Season tempeh: toss cubes with tamari, sesame oil, rice vinegar, garlic, maple syrup, and all spices. Let sit 15 min.
2. Heat oil in large cast-iron over medium-high. Add both potatoes in a single layer — don't stir for 4-5 min until a crust forms. Toss and cook 8-10 more min until golden and fork-tender. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Add onion and bell pepper; cook 3-4 min until softened.
4. Add tempeh with all marinade liquid. Cook 5-6 min until marinade absorbs and caramelizes.
5. Fold in kale, stir 2 min until wilted.
6. Serve topped with sliced avocado and hot sauce.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free). Sesame oil → toasted pumpkin seed oil (sesame-free).

BREAKFAST

TEMPEH SCRAMBLE — THE “EGGY” BREAKFAST BOWL **BREAKFAST**

SERVES 3-4 · 20 MIN

8 oz fresh tempeh, crumbled into egg-curd-sized pieces · ½ tsp kala namak (black salt) · 2 tbsp nutritional yeast · ½ tsp garlic powder · ¼ tsp turmeric · ½ tsp smoked paprika · 1 tsp Dijon mustard · 2 tsp tamari · 1 tsp dried thyme · black pepper to taste · 2 tbsp neutral oil · ½ yellow onion, diced · 1 bell pepper, diced · 2 cups baby spinach

1. Spice slurry: combine kala namak, nutritional yeast, garlic powder, turmeric, paprika, Dijon mustard, tamari, thyme, and pepper in a small bowl. Stir to combine.
2. Heat oil in large skillet over medium. Sauté onion and bell pepper 5 min until softened.
3. Add crumbled tempeh; stir to combine with vegetables.
4. Pour spice slurry over everything; stir well to coat. Cook 4-5 min, letting some pieces develop golden color without constant stirring.
5. Fold in spinach; stir 2 min until wilted.
6. Taste and adjust — kala namak intensifies as it sits.

KALA NAMAK NOTE

Kala namak (“black salt”) is a sulfurous mineral salt that makes this convincingly eggy. Find it at Indian grocery stores or online. Start with the stated amount — a little goes a long way.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free).

BREAKFAST

HOUSE TEMPEH BACON **BREAKFAST**

MAKES ~18 STRIPS · NO PRE-STEAM NEEDED

1 lb fresh tempeh · 3 tbsp tamari · 2 tbsp maple syrup · ¾ tsp liquid smoke · 1 tbsp neutral oil
· 1½ tsp smoked paprika · ½ tsp black pepper · pinch cayenne (optional)

- 1. Slice:** Cut block into ~18 thin strips, approximately ¼" thick.
- 2. Marinate:** Whisk all marinade ingredients together. Add strips in a single layer. Marinate 20–30 min maximum.
- 3a. Pan method:** Thin film of oil, medium-high heat. Cook 2 min per side until dark and caramelized. Strips crisp further as they cool on a wire rack.
- 3b. Oven method:** Preheat oven to 375°F. Parchment-lined sheet pan. 12 min, flip, 8–10 more min. Watch the last 3 min carefully — maple sugar burns fast.

WHY LESS LIQUID SMOKE?

Commercial recipes use 1½ tsp because pasteurized tempeh needs flavor masking. Fresh tempeh has natural depth — ¾ tsp adds smoke without overwhelming the fermented character. Taste your tempeh before cooking; adjust from there.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free).

BREAKFAST

CHICKEN-FRIED TEMPEH **FRY** **BREAKFAST**

SERVES 2 · 30 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh, sliced ¼" thick · 1 cup oat milk + ¼ cup hot sauce (marinade/wet batter) ·
1 cup all-purpose flour · 1 tsp smoked paprika · 1 tsp garlic powder · 1 tsp salt · neutral oil for
frying (1" deep)

- 1. Marinate:** Combine oat milk and hot sauce in a shallow bowl. Add tempeh slices and marinate 8–10 min.
- 2. Dredge:** Whisk flour, smoked paprika, garlic powder, and salt in a separate shallow dish. Remove tempeh from marinade, let excess drip off, then press firmly into seasoned flour coating all sides. For extra crunch: dip back into marinade, then press into flour again (double dip).
- 3. Fry:** Heat oil in a heavy pan to 350°F. Fry 2–3 min per side until deep golden brown. Work in batches — don't crowd.
- 4. Drain:** Rest on a wire rack (not paper towels) to keep the crust crisp.

Week-one block preferred — cleaner base flavor. Excellent as sandwich protein, breakfast plate centerpiece, or alongside biscuits and gravy.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

All-purpose flour contains **WHEAT** → substitute rice flour or a certified GF flour blend. Check your oat milk label if needed for gluten sensitivity (some oat milks are processed with wheat).

BREAKFAST

CRISPY SMOKY TEMPEH BACON STRIPS BREAKFAST

SERVES 3-4 · MAKES ~18 STRIPS

A sesame-forward marinade inspired by Rainbow Plant Life — designed to stand on its own over rice, crumbled on salads, or layered in a sandwich.

1 block (8 oz) fresh tempeh · 3 tbsp tamari · 1½ tsp maple syrup · 2½ tsp liquid smoke · 1½ tsp rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar · 1 tbsp olive oil + ½ tsp for pan · 2½ tsp toasted sesame oil · ¼ tsp smoked paprika · ½ tsp onion powder · ¼ tsp cayenne · ¼ tsp kosher salt · smoked sea salt for finishing

- 1. Slice thin:** No thicker than ⅛". Placing the block in the freezer for 20 min before slicing gives cleaner cuts.
- 2. Marinade:** Whisk all liquid ingredients and spices together in a shallow dish.
- 3. Marinate:** Add strips, toss to coat, seal in a zip bag or cover. 30-45 min maximum.
- 4. Pan-fry:** Medium heat (not high). ½ tsp oil. Work in flat batches, 2-3 min per side until deep brown and caramelized.
- 5. Finish:** Rest on wire rack. While hot, pinch of smoked sea salt over each strip.

The two-oil method (sesame + olive) adds layered toasty depth. These are excellent cold the next day — pack them in lunchboxes or crumble over grain bowls.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free). Sesame oil → toasted pumpkin seed oil (sesame-free) — note: omitting sesame oil changes the flavor profile but remains delicious.

BREAKFAST

TEMPEH SAUSAGE GRAVY BREAKFAST

SERVES 4 · 30 MIN · SERVE OVER BISCUITS, TOAST, OR GRITS

8 oz Chaotic Good chickpea tempeh, crumbled fine · 2 tbsp neutral oil or vegan butter · ½ yellow onion, finely minced · 3 cloves garlic, minced · 1 tsp fennel seed, crushed · 1 tsp dried sage · ½ tsp smoked paprika · ½ tsp black pepper + more to taste · ¼ tsp red pepper flakes · 1 tsp tamari (or coconut aminos) · 3 tbsp all-purpose flour (or GF flour blend) · 2 cups unsweetened oat milk or other plant milk · salt to taste

- 1.** Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add crumbled tempeh. Cook 5-6 min, stirring occasionally, until golden brown in spots. Fresh tempeh browns quickly — don't walk away.
- 2.** Reduce to medium. Add onion and garlic; cook 2-3 min until softened.
- 3.** Add fennel, sage, paprika, pepper, red pepper flakes, and tamari. Stir to coat; cook 1 min until fragrant.
- 4.** Sprinkle flour over everything. Stir well and cook 2 min to eliminate raw flour taste.
- 5.** Pour in plant milk slowly, stirring constantly. Increase heat to medium-high. Cook, stirring frequently, 5-7 min until thickened to gravy consistency.
- 6.** Season with salt and adjust pepper. Serve immediately over biscuits, toast, or grits.

CONSISTENCY TIP

For thicker gravy use 4 tbsp flour; for thinner use 2 tbsp. Leftovers thicken in the fridge — add a splash of plant milk and reheat gently over medium-low, stirring constantly.

VEGAN NOTE

Use plant-based butter and oat milk — fully vegan as written!

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Contains **WHEAT** (flour) and **SOY** (tamari). Wheat-free: use certified GF flour blend; serve over GF biscuits or grits. Soy-free: substitute coconut aminos. ✓ Chaotic Good Tempeh is chickpea-based — naturally soy-free at the tempeh level!

TTLA — TEMPEH, TOMATO, LETTUCE, AVOCADO LUNCH

SERVES 2 · 5 MIN ONCE BACON IS MADE

6–8 strips House Tempeh Bacon (pg 9) · 1 ciabatta roll per sandwich, split · 2–3 tbsp vegan garlic aioli · 2–3 leaves butter lettuce · 2–3 slices ripe tomato, seasoned with salt · ½ ripe avocado, sliced

Quick garlic aioli: ¼ cup vegan mayo + 1 clove garlic, minced + squeeze of lemon, stirred together

1. Reheat bacon: dry skillet 1–2 min per side, or 90 sec in a 400°F oven.
2. Toast the ciabatta roll.
3. Season sliced tomato and avocado with flaky salt.
4. Build: garlic aioli on top half. Bottom half: avocado first (acts as glue), then tomato, lettuce, bacon. Close and press lightly.
5. Serve warm.

The aioli is doing a lot of work — don't be stingy with it. Beyond TTLA: BLT on sourdough · crumbled over Caesar · tucked into a breakfast burrito.

FERMENTATION SCIENCE

THE FUNK IS FLAVOR CHEMISTRY,
NOT SPOILAGE

As fresh tempeh ages, the mycelium produces more **proteases and lipases** — enzymes that break down proteins and fats into smaller, more flavorful compounds. This is the same biological process that creates complexity in aged cheese and cured meat.

Days 1–3: Clean, mild, slightly grassy. High moisture content. Ideal for scrambles, cold salads, and delicate applications.

Days 4–7: Deeper, nuttier, more savory. Free amino acids accumulate — including glutamate, which drives umami perception. Best for searing, frying, bold marinades.

Day 7+: Intensely funky, white bloom fully expressed. More ammonia character from protein breakdown — excellent for smoky bacon preparations and heavily spiced applications where you want depth to cut through.

The visible white bloom is *Rhizopus* sporulation — completely edible, not mold contamination. **Black spots are the only sign of an issue.**

LUNCH

CLASSIC “CHICKEN” SALAD COLD LUNCH

SERVES 3–4 · MAKE-AHEAD · STEAM REQUIRED

1 lb fresh tempeh, steamed 12–15 min and cooled completely · ¼ cup Duke's mayo (or your favorite) · 2 stalks celery, finely diced · 1 tbsp Dijon mustard · 2 tbsp fresh dill, chopped · 1–2 tbsp fresh lemon juice · salt + white pepper

1. **Steam and cool:** Steam tempeh 12–15 min. Cool to room temperature at least 20–30 min — warm tempeh will break the mayo dressing.
2. **Chop or crumble:** Cut into ½” cubes for a chunky texture, or crumble for a finer, spreadable result.
3. **Mix:** Combine mayo, celery, Dijon, dill, and lemon juice in a bowl. Fold in tempeh. Don't overmix — you want some texture.
4. **Season aggressively** with salt and white pepper — cold food needs more seasoning than hot.
5. **Chill:** Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving. Keeps for 3 days covered.

TEXTURE TIP

If the salad thickens too much after refrigerating, stir in a small squeeze of lemon juice to loosen it back to spreadable consistency.

VEGAN NOTE

Duke's mayo contains eggs. Use Just Mayo, Vegemaise, or Hellmann's Vegan instead for a fully vegan version.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Mayo contains eggs → substitute any vegan mayo brand to eliminate the egg allergen entirely.

LUNCH

CURRIED TEMPEH SALAD

COLD

LUNCH

SERVES 3-4 · MAKE-AHEAD

1 lb fresh tempeh, steamed 12–15 min and cooled · ½ cup mayo · 1½ tsp curry powder · 1 tsp honey or maple syrup · 1 tbsp lemon juice · ½ cup golden raisins · 1 small apple (Honeycrisp), small dice · 2 stalks celery, diced · ½ cup toasted cashews · salt to taste

- 1. Toast curry powder:** Dry skillet over medium, stir constantly 60 sec until fragrant. Blooming the spice in a dry pan deepens its flavor significantly.
- 2. Make dressing:** Stir mayo, bloomed curry powder, honey (or maple syrup), and lemon juice together until smooth.
- 3. Combine:** Crumble or dice cooled tempeh. Fold into dressing. Add raisins, apple, and celery; stir to combine.
- 4. Add cashews last:** Fold in right before serving to preserve their crunch. If making ahead, store cashews separately.

The sweetness from raisins and apple is the counterpoint to curry — this should balance as a dish, not be a spice showcase. Taste before adding extra curry.

VEGAN NOTE

Standard mayo → Just Mayo, Veganaise, or any vegan brand. Maple syrup instead of honey is already fully vegan.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Mayo → vegan mayo (egg-free). Cashews are **TREE NUTS** → substitute toasted pepitas (pumpkin seeds) or toasted sunflower seeds for a tree nut-free version.

LUNCH

MEDITERRANEAN TEMPEH SALAD

COLD

LUNCH

SERVES 3-4 · MAKE-AHEAD

1 lb fresh tempeh, steamed 12–15 min · ½ cup kalamata olives, halved · ½ cup roasted red peppers, drained · ¾ cup feta (or vegan feta), crumbled
Herb vinaigrette: 3 tbsp red wine vinegar · 1 tsp dried oregano · 1 clove garlic, minced · ¼ cup olive oil · salt + pepper

- 1. Vinaigrette:** whisk vinegar, oregano, and garlic together; stream in olive oil while whisking.
- 2. Toss warm steamed tempeh cubes in vinaigrette immediately** — warm tempeh absorbs as it cools. This is the key step.
- 3. Cool completely, then fold in olives, roasted peppers, and feta.**

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Feta contains **MILK** → use Violife vegan feta block, crumbled.

SMOKY “BLT” TEMPEH

SEAR

LUNCH

SERVES 3-4 · 20 MIN

1 lb tempeh, sliced ¼" · 1 tbsp smoked paprika · 2 tbsp tamari · 2 tbsp maple syrup · 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved · 3 scallions, bias-cut

Whisk smoked paprika, tamari, and maple syrup together into a glaze. Pan-sear tempeh slices over medium-high heat 3–4 min per side until browned. Reduce to medium, pour glaze over — caramelize 2 min, turning once. Cool to room temperature. Toss with cherry tomatoes and scallions.

Works cold in sandwiches or at room temperature as grain bowl protein.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free).

LUNCH

CRUMBLED TEMPEH TACOS

CRUMBLE

LUNCH

SERVES 4 · 15 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh · 2 tbsp neutral oil · 1 tsp cumin · 1 tsp chili powder · ½ tsp garlic powder · salt + pepper

Serve with: warm corn tortillas · cotija or vegan cheese · fresh cilantro · pickled red onion · lime wedges · sliced avocado

- 1. Crumble:** Break tempeh by hand into ½”-¾” irregular pieces. Chickpea tempeh crumbles cohesively — press and break it actively rather than just pinching. Aim for varied sizes.
- 2. Heat pan:** Large skillet, medium-high heat, add oil and heat until shimmering.
- 3. Cook:** Add crumbles in a single layer. Do NOT stir for 3–4 min until golden-brown and crispy on the bottom. Toss and cook 2–3 more min.
- 4. Season:** Reduce to medium. Add spices and 1 tbsp water. Cook 2 more min until fragrant and spices are evenly distributed.

Pickled onion is the key counterpoint — its acidity cuts through richness and brightens the whole taco. Don't skip it.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Cotija contains **MILK** → use vegan shredded cheese (Violife) or omit entirely. Corn tortillas are naturally gluten-free.

LUNCH

BUFFALO TEMPEH SANDWICH WITH RANCH SLAW

LUNCH

SERVES 2 · 25 MIN

Buffalo sauce: 3 tbsp Frank's RedHot · 2 tbsp vegan butter, melted · ⅛ tsp smoked paprika · pinch garlic powder · pinch salt

Ranch slaw: 8 oz coleslaw mix · ¼ cup vegan ranch dressing

Plus: 8 oz fresh tempeh, sliced ¼” planks · 2 tbsp neutral oil · 2 large hoagie or ciabatta rolls · 1 avocado, sliced

- 1. Make slaw:** Toss coleslaw mix with vegan ranch dressing. Refrigerate until ready to build.
- 2. Buffalo sauce:** Stir all sauce ingredients together until smooth and well combined.
- 3. Cook tempeh:** 1 tbsp oil, medium heat. Lay tempeh planks in a single layer. Cook 3 min undisturbed until golden brown. Add second tbsp oil, flip, 3 more min.
- 4. Sauce:** Transfer cooked tempeh to a bowl, pour warm buffalo sauce over, toss to coat evenly.
- 5. Build:** Toast rolls. Ranch slaw on bottom half. Buffalo tempeh piled on top, then avocado. Serve immediately.

INTRODUCTION TIP

This is one of the best “introduction to tempeh” recipes in the book — even skeptics tend to love the buffalo format. Great for first-timers or guests who are curious but cautious.

LUNCH

TEMPEH BÀNH MÌ WITH QUICK-PICKLED VEGETABLES LUNCH

SERVES 2-3 · 30 MIN

Quick pickles (30 min to 3 days ahead): 1 large carrot + ½ daikon, cut into matchsticks · ½ cup rice vinegar · 1 tsp sugar · pinch salt

Marinade: 8 oz fresh tempeh, sliced ¼" · 2 tbsp tamari · 1 tbsp rice vinegar · 1 tbsp maple syrup · 1 tsp sesame oil · 2 cloves garlic, minced · ½ tsp ginger, grated · ½ tsp sriracha

Build: 2-3 small baguettes · 3 tbsp vegan mayo + 1 tbsp sriracha (sriracha mayo) · fresh cilantro · jalapeño, thin-sliced · cucumber, thin-sliced

- 1. Pickles:** Toss carrot and daikon with rice vinegar, sugar, and salt. Let sit at least 30 min (better overnight).
- 2. Marinate tempeh:** Combine all marinade ingredients. Add tempeh slices. 10 min only for fresh tempeh planks — don't over-marinade.
- 3. Sear:** Medium-high heat, thin film of oil. 3 min per side. Pour reserved marinade into hot pan in the last 30 seconds — it caramelizes and lacquers the tempeh.
- 4. Build:** Sriracha mayo on both sides of baguette. Tempeh first, then pickled veg, cucumber, cilantro, jalapeño.

BALANCE NOTE

Every component is doing a specific job: pickles = acid + crunch; cucumber = freshness; cilantro = brightness; jalapeño = heat; sriracha mayo = richness. Don't leave anything out.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free). Sesame oil → toasted pumpkin seed oil (sesame-free). Baguette contains **WHEAT** → use GF baguette or rice paper wraps for wheat-free.

LUNCH

RAINBOW THAI SALAD WITH PEANUT TEMPEH LUNCH

SERVES 3-4 · 30 MIN

Peanut tempeh: 8 oz fresh tempeh, cubed · 2 tbsp peanut butter · 6 tbsp coconut aminos (or 3 tbsp tamari + 3 tbsp water) · 3 tbsp lime juice · 2 tbsp maple syrup · 2 tsp chili garlic sauce · 1 tbsp sesame oil · 4 cloves garlic, minced

Salad: 6 oz rice vermicelli noodles · 2 carrots, ribboned · 1 cup red cabbage, thin-sliced · 1 red bell pepper, thin-sliced · 1 cup baby spinach · 2 scallions, bias-cut · ¼ cup cilantro · 2 tbsp fresh mint

Extra peanut dressing: ½ cup peanut butter + 3 tbsp tamari + 3 tbsp maple syrup + 1 tsp chili garlic sauce + ¼ cup water + lime juice — whisk until pourable

- 1. Marinate tempeh cubes** in peanut marinade 15-20 min.
- 2. Cook tempeh:** Bake at 375°F 20-25 min (flip halfway), or pan-fry medium-high 3 min per side.
- 3. Cook rice noodles** per package, rinse cold, toss with a small drizzle of sesame oil to prevent sticking.
- 4. Peanut dressing:** Whisk all ingredients together, adding water until dressing is pourable consistency.
- 5. Assemble:** Noodles and veg as a base; top with peanut tempeh. Drizzle generously with extra peanut dressing. Serve with extra lime wedges.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Peanut butter → pumpkin seed butter (**PEANUT**-free). Sesame oil → toasted pumpkin seed oil (**SESAME**-free). Tamari → coconut aminos (**SOY**-free). ⚠ If avoiding both peanuts AND sesame: use pumpkin seed butter throughout — do NOT substitute tahini (tahini is sesame-based).

LUNCH

MAPLE MUSTARD TEMPEH BUDDHA BOWL LUNCH

SERVES 3-4 · 40 MIN

Maple mustard tempeh: 8 oz fresh tempeh, cubed · 3 tbsp whole grain or Dijon mustard · 2 tbsp maple syrup · 1 tbsp tamari · 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar · 1 tbsp olive oil · 1 tsp garlic powder

Bowl: 2 cups kale, massaged · 1 large sweet potato, cubed and roasted · 1 apple (Honeycrisp), thin-sliced · ½ cup sauerkraut · 1 cup cooked farro, quinoa, or brown rice · pepitas or toasted walnuts

Tahini dressing: 2 tbsp tahini + 1 tbsp lemon juice + 1 tsp maple syrup + 2-3 tbsp water — whisk until smooth

1. Marinate tempeh in maple mustard mixture at least 30 min.
2. **Roast:** Preheat oven to 400°F. Sweet potato on a sheet pan, 20-25 min. Tempeh on a separate parchment-lined pan, 20-25 min, flip halfway — watch the maple in the last 5 min, it can burn.
3. Massage kale with a small drizzle of olive oil and pinch of salt for 1-2 min until softened.
4. **Build:** Grains base → kale → sweet potato → tempeh → apple → sauerkraut → nuts/pepitas → drizzle tahini dressing.

MEAL PREP NOTE

Ideal for meal prep — all components store separately 3-4 days in the fridge. Dress only the portion you're eating right away; keep dressing separate for storage.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tahini contains **SESAME** → substitute pumpkin seed butter. Walnuts are **TREE NUTS** → use pepitas (pumpkin seeds). Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free). Farro contains **WHEAT** → use brown rice or quinoa for wheat-free.

LUNCH

TEMPEH TACO SALAD WITH CHIPOTLE DRESSING CRUMBLE

LUNCH
SERVES 3-4 · 20 MIN

Taco tempeh: 8 oz fresh tempeh, crumbled · 2 tsp chili powder · 1 tsp cumin · ½ tsp smoked paprika · ½ tsp garlic powder · ¼ tsp onion powder · ¼ tsp dried oregano · 1 tbsp olive oil · 2 tbsp water

Salad: 1 large head romaine, chopped · 1 cup black beans, drained · 1 cup corn (fresh, frozen-thawed, or roasted) · 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved · ½ red onion, finely diced · 1 avocado, cubed · ½ cup crushed tortilla chips

Chipotle dressing: 3 tbsp olive oil + 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar + 1 tsp smoked paprika + ½ tsp chipotle powder + 1 tsp maple syrup + salt — whisk together

1. **Taco crumble:** Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium-high. Add crumbled tempeh, cook 3 min until starting to brown. Reduce heat to medium; add spices and 2 tbsp water. Cook 3-4 min until fragrant and evenly seasoned.
2. **Whisk dressing:** Combine all dressing ingredients and whisk until emulsified.
3. **Build:** Romaine base, then beans, corn, tomatoes, onion, avocado, and taco tempeh. Drizzle dressing over. Add crushed chips at the last moment so they stay crisp.

CLEAN RECIPE NOTE

No major common allergens in this recipe as written. Naturally gluten-free (use certified GF tortilla chips), naturally dairy-free, naturally egg-free.

LUNCH

TEMPEH PHILLY CHEESESTEAK

SEAR

LUNCH

SERVES 2 · 35 MIN

Marinade: 1 block (8 oz) fresh tempeh · 1½ tsp tamari · 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar · 1 tbsp maple syrup · 1 tsp smoked paprika · ½ tsp garlic powder · ½ tsp onion powder · ¼ tsp black pepper

Veg: 1 yellow onion, thin-sliced · 1 green bell pepper, thin-sliced · 1 red bell pepper, thin-sliced · 4 oz cremini mushrooms, sliced · 4 tbsp neutral oil, divided

Build: 2 hoagie rolls · vegan butter + minced garlic (garlic butter) · 4 slices provolone or vegan provolone · 2 tbsp Dijon mayo

1. Chill tempeh block 20 min in freezer. Slice ¼" thin, then cut into strips. Combine all marinade ingredients; add tempeh strips. Marinate 15–20 min maximum.
2. **Caramelize veg:** 2 tbsp oil, medium heat, onions and peppers 15 min until onions are golden and soft. Add mushrooms in last 5 min. Set aside.
3. **Cook tempeh:** Same pan, 2 tbsp oil, medium-high. Lay tempeh flat, 2–3 min undisturbed, then flip 2 min. Pour reserved marinade in last 30 sec, toss, add vegetables back in.
4. **Melt cheese:** Lay cheese slices over the mix, reduce to low, cover with lid 1–2 min.
5. Mix vegan butter with minced garlic; brush on rolls and toast. Dijon mayo on inside of top bun.

DEPTH NOTE

Balsamic vinegar in the marinade provides savory, meaty depth. Do not omit it.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free). Provolone contains **MILK** → use vegan provolone (Follow Your Heart or Violife). Hoagie roll contains **WHEAT** → use GF hoagie bread.

LUNCH

TEMPEH REUBEN

LUNCH

SERVES 2 · 35 MIN

Marinade: 1 block (8 oz) fresh tempeh, sliced ¼" planks · ½ cup vegetable broth · 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar · 1 tbsp vegan Worcestershire · 1 tsp liquid smoke · 1 tsp smoked paprika · 1 tsp onion powder · ½ tsp garlic powder

Russian dressing: ¼ cup vegan mayo · 2 tbsp ketchup · 1 tbsp dill pickle relish · 1½ tsp prepared horseradish · dash hot sauce · 1 tsp vegan Worcestershire · 1 tsp apple cider vinegar · salt + pepper

Build: 4 slices dark seeded rye bread · ½ cup sauerkraut, drained and pressed dry · 4 slices vegan Swiss or provolone · vegan butter for grilling

1. Marinate tempeh 30 min to 2 hours maximum — do not marinate overnight, the liquid smoke and acid will break down the texture.
2. **Cook tempeh:** Cast iron skillet, medium heat. 3 min per side. Pour in remaining marinade; let it cook off and reduce into a glaze coating the tempeh.
3. **Russian dressing:** Whisk all ingredients together. Taste and adjust seasoning.
4. Press sauerkraut completely dry in a kitchen towel — excess moisture makes the sandwich soggy.
5. **Build:** Russian dressing on one side of each bread slice. Layer: tempeh → sauerkraut → vegan Swiss. Butter the outsides of bread generously.
6. **Grill:** Medium skillet, 3–4 min per side pressing firmly with a spatula until deeply golden brown and cheese is melted.

FLAVOR NOTE

Smoked paprika is doing the heavy lifting for “corned beef” flavor here. Fresh tempeh paired with live-fermented sauerkraut is a genuinely excellent combination.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Rye bread contains **WHEAT/GLUTEN** → use GF sourdough (Canyon Bakehouse) or a GF rye-style bread. Vegan Swiss/provolone is dairy-free by definition — confirm your specific brand's label.

PEANUT LEMONGRASS TEMPEH SATAY **SNACK**

SERVES 4 (APPETIZER 6) · 30 MIN + 20 MIN MARINATE

Marinade/dipping sauce base: 2 tbsp salted peanut butter · 6 tbsp coconut aminos (or 3 tbsp tamari + 3 tbsp water) · 3 tbsp lime juice · 2 tbsp maple syrup · 1 tbsp sesame oil · 2 tsp chili garlic sauce · 2 tsp fresh turmeric, grated (or ½ tsp ground) · 4 cloves garlic, minced · 1 stalk lemongrass (inner core only, minced very fine) · pinch sea salt
8 oz fresh tempeh, cut into rectangles (1" × 2½" × ¾") · bamboo skewers soaked 30 min

- 1. Marinade:** Blend or whisk all smooth. Divide in half — one half for dipping sauce (add 1 extra tbsp peanut butter + 2-3 tbsp water to thin), one half for marinating.
- 2. Skewer:** Thread 2 tempeh pieces per skewer.
- 3. Marinate:** 20-25 min only — lime juice will start breaking down fresh tempeh's mycelium past 30 min.
- 4. Grill:** Grill pan or outdoor grill, medium-high. 3 min per side. Brush with reserved marinade in last minute.
- 4b. Bake option:** 400°F, 22-25 min, flip halfway.
- 5.** Serve with dipping sauce, cucumber rounds, and cilantro.

INGREDIENT NOTE: LEMONGRASS

A fragrant tropical grass. Buy fresh. Peel off tough outer layers to reach the softer inner core. Mince very finely — it's fibrous.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Peanut butter → pumpkin seed butter (peanut-free); sesame oil → toasted pumpkin seed oil (sesame-free); coconut aminos already soy-free. ✓ Chaotic Good Tempeh is chickpea-based.

SNACKS

BAKED BUFFALO TEMPEH TENDERS **SNACK**

SERVES 3-4 · 45 MIN

8 oz fresh tempeh, sliced ½"-thick tender-shaped strips · ¾ cup buffalo sauce (Frank's RedHot Buffalo), divided · ½ cup AP flour + ¼ tsp each: salt, pepper · 1 flax egg (1 tbsp ground flax + 2½ tbsp water, rest 10 min) · 1 cup panko breadcrumbs · celery sticks + vegan ranch for serving

- 1.** Cover tempeh with ½ cup buffalo sauce. Refrigerate 1 hour. Preheat oven 375°F, parchment-lined sheet pan.
- 2. Breading station:** (1) flour + salt + pepper, (2) flax egg (gel-like), (3) panko.
- 3.** Remove tempeh from marinade, shake off excess. Flour → flax egg → panko (press firmly).
- 4. Bake:** 20 min, flip, 12-15 more min until deep golden.
- 5. Glaze:** Warm remaining ¼ cup sauce, brush on tenders, return to oven 3-5 min to set.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

AP flour + panko contain **WHEAT** → use rice flour and GF panko breadcrumbs.

THAI TEMPEH LETTUCE WRAPS **SNACK**

SERVES 3-4 · 20 MIN

Filling: 8 oz fresh tempeh, pulsed to small crumbles · 2 tsp oil · 3 cloves garlic · 1 tsp ginger · 1 tbsp hoisin · 1 tbsp tamari · 1 tbsp rice vinegar · ½ tsp sesame oil

Peanut sauce: 3 tbsp peanut butter + 1 tbsp each: rice vinegar, tamari, maple syrup + 1 tsp sesame oil + 2-4 tbsp water

Build: 1 cup shredded carrots · 1 cup red cabbage · ½ red bell pepper, fine dice · 8-10 butter lettuce cups · scallions

Pulse tempeh in food processor (5-sec bursts) to small crumbles. Whisk peanut sauce. Sauté garlic + ginger 60 sec. Add tempeh, cook 5-7 min until browned. Add hoisin, tamari, vinegar; cook 2 min until absorbed. Drizzle sesame oil. Fill lettuce cups: tempeh, carrots, cabbage, pepper. Drizzle peanut sauce, scatter scallions.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Hoisin usually contains **WHEAT** → use GF hoisin (San-J) or coconut aminos + ½ tsp molasses; peanut butter → pumpkin seed butter; sesame oil → pumpkin seed oil; tamari → coconut aminos.

PAN-SEARED TEMPEH — TAMARI GLAZE SEAR DINNER

SERVES 2 · 15 MIN · NO PRE-STEAM

1 lb fresh tempeh, sliced ¼" thick · olive oil · salt · pepper

Tamari glaze: ¼ cup tamari · 2 tbsp maple syrup · 1 tbsp rice vinegar · 1 tsp sesame oil · 1 clove garlic, minced · pinch fresh ginger

1. Slice tempeh ¼" planks. Pat dry.
2. Cast iron or heavy stainless, medium-high heat. Oil until shimmering.
3. **Sear:** Single layer. Don't touch 3–4 minutes. Ready to flip when it releases cleanly — deep mahogany bottom.
4. Flip once. 3 more minutes. Remove from heat.
5. **Glaze:** Whisk all glaze ingredients. Brush over hot tempeh immediately — residual heat tightens and caramelizes the glaze.

CHEF NOTE

If sticking, it isn't ready to flip. It will release on its own once the crust has fully formed. Patience is the whole technique. Week-two tempeh works beautifully here — fermented depth plays against sweetness of maple and tamari.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free); sesame oil → pumpkin seed oil (sesame-free).

FERMENTATION SCIENCE

WHY FRESH TEMPEH TASTES LIKE NOTHING ELSE

Fermentation produces **free glutamate** — the same compound that makes Parmesan, soy sauce, mushrooms, and miso intensely savory. In chickpeas, glutamate is bound up in protein chains. *Rhizopus oligosporus* breaks those chains, liberating free glutamate throughout the ferment.

The result: **fresh tempeh has built-in umami**. It doesn't need masking or heavy marinades to taste good — a clean sear with a simple glaze like this one lets the fermentation work speak for itself. This is why fresh tempeh recipes use less sodium and less acid than commercial tempeh recipes. The flavor is already there.

Chickpea tempeh adds another layer: chickpeas are naturally higher in free amino acids than soybeans, giving Chaotic Good Tempeh a **sweeter, nuttier baseline** that soy-based tempeh doesn't have.

DINNER

BBQ BRAISED TEMPEH DINNER

SERVES 3–4 · 30 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh, sliced ½" thick · ¾ cup BBQ sauce (store-bought or house) · ½ tsp smoked paprika · ¼ cup vegetable stock or water · 2 tbsp neutral oil

1. **Sear:** Heat oil large skillet medium-high. Add tempeh single layer. Sear 3–4 min per side until good color.
2. **Add braise:** Mix BBQ sauce, stock, smoked paprika. Pour in — it will sizzle. Reduce to gentle simmer.
3. **Braise:** 12–15 min, flip once halfway, until sauce reduces and thickens to coat.
4. **Rest in sauce:** Turn off heat, cool in sauce a few minutes.

CHEF NOTE

The most versatile recipe in this book. Sandwiches, rice bowls, nachos, baked potato, quesadillas — this tempeh fits anywhere.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Many BBQ sauces contain **WHEAT** (Worcestershire or malt vinegar) — check label. Use Stubb's Original or Annie's BBQ for reliably clean options.

FERMENTATION SCIENCE

GLUTAMATE → GABA:
YOUR TEMPEH IS MAKING NEUROTRANSMITTERS

During fermentation, *Rhizopus oligosporus* — the mold that holds your tempeh together — produces an enzyme called **glutamate decarboxylase**. This enzyme converts free glutamate (an excitatory amino acid) into **GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid)**, an inhibitory neurotransmitter associated with calm, reduced anxiety, and better sleep quality.

Measured GABA levels in fresh tempeh are significantly higher than in pasteurized commercial tempeh — because pasteurization halts the enzymatic activity that produces it. The mold needs to be alive to keep making GABA. **Fresh tempeh is not just food — it's a biologically active ferment.**

GABA doesn't cross the blood-brain barrier efficiently in supplemental form, but dietary GABA from fermented foods shows meaningful effects in human studies, likely through gut-brain axis signaling. This is an active area of research.

DINNER

STICKY GINGER-SESAME TEMPEH

SEAR

DINNER

SERVES 2-3 · 20 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh (cubed or sliced) · 3 tbsp tamari · 1 tbsp fresh ginger, grated (squeeze pulp) · 2 cloves garlic, minced · 2 tbsp rice vinegar · 1 tsp sesame oil · 2 tbsp neutral oil · 2 scallions, thin-sliced · 1 tbsp sesame seeds

- 1. Glaze:** Whisk tamari, ginger juice (squeeze grated ginger over bowl, discard pulp), garlic, and rice vinegar in small saucepan. Simmer over medium until reduced by half, ~5 min. Should coat a spoon.
- 2. Sear:** Medium-high heat, oil shimmering. Sear tempeh 2-3 min per side.
- 3. Glaze and finish:** Pour glaze into pan — it will spit. Toss quickly to coat. Remove from heat immediately. Finish with sesame oil, scallions, sesame seeds.

CHEF NOTE

Week-two tempeh — the extra funk plays beautifully with sesame. Excellent over rice or noodle bowls.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free); sesame oil + sesame seeds → toasted pumpkin seed oil + hemp seeds or sunflower seeds (sesame-free).

DINNER

TEMPEH BOLOGNESE CRUMBLE

CRUMBLE

DINNER

SERVES 4 · 45 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh, crumbled · 1 small onion, finely diced · 2 medium carrots, finely diced · 2 stalks celery, finely diced · 4 cloves garlic, minced · 2 tbsp olive oil · ½ cup dry red wine (or 1 tbsp balsamic + ¼ cup water) · 1 can (14 oz) crushed tomatoes · 2 tbsp tomato paste · 1 tbsp tamari · 1 tsp each: dried oregano, dried thyme · ⅛ tsp ground nutmeg · salt + pepper

- 1. Soffritto:** Heat olive oil large Dutch oven medium. Add onion, carrot, celery. Cook 10-12 min, stirring occasionally, until deeply soft and caramelizing. Don't rush.
- 2. Add garlic** 1 min, stirring.
- 3. Brown the crumble:** Medium-high. Add crumbled tempeh. Cook 5-7 min until lightly browned.
- 4. Deglaze:** Add wine. Stir, let cook off 2 min.
- 5. Simmer:** Add tomatoes, tomato paste, tamari, herbs, nutmeg. Reduce to low, cover partially, simmer 20-25 min until thickened.

CHEF NOTE

Better the next day. Use on pasta, polenta, stuffed potatoes. Add 2-3 extra tbsp water during simmer — fresh tempeh has more moisture than commercial.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos. Pasta (if serving) contains **WHEAT** → use GF pasta or serve over polenta/rice.

DINNER

JERK CHICKPEA TEMPEH SEAR DINNER

SERVES 3-4 · 30 MIN + MARINATE

1 lb fresh tempeh, thick-sliced (½") or cubed

Jerk marinade: 1 scotch bonnet or habanero, seeds removed · 1 tsp ground allspice · 1 tsp dried thyme · 1 tsp fresh ginger, grated · 2 tbsp tamari · 1 tbsp neutral oil · 1 tsp brown sugar · 2 cloves garlic · juice of 1 lime · 1 tbsp green onion

- 1. Blend marinade:** All ingredients in blender. Blend smooth — spicy, fragrant, deeply savory.
- 2. Marinate:** Pour over tempeh. 30 min to 2 hours. Don't go overnight — lime juice breaks down fresh tempeh's texture past 2-3 hrs.
- 3. Cook:** High-heat sear or grill. Get char marks and caramelization — slight burn is intentional.
- 4. Finish:** While hot, brush with 1 tbsp tamari + 1 tsp brown sugar glaze. Rest 3-5 min.

HEAT NOTE

Scotch bonnet is genuinely hot. Start with half or substitute jalapeño for milder. Pairs with rice and peas, fried plantain, mango slaw. Week-two tempeh is ideal.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free).

FERMENTATION SCIENCE THE WHITE THREADS ARE ALIVE UNTIL YOU COOK THEM

The dense white mycelium binding your tempeh is a network of **fungal hyphae** — microscopic filaments of *Rhizopus oligosporus*. In fresh tempeh, these hyphae are still biologically active. They're continuously secreting enzymes:

Phytase breaks down phytic acid — an anti-nutrient in chickpeas that binds zinc, iron, and magnesium and blocks their absorption. Fresh tempeh's live phytase activity can reduce phytic acid by **up to 60%** compared to unfermented chickpeas — roughly double what pasteurized commercial tempeh achieves.

Proteases continue pre-digesting proteins, improving amino acid bioavailability. This is why fresh tempeh has a softer, denser texture than commercial — the mycelium is actively working on the protein matrix.

Cooking doesn't destroy these benefits — the minerals and amino acids have already been liberated.

Heat sets what fermentation built.

DINNER

TEMPEH AL PASTOR DINNER

SERVES 4 · 45 MIN + 1-2 HR MARINATE

Chile marinade: 3 dried guajillo chiles · 2 dried ancho chiles · 1 chipotle in adobo + 1 tsp sauce · ½ cup pineapple juice · juice of 1 orange · 2 tbsp ACV · ½ white onion, rough chop · 3-4 cloves garlic · 1 tsp salt · 1 tsp Mexican oregano · ½ tsp cumin · ¼ tsp each: cinnamon, cloves · 2 tbsp achiote (annatto) paste · 1 tbsp brown sugar
2 blocks (16 oz) fresh tempeh, cubed ½" · ½ fresh pineapple for charring · corn tortillas · white onion, fine dice · cilantro · lime wedges · salsa verde

- 1. Toast dried chiles:** Dry skillet, medium heat. Press flat, 30 sec per side until fragrant. Don't burn — dark = bitter.
- 2. Rehydrate:** Cover with hot water 15-20 min until soft. Drain.
- 3. Blend:** All marinade ingredients on high 60+ sec until completely smooth. Adjust to taste.
- 4. Marinate:** Pour over tempeh. 1-2 hours MAX. Pineapple juice contains bromelain — it will make fresh tempeh mushy past 2 hrs.
- 5. Cook:** Large cast iron, medium-high, 2 tbsp oil. Single layer. Sit 3-4 min until browned. Flip. Add remaining marinade, caramelize 3-4 min more.
- 6. Char pineapple:** Dry-sear slices 2-3 min per side.
- 7. Assemble:** tortilla → tempeh → white onion → cilantro → pineapple → lime → salsa verde.

NO ACHIOTE PASTE?

Sub: 1 tbsp ground annatto + ½ tsp cumin + ½ tsp garlic powder + ½ tsp oregano.

AL PASTOR · NOTES & VARIATIONS

UNDERSTANDING THE CHILE MARINADE

Guajillo chiles — the backbone. Mild heat, deep red color, slightly tangy fruity flavor. Most important ingredient in the marinade.

Ancho chiles — darker, chocolate-like depth. Dried poblanos. Very mild heat.

Achiote (annatto) paste — gives the signature brick-red color and slightly earthy, peppery flavor. What makes al pastor look and taste like al pastor.

Chipotle in adobo — smokiness and heat. One pepper is plenty — they're concentrated.

VARIATIONS

Al Pastor Bowl: Serve over cilantro-lime rice with black beans, pickled red onion, and crema.

Al Pastor Quesadilla: Fold into flour tortilla with cheese and griddle until golden.

Al Pastor Nachos: Pile onto chips with cheese, jalapeño, sour cream, pico de gallo.

MAKE-AHEAD + DAIRY-FREE OPTIONS

Marinade keeps 5 days in fridge or 3 months frozen. Cooked tempeh al pastor holds 3 days; reheat in dry skillet with splash of reserved marinade.

Dairy-free swaps: Replace crema with vegan sour cream (Kite Hill, Forager) or thinned vegan mayo + lime. Replace cheese with Violife shreds. The marinade flavor is so dominant that the cheese is more texture than flavor — swaps work seamlessly.

DINNER

ORANGE PAN-GLAZED TEMPEH SEAR DINNER

SERVES 3-4 · 25 MIN · HEIDI SWANSON METHOD

10-12 oz fresh tempeh, sliced into thin bite-sized pieces (¼" thick) · 1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice (3-4 oranges — must be fresh, not bottled) · 1 tbsp fresh ginger, grated (squeeze pulp) · 2 tsp tamari · 1½ tsp mirin · 2 tsp maple syrup · ½ tsp ground coriander · 2 cloves garlic, minced · 2 tbsp olive oil · juice of ½ lime · fresh cilantro, generous handful

Serve over: steamed jasmine or brown rice + broccoli

- 1. Glaze:** Combine OJ, ginger juice (squeeze grated ginger firmly, discard pulp), tamari, mirin, maple syrup, coriander, garlic. Whisk and set aside.
- 2. Sear tempeh:** Olive oil, large skillet, medium-high. Single layer. Undisturbed 2-3 min until deeply golden. Flip, 2-3 more min.
- 3. Glaze and reduce:** Pour orange mixture in — it will sizzle. Reduce to medium. Simmer 7-8 min, spooning over tempeh, until reduced to thick lacquered glaze. Check at 7 min — fresh tempeh needs slightly less.
- 4. Plate over rice.** Squeeze lime. Scatter cilantro. Serve right away — glaze tightens as it sits.

CHEF NOTE

One of the most-cited tempeh recipes online for a reason. Fresh tempeh's clean, nutty flavor shines against the bright citrus glaze.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Tamari → coconut aminos; mirin may contain **WHEAT** → use GF mirin (Eden brand or Kikkoman GF) or substitute 1 tbsp dry sherry + ½ tsp sugar.

DINNER

TEMPEH TIKKA MASALA DINNER

SERVES 4-5 · 1 HR · MAKE-AHEAD FRIENDLY

8-10 oz fresh tempeh, cubed $\frac{3}{4}$ " · $\frac{1}{2}$ head cauliflower, florets · 1 large sweet potato, cubed · 1 red bell pepper, diced · $\frac{1}{2}$ yellow onion, diced · 6 cloves garlic, minced · 1" fresh ginger, minced · 1 can (28 oz) crushed tomatoes · $\frac{1}{4}$ cup coconut cream · 1 cup plain coconut yogurt · 3 tbsp neutral oil, divided

Spices: 1 tsp turmeric · 1 tsp smoked paprika · 1 tsp ground coriander · $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garam masala · $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne · 1 tsp salt

Basmati rice + cilantro to serve

- 1. Roast:** 375°F. Cauliflower + 1 tbsp oil on sheet pan. Sweet potato + 1 tbsp oil on separate pan. Both 35 min until caramelized.
- 2. Build sauce:** Heat remaining oil, large pot, medium. Add all spices, stir constantly 15 sec (blooming). Add garlic + ginger 30 sec. Add onion + bell pepper 7-8 min.
- 3. Liquids:** Add crushed tomatoes, coconut cream, yogurt. Stir combined. Add tempeh cubes. Bring to low simmer, cover, cook 25-30 min. Fresh tempeh reaches ideal tenderness at 25 min — don't over-simmer.
- 4. Finish:** Add roasted cauliflower and sweet potato. Simmer uncovered 5 min. Taste and adjust.
- 5.** Serve over basmati with cilantro and drizzle of coconut cream.

MAKE-AHEAD NOTE

Genuinely better the next day. Double batch and freeze up to 3 months.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

If using soy-based yogurt, it contains **SOY** → use coconut yogurt (soy-free). Chaotic Good Tempeh is chickpea-based and naturally soy-free.

DINNER

PEANUT TEMPEH STIR-FRY WITH NOODLES DINNER

SERVES 4 · 30 MIN

Peanut sauce: $\frac{1}{3}$ cup creamy peanut butter · 3 tbsp tamari · 2 tbsp maple syrup · 2 tbsp rice vinegar · 1 tbsp sesame oil · 2-3 tsp sriracha · 1 tbsp Thai red curry paste (highly recommended) · $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm water

8 oz fresh tempeh, cubed or sliced · 1 tbsp neutral oil · $\frac{1}{2}$ large onion, sliced · 3 cloves garlic, minced · $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups mixed vegetables (broccoli, snap peas, carrots, bell pepper, bok choy) · 8 oz rice or soba noodles, cooked

To serve: roasted peanuts · cilantro · lime wedges · sesame seeds

- 1. Peanut sauce:** Whisk all, add water until pourable. Rich, spicy, slightly sweet.
- 2.** Cook noodles per package, rinse cold, tiny drizzle sesame oil.
- 3. Sear tempeh:** Oil, medium-high. 3 min undisturbed, flip, 3 more until golden. Remove.
- 4. Stir-fry veg:** Same pan. Onion 2-3 min. Garlic 30 sec. Longer-cooking veg first, quicker ones after. 4-5 min total — keep heat high.
- 5. Finish:** Return tempeh. Pour peanut sauce. Toss 2 min. Add noodles, toss again.
- 6.** Serve topped with peanuts, cilantro, lime.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Peanut butter → pumpkin seed butter; sesame oil + seeds → pumpkin seed oil + hemp seeds; tamari → coconut aminos; soba noodles contain **WHEAT** → use 100% buckwheat soba or rice noodles.

DINNER · RICE BOWLS

SMOKY CHIPOTLE TEMPEH BURRITO BOWL **DINNER**

SERVES 4 · 30 MIN

Chipotle tempeh: 8 oz fresh tempeh, cubed $\frac{3}{4}$ " · $\frac{1}{2}$ white onion, diced · 3 cloves garlic, minced · 1 cup tomato sauce · 1–2 chipotle peppers in adobo + 1 tsp sauce · 1 tsp cumin · $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp smoked paprika · 1½ tbsp olive oil

Bowl: cilantro-lime rice · black beans (warm, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin) · corn · avocado · pico de gallo · cilantro · lime

- $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp oil, medium-high. 2–3 min undisturbed. Flip 2–3 more min. Remove.
- Same pan: remaining oil, sauté onion 3 min, garlic 1 min. Add tomato sauce, chipotle, cumin, paprika. Simmer 4 min.
- Add tempeh, simmer 5 min until absorbed. Build bowls.

HEAT NOTE 1 chipotle = mild-medium. 2 = spicy.

SPICY TEMPEH CRUMBLE RICE BOWL **CRUMBLE** **DINNER**

SERVES 4 · 25 MIN · HEIDI SWANSON METHOD

Spicy crumble: 12 oz fresh tempeh, crumbled · 2 tbsp sriracha · 3 tbsp tamari · 1 tsp sugar · 2 tbsp water · 2 tbsp olive oil · 2 serrano chiles, sliced · 3–4 green onions, divided

Bowl: cooked brown rice · butter lettuce · cucumber · quick-pickled carrots · avocado · sriracha + tamari tableside

- Whisk sriracha, tamari, sugar, water. Set aside.
- Medium-high heat, oil. Add serranos + half the green onions, 2–3 min. Add crumbled tempeh + seasoning liquid.
- Cook 10–12 min, stirring every 2–3 min, letting pieces crisp between stirs. Fresh tempeh releases extra moisture — extend by 2 min if needed.
- Build bowls: rice → lettuce → veg → crumble → green onions.

MEAL PREP Extra crumble holds 4 days. Use in banh mi, nachos, fried rice.

ALLERGEN Tamari → coconut aminos (soy-free).

BUILD YOUR BOWL · FRESH TEMPEH

THE FORMULA

BASE (grain or greens)

Cilantro-lime rice · Brown rice · Quinoa · Cauliflower rice · Shredded cabbage · Butter lettuce

TEMPEH PREP

Sear → tamari glaze · Braise → BBQ · Crumble → spicy sriracha · Marinate → chipotle sauce · Cube → tikka masala

FRESH COMPONENTS

Avocado · Cucumber · Pickled onion or carrots · Shredded purple cabbage · Cherry tomatoes · Edamame · Corn

SAUCE

Peanut sauce · Chipotle tomato · Tahini lemon · Tamari & sesame · Sriracha lime crema

MEAL PREP: ONE COOK, FIVE MEALS

Cook **2 lbs tempeh** on Sunday using the crumble method (pg 3). Split into 4 equal portions. Season each differently:

- Plain crumble → scrambles all week
 - + chipotle sauce → burrito bowls / tacos
 - + peanut sauce → stir-fry noodles
 - + BBQ sauce → sandwiches / grain bowls
- Holds 4 days refrigerated. Reheat in dry skillet 2 min.

PROTEIN AT A GLANCE

Fresh chickpea tempeh (4 oz / 113g serving):

~**18-20g protein** · ~8g fiber · complete amino acid profile

Bioavailability higher than unfermented chickpeas — live phytase activity reduces phytic acid up to 60%, unlocking iron, zinc, and magnesium that bound forms can't deliver.

STORAGE RULES

- Raw fresh tempeh: up to 10 days refrigerated · 3 months frozen
- Cooked tempeh: 4 days refrigerated · 2 months frozen
- Never store in an airtight bag while still warm — steam condenses and softens the crust
- Reheat in dry skillet (not microwave) to restore crispness

SECTION FIVE

INDONESIAN

6 recipes · Traditional Javanese preparations

Tempeh was born in Java. These six traditional preparations are how it's been cooked for centuries — and they're some of the best ways to cook it. All recipes adjusted for fresh tempeh: no pre-steaming, shorter cook times, 25% less kecap manis than standard recipes.

TEMPE GORENG — CLASSIC FRIED TEMPEH FRY INDO

SERVES 4 · 20 MIN · THE SIMPLEST PREPARATION

1 lb fresh tempeh, sliced $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick · 4 cloves garlic, minced to paste · 1 tsp ground coriander · $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground turmeric · 1 tsp salt · 1 tbsp water · neutral oil for shallow frying ($\frac{1}{4}$ " deep)

- 1. Spice paste:** Combine garlic, coriander, turmeric, salt with 1 tbsp water. Stir into a loose paste.
- 2. Coat:** Toss tempeh slices in spice paste. Let sit 15 min.
- 3. Fry:** Heat oil in wide skillet, medium-high, until shimmering. Fry single layer 3–4 min per side until deep golden. Work in batches.
- 4. Drain** on rack or paper towels. Serve immediately.

CHEF NOTE

Serve with steamed rice, raw vegetables (lalapan), and sambal. This is the foundational Indonesian preparation — no pre-steaming needed. Fresh tempeh has no bitterness; fry directly from the block.

INDONESIAN

TEMPE BACEM — JAVANESE SWEET BRAISED TEMPEH INDO

SERVES 4 · 45 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh, sliced $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick · $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups water · $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coconut milk · $2\frac{1}{4}$ tbsp kecap manis (sweet soy sauce) · 2 tbsp palm sugar or brown sugar · 3 cloves garlic, minced · 3 shallots, minced · 1" galangal (or ginger), bruised · 1 stalk lemongrass, bruised · 2 bay leaves · 1 tsp ground coriander · $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt · neutral oil for shallow frying

- 1. Braise:** Combine water, coconut milk, kecap manis, palm sugar, garlic, shallots, galangal, lemongrass, bay leaves, coriander, salt in wide saucepan. Add tempeh single layer.
- 2. Simmer:** Bring to gentle simmer, medium heat. Cook 25–30 min, turning once or twice, until liquid almost completely absorbed and tempeh deeply colored. Check at 20 min — fresh tempeh absorbs faster. Goal: mostly-dry, not wet.
- 3. Fry:** Thin film of oil, separate skillet, medium-high. Fry braised tempeh 2–3 min per side until caramelized and slightly sticky.
- 4. Serve** with steamed rice.

FRESH TEMPEH ADJUSTMENT

Standard bacem uses 3 tbsp kecap manis — this uses $2\frac{1}{4}$ tbsp (25% less) because fresh tempeh has savory depth that commercial lacks. Bacem is deeply savory-sweet and unlike anything in Western cooking.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Kecap manis contains **SOY** and **WHEAT** → for soy-free/wheat-free: use coconut aminos + 1 tsp coconut sugar + $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp molasses to approximate kecap manis sweetness.

INDONESIAN

TEMPE MENDOAN — SOFT BATTER-FRIED TEMPEH FRY INDO

SERVES 4 · 30 MIN · FROM PURWOKERTO, CENTRAL JAVA

1 lb fresh tempeh, sliced paper-thin (⅛" or thinner)

Batter: ½ cup rice flour · 2 tbsp AP flour · ½ tsp ground coriander · ¼ tsp ground turmeric · ½ tsp salt · 1 clove garlic, minced to paste · 1 stalk green onion, very thin-sliced · ½ cup + 2 tbsp water (adjust — batter coats a spoon but drips off slowly)

Dipping sauce: 3 tbsp kecap manis + 1 tsp sambal oelek + 1 tsp lime juice, stirred

- 1. Batter:** Combine all, adding water gradually until smooth medium-thick batter — thicker than crêpe batter but thinner than pancake batter.
- 2.** Slice tempeh paper-thin — a cold block (20 min in freezer) helps. Fresh tempeh slices cleanly at ⅛".
- 3. Fry:** Heat 1" neutral oil to 350°F. Dip each slice in batter to coat. Fry 1.5–2 min per side.
Important: mendoan is intentionally NOT crispy. Soft, slightly chewy batter is correct — pull at 1.5 min for the authentic version.
- 4.** Drain briefly on paper towels. Serve immediately.

TEXTURE NOTE

Mendoan is defined by its soft batter — a texture feature, not a mistake. If you fry until crispy, it becomes tempe goreng tepung, a different preparation. Paper-thin slices are much easier from fresh tempeh.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

AP flour contains **WHEAT** → use all rice flour (double the rice flour, omit AP flour). Kecap manis in dipping sauce → see Tempe Bacem allergen note for soy-free/wheat-free sub.

INDONESIAN

SAMBAL GORENG TEMPE — TEMPEH IN CHILI SAMBAL INDO

SERVES 4 · 35 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh, cubed ½"

Sambal: 6 dried red chilies, rehydrated (or 3 fresh red chilies) · 4 shallots, roughly chopped · 3 cloves garlic · ½ tsp terasi (shrimp paste) — see vegan note · 3 kaffir lime leaves · 1 stalk lemongrass, bruised · 2 tbsp palm sugar or brown sugar · 1½ tbsp kecap manis · 2 tbsp neutral oil · salt to taste

- 1. Fry tempeh:** 2 tbsp oil, large skillet, medium-high. Cook tempeh cubes 4–5 min turning occasionally until golden. Remove.
- 2. Blend sambal base:** Chilies, shallots, garlic in blender/food processor. Pulse to coarse paste — leave some texture.
- 3. Cook sambal:** Same pan, drizzle of oil. Add blended paste + terasi. Fry medium heat, stirring frequently, 5–7 min until paste deepens, fragrant, oil separates from solids (*matang* — cooking the rawness out).
- 4. Season:** Add lemongrass + kaffir lime leaves. Add palm sugar + kecap manis. Stir, cook 2 min.
- 5. Combine:** Add tempeh back in. Toss well. Cook 3–4 min until sauce clings.

CHEF NOTE

Kaffir lime leaves give an irreplaceable floral citrus note. Find at Southeast Asian grocery stores or online — they freeze beautifully.

VEGAN SUB — TERASI: Blend ½ tsp white miso paste + ¼ tsp nori powder into smooth paste. Add in step 3 where terasi goes. Miso provides fermented umami; nori adds oceanic depth.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Kecap manis → see Tempe Bacem note; terasi = **SHELLFISH** (has vegan note above for complete replacement).

INDONESIAN

OREK TEMPE — SWEET & SAVORY TEMPEH STRIPS FRY

INDO

SERVES 4 · 25 MIN · EXCELLENT FOR MEAL PREP

1 lb fresh tempeh, cut into thin matchsticks or small cubes · 4 tbsp neutral oil

Sauce: 3 tbsp kecap manis · 1 tbsp tamari · 1 tbsp palm sugar or brown sugar · 2 cloves garlic, minced · 3 shallots, thinly sliced · 2–3 fresh red chilies, sliced · 2 bay leaves · ½ tsp salt

- 1. Cut into matchsticks:** Slice block into thin planks (¼"), cut each into matchstick pieces ½" wide × 1½" long. Maximizes crispiness. Fresh tempeh holds these thin cuts.
- 2. Fry tempeh:** Oil, wide skillet, medium-high. Single layer batches. Fry 5–7 min until golden and crispy at edges. Drain on rack.
- 3. Aromatics:** Same pan, remaining oil. Fry shallots + garlic medium heat until golden, 3–4 min. Add chili + bay leaves, 1 min.
- 4. Sauce:** Add kecap manis, tamari, palm sugar. Simmer 1–2 min until sugar dissolves and sauce glossy.
- 5. Combine:** Add fried tempeh back in. Toss quickly. Cook 2–3 min until sauce absorbed and tempeh sticky and glistening.

CHEF NOTE

Served as dry side dish alongside rice. Stores at room temp for hours — actually improves over a day as flavors concentrate.

ALLERGEN SWAPS

Kecap manis + tamari → see substitution in Tempe Bacem allergen note.

INDONESIAN

TEMPE PENYET — JAVANESE SMASHED FRIED TEMPEH FRY

INDO

SERVES 4 · 35 MIN

1 lb fresh tempeh, sliced ½" thick

Marinade: 3 cloves garlic · 1 tsp ground coriander · ½ tsp ground turmeric · 1 tsp salt · 1 tbsp water (work into paste)

Sambal penyèt: 6–10 fresh red bird's eye chilies · 3 cloves garlic · 3 shallots · ½ tsp terasi — see vegan note · 2 roma tomatoes · 1 tbsp lime juice · ½ tsp salt · ½ tsp sugar · neutral oil for frying

- 1. Marinate:** Coat tempeh in spice paste. 20 min.
- 2. Fry:** ¼" neutral oil, skillet, medium-high. Fry tempeh 3–4 min per side until golden and crispy. Drain on rack.
- 3. Smash (the penyèt step):** While still hot, place each slice on a cutting board. Press firmly with the flat bottom of a heavy cup until the tempeh cracks and flattens slightly — not pulverized, just cracked open. Exposes interior to sambal.
- 4. Make sambal:** Grill or broil tomatoes, chilies,