



Stir-Fried Bitter Melon and Tofu with Garlic and Fermented Black Beans

Featured on June 30th, 2017, for the program “The Chinese Kitchen Garden”

Recipe courtesy of program guest Wendy Kiang-Spray

*How do three generations of a family’s Chinese gardening traditions take root in America? We welcomed guest Wendy Kiang-Spray, author of *The Chinese Kitchen Garden*, whose parents and grandparents grew food in their own traditional Chinese kitchen gardens in Shandong and Hong Kong, using techniques that Wendy incorporated into her own Maryland garden. As we prepared dishes from Wendy’s book, we explored the many ways Chinese vegetables, herbs, and spices have held significance and symbolic meaning, and how the process of planting food for one’s family is key to preserving a sense of home and tradition wherever you live.*

From Wendy: *This dish, served with a small bowl of steamed rice, provides a well-rounded and much-anticipated meal for my vegetarian sister whenever she comes to visit. In a typical stir-fry, bitter melon is cut in half lengthwise, seeded, and sliced into thin C-shaped pieces. In this recipe, I use a different method that results in large pieces of the refreshingly bitter and cooling melon with each bite. To prepare tofu, I like press the water out by placing the tofu block on a cutting board between towels with a heavy flat object on top. This dries out the tofu, allowing it to soak up the savory, garlicky marinade.*

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Serves 4

Recipe and headnote from *The Chinese Kitchen Garden: Growing techniques and family recipes from a classic cuisine* by Wendy Kiang-Spray. Copyright © 2017 by Wendy Kiang-Spray. Reprinted with permission from Timber Press. Page 75.

Ingredients

2 teaspoons garlic, minced
2 teaspoons Shaoxing rice wine
2 teaspoons soy sauce
½ teaspoon dark (toasted) sesame oil
Salt and white pepper

1 block extra firm tofu, pressed for 1 hour and then cut into bite-sized cubes
2 medium (about 8-inch long) bitter melons
2 tablespoons corn or peanut oil
1 tablespoon fermented black beans, rinsed, drained, and chopped

Directions

1. Combine the garlic, rice wine, soy sauce, sesame oil, and salt and pepper to taste in a medium bowl. Add the tofu and marinate for about 1 hour at room temperature, occasionally turning gently.
2. Prepare the bitter melon by cleaving off bite-sized slices of the outer part of the fruit, leaving the pith and seeds behind. It is fine to leave small amounts of white pith on the bitter melon pieces.
3. Heat a wok over medium-high heat until hot, then add the oil. When oil is hot, add the black beans and stir-fry until fragrant, about 10 seconds. Add the bitter melon and stir-fry until almost tender, about 4 minutes. Add tofu along with marinade and cook until tofu cubes are warmed through and just beginning to brown, another 1-2 minutes. Serve immediately with steamed white rice.

