

黒ごま味噌豆腐田楽
Kuro Goma Miso Tōfu Dengaku
Black Sesame Miso Slathered Tōfu,
Dengaku-Style



In 1782 “*Tōfu Hyaku Chin*” (100 Delicacies Made with *Tōfu*) was published in Edo (the former name for Tokyo) and became a bestseller among the literati and merchants there. Although the recipes themselves were neither new nor original, the idea of compiling so many dishes made from *tōfu* into a single volume was revolutionary.

Of the 100 recipes, a dozen of them were **dengaku** preparations – *tōfu* slathered with a flavored *miso* paste before being broiled. The word *dengaku* refers to the sticks on which the *tōfu* is skewered – in appearance they resemble the stilts on which dancers balanced as they performed an ancient rice-planting ritual. In gastronomic circles today, however, *dengaku* usually refers to the sweet-and-salty *miso* paste that is spread on *tōfu*, *ofu* (blocks of wheat gluten), vegetables and/or seafood. *Tōfu dengaku* is as appealing a dish now, as it was hundreds of years ago.

The black sesame-enriched miso paste in this recipe will keep well for several weeks in the refrigerator. The quantities (for making the miso sauce) I suggest below are enough to make this recipe twice.

Makes 4 servings.

1 block firm *tōfu*, about 400 grams/14 ounces, well drained

Kuro Goma Dengaku miso sauce:

1/3 cup *aka miso* (robust “red” miso such as Sendai miso)

2 tablespoons *saké*

1 and 1/2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons black sesame seeds

Kinomé leaves, optional garnish

Special equipment: *dengaku* skewers (2 or 3 per serving), optional

Begin by draining and pressing your **tōfu**:



Open the package and pour off the packing liquid. Wrap the *tōfu* in paper towels or a clean tea towel or kitchen cloth and place it between two flat plates or small cutting boards.

Tilt this “sandwich” in a large bowl at an angle so that excess liquid can drain off. After 8-10 minutes discard the accumulated liquid and blot away excess moisture. Draining and pressing can be done hours ahead; cover and refrigerate.



Cut your drained-and-pressed *tōfu* into slabs; you'll want to serve 2 or 3 slabs per portion.

Arrange the slabs on foil on a rack or tray that fits in, or under, your oven-toaster, broiler unit or grill.

Turn your appliance on to heat it up and dry off the surface of the *tōfu*.

You want to be sure the *tōfu* is also warmed through before spreading the miso sauce on it.

Next, make the *dengaku miso* sauce:



Mix the *miso*, *saké* and sugar in small, heavy-duty saucepan BEFORE setting it on your stove. Once the mixture is completely combined, set the saucepan over low heat. Stirring, cook the sauce for about one minute until glossy, smooth and the consistency of tomato paste. As you stir, you should be able to see a clear path (that does not fill up right away) through the miso sauce. Remove the pan from the heat and set it aside.



Toast your sesame seeds in a dry skillet. Transfer to the bowl of either a traditional *suribachi* (grooved mortar) or a mini food processor.

Grind coarsely, or pulse-process the seeds. Ideally the sesame seeds will be cracked (to release their aroma) but not oily or pasty.

Add the coarsely ground sesame seeds to the miso mixture; stir to combine completely.



Spread some of the sesame miso over each piece of *tōfu*.

Place the *tōfu* under medium heat until bubbly and slightly aromatic.

With a flexible spatula move the *tōfu* to serving plates.

Insert dengaku skewers in each piece.

Garnish with *kinomé* leaves (optional) and serve.

