



ゴーヤ、ベーコン、
豆腐、玉子チャンプル

Bitter Melon, Bacon, Tōfu, Egg Scramble

(*Gōya, Békkon, Tōfu, Tamago Champuru*)

Champuru, the signature dish of Okinawa, is essentially a stir-fry -- the word means “hodgepodge.” Every household will have its own version but common to all is *tōfu* and vegetables, most likely bitter melon, what the locals call ***gōya***. Many versions of *champuru* will include pork, often canned Spam. The version I offer you here allows *tōfu* to brown a bit, includes bacon and onions, and is finished with scrambled egg.

When hot, muggy weather makes you listless, I urge you to give this dish a try. *Gōya* restores energy and nutrient balance to heat-weary bodies.

Serves 4.

- 1 *gōya* (bitter melon, or *nigauri*), about 250 grams (9 ounces)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (for prepping *gōya*)
- 340 gram (12 oz) loaf of firm or extra firm *tōfu*
- 1 onion, about 200 grams (7 ounces), peeled
- 1-2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 85 grams (3 ounces) sliced bacon, cut into 2-cm (1/2 inch) pieces
- 2 teaspoons *saké*
- 1 large egg (about 60 grams/2 oz), lightly beaten
- 1 tablespoon Standard Sea Stock (<https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Standard-Sea-Stock-Smoky-Sea-Stock.pdf>), or water
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon brown rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon *mirin*

Begin by **prepping your *gōya*** to remove excess bitterness (*aku nuki* technique).

Cut the *gōya* in half, lengthwise.

(clockwise from upper left):



Use a spoon to scrape out the center spongy section containing seeds. Place the cut-edge of each half flat to your cutting board (to keep it steady) and slice thinly into halfmoons.

Place *gōya* slices in a large bowl and toss them with the salt. Set aside until the *gōya* begins to “sweat,” about 10 minutes.

Rinse with cold water (the water will become quite foamy) and drain. Rinse a second time in fresh cold water, and drain again. Blot up surface moisture.

Drain your tōfu, and lightly press it to further remove excess moisture. I wrap *tōfu* in fine-woven cloth (Japanese *sarashi*) or two or three layers of cheesecloth and place it between two flat dishes (you could use cutting boards instead). Set this at an angle in a deep bowl. After 10 to 15 minutes moisture will accumulate in the bowl and can easily be drained off. You can further blot up excess moisture by wrapping the loaf in heavy-duty paper towel. Set the wrapped *tōfu* on a rack for 5 to 10 minutes.

The more moisture you remove, the denser the *tōfu* becomes making it easier to brown in the skillet. Cut the *tōfu* into bite-sized pieces.



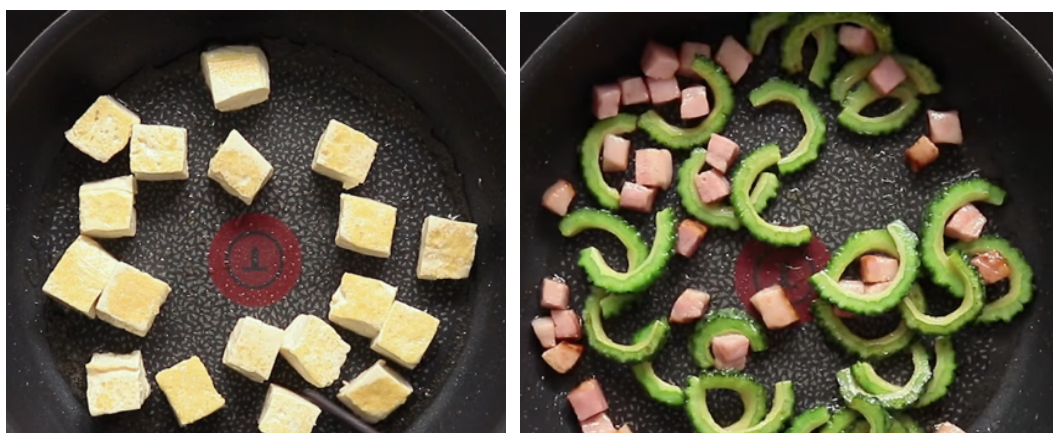
Cut your onion into kushi-gata wedges:

Kushi-gata “comb cut” is so named for its resemblance to traditional Japanese hair combs.

Peel the onion and cut it in half through the stem. Place half the onion, cut-edge flat to the cutting board and slice into thin half-moon wedges thru the stem end. Repeat with the other half.



Cook/assemble the champuru: Drizzle sesame oil into a heavy-duty skillet and heat until the oil becomes aromatic.



Add the *tōfu* to the skillet and cook till slightly browned on all surfaces. Remove *tōfu* from the skillet and set aside. Add the bacon and cook it over medium heat, until it becomes somewhat translucent. Add the *gōya* to the skillet. Raise the heat to high and tossing vigorously, cook for 1 minute. Add the onion to the skillet and cook until wilted, aromatic and slightly caramelized, about one more minute. Deglaze the skillet with the *saké*. Return the *tōfu* to the skillet.

Mix the egg with the stock in a bowl. Make a bit of space in the center of your skillet; pour in the egg mixture. Let it set ever so slightly (about 30 seconds) then scramble and toss with the *gōya*, bacon, onions and *tōfu*.



Combine the soy sauce, brown rice vinegar and *mirin*. Drizzle the mixture into the skillet at the very end of cooking, just before serving. Instead of adding sour, salty or sweet notes, each seasoning works in a slightly different way to bring the dish into harmony: the rich wholegrain vinegar mellows the intense astringency of the *gōya* (and aides in digestion), the soy sauce adds a fermented savoriness and the *mirin* a touch of soft sweetness, and a bit of gloss.



From left: brown rice vinegar (*genmai su*; Mizkan), soy sauce (Kikkoman, Yamasa), *mirin* (Hinode, Takara)