

無花果の白和え
Ichijuku no Shira Ae
Figs in Tofu Sauce



Foods dressed with a creamy *tōfu* sauce are called *shira aé* — a classic dish in Japan's culinary repertoire. Here the creamy sauce tops sliced figs.



Makes about 1 cup.

1/4 to 1/3 large block *tōfu*, about 4 ounces
2 teaspoons *Saikyo shiro miso* (sweet light bean paste)
Pinch of salt
Drop of *mirin*

This is a perfect way to use just a few ounces of *tōfu* that may remain after purchasing a large block. Any unused *tōfu* should be stored covered in fresh cold water (change the water daily) for up to 3 days. Even with careful storage, it is best to fully cook the *tōfu* before using it in this sauce.

Bring plain water to a vigorous boil and cook the *tōfu* for 2 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove the *tōfu* to a colander lined with *sarashi* cloth or a double layer of cheese cloth. When cool enough to handle, gather up the edges of the cloth to enclose the *tōfu*, twisting the top to gently squeeze out excess moisture. It is fine to mash the *tōfu* a bit while doing this.

In the old-fashioned Japanese kitchen, the boiled *tōfu* would then be forced through a sieve called an *uragoshi* and finally mashed in a *suribachi* (grooved mortar).

In my modern kitchen (and, I suspect in other Japanese households today), the boiled-and-drained *tōfu* goes into the bowl of a food processor to be pulse-blended until smooth.

Add the sweet light *miso* to the *suribachi* and hand grind to blend. Or, scrape down the sides of the food processor bowl, add the sweet light *miso* and pulse-blend the mixture until smooth. Season with the salt and *mirin*; then pulse-blend again until creamy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as necessary to insure even mixing.

The *tōfu* sauce is perishable and should be kept refrigerated until use. It will keep for about 2 days, covered, in the refrigerator. During that time liquid may form a puddle in the container. Carefully pour this liquid off if you prefer a stiff sauce, or stir it back in if you want a looser sauce.