

## **Tofu Gratin with "Faurk" Miso Soba Soup**

*This is a cheesy twist on lasagna without any meat. While it's vegetarian it's decidedly NOT vegan due to the cheese (anything with "gratin" in the title necessarily has dairy in it). You could use vegan cheese substitute but it just doesn't melt as nicely. I am trying to make some recipes for my family members who are vegetarian. I think everyone would enjoy this, carnivore or not. There appear to be a lot of moving parts here but most bits can be prepared ahead of time before final assembly and cooking. Only the soba and gratin need be prepared concurrently so both are served hot. This will be a filling meal.*

### **Ingredients:**

#### **Tofu Gratin:**

- 1 package firm tofu
- 1.5 cups or 355 milliliters marinara sauce (use favorite jar or from recipe below)
- 0.5 pound or 0.25 kilograms fresh mozzarella cheese
- 0.25 pound or 0.1 kilograms grated Pecorino-Romano cheese (or grated block/wedge)
- 1 bunch fresh basil
- Optional: Fresh Shitake mushrooms

#### **Miso Soba:**

- 0.5 teaspoon or 2.5 milliliters sesame oil per bowl
- 1 tablespoon or 15 grams blonde miso paste per bowl
- 1.5 cups or 355 milliliters water per bowl
- Soba noodles per appetite (can sub ramen noodles)
- 4 scallion greens

#### **"Faurk" (Faux Pork):**

- 2 sheets thick rice paper
- 2 tablespoons or 30 milliliters neutral oil (ie canola not olive)
- 3 tablespoons or 45 milliliters soy or tamari sauce
- 3 tablespoons or 45 grams nutritional yeast
- 0.5 teaspoon or 2.5 milliliters liquid smoke
- 0.5 tablespoon or 7 milliliters maple syrup
- generous pinch of ground black pepper
- pinch of smoked paprika

## **Marinara Sauce:**

- 2 tablespoons or 10 milliliters high-quality extra-virgin olive oil (you should be able to drink it)
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 2 large knuckles garlic
- 1 cup or 237 milliliters quality red wine (suggest Barolo - again, if you wouldn't drink it don't cook with it)
- 1 28-ounce (828 milliliters) can whole San Marzano tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice (can use lime if necessary)
- 1 bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 bunch fresh basil
- 1 teaspoon or 4 grams kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon or 4 grams freshly ground black pepper

## **Procedure:**

### **Marinara sauce (Optional - or use favorite jar sauce):**

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan on medium heat. While saucepan is heating the oil, dice the onion and garlic. After the oil is shimmering in the pan, lower in the onion and gently sauté until translucent, about 5 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for another minute or two until the garlic is quite fragrant.

Lower in the wine and increase to medium-high heat for about 2-3 minutes, being sure to scrape up all the fond from the bottom pan until the alcohol evaporates. While everything is cooking, chop the parsley and chiffonade the basil, about 2 tablespoons (30 grams) each (eyeball it to your taste).

Place tomatoes into a large bowl and with thoroughly washed hands gently crush the tomatoes into small chunks (up to you how small you want). Lower the parsley, basil, salt, pepper, and lemon juice into the crushed tomatoes and give a stir.

Lower in the tomatoes mixture into the saucepan and stir well. Cover and simmer on medium-low heat for about 15 minutes.

For a slightly sweeter sauce, first very thinly shred a carrot and dice a small onion. Take the carrot and onion and sauté on medium-low heat until both are caramelized. This will take about 20-30 minutes to do properly. Once thoroughly caramelized, place in a blender with two ounces water and a tablespoon of olive oil and blitz to a fine puree. Add this to the tomato mixture right before cooking the marinara. I cannot advocate adding sugar because there's already too much of that in the American diet. I only advocate natural sugars from vegetables and fruits.

### **Tofu Gratin:**

Take the firm tofu out of package and place on multiple folded paper towels to drain for about 20 minutes. Once drained, using a very sharp knife – preferably a wide and very sharp cleaver - to slice across into sheets a quarter as thick as original block. Using a Panini sandwich grill or cast iron stove-top grill (not a flat griddle or skillet because you want the grill lines on it) greased with butter, gently grill each sheet for about 5 minutes or until good grill marks are on the sheets. Alternatively you can grill the sheets on a charcoal grill over indirect heat with just a few coals about halfway burned, using a little apple wood to provide some smoke flavor. Indoors you can smoke by putting very small wood chips of your desired flavor (apple, peach, lemon, or old fashioned hickory, soaked in cold water for at least 30 minutes so they don't just catch fire) in a small aluminum foil packet with 2-3 slits in the top, laying the packet in a covered pan on high heat until it begins to release smoke then reduce to medium-low heat and add the grilled tofu for about 10-15 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 355F or 180C.

Place a little marinara in the bottom of a small glass or ceramic baking dish to lightly coat. Sprinkle of the grated mozzarella on top. Then lay in a sheet of the grilled tofu. Lower in some of the fresh basil leaves. Then lower in another coating of the marinara, mozzarella, tofu, and basil. If you have room enough for a third layer, repeat. If not, top with a final layer of marinara, mozzarella, and finish with the Pecorino-Romano. If desired, add a layer of Shitake mushroom caps between the two tofu layers.

Place in oven for about 20 minutes or until golden brown.

### **"Faurk" Bacon Strips:**

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Whisk together the wet ingredients for the marinade in a wide bowl until the nutritional yeast is well-incorporated. Partially fill a second bowl with warm water. Line a cookie sheet with a sheet of parchment paper.

Carefully and exactly line up two sheets of rice paper and lightly brush with warm water so they stick together. Let dry a few minutes so they laminate together. Then using dry, clean, sharp kitchen shears only used for food, cut the sheets into bacon-sized strips. Dip the strips into the marinade and coat generously then place it onto the parchment paper to dry a little bit (around 10 minutes).

Bake for about 7 to 10 minutes or until crisp, rotating the tray halfway through. The strips can burn easily, so keep an eye on it and remove immediately once done. Let cool for at least 10 minutes then cut into halves or thirds or whatever necessary to fit 3 pieces in the soba bowl immediately before serving. This will simulate the pork charsi commonly found in ramen bowls.

### **Miso Soba Soup:**

Tofu Gratin w/ "Faurk" Miso Soba Soup

Bring large pot of unsalted water to a boil (the miso is quite salty enough for this). When pot is boiling, add the soba noodles and cook about 3-4 minutes.

In each bowl, lower in first the sesame oil then the miso. In a separate teapot, bring water to a boil. Once teapot water is boiling, take off heat then pour 1.5 cups (355 milliliters) into each bowl and gently stir until miso is thoroughly dissolved.

When soba noodles are done, add equal amounts to each bowl. Add 3-4 pieces of the "faurk". Top with a sprinkle of the scallion greens, finely chopped. Optionally place a few small bok-choy or Napa cabbage heart leaves.

**Notes:**

Serve with a small salad of bok-choy or Napa cabbage heart leaves (save the larger and very slightly tougher outer leaves for a soup or other dish). Shred some fresh Daikon radish and carrot, add some enoki mushrooms, and toss together. Very lightly drizzle a modified vinaigrette dressing made of miso paste, olive oil, red wine vinegar, water, a few drops of soy sauce, and a dusting of black pepper either whisked together or placed in a jar and shaken vigorously. If vinaigrette sits for a little bit before serving be sure to whisk/shake again to re-emulsify. Dress immediately before serving or let each diner dress him/herself at the table.

Pair with a crisp beer like Kirin Ichiban, a tart white wine, or sweet cold saki.

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