

# Tempeh Facts

## Tempeh

Tempeh (pronounced 'tem-pay) is a traditional Indonesian food. This chunky, tender cake of soybeans is consumed daily in Indonesia, usually with rice as a part of the main meal, or sometimes by itself as a snack. In Indonesia, tempeh making is a household art that varies somewhat from home to home. Whole soybeans are usually mixed with a grain such as rice or millet. A "starter", usually a piece of tempeh from a previous batch, is added to begin the fermentation process. In traditional home-based tempeh making, the mixture is wrapped in banana leaves and left to ferment for 18 to 24 hours. In western factories, commercial starters are often used to produce tempeh, where the fermentation process takes place under more carefully controlled conditions. Whatever process is used, the result is a cake of soybeans with a rich flavor sometimes described as smoky or nutty. The flavor has also been compared to that of mushrooms.

## Buying & Storing Tempeh

Tempeh is usually sold in natural food stores, where it is found in the frozen food case. Frozen tempeh keeps well for several months. Tempeh can be kept in the refrigerator for about 10 days. As with other aged or fermented products, such as cheese, a little mold on the surface of tempeh is harmless.

## Using Tempeh

Tempeh has a tender chewy consistency that makes it an excellent addition to a variety of foods. It's also delicious on the grill. Just steam cubes of tempeh then marinate them in a lemon marinade or a zesty barbecue sauce, and grill until browned. Add chunks of tempeh to spaghetti sauce, sloppy joe or chili mix, or to favorite soups and casseroles. For a tasty sandwich spread, steam and grate tempeh, then mix with chopped onions, celery, and mayonnaise. For a delightful mushroom stuffing, panfry it with mushrooms, onions, and bread crumbs.

## Nutritional Value of Tempeh

Since tempeh is made from whole soybeans, it's a fiber-rich food. It's also a generous source of many nutrients such as calcium, B-vitamins, and iron. Four ounces of tempeh provides:

Calories – 204  
Protein – 17g  
Fat – 8g  
Carbohydrates – 15g  
Calcium – 80mg  
Iron – 2mg  
Zinc – 1/5mg

*Source: Composition of Foods:  
Legume and Legume Products.  
United States Department of  
Agriculture, Human Nutrition  
Information Service, Agriculture  
Handbook, Number 8-16. Revised  
December 1986.*

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