

K's Kitchen: Tofu salad worthy of an entree

By Kathryn Reed



Reading this month's issue of *Cooking Light* magazine took me back a bit as I read the calorie intake for several items on a Thai menu. Naively, I think of all Asian food as being rather healthy.

Thai food often contains coconut milk – not exactly a slimming agent. Fish sauce and curry paste could put you over your daily sodium needs.

Sometimes you just have to say to heck with nutrition, I want to eat what I want. But it's that awareness that is so important – that you know what you are consuming.

I was at Orchids Thai restaurant in South Tahoe recently for a business lunch. I ordered one of my favorites – Tofu Salad. (It's much better than it sounds.) I tried making it at home once before, but had not marinated the tofu long enough for it to absorb the flavors of the marinade.

I decided to try again. By no means is the recipe below Orchids' recipe. Theirs is made with cilantro and has a sweet taste to it. Plus, the tofu is deep fried. While I can see the benefit of deep frying the tofu – a firm, crispy finish – I just don't deep fry food.

How healthy is my version? Probably not very. But it is one of those salads that can be a meal. It would also work well as a

side dish.

One of the nice things about what I came up with is that the marinade is used as the cooking liquid and then as the dressing.

I had a bunch of red leaf lettuce, so that's what I used. With the farmers' markets having fresh greens, I'd suggest using those. Also, I think peanuts or cashews could easily be substituted for the pecans. I happened to have an open bag of pecans, so that's why I chose them. Just remember that some nuts come with a ton of salt.

Tofu Salad

1 package firm tofu

1 bunch basil

1/8 C soy sauce

1/4 C sesame oil

3/8 C rice vinegar

2 T hot chili oil

1 bunch lettuce

6 baby carrots

1/2 C pecans

Drain tofu and cut into cubes. Place single layer in baking dish. Add chopped basil and liquids. Gently toss so all pieces of tofu are covered. Cover, marinate overnight or for several hours. Toss pieces every so often so marinade soaks in to each side of tofu.

Pour tofu mixture, including liquid, into skillet or wok on high heat. Gently stir. (Tofu may break apart a bit.) Cook

until heated all the way through.

Put bite-size lettuce pieces in serving bowl. Add carrots that have been cut into matchsticks. Add chopped pecans.

If serving salad immediately and you want to serve a warm salad, pour tofu mixture over greens. If you want to serve later or a cool/room temperature salad, let tofu mixture cool.