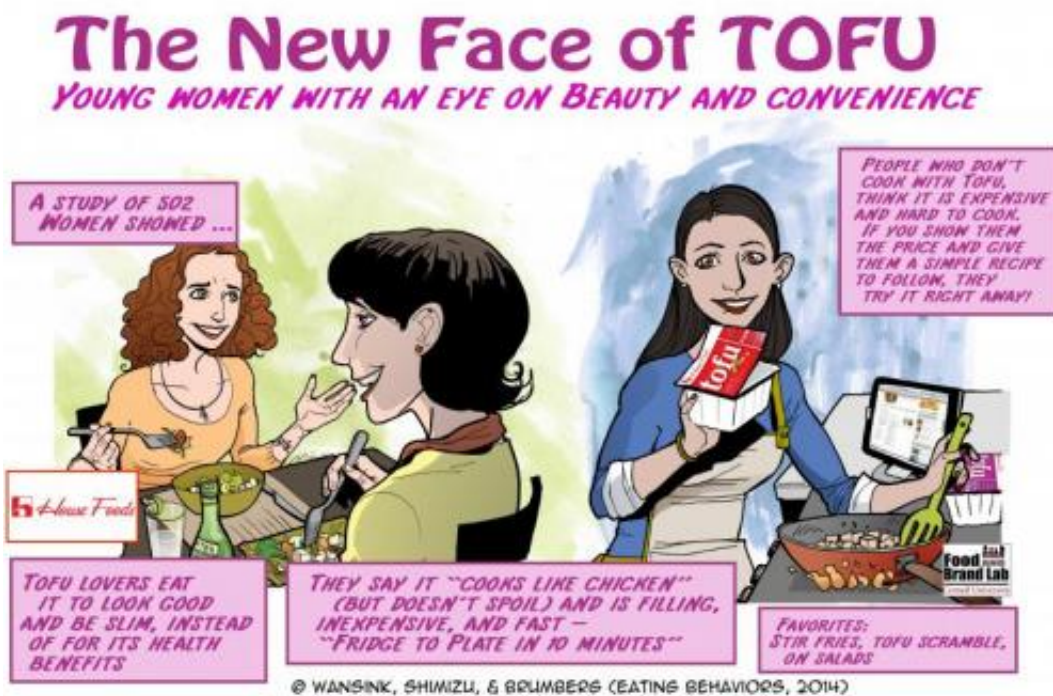


The new face of tofu: And how to get your friends to try it

May 6 2014, by Adam Brumberg



Credit: Daniel Miller

Tofu has long been a favorite among vegetarians and families with eastern ancestry. But now Tofu is becoming a bigger part of western diets, especially with 20-something women who want dishes that are quick, easy to cook and that can help keep them trim.

A new Cornell study, published in *Eating Behaviors*, involving 502 young

women (20-35 years old) showed that [tofu](#) lovers saw it as a great source of light, inexpensive, energizing protein. "Importantly, they also believed you could cook firm Tofu just like chicken, but you didn't have to worry about it spoiling," said co-author Adam Brumberg. Although Tofu is high in calcium and has no cholesterol, most of these women didn't eat it for its healthy qualities. Instead, they ate Tofu because it is convenient and filling.

The study also uncovered some interesting insights into how Tofu lovers can get their reluctant friends and family members to try new foods like Tofu. The non-users in the group tended to have a number of misconceptions about Tofu. While women in the study who already cooked Tofu were twice as likely to think of it as a great source of protein and an easy-to-cook food, the non-users thought Tofu was difficult to cook, needed special extra ingredients and was expensive; in fact, many estimated prices being as much as one dollar per pound higher than beef, when asked to estimate the cost of a 1 pound block of Tofu.

However, the most interesting finding was what techniques were effective in getting the non-users to consider adding Tofu to their shopping carts. Telling them all of the positive health and diet related aspects of Tofu, such as being high in protein and calcium or that it has no cholesterol, only resulted in a 12% increase in the likelihood of purchase. But correcting their misconceptions by telling them the actual price, showing them a simple recipe they could make in 10 minutes and having them read the phrase "Cooks Like Chicken" made the non-users almost 50% more likely to say they'd be willing to try cooking with Tofu at home!

The study also showed that the three most popular uses of Tofu were Tofu Scramble, Stir Fry, and cutting it up and putting it on salads. Although Tofu is sold in different firmness levels, the study's sponsor,

House Foods America, indicated that the firm and extra firm Tofu are the most popular among new Tofu converts.

What's the key take away of this study? Dr. Brian Wansink says, "If you're trying to convince a friend or family member to join you in becoming a Tofu lover, don't belabor its health benefits; instead focus on it being quick and filling and cooking like chicken. In no time they'll be making Tofu Scramble, Stir Fry and all the other dishes the Tofu lovers in the study listed as big parts of their diets."

More information: Brian Wansink, Mitsuru Shimizu, and Adam Brumberg. (2014) Dispelling Myths about a New Healthful Food can be More Motivating than Promoting Nutritional Benefits: The Case of Tofu. *Eating Behaviors*, Forthcoming.

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