

Tofu

It goes without saying that the main ingredient in tofu is soya bean. But how did tofu come about initially? Despite what you think, tofu was unintentionally discovered by ancient alchemists.

Tofu is linked to the thinker and writer of the Han dynasty, Liu-an (179 BC-122 BC). He was influenced by Taoism and its belief that human beings can create longevity drugs. With this in mind, he recruited many alchemists to study alchemy. At one point, the alchemists tried mixing brine and soy concentrates, boiling the concoction over fire for a long time. Through a series of chemical processes, the result was not an elixir of life, but a piece of tofu. They documented the entire process of manufacturing tofu and introduced it to the people. Over time, tofu gradually became a unique part of Chinese cuisine.



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Generally, the tofu-making process is quite simple. First, soya beans are soaked in water. They are then ground in milk and then placed in a pot to boil. After boiling the soya-bean milk, a coagulating agent is added to allow the soy milk to condense into a gel-like form. The excess water will be squeezed out to produce solid tofu. The coagulant is usually made using a salt marinade, gypsum and vinegar, which is the fruit of wisdom of the ancient people of China.

Food for Thought:

The tofu may seem like the product of an accidental discovery, but if it was not for the untiring efforts of Liu-An's alchemy research, the process of making tofu would have remained undiscovered.

