

Nikudōfu (Japanese Beef & Tofu Simmer)

肉豆腐

Serves 2



Ingredients

Protein

- 300 g lean beef, thinly sliced (shabu-shabu or sukiyaki style) 牛肉
- 400 g firm tofu, cut into 3 cm cubes 木綿豆腐

Vegetables

- 1 large onion (about 180 g), cut into wedges 玉ねぎ
- 100 g shimeji mushrooms, separated into small clusters しめじ
- 150 g shirataki, rinsed well, drained, and cut into shorter lengths しらたき
- 2 scallions, cut into 4 cm lengths 青ねぎ

Braising Sauce

- 250 ml reduced-sodium dashi だし
- 2 T sake 酒
- 1½ T mirin みりん
- 1½ T Big Tree Organic Coco Aminos Marinade & Sauce ココアミノ
- 1 T reduced-sodium soy sauce 減塩しょうゆ
- 1 tsp sugar or honey 砂糖
- 1 tsp freshly grated ginger しょうが

Optional Thickener

Traditional Nikudōfu has a light broth.

If you prefer a slightly glossy sauce:

- 1 tsp potato starch 片栗粉
- 1 T cold water 水

Garnish

- Sliced scallions 青ねぎ
- Shichimi togarashi (optional) 七味唐辛子

Instructions

Prepare the Shirataki

- Bring a saucepan of water to a boil.
- Boil the shirataki for **2–3 minutes**.
- Drain thoroughly and cut into pieces about 8–10 cm long. This removes any residual odor and improves the texture.

Prepare the Braising Sauce

In a wide sauté pan, shallow Dutch oven, or deep skillet, combine:

- dashi
- sake
- mirin
- Big Tree Coco Aminos
- reduced-sodium soy sauce
- sugar
- grated ginger

Bring just to a gentle simmer.

Cook the Onions

- Add the onion wedges.
- Cover partially and **simmer** gently for **5 minutes** until beginning to soften.

Add the Mushrooms and Shirataki

- Add the **shimeji** and prepared **shirataki**. Continue simmering for **3–4 minutes**. The shirataki will absorb the flavorful broth.

Add the Beef

- Separate the beef slices as you add them. Simmer gently for only **1–2 minutes**, just until the beef loses its pink color. Avoid overcooking.

Add the Tofu

- Carefully nestle the tofu cubes into the broth. Spoon some broth over the tofu. Cover partially and **simmer gently** for **8–10 minutes**. Do not boil vigorously. The tofu should absorb the broth while remaining intact.

Optional Thickening

- If you prefer a slightly richer sauce, stir together the potato starch and water. Slowly drizzle into the simmering broth while stirring gently. Cook for about **1 minute** until lightly thickened.

Finish by scattering the scallions over the top. Serve immediately.

Suggested Side Dishes

- Steamed brown rice
- Spinach goma-ae
- Japanese cucumber salad
- Pickled vegetables

Make-Ahead Notes

- The broth may be prepared one day ahead.
- Leftovers keep well for 2 days in the refrigerator.
- The flavors often deepen overnight.
- Reheat gently over low heat to avoid breaking the tofu.

Notes

- Thinly sliced beef cooks extremely quickly. Longer simmering makes it noticeably tougher.
- Shirataki is a traditional addition that contributes almost no calories while making the dish more satisfying.
- Firm tofu is easiest to handle, although medium-firm tofu may be used if handled gently.
- The onions should become soft and sweet while still holding their shape.
- The broth is intentionally lighter than sukiyaki, allowing the natural flavors of the beef, tofu, and mushrooms to remain the focus.
- This recipe is designed as comforting everyday Japanese home cooking rather than a restaurant-style dish.

Nutrition (Approximate)

Per Serving (1 of 2)

Kcal total: ~470 kcal | Protein: ~42 g | Fat: ~23 g | Sat Fat: ~7 g | Carbs: ~19 g
| Sugars: ~8 g | Fiber: ~3 g | Sodium: ~580 mg | Omega-3: ~0.3 g

Chef's Notes

Unlike sukiyaki, Nikudōfu is not intended to be rich or celebratory. Its appeal lies in its simplicity: tender slices of beef, silky tofu, sweet onions, earthy shimeji mushrooms, and springy shirataki gently simmered in a light, savory broth. By using reduced-sodium ingredients and a generous amount of lean beef, this version stays true to the spirit of the original while fitting naturally into the philosophy of high protein, moderate sodium, and practical everyday cooking for a Japanese home kitchen. I