

## Tempeh Girl

Tempeh may have originated on the island of Java in the Indian Ocean, but now you can get fresh tempeh made right here in Orange County! Beth May of Tempeh Girl makes tempeh using traditional Indonesian methods at PFAP, the Piedmont Food & Ag Processing Center in Hillsborough.

tempeh girl  
culturing a revolution

Tempeh is a soy product, but unlike tofu (a.k.a. bean curd, the curds of coagulated soy juice), tempeh is made from whole soy beans and fermented. The fermentation binds the soybeans into a cake (like partile board – only tasty). As a result, tempeh has a firm, grainy texture. The use of whole beans gives it higher protein, fiber, and vitamin content.



Tempeh Girl uses organic soybeans, which Beth will source from North Carolina starting in 2013.

“When I started,” Beth says, “it was very important to me that this not only be a made-locally product but made from local beans, to start really trying to close our loop of where we get our food.”



Beth shells the beans and inoculates them with Lactobaccilli, the same family of microorganisms responsible for sourdough bread! As the beans spend the day fermenting, their pH drops; later, this will help the tempeh culture do its work. (Most American tempeh producers skip this “prefermentation” step, using vinegar to lower the pH.) Another result of prefermentation is that the Lactobaccilli breaks down raffinose and stachyose, two

oligosaccharides responsible for beans’ reputation of causing flatulence.

After the first fermentation, Beth cooks the beans, dries them, and inoculates them with a *Rhizopus* culture. She weighs them into perforated bags, which she flattens into a rectangular shape. The second, longer fermentation, done in an incubator at 30 degrees Celsius, binds the beans into a solid slab. The finished product has “an intoxicating mildly mushroomy aroma.”



Beth is no beginner to the science of making tempeh. She studied “fungal fermentation” in a lab at UC-Davis, in the Bio and Ag Engineering Department. She missed the lab work, and when she saw an article about tempeh, it inspired her. Her first batches were made in a homemade incubator. Now Beth rents kitchen space by the hour at PFAP. She takes advantage of the center’s equipment, like the machine that vacuum seals her bags of tempeh. Each batch uses 120 pounds of beans, and she’s been making a batch every other week, although recently her production schedule has been increasing.



Tempeh should be cooked before consuming. It can be marinated and browned (although Tempeh Girl tempeh is good enough to eat without marinating). Steaming or boiling it before marinating softens the texture and enhances browning.

We carry Tempeh Girl's plain tempeh and tempeh bacon. Look for them in the freezer case.

Visit Tempeh Girl online at [www.tempehgirl.com](http://www.tempehgirl.com) for recipes including her Simon and Garfunkel Balls – made with parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme – and Corned Tempeh, if you want your Tempeh Reuben to be super authentic. Or try this simple Tempeh Reuben recipe. You can meet Beth at the Eno River Farmer’s Market . Watch a video of our visit to PFAP on Youtube. [http://youtu.be/B\\_yDhR\\_df6A](http://youtu.be/B_yDhR_df6A)



## Simple Tempeh Reuben

### Ingredients:

- tempeh, fresh or defrosted
- 2 slices bread (rye or sourdough work well)
- 1-2 slices cheese (Swiss or cheddar)
- hunk of sauerkraut, drained
- Russian or Thousand Island dressing (alternatives: Annie's Goddess or Woodstock, Drew's Roasted Tomato, or DIY Russian made with mayo, ketchup, and relish)

### Directions:

Use a 4"x4" square of tempeh; this is about ¼ of a Tempeh Girl slab. Cut it in half on a horizontal to make two thin slabs. Brown them in a toaster oven (no oil needed) on 350 for about ten minutes, or in a frying pan with olive oil. Heat up the sauerkraut at the same time, in the same pan. You can melt the cheese onto the tempeh, or simply put the hot tempeh on top of the cheese in the sandwich. You might need to cut the tempeh to make it fit in one layer on the bread.

Make your sandwich: bread, cheese, tempeh, kraut, dressing, bread. Cut in half and enjoy.

