

Linda Funk, Executive Director, The Soyfoods Council

My whole career has revolved around food, from chocolate to cheese to soy and my mantra is “Food is Fun”.

I joined Iowa Soybean association in 1999 just after Food and Drug Administration issued soy protein a health claim. The health claim started the food industry exploring ways to include soy protein in many food products. I started The Soyfoods Council, www.thesoyfoodscouncil.com, to increase the awareness of soy protein, soy foods and the many health benefits. It has been a fascinating and delicious journey. When I started, I did not even know what a soybean looked like. It has been an adventure exploring the soybean and soy food world. I have been to Japan seven or eight times working with Masako Tateishi on various programs. Every time I visit, I taste as many soy food products and restaurant dishes as possible. And when I return home, I explore ways to incorporate some of the ideas into everyday dishes to share via the website, press releases, brochures, cookbooks and media interviews. We also create programs for dietitians, chefs and influencers.

My philosophy is to encourage consumers to add soy to their everyday diet. I call it “soy-izing” their recipes. Most consumers in America did not grow up eating soy, so it is unfamiliar. I show how easy it is to incorporate soy into dishes and recipes they know and love. Edamame is the easiest way to start to enjoy soy. And children love it. Then introduce miso, tofu and textured soy protein and more. My goal is to have consumer and chefs say, “That is easy and I can do that!” I always say the soy protein health benefits are the “why” of soy and the recipes are the “how”. And then convey it is all about taste. If food does not taste good, no matter how healthy it is, people will not eat it.

At Iowa Soybean Association, I have had the great pleasure of working with soybean farmers. Farmers are so committed to providing high quality, sustainably produced soybeans around the world. And I have gotten to know a remarkable young couple that farms in Corning, Iowa, Chris and Shannon Gaesser. Ray and Elaine, Chris’s father and mother, began Gaesser Farms in 1977 and turned the original few hundred acres into 5400 acres. Corn is grown for a local ethanol plant

and soybeans are grown for Stine Seed Company. In 2012, Chris started growing rye for their cover crop seed. In 2020, Chris and Shannon started talking with Revelton Distilling Company about growing the rye for their whiskeys. Revelton wanted to use more of the local products from Iowa. Gaesser farms uses the latest technology and innovations in seeds and equipment and continues to test new practices to conserve and enhance resources. Caring for the land is a priority. Gaesser Farms has been 100 percent no-till since 1991 and has planted cover crops since 2010. The Gaesser family believes in educating others on what they have learned, so they host field days on their farm to bring together neighbors, researchers and legislators to share best practices.

Shannon and Chris are foodies. They love spending time cooking together and exploring new recipes and ingredients. Recently, tofu has been a heart healthy protein used in many of their recipes. They both look at tofu as a way to reduce calories and get all the benefits of soy protein. They have shared a couple of their favorite tofu recipes.

People in America as in Japan, love desserts. The challenge is to add a little soy protein to the dessert to make it a bit healthier. And what a great way to get people to enjoy tofu! Both the lemon and chocolate pudding use silken tofu. Every time I serve these desserts, people love them. They are easy to make and that is so important to consumers with busy lifestyles and families.

Soy is such an important protein for people around the world. Enjoy the soy journey.

Bio- Linda

For more than 40 years, Linda Funk has chosen a career in food marketing. Her professional experience has included extensive management experience with two large food and beverage manufacturers, Ambrosia Chocolate and Pepsi-Cola and two of the largest commodity associations, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB) and Iowa Soybean Association. Linda is the founding Executive Director of The Soyfoods Council, where she has served for 23 years. She has co-authored two digital soyfoods-focused cookbooks, one of which received a “Best in the U.S.” 2022 Gourmand World Cookbook Award. Linda specializes in working with large food and beverage manufacturers and commodity associations. She has promoted soyfoods

internationally at in-person events, at culinary schools worldwide, through editorial placements in major publications and travels to more than ten countries. Her clients have been featured on major broadcast media outlets, including NBC Nightly News, A&E, and National Public Radio.



Linda Funk, The Soyfoods Council and Paul Murphy-Spooner, United Soybean Board conducting a soy foods demo for soybean farmers.

Chocolate Pudding Pies

- 1 12-ounce container silken firm tofu
- 1 cup confectioner's sugar
- 1 cup Scharffen Berger Cocoa or other Best Quality Cocoa
- 1 tablespoon vanilla

- 6 individual, prepared graham crust pie shells
- ½ pint of heavy whipping cream, whipped
- fresh raspberries for garnish
- shaved chocolate or mini chocolate chips for garnish

Combine tofu, confectioner's sugar, cocoa and vanilla in a blender. Blend until smooth, then chill for 30 minutes.

Spoon into individual pie shells or into parfait glasses. Chill loosely covered in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Top with whipped cream, garnish with raspberries and shaved chocolate just before serving.

Yield: 6 servings



Lively Silky Lemon Tofu Pudding

1-10 ounce jar lemon curd
1-12 ounce package silken firm tofu
Garnish with raspberries (or fruit of choice)

In a blender, add lemon curd and tofu. Blend until smooth.
When ready to serve-Add lemon mixture to individual graham cracker crust shells
or layer in parfait glass with whipping cream or soy whip
Garnish with raspberries or fruit of choice.
Yield: 8-10 servings



Chris and Shannon Gaesser, in the combine during harvest.



Asian Inspired Tofu over Cauliflower & Carrot Rice

Tofu Marinade

2 tbsp soy sauce

1 tbsp sweet soy sauce

2 tsp honey

Splash of rice wine vinegar

1 tsp mirin
1 tbsp siracha sauce
1 tbsp Japanese mustard

1-12 ounce package silken firm tofu, drained, pressed and cut into four pieces
1 bag cauliflower rice
10 baby carrots
1 tbsp soybean oil

Remove tofu from packaging; drain and press tofu. In a small mixing bowl, add marinade ingredients; mix. Cut tofu in quarters, place in marinade. Marinate for 30 minutes. Chop carrots to desired shape and size; heat carrots in a pan until desired tenderness. Cook cauliflower rice according to package directions. Add carrots to rice & set aside. In a fry pan add oil; heat until hot, add marinated tofu. Save the rest of the marinade for later. Cook tofu until brown, flipping as needed. Take tofu out of pan, add the rest of the marinade; cook until hot. Place cauliflower rice on plates, top with tofu. Spoon marinade over as much as desired. Serve immediately.
Yield: 4 servings



Buffalo Chicken Dip with Tofu

1- 12 ounce package firm silken tofu
3/4 cup buffalo sauce
1/2 cup ranch dressing
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1- 12.5 oz canned chicken (drained)

In a medium microwave safe mixing bowl, add tofu, buffalo sauce, and ranch dressing; mix until combined. Microwave on high for 1 ½ minutes or until hot. Using an immersion blender; blend until smooth. Add cheese and chicken. Stir until combined. Serve with tortilla chips.
Yield: 6 servings