



BANRAI-Nabe

Gourmet Tofu Made from the Pot

Melody Lan, *The Nibble*, March 2006

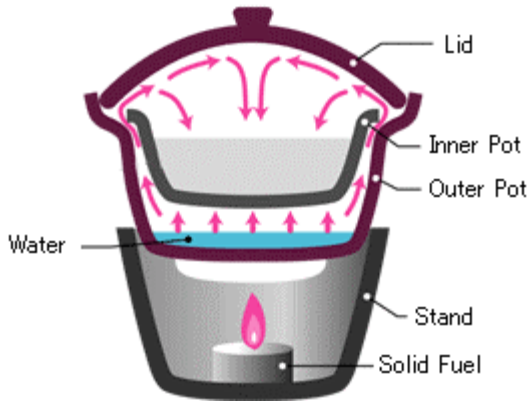
In January, we made fresh tofu from a soymilk maker. We were thrilled with the machine's production of delicious soymilk, but the time it took to make tofu wasn't as convenient as we had hoped. Now that it's National Nutritional Month, we decided to re-introduce homemade tofu the quick and easy way with BANRAI's BANRAI-Nabe, a pot that steams soymilk into rich and velvety tofu.

BANRAI, the company's brand name, literally means "10,000 comes" in Japanese. The term refers to the Japanese expression "a hope for a succession of tens of thousands of visitors to come enjoy," while *nabe* translates as "clay pot." And we find that the BANRAI-Nabe lives up to its name. With this gorgeous clay pot, we have made some of the best tofu we have ever. Initially designed to make individual servings of tofu or other foods, the BANRAI-Nabe is now available in a 14-portion size and also may be customized by design or size. It was the first patented tofu-pot maker in Japan and is the only one available in the U.S.

Summary

We had such a pleasant experience with the BANRAI-Nabe that after a single testing of the pot in the NIBBLE™ kitchen, we had ourselves fooled into believing that we were professional tofu chefs. We used BANRAI's soymilk to make the tofu, and the results were phenomenal; we have never tasted tofu with such a refined flavor and consistency. Silky and custard-like, it melted in our mouths, leaving hints of sweetness on our tongues. Easy to assemble, use and clean, what we like most about this appliance is that it not only makes delicious tofu in a short amount of time, but the pot's elegant physique also delivers an exquisite presentation of food that's sure to garner compliments. We appreciate the BANRAI-Nabe's health benefits, too. Steaming food

is one of the most heart-healthy methods of cooking. This pot makes it convenient for solo diners to fix a delicious, wholesome meal without having to cook three days worth of food.



How it Works

The concept behind the BANRAI-Nabe is its duo-layer steaming process, assembled similarly to a double-boiler. Placed on top of a heat source, the water boils in the outer pot, producing steam that circulates all the way around to the top. The steam travels downward, allowing the food to be heated thoroughly from all sides. Excess moisture dribbles off the lid and back into the outer pot. With a heat source, the pot quickly distributes uniform steam heat to cook tofu or other foods. In only 10 minutes, you can make an amazingly silky disk of tofu for a satisfying meal. For a single serving of tofu, all the ingredients you will need are a small packet of liquid nigari, 125 milliliters of soymilk with at least 11 percent soy solid, and water.

Heat Source Options

There are three choices of obtaining heat for the BANRAI-Nabe.

- You can purchase the BANRAI Cooking Stand (image at the very top left) and use the flame from solid fuel. However, we suggest using liquid or gel fuels normally used for melting fondue because solid fuel may be difficult to purchase and can be dangerous to use without constant supervision.
- Placing the pot directly over the stovetop on medium heat is another alternative. At THE NIBBLE™, we like the luxury of preparing a small pot of food, allowing the appliance to do its job alone on the stovetop, and then returning to enjoy a savory dish.
- If you don't want to bother with the stove or open flames, place the BANRAI-Nabe and its contents in the microwave; you can enjoy piping hot tofu in about 7 minutes. More or less time may be needed, depending on the microwave and the food that will be cooked. Overall, using the stovetop with medium heat worked the best for us since it delivered consistent results, while it was harder to predict the appropriate power level



of each microwave or to estimate how big a flame is needed to evenly cook the pot's contents.

How to Use It

- **Step 1:** Pour water into the outer clay pot up to the indicated line.
- **Step 2:** Insert the inner porcelain pot and fill it with 125 ml of soymilk.
- **Step 3:** Add a small packet of liquid nigari coagulant and stir.
- **Step 4:** Cover the pot with the lid and place over heat.
- **Step 5:** Let the contents cook for 10 minutes if you are using solid fuel, 8 minutes if over a stovetop, and 7 minutes if in the microwave.

It doesn't get much easier to prepare food with the BANRAI-Nabe than it does to heat up a pre-packaged frozen meal. Plus, you have complete control over the ingredients. In addition to making lush tofu, the pot can work its magic on:



- **Vegetables:** Clean and slice a medley of vegetables like broccoli, baby corn or red peppers. Combine the contents into the outer clay pot, drizzle them with the sauce of your choice, and then add 3/4 cup water. Place the pot over heat, and let it steam you a "home-cooked" meal in approximately ten minutes.
- **Spare Ribs or Other Meats:** Marinate spare ribs in black bean sauce (or any flavoring you prefer), and place pieces inside the porcelain inner bowl. Add water to the outer pot, as though you are about to make tofu. Let the ribs steam-cook for a full-forward-flavor meat.
- **Fish:** Remove the porcelain inner pot, and place a clean slice of fish in the outer clay pot. Add a few splashes of sesame oil and soy sauce with a sprinkling of minced garlic and green onion. Place over heat, and allow the fish to cook for about eight minutes.
- **Dim Sum (Chinese tea-time delicacies):** You can find frozen dim sum delicacies, like shrimp dumplings or meatballs, in the frozen food aisle at many markets. Select a few pieces and arrange them in the porcelain bowl. Steam them according to package directions.

What Soymilk to Use

To obtain silky, rich tofu, you can't use just any soymilk. In order to produce tofu out of soymilk, the milk must contain at least 11 percent soy solid; most commercial soymilks contain between 2 and 6 percent soy solid. BANRAI sells its own brand of soymilk, which is made from Japanese Fukuyutaka soybeans that deliver a delicate hint of sweetness to the milk. Another alternative is simply to make your own soymilk. This way, you can add salts and flavorings to your own preference.



Last But Not Least

We admit that we enjoy eating directly from the pot to avoid having to wash dishes, so we were delighted to find that these ultra sleek pots are designed to enjoy meals right out of where the food is made. The attractive pot both keeps food warm and serves as beautiful serveware. Also included is a wood square tab that serves as a trivet. Once the contents are consumed, all parts can be loaded into the dishwasher.

When we only have a few moments to make a meal for ourselves, we prefer cooking to be as uncomplicated as possible. Making incredibly fresh tofu in almost no time is our idea of simple cooking. With minimal preparation, the BANRAI-Nabe allows us to eat well and in style too. Table for one, please!