

sport



# a soy story

## The sides to the soy debate

**A**s more and more Americans venture toward vegetarianism and the world of health foods, more and more are eating foods with soy in them, mostly to get their daily dose of protein in a way they believe is healthy. Many vegetarians have looked to soy, a legume, as their ideal form of protein, consuming many easily defrostable and ready-to-eat forms of the food. Soy is popping up everywhere, from soy burgers to soy chips to energy bars. In fact, soy is in many food items most people probably don't realize, including many junk foods. Partially hydrogenated soybean oil is in most of the processed, packaged snack foods available in the aisles of most traditional grocery stores (and is very damaging to the body). It's important to note that all soy is not created equal, and that because a little is good does not mean more is better.

We started to think of soy as "healthy" when we recognized that the Japanese and other Asian cultures live long, productive lives with comparatively much less disease. We assumed much of that was due to their consumption of soy-based foods (much like we pinpointed the French's bountiful health on the fact that they drink red wine). But while we're busy chowing down our soy dogs, yogurt and chips in large

quantities, they're savoring unprocessed edamame and miso soup, two of the most natural, least processed forms of soy, and thereby the most beneficial, in small quantities. They also eat bean curd, or tofu, along with their main meat dishes, whereas we often eat it here in the United States as our main dish, snacks and/or meal replacements. There are many benefits to eating soy, as well as some possible dangers, which is why being an educated consumer can aid you immeasurably.

Numerous studies have indicated that regular consumption of soy products benefit the body in various ways, including helping prevent breast, prostate and colon cancer, due to their containing isoflavones, a kind of plant chemical. The belief is that these isoflavones prevent the diseases by inhibiting the growth of tumor cells. The soybean is also thought by some to aid in the prevention of heart disease and osteoporosis, and alleviate menopausal symptoms due to its estrogen-like compounds, phytoestrogens. Proponents of these studies suggest that these compounds offer a natural substitute for hormone replacement therapy, although others have found no help with menopausal symptoms through eating soy.

The Food & Drug Administration also has said that soy can lower

Photo by John Haigwood of Haigwood Studios

cholesterol and the risk of heart disease, which is important, particularly with the current obesity epidemic we're experiencing. There are also some probiotic benefits to ingesting fermented soy products like miso. Probiotics help beneficial, friendly bacteria in the intestinal tract grow and thrive, aiding in proper digestion. As if that were not enough, besides being a source of protein and calcium, soy products like tempeh and tofu contain such vitamins and minerals as zinc, magnesium, iron and selenium.

However, many of the studies that have touted soy as a miracle food are challenged by equally convincing studies that suggest soy might have some harmful effects on us. Like many grains and beans, soy contains natural toxins, but many of the toxins in most other grains and beans are broken down during the cooking process. Soy's toxins, including phytic acid, soy lectins and protease inhibitors, which have been shown to cause cancer in rats, are not completely broken down during the cooking stages. Not only can it be hard to digest, but since the soybean also contains a high level of phytic acid, some researchers believe that this may prevent the calcium, magnesium, iron and zinc it offers from being absorbed, in addition to inhibiting the absorption of these vitamins and minerals from other foods.

Some have found possible links to breast cancer and brain shrinkage, even possible connections to Alzheimer's disease, among others. Concerns also have been raised about possible abnormalities to infants raised on soy formulas, including thyroid disorders. Because the short- and long-term effects have not been studied thoroughly, it's not clear what more serious effects eating large doses of processed soy will or will not have on humans. Many studies contradict each other; some studies on soy have yielded opposite results from others. Another point to keep in mind is that soy is one of the eight most common allergens, along with milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish and wheat, making it an unfeasible option for many.

As with any food, eating soy in its less processed forms is the healthier choice. Eating soybeans in their fermented or natural states is probably the best for your gut, especially fermented varieties, since they're easier to digest. Some good choices include edamame, miso, soy sauce and tempeh, as well as small doses of soy milk and tofu. There are many alternatives to soy as well, including almond and rice milk and cheese. Whether you're a soy devotee or just beginning to explore the many soy options, choose high-quality varieties of soy and eat them as supplements to your existing diet, rather than as the main staple. As my longtime doctor used to tell me: everything in moderation. —BY CINDY KLINGER

Some of the information in this article was obtained through Web sites such as [www.soyinfo.com](http://www.soyinfo.com), [www.mercola.com](http://www.mercola.com) and [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org), and sites that were linked to those sites.



### LEMON GINGER MISO DRESSING

Produces 1 quart

Ingredients

- 1-1 1/2 cups miso (fermented soybean paste)
- 1 cup water
- 2 Tbsp. fresh ginger, grated
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 1 cup sugar (or replace with a less refined sweetener, like agave nectar)
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil (or replace with more heart friendly oils, like olive or hazelnut, or another nut-derived oil)
- 1 tsp. lemon peel, grated

Mix miso, water and ginger in a blender. Strain mixture and return liquid to blender. Add remaining ingredients and mix well.

### SOME USEFUL WEB SITES TO VISIT FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SOY INCLUDE

- [soyfoods.com](http://soyfoods.com)
- [talksoy.com](http://talksoy.com)
- [westonaprice.org/soy](http://westonaprice.org/soy)
- [mercola.com/article/soy](http://mercola.com/article/soy)