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GOHAN THE GOHAN SOCIETY Event Report -vol.1-

Showcasing TOFU as a Versatile Ingredient

The Gohan Society recently presented an educational event, "Journey from Soybean Field to Table," revealing the many fascinating and surprising aspects of tofu.

Japan has a profound culinary culture that should be shared globally, and Saori Kawano established the Gohan Society to foster an understanding and appreciation in the United States of this great culinary heritage. With celebrated culinary experts as founding members, the nonprofit organization provides culinary exchange programs and outreach to chefs, culinary arts professionals, and all who admire and enjoy Japanese culture.

The Gohan Society holds various events, programs, and lecture series to achieve its mission, and it just held an open-to-the-public event at New York's French Culinary Institute on April 5, "Journey from Soybean Field to Table," that featured tofu in honor of National Soyfoods Month. The event started with a comprehensive presentation by Yoko Difranca of House Foods

America, a tofu manufacturer, about tofu's history, its health benefits, how tofu is made, and the company's quality-control methods. Following this introduction, the program moved on to the main course, Chef Lee Anne Wong's tofu cooking demonstration.

Chef Wong — consultant and "Top Chef" extraordinaire — showcased her global, seasonal approach to this super food as she created three innovative tofu dishes: Tofu Falafel with Asparagus and Meyer Lemon Tahini; Tofu Chawanmushi with Salmon, Green Onions, Mushrooms, and Lettuce and Tofu Honey Panna Cotta with Blood Oranges and Pistachio. Chef Wong, who confessed that tofu is now part of her everyday diet, commented, "Tofu can take many forms. It's not something eaten as a meat substitute. I use it in soups, sauces, shakes, purees, and pastes. As I demonstrated today, it's really a

healthy alternative because the assumption is we are substituting for cream, so we are cutting a lot of fat but maintaining the texture and richness."

Participants picked up on her cooking tips and creative ways to expand on tofu's incredible versatility. Mark, a food journalist, remarked, "Tofu is a great ingredient, but I think in this country we misunderstand it. We think of it as a substitute for meat instead of just its own ingredient, so I was glad Chef Wong chose three different recipes and we got to see some different ways of using it."

The Gohan Society's upcoming events and lecture series this year are on its website, and event reports will be featured in Chopsticks NY each month.

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Time Line



▲ Chef Lee Anne Wong, who recently visited Japan, shared her culinary experiences and passions for the featured ingredient of the day, tofu.

▼ This event at the French Culinary Institute (FCI) was sponsored by House Foods America, the primary tofu-producing company in the United States, and supported by the FCI.



From left: Tofu Falafel with Asparagus and Meyer Lemon Tahini; Tofu Chawanmushi with Salmon, Green Onions, Mushrooms, and Lettuce; and Tofu Honey Panna Cotta with Blood Oranges and Pistachio.