

THE LITTLE GERANIUM RECIPES

Born Free | Crispy fried & spiced tofu salad

Background Story

A few years ago I was patron of The Born Free foundation that does great work in protecting beautiful animals from becoming extinct. I even ran the London Marathon for them in 2001 to help raise funds. Virginia Mc Kenna (the actress and founder of Born Free) became a close friend and she introduced me to Kiki Dee the singer most famous for singing 'don't go breaking my heart' with Elton John which reached No 1 in the charts back in 1993. Kiki also sang the title track for Born Free for Virginia and had released it as a single. (The original soundtrack was performed by Matt Monro back in 1966.)

Anyway Virginia and Kiki came to my restaurant and in the middle of dinner Kiki stood up and sang "Born Free" it was the most moving version I have ever had the privilege to listen to... Acapella. Wow the room stood still with appreciative silence and I noticed some of the guests wiping tears from their eyes, it was so powerful.

Not competing you understand, but I had a song in the charts many moons ago called Crying Tonight, (you can see it on You Tube if you have time to waste but be aware that it is pretty awful!) So I said to Kiki do you fancy doing a rendition of "Don't go breaking my heart? ", I will be Elton of course, I said. Sure she said and then she broke out with a slow version of the song which was equally as moving as the previous song. I looked down to see the words and noticed that the dish that I had especially created for the evening was getting cold for everyone and more concerned about the food than the song I said...Kiki that was amazing but you should now relax and enjoy the special dish I have created for you. It was tofu which we had fried crispy and tossed with mint leaves, basil and coriander in an oriental dressing.

Steven, she said, I am so pleased that we didn't have to eat an animal! Not known for my diplomacy (I once stood in front of the entire board of the RSPCB at a conference and said I need to kill two birds with one stone and tell you something important) I replied, Kiki isn't that your leather bag under the table?

Sure she replied but I'm not eating it. I'm not sure that it makes much sense really so let's avoid the debate and move onto the dish that I cooked for Kiki and Virginia and for Elton (who didn't attend but sent his love to us via live satellite TV connection) He even commented on my trousers which were more eccentric than his! Haha!

If you fancy a break from meat you really should try this dish, it is yummy.

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Ingredients

Serves 2 people as a main, 4 as a starter

- 400g / 14 oz firm tofu, patted dry then cut into 2cm cubes approx.

The Salad

- 6-8 assorted cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 red onion, peeled halved and thinly sliced
- 1 small bunch of fresh basil leaves
- 1 small bunch of fresh mint leaves
- 1 small bunch of fresh coriander
- A good handful of rocket leaves
- 2 tablespoons of corn flour seasoned with salt and black pepper
- Maldon salt to season at the end

For the Dressing

- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce (tamari is the best)
- Zest and juice of 1 lime
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ½ red chilli, finely chopped with seeds removed
- 1 teaspoon of chopped fresh ginger

Method

- Make the dressing by whisking all the dressing ingredients together with a whisk in a small bowl. Set aside
- Put all the salad ingredients (herbs and leaves) in a separate glass bowl

Now fry the tofu

- Heat your deep fat fryer to 180 c (or use a wok with veg oil)
- Toss the tofu in the seasoned corn flour
- Fry until golden brown and crisp, shaking the basket to ensure that the tofu browns equally, drain on tissue paper
- While still hot season with the Maldon salt

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- Toss the tofu into the glass bowl (with the leaves and herbs)
- Now dress with the dressing and divide onto 4 plates and serve immediately.