

Winter Bamboo with Soybeans, Ginkgo Nuts, Mushrooms, and Tofu

2 pieces winter bamboo (about 1 ½ to 2 pounds)
2 tablespoons plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
¼ cup soy sauce
2 tablespoons sugar
4 to 6 Chinese dried black mushrooms, soaked until soft, drained, stemmed,
and cut into ½ inch strips
½ cup canned soybeans, drained and rinsed
½ cup canned ginkgo nuts, drained and rinsed
8 ounces drained firm tofu, cut into 1 inch pieces
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 tablespoon sesame oil

Using a sharp knife, cut off the woody bottom end of the bamboo and discard. Make a lengthwise incision in the shoot and remove outer husk, along with the leaves and sharp hairs that grow on it. Cut off the top of the bamboo and shave off any remaining hairs and any remaining inner leaves until you have a smooth piece. (You will have reduced the diameter of the bamboo by more than half.) Discard the leaves and shavings. Cut the remaining piece of bamboo in half lengthwise and slice crosswise into pieces ¼ inch thick.

In a large skillet or wok, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the bamboo and stir-fry until golden, about 5 minutes. Add the soy sauce, sugar, and enough water to just cover the bamboo. Bring to a boil. Immediately reduce the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, until the bamboo is soft to the bite, about 40 minutes.

In a 10 inch skillet or wok, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil over high heat until shimmering. Add the mushrooms, soybeans, ginkgo nuts, and tofu and gently stir-fry, being careful not to break up the tofu, until everything is cooked through, about 3 to 4 minutes. (Note: if using fresh mushrooms, you will need to sauté them ahead of time. Also, when adding the remaining ingredients, you may need to work in batches to stir-fry properly so that the ingredients are not crowded in the pan.) Add the bamboo and its liquid and continue to cook for another minute. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer everything to a serving plate and drizzle with the sesame oil.