

The Best Recipe for Tofu



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Illustrated by

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Tofu helped her Uncle Ayu to sell fish in the market every day.

Before sunrise, she would harvest fish from their farm and pack them neatly into boxes.

Then, she would help carry the boxes to their stall.





Tofu worked long hours at the stall.
It was very hard work for a kitten and
she did not have much time to eat.

At night, Tofu returned home to cold meals.
Often, she longed for better days.



• Tofu loved talking about fish though.

“Put sambal chilli on the stingray.
Then, wrap it in a banana leaf and grill it.”

“This fish is great for Curry Fish Head.”

“Roll fish paste into balls like this for your fishball soup!”



And so, Tofu sold lots of fish because she gave her customers so many cooking ideas.



One day, new customers came to Uncle Ayu's stall. "Welcome!" Tofu said. "We have the best variety here. Try the seabass - it is best steamed with light soy sauce and sesame oil."





"And how would you cook this, Miss?" asked Mr Kuali, pointing at a mackerel.

"This is great for making the spicy fish paste called Otah-Otah!"



“Sister! Brother-in-law!
Have you moved back from
overseas?” Uncle Ayu called out.

"Yes," said Auntie Kuali. "We will be opening a restaurant here. You must come!"

"Great!" said Uncle Ayu. "By the way, this is Tofu. You took care of her when she was a baby!"



Auntie Kuali exclaimed, "Yes, I remember!
But why is Tofu so thin now?"

"Well, farming and selling fish is hard work," said Uncle Ayu. "We don't have much time to eat or rest."



“Should young Tofu be doing so much work?” asked Auntie Kuali. “Why don’t I take care of her for you? I can also give her an education in cooking since she is so interested.”



“Why does she need an education? And what’s wrong with working here?” Uncle Ayu said. “Our family has been selling fish since our great grandfather’s time.”



“Yes. And hasn’t it been very hard work for you?” asked Auntie Kuali. “Long hours and cold meals are not good for a growing kitten. Don’t you want the best for Tofu?”





Uncle Ayu was quiet for a while. Then, he said, "Tofu, will you consider living with Uncle and Auntie Kuali? I am sure they will be able to take care of you better. I will still see you regularly, of course."



Tofu looked at Auntie Kuali closely and asked, "Did you used to sing *Three Blind Mice* when you put me to sleep?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Auntie Kuali.
"Can I take care of you again?"





Tofu smiled, "Yes, I missed you when you and Uncle Kuali moved overseas."



So, Tofu finally had the hot milk and warm blanket that she longed for. More importantly, she had the loving care that she needed.

And this was the best recipe that Tofu could possibly come up with for making one happy kitten.



The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions and actions affecting the child, or children as a group. This holds true whether decisions are made by government, administrative or judicial authorities or by families themselves.

– Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



Young Tofu works long hours helping Uncle Ayu in his fish business. She does not receive the care and attention that she needs. Uncle Ayu and Auntie Kuali finally agree on a solution which works in Tofu's best interests.



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Emily Lim is an award-winning author of numerous children's books. She is the first outside North America to win three medals for children's books at the IPPY Awards, the world's largest book awards. She is also the first in Southeast Asia to win the Moonbeam Children's Book Award.

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Young Tofu lives with her Uncle Ayu and helps him sell fish. Often, she works long hours on an empty stomach. What can Uncle Ayu do to provide Tofu the care that she needs to grow well?