

## Okinamiyaki - Jillian Forte

The creation of this very popular dish at the cafe has an interesting backstory. While reading a foodie magazine I ran across a list of the Top 20 things chefs like to put on their menus that customers don't understand. I knew 18 of them, one I had heard of but the last was a complete mystery to me, I didn't even know how to pronounce it! As a culinarily curious chef I jumped right into the research finding out it was a popular street food in Japan that used egg to make this "savory vegetable pancake". Interesting, however this is Chester Creek Cafe, would my customers go for this? I know that my vegan and, often, gluten free friends tend to be a bit more adventurous in their eating, as dictated by constraint, so I figured "Why not"?! Let's make our version vegan *and* gluten free. The final product does not hold together as well as a more traditional egg based Oki but the crumbley version is just as good. Turns out lots of our customers love this dish, it even has its own GIF!

Prep time: 50 minutes      Cook time: 20 minutes      Serves: 4

Gather: Chef knife and cutting board, measuring spoons & cups, one large and one small mixing bowl, tongs, large mixing spoon, spatula, saute pan

Gluten Free, Vegan

1	cup	Red pepper, julienned
2+	cups	Cabbage, shredded
2	each	Green onion thinly sliced - one more for garnish
1/2	cup	Carrot shredded
1 1/3	cups	Shiitakes de-stemmed and thinly sliced
3/4	tsp	Ginger minced
2	cups	Shredded hash browns, yes the pre cooked ones in a bag
1/2	cup	Tofu crumbled
1 Tbsp	1 tsp	Tamari GF or soy sauce, but it won't be gluten free anymore
1/2	tsp	Rice vinegar
1/4	cup	Water
3	Tbsp	Corn starch
1	Tbsp	Nori toasted and crumbled - 1/2 sheet
6	Tbsp	Oat flour, ground flax is a great substitute
6	Tbsp	Garbanzo bean flour, sometimes known as ceci bean or chickpea flour
2	Tbsp	Nutritional yeast, I prefer the flakes
1/2	tsp	Salt, kosher
4		Eggs
		Canola oil
		Spicy Vegan Aioli
		Kimchi
		Cilantro

1. Take the time to prep all of the veggies in the ingredient list, this is actually the longest part of the recipe!
  - My tip for peeling ginger is to use a spoon with the cupped side facing down, it removes less of the flesh than a typical vegetable peeler and is able to reach the nooks much easier. Bonus: it keeps the juice from splashing into your face.
2. Put the red peppers, cabbage, green onion, carrot, shiitakes and ginger into a very large mixing bowl. Place the hashbrowns on top of the pile of veggies.
3. Crumble the tofu with your hands then put into a glass measuring cup. Now pour some of the tamari onto the tofu and the rest on top of the hash browns. Mix the tofu and tamari together and add it to the bowl.
  - This ensures that the tofu and potato are flavorful in the end recipe.
4. Add the rice vinegar to the veggies, sprinkling it around.
5. Rinse out your measuring cup then fill it with 1/4 cup of water. Add the cornstarch to the water and mix thoroughly, pour over the veggies
  - This is your binder, when cooked it will help to hold everything together.
6. In order to toast the nori, which is a step you can skip if it feels overwhelming, either use tongs to run it over the flames of your stove top or put it in a hot saute pan until it starts to blister, flipping as necessary. Toasted nori deepens the flavor and makes it easier to crumble by hand. Alternatively you can use kitchen shears to cut the nori into small, dime size pieces.
7. In a separate smaller bowl combine the crumbled nori, flours, nutritional yeast and salt. Mix together then sprinkle evenly over the veggie mix.
8. Now mix all the ingredients together until everything is evenly distributed. There should be no wet or dry spots and no clumps of ginger or potatoes.
  - This mixture will stay good for about 3-4 days in the fridge, after that the veggies start to weep and it will become overly soggy.
9. Cook Time! Get your non-stick saute pan nice and hot, this will be easier in a curved edge pan versus a cast iron.
10. Pour in some canola or cooking oil, add about 2-3 cups of the mix, enough to cover the bottom of the pan about an inch thick. The mixture should sizzle and fry and hopefully not stick to the pan, immediately give the pan a little jiggle to prevent this. Flatten out the Oki with the back of your spatula compacting everything.
11. (optional) Crack 2 eggs into a bowl and whisk together. Pour over the eggs over the oki mixture in the pan.
12. Once the bottom is crispy we are onto the tricky part, *the flip*. If you feel confident in your flipping skills, master pancake flipper level, go ahead and give this one a good flip in order to continue cooking the other side. If you are a bit more hesitant try using your spatula to flip the Oki in sections. This method works just fine as the mix can be shaped back into a perfect circle very easily.
13. Once the other side has become nice and crispy also, slide the Oki onto your plate.
14. Garnish with the spicy vegan aioli, or your favorite spicy mayo, kimchi, cilantro and green onions. The toppings really make this dish so don't skimp out!