

MUMBAI BOSS

FOOD & NIGHTLIFE

An Ai For Tofu

FEBRUARY 6, 2013 8:22 PM BY PURVA MEHRA



Vidiyaa Maloo, a Walkeshwar-based housewife, is a tofu zealot. So great is her love of tofu, which is made by curdling soymilk, that since January 2012, she's been selling her own brand of tofu called Ai (a Japanese word for "love"), that has quickly become a favourite among fellow tofu fiends.

Maloo, who is Jain, developed a taste for tofu as a child during trips to Japan, where her family lives, and began making it at home, with the help of a recipe she got from relatives in Kobe. Six months ago, she and her daughter Jyoti Jain set up the company Premium Tofu to keep up with the demand from family and friends. They then enlisted the services of Yugata Hasegawa, a Japanese tofu specialist who worked in a tofu factory in Bangkok for 15 years before moving to Mumbai, to help manage their Goregaon factory. Premium Tofu sources its soybean from Madhya Pradesh, and its nigari, a tofu coagulant, from Japan. Every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, the company produces fresh batches of five types of tofu—momen, kinu, abura-age, atsu-age, and oboro.

Momen, kinu, and oboro differ in firmness, with oboro the most tender and ideal for desserts; the momen is best chucked in a stir fry where it manages to retain its wobbly texture without becoming rubbery; while the silken-textured kinu works best in salads. Tofu fans swear by Maloo's variety, saying it easily trumps the store-bought kind in taste, texture and freshness (her tofu should be consumed immediately once opened). Abura-age and atsu-age, which are deep-fried and vary in thickness, are used in soups, salads and sushi. In fact, Maloo also caters tofu salads and veg sushi which, along with the Ai brand of tofu, she currently only sells from her Walkeshwar home.