

Looking for big flavor without all the fat? Try soy chorizo. - Spicy Clam and Kale Soup -

By: *Melissa d'Arabian* *January 12, 2015*

Tucked away between the tofu "cheeses" and textured vegetable protein taco crumbles lies a tiny package you really should consider including in your lineup of go-to good-for-you ingredients - soy chorizo.

Vegetarian and vegan readers may well be nodding their heads as they read. Been there, eaten that. I know. But even if you are a steak-loving meat eater, soy chorizo is worth keeping on hand, even if you aren't normally a fan of pretend meat (as I am not).

Chorizo - the real deal, that is - is a spicy, fatty pork sausage oozing with flavor. Fresh (or Mexican) chorizo is most common in the United States, though sometimes you'll find the Spanish or dried version. Chorizo is used primarily to accent other ingredients, mixed in with scrambled eggs, sauteed with vegetables, or added to stuffings, stews or chilies.

Soy chorizo usually is a Mexican-style chorizo, and it's just as versatile and flavorful as the real thing. And like the pork version, it usually comes in tube-shaped sausage casings. Squeeze the chorizo out of the casings and it cooks up like ground meat. As it cooks, the chorizo imparts its wonderfully spicy, slightly fatty sauce that makes everything in the dish infinitely better.

But soy chorizo has less than half the fat and calories of pork chorizo. And since the flavor and texture of soy chorizo is close enough to the real thing, it's a caloric flavor bargain in my book.

In the spirit of Chinese New Year, I'm celebrating clams, which are said to represent financial fortune in the year to come. Enjoy these lucky clams in a just-spicy-enough soy chorizo broth, along with some bright, fresh kale. I took inspiration from classic steamed clams served with slabs of bread for dunking. A few toasty croutons on top sop up the brothy goodness without me resorting to downing an entire baguette.

This easy recipe is a perfect way to try soy chorizo for the vegetarian meat newbie, and it's a tasty way to bring a little extra luck this year.

SPICY CLAM AND KALE SOUP

Start to finish: 30 minutes Servings: 4

You'll find soy chorizo in the grocer's refrigerated case alongside tofu and other vegetarian "meats." Some soy chorizo is packed in casings and crumbles easily when they are removed. Other varieties have a texture similar to chicken sausage and can be sliced or chopped for use in this recipe.

3 slices French or Italian bread, cut into 1-inch cubes
Olive oil cooking spray
Salt and ground black pepper
3 tablespoons butter
4 shallots, sliced
1/2 pound soy chorizo sausage, casings removed (if any)
3 cloves garlic, minced



1 teaspoon all-purpose flour
2/3 cup dry white wine
2 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1/2 cup water
3/4 bunch kale, stems discarded, chopped (about 1 1/2 cups)
2 pounds fresh clams, scrubbed
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

Heat the oven to 350 F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with kitchen parchment or foil.

Arrange the bread cubes on the prepared baking sheet, then mist with olive oil, tossing to coat all sides. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then toast in the oven until golden, about 10 minutes, stirring halfway through. Remove the croutons from the oven and allow to cool.

Meanwhile, make the soup. In a large, heavy saucepan or Dutch oven over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the shallots and cook, stirring often, until soft, about 5 minutes. Crumble the soy chorizo and add to the pot. Cook until lightly golden, about another 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook another minute, or until very fragrant.

Sprinkle with the flour, then stir. Increase the heat to medium-high and add the wine, stirring constantly for about 1 minute to deglaze the pan. Add the chicken stock and water, then bring to a simmer. Taste and season with salt and pepper, as needed.

Stir in the kale, then gently add the clams. Cover the pot and let the clams steam just until they open, about 4 minutes, removing the clams as they open and discarding any that don't. Remove the pot from heat and stir in the opened clams. Stir in the lemon juice, then ladle into serving bowls. Top with croutons and parsley.

Nutrition information per serving: 370 calories; 170 calories from fat (46 percent of total calories); 19 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 45 mg cholesterol; 24 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 22 g protein; 1,250 mg sodium.

Food Network star Melissa d'Arabian is an expert on healthy eating on a budget. She is the author of the "Supermarket Healthy" cookbook. <http://www.melissadarabian.net>