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## **Stir-Fried Rice Cakes with Zucchini, Mushrooms, and Vegan XO Sauce**

**Serves 4 as part of a multicourse meal**

I often crave the chewy texture of rice cakes, also known as nian gao in Mandarin. You can find fresh rice cakes in Chinese or Korean grocery stores, usually in the refrigerated section near the fresh noodles and tofu. They will need to soak in room-temperature water for 2 hours (or more depending on package instructions). Or you can use frozen rice cakes, which you have to thaw before soaking. Stir-fried with XO sauce and vegetables, they are an addictive entree alongside other dishes at the table, or just eaten on their own.

**8 ounces fresh rice cakes**  
**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**  
**2 cloves garlic, minced**  
**1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger**  
**1 shallot, thinly sliced**  
**1 large zucchini, cut into half-moons about ½ inch thick**  
**12 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stems discarded and caps thinly sliced**  
**1/3 cup chicken stock or vegetable broth**  
**2 tablespoons Chinese rice wine or dry sherry**  
**2 cups shredded cabbage**  
**¼ cup Vegan XO sauce (*see recipe below*)**  
**1 teaspoon rice vinegar**  
**Salt**

1. Soak the rice cakes in room-temperature water for 2 hours or according to package directions. Drain.
2. Heat a wok or large skillet over medium-high heat until a bead of water sizzles and evaporates on contact. Add 2 tablespoons of the vegetable oil and swirl to coat the bottom. Add the garlic, ginger, and shallot and stir-fry just until aromatic, about 20 seconds. Add the zucchini and shiitake mushrooms and cook for 1 minute.
3. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and the rice cakes and stir-fry until they start to turn golden, about 2 minutes. Add the stock or broth, cover the wok or skillet with a lid, and let steam until the rice cakes have softened and most of the liquid is gone, 2 to 3 minutes. Uncover and add the rice wine, scraping the bottom of the pan with a spatula if any of the rice cakes have gotten stuck to the bottom. Add the cabbage, XO sauce, and rice vinegar. Stir so that everything in the pan gets evenly coated and cook for another 1 minute. Adjust the seasoning with salt if needed. Transfer to a plate and serve.



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## **Vegan XO Sauce**

### **MAKES 2 CUPS**

Dried shiitake mushrooms, caramelized shallots, and a bit of cumin are the keys to getting the meaty taste of the seafood and bacon XO sauce. The yield for this recipe is less than in the recipe for traditional XO sauce because it keeps for only 1 week in the fridge, but you can always double the portions for a bigger batch. Like with the regular XO sauce, the texture will be more of a coarse paste.

**3 ounces dried shiitake mushrooms (about 2 cups)**  
**2 large shallots, chopped**  
**3 cloves garlic, crushed**  
**40 dried red cayenne, Japonese, or Tien Tsin chilies, coarsely chopped**  
**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**  
**1 tablespoon brown sugar**  
**2 teaspoons ground cumin**  
**1 tablespoon sea salt**

- 1.** Soak the shiitake mushrooms in warm water until softened, 10 to 15 minutes. Reserving 1/4 cup of the mushroom soaking liquid, drain the mushrooms. Squeeze out the excess water, discard the stems, and thinly slice the caps (this will make it easier to chop in the food processor).
- 2.** In a food processor, pulse the shallots and garlic until minced. Scrape out and transfer to a bowl. Pulse the shiitake mushrooms until minced and transfer to another bowl. Pulse the dried chilies until they resemble coarse flakes, then transfer to a third bowl.
- 3.** In a large wok or skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the shallot/garlic mixture and stir-fry until both are just golden and crispy, 3 to 4 minutes. Increase the heat to medium-high and stir-fry the mushrooms for 2 minutes. Add the chilies and stir-fry for another 2 minutes. Add the reserved mushroom soaking liquid and cook until the liquid is almost gone, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the brown sugar, cumin, and sea salt. Stir well for another 1 minute, then remove from the heat. Allow to cool before transferring to glass containers for storage. The vegan XO sauce will keep in a fridge for up to 1 week.

