



SIMPLE SOYMAN

By: Maya Ticku, Purchasing Assistant

Simple Soyman is back! Their beloved plant-based products are finally returning to shelves, but this time with a new face. After the retirement of long-time owners, Barb and RJ Gruenwald, Jim Neumeyer purchased the company with his wife, Olive Crane, early in 2026 to bring back fresh, local tofu and tempeh.

Jim started his career in food service as a 19 year old working as a dishwasher at a local Milwaukee restaurant called Beans & Barley. As he transitioned between roles, from dishwasher, to kitchen staff, to co-owner, Beans & Barley served Simple Soyman tofu throughout. In 2026, Beans & Barley was facing closure, around the same time that the former Simple Soyman owners were looking to scale back production and transition into retirement. After 26 years of Simple Soyman tofu, Jim wasn't ready to say goodbye to such a beloved local product.

To Jim, food itself should be truly simple: nutritious and protein-dense food that comes directly from the earth. Although making tofu is a strenuous process, he describes it as being relatively simple. Pallets of organic soybeans arrive fresh from local farmers. Then, they are washed and ground down. Once salt is added, the soybean mixture is pressed into tofu. He explained that tofu-making is not for the faint of heart—it can be hot, sweaty work. But knowing that the result is a food that is good for people and keeps communities healthy makes it worth the effort, Jim says. Simple Soyman prioritizes specializing and perfecting a clean and simple product. Jim says tofu and tempeh that is local to Wisconsin is truly special because soybeans love growing in Wisconsin's fertile soils.

Jim categorizes Simple Soyman tofu as being firm or extra firm tofu; but to those who have never tried tofu, he describes the texture profile as being light and fluffy. If you are wary of plain tofu, Jim assures that Simple Soyman tofu works great with any marinade or sauce of your choosing to completely elevate your tofu experience. Although Jim himself is a long-time vegetarian, he has discovered that the enjoyment of tofu has gone beyond vegetarians and vegans, with those who eat meat frequently indulging in this plant-based, protein-packed food. For tofu-lovers, or anyone curious to try,

Neumeyer says that the three best ways to enjoy Simple Soyman protein are baked, stir-fried, and scrambled. Baked tofu starts with a good marinade—Jim recommends a Cajun-style or balsamic marinade. Stir-fried tofu has just as many options to enjoy, whether you choose aromatic flavors like ginger and garlic, or prefer your tofu lathered in a bold red curry.

Tofu scrambles for breakfast (or any meal of the day), work great for anyone wanting to substitute their egg scramble—just combine scrambled tofu with your choice of veggies—bell peppers and spinach work great—and season to your liking.

It has been a long journey for Jim, who says that each person he's had the opportunity to work with has left an impact on him. He names Barb and RJ Gruenwald as two of his biggest influences, as he says that their incredible legacy is something he will always look up to. Jim especially names the Milwaukee community as the driving force behind what he does. Along with his career working in the Milwaukee restaurant scene and being exposed to the city's large community of artists, musicians, and working-class folks, Jim says that Milwaukee influences him in all things. As Simple Soyman enters their new chapter, Jim says he's looking forward to learning and perfecting the tofu-making process. Like any new endeavor, there is bound to be some trial and error, but Jim says that he's driven by the feeling of excitement when things succeed.



Know Your Maker
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Milwaukee, WI
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IN THE DELI:

- Vegan Breakfast Scramble Empanada
- Tofu Breakfast Scramble
- Nashville Hot Tofu Sandwich
- Vegan Reuben
- Ginger Tempeh Wrap
- Avocado Tempeh Lettuce Tomato Wrap
- Sesame Tofu
- Southern Fried Tofu
- Eggless Egg Salad
- Tofu Cabbage with Spicy Peanut Sauce
- Grab & Go Red Chili Tofu Salad
- Red Curry Tofu
- Red Curry Tofu Wrap



IN GROCERY:

- Plain Firm Tofu
- Herb Tofu
- Soy Tempeh



Serving Suggestion