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How to cook Vegetable Tempura (Kakiage)?

Cooking Vegetable Tempura (Kakiage) at home is a rewarding experience that allows you to enjoy this delicious Japanese dish fresh and crispy. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you make perfect Kakiage:

Ingredients:

For the Batter:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup ice-cold water
- 1 egg (optional, can be omitted for a vegan version)
- A pinch of salt

For the Kakiage:

- 1 small carrot, julienned

- 1 small sweet potato, julienned
- 1/2 onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 bell pepper, julienned
- A handful of green beans, cut into thin strips
- Vegetable oil for frying

For the Dipping Sauce (Tentsuyu):

- 1 cup dashi (or vegetarian dashi made from kombu)
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup mirin
- Grated daikon radish (optional)

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Vegetables:

- Wash and peel the vegetables as necessary.
- Julienne the carrot, sweet potato, and bell pepper.
- Thinly slice the onion.
- Cut the green beans into thin strips.
- Mix all the prepared vegetables in a large bowl.

2. Make the Batter:

- In a separate bowl, beat the egg (if using) and mix it with the ice-cold water.
- Add the flour and a pinch of salt to the liquid mixture.
- Gently mix the batter with chopsticks or a fork until just combined. It's okay if there are a few lumps; over-mixing will make the batter heavy.

3. Heat the Oil:

- In a deep frying pan or pot, heat the vegetable oil to 340-350°F (170-180°C). Use a thermometer to maintain the temperature.

4. Mix the Vegetables with Batter:

- Add a small amount of batter to the mixed vegetables to coat them lightly. The vegetables should stick together but not be overly wet with batter.

5. **Fry the Kakiage:**

- Using a spoon or your hands, take small mounds of the vegetable mixture and gently place them into the hot oil.
- Fry in batches to avoid overcrowding the pan. Each piece should be about the size of a small fist.
- Fry until golden brown and crispy, about 3-4 minutes per side.
- Use a slotted spoon to remove the Kakiage from the oil and place it on paper towels to drain excess oil.

6. **Prepare the Dipping Sauce:**

- In a small saucepan, combine the dashi, soy sauce, and mirin.
- Bring to a gentle boil and then turn off the heat.
- Let the sauce cool slightly. Serve with grated daikon radish if desired.

7. **Serve:**

- Serve the hot Kakiage immediately with the dipping sauce on the side.
- Enjoy your Vegetable Tempura (Kakiage) with steamed rice and miso soup for a complete meal.

Tips for Perfect Kakiage

- **Cold Batter:** Ensure the batter is ice-cold. This helps create a light and crispy texture.
- **Hot Oil:** Maintain the oil temperature at 340-350°F (170-180°C) for even frying.
- **Thin Vegetables:** Cut the vegetables into thin, uniform strips to ensure they cook evenly.
- **Minimal Batter:** Use just enough batter to hold the vegetables together. Too much batter can make the tempura heavy.

By following these steps, you'll be able to create a delicious and authentic Vegetable Tempura (Kakiage) that can be enjoyed as part of a vegetarian meal or a delightful snack.