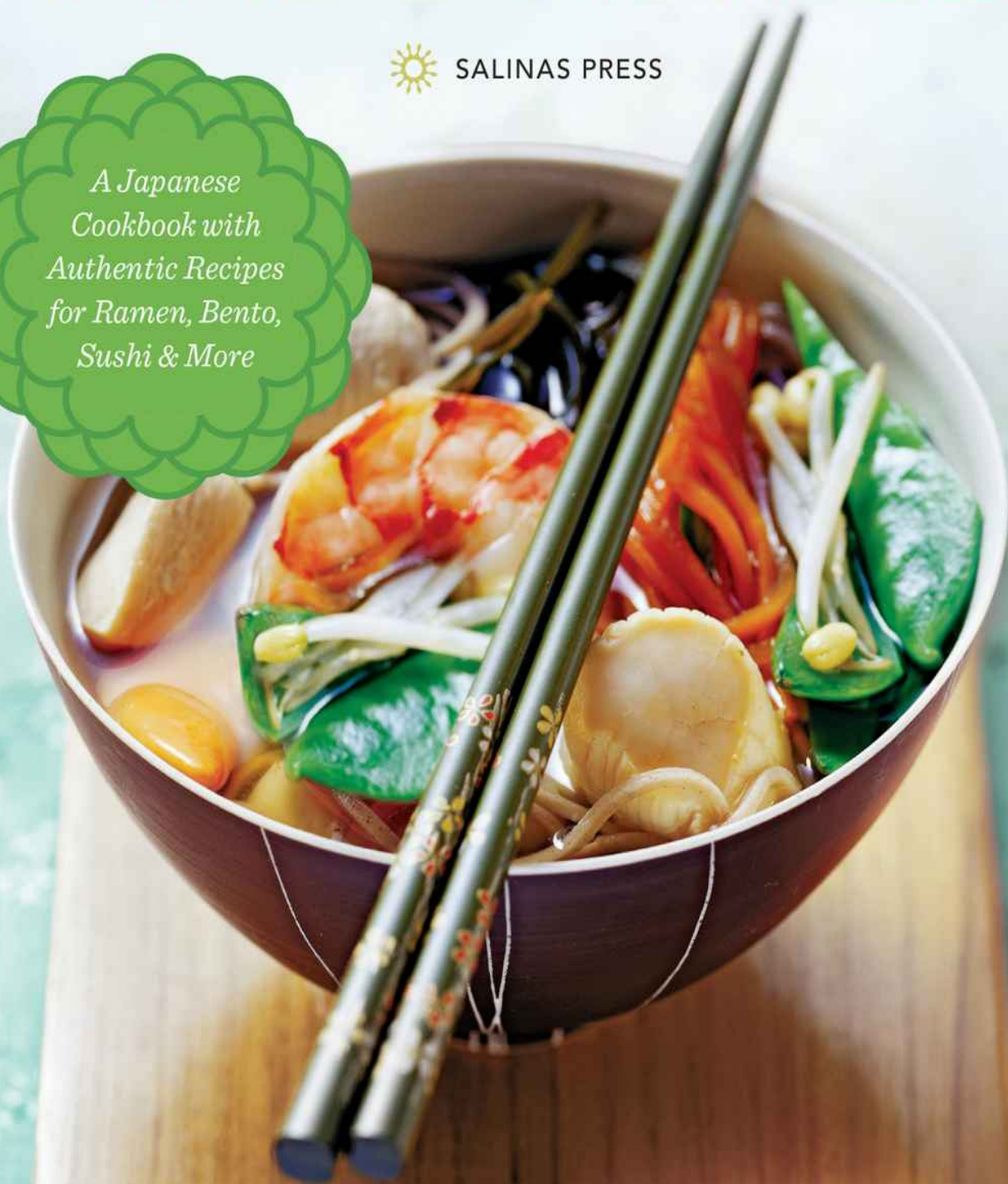


JAPANESE COOKING MADE SIMPLE



SALINAS PRESS

*A Japanese
Cookbook with
Authentic Recipes
for Ramen, Bento,
Sushi & More*



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CONTENTS

Introduction

- 1 THE BASICS OF COOKING JAPANESE
 - 2 FLAVORINGS
 - 3 RICE
 - 4 SOUPS, STEWS, AND HOT POTS
 - 5 NOODLES
 - 6 SALADS, VEGETABLES, AND GARNISHES
 - 7 TOFU AND EGGS
 - 8 SUSHI
 - 9 FISH AND SEAFOOD
 - 10 POULTRY AND MEAT
 - 11 SWEETS
 - 12 BENTO BOXES
- APPENDIX: ONLINE RESOURCES FOR JAPANESE
FOOD PRODUCTS
- References



INTRODUCTION

To many Americans, Japanese cooking seems mysterious and inaccessible. The truth is that most of it is quite easy and surprisingly quick.

Americans eat a lot of Japanese food, but very few prepare it themselves. You might be perfectly comfortable eating sushi or tempura at your favorite Japanese restaurant, but cook it at home? To many Americans, Japanese cooking seems mysterious and inaccessible. The truth is that most of it is quite easy and surprisingly quick. Think about the chicken yakitori you ate last night: a skewer of grilled meat with sauce, perhaps topped with a scattering of slivered scallions. Or that miso soup: broth with some cubes of tofu. The title of the classic Japanese cookbook, Shizuo Tsuji's *Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art*, perfectly describes these dishes, and, in fact, all of Japanese cuisine. Each recipe is a refined combination of only a few ingredients, beautifully presented.

The chapters that follow clear the air of mystery that surrounds Japanese cookery. You'll learn about the ingredients, most of which you'll recognize from your visits to the sushi bar; the tools, many of which are interchangeable with gear you already own; and the techniques, which you're likely to master easily. [Chapter 1](#) lays out the fundamentals that come into play in basic Japanese cooking, and [chapters 2 through 12](#) contain recipes for familiar, classic dishes from sauces to sweets, along with information about ingredients and techniques specific to each category of food. All along the way, translations of Japanese terminology will enrich your understanding of Japanese cooking (not to mention restaurant menus!). In the [Appendix](#), you'll find listings of online sources for affordable ingredients and tools that may not be readily available at your regular supermarket.

Although sushi is the first thing that pops into your mind when you think about Japanese food, you'll discover there's a lot more going on. Savory rice dishes, vegetable salads, grilled meats, fried seafood, noodle soups, and hot pots bring a wide range of flavors

and preparations to the table. Some of this variety originated in Japan, while many elements were adopted from other cultures.

The single most important ingredient in Japanese cuisine is rice, which the Japanese have been cultivating for more than 2,400 years. Soybeans, the second-most important food, arrived from China around the same time as rice, and were turned into a whole category of foods—from miso to tofu—that show up all over the Japanese menu. Soy products, along with the seasonal vegetables, game, and fish that grew on the islands of Japan and in the surrounding sea, served as accompaniments to rice, as they still do today. Starting in the sixth century, when Buddhism became Japan's official religion, meat was almost entirely removed from the Japanese diet; fish and poultry remained. But the cuisine continued to evolve, incorporating more foreign influences. Deep-frying (tempura) appeared after the first European missionaries—the Portuguese—arrived in the sixteenth century. By the early nineteenth century, sushi had been refined into its now-familiar form. Curry, now a very popular way of cooking, reached Japan in the mid-1800s, when the British imported it from colonial India, and ramen noodles came from China.

Japan has continued to make foreign ingredients and techniques its own, while remaining true to its rice-based culinary customs.

This has changed somewhat in recent decades, however, as processed, fatty Western convenience and fast foods have flooded in, and the time-honored respect for fresh, seasonal, simple foods has weakened (but not disappeared!). Yet at the same time, Westerners in search of culinary diversity and a healthier diet have embraced traditional Japanese fare. It turns out that the centuries-old Japanese habit of eating lots of fresh fish and vegetables just happens to be great for your health. Among its many benefits, the Japanese diet fights heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. It helps keep your mind sharp and your figure trim. Japanese food loves you just as much as you love it!



THE BASICS OF COOKING JAPANESE

THE ART OF JAPANESE COOKING

THE JAPANESE MEAL

THE BASICS OF JAPANESE COOKING

TOOLS

PREPARATION AND COOKING TECHNIQUES

TABLEWARE

In Japan, cooking isn't just a way to prepare food, and food isn't just a way to fill your stomach. Both cooking and eating are meant to enrich the soul as well as nourish the body—a lofty goal, but one that's achieved without much ado. Keep a few basic principles in mind, and you'll have a fundamental understanding of Japanese cooking.

The Japanese believe that food should appeal to all five senses, not just taste and smell but also sight (the way food looks), touch (food's textures), and hearing (a quiet atmosphere while eating). Meals should encompass five colors—white, black, red, green (or blue, in some interpretations), and yellow—which correspond to a set of Japanese philosophical concepts and spiritual beliefs. The classical Japanese meal also incorporates all of food's five flavors. These include the salty, sweet, sour, and bitter tastes long recognized in Western cuisine, as well as *umami* (roughly translated as “savory”), a fifth category of flavor identified by Japanese scientists. Similarly, a meal should include dishes prepared in different ways, using the traditional Japanese cooking styles: fresh or raw, steamed, simmered, broiled or grilled, and deep-fried.

These foundations of Japanese cookery are guidelines for you to follow only so far as they suit your own approach to the kitchen. You can forget about them altogether if you like, and focus solely on preparing good food using the recipes in this book. Whatever your style, cooking the Japanese way doesn't require elaborate kitchen skills, a fat wallet, or a Japanese specialty store down the block. Thanks to the booming popularity of the cuisine, Japanese ingredients are readily available in American supermarkets, and online if you can't find them locally. They're by and large very affordable, except for certain fish (and you can usually get around

that by swapping the pricey cuts for less expensive varieties). Bottom line, if you've got a sharp knife and a working stove, you can make dozens of tasty, attractive, authentic, *impressive* Japanese-style dishes.

THE ART OF JAPANESE COOKING

Traditional Japanese cooks—including home cooks—take great care in preparing even the most humble dish, striving to create food that's not only delicious to the tongue but lovely to the eye. Cooking is truly an art, with food as the medium, used to express both gratitude for nature's splendor and a mindfulness of the seasons. To that end, ingredients are (as much as possible) used at the time of year when they're harvested, to celebrate the four seasons. Recipes are designed to accentuate the flavors and goodness of the ingredients bestowed by nature, without smothering them in spices, sauces, or oils. Food is arranged on the plate with an elegance that's meant to evoke the organic forms and processes of nature. And to focus diners' attention on each dish's natural attributes, each one is served in individual portions in separate vessels. These practices come together in meals that are of great beauty to all the senses, as well as to the heart.

Japanese cooking may be an art, but it's one that you can readily learn to grasp. Start by buying produce and fish that are in season, so they are at their peak of freshness and flavor. High-quality raw materials are crucial to the success of recipes that aim to showcase just one or two ingredients. Of course, you can get fresh foods year-round at your supermarket, so you can enjoy almost any Japanese dish any time of year. But do yourself a favor and stay away from frozen and canned items (except when a recipe specifically calls for them), whose texture and flavor most likely have been altered.

Just like a Japanese watercolor, basic Japanese recipes are unfussy. Most of the prepping and cooking methods will be familiar to you, and you won't have to hassle with lots of ingredients, steps, and hours at the stove. No recipe is foolproof, but it's hard to ruin these simple recipes. You don't have to measure out a slew of herbs and spices, and there are no gravies to go lumpy, roasts to dry out, or cakes to fall.

The practice of Japanese cooking encompasses the art of serving Japanese food, and you can get really creative here. Japanese cooks serve a small quantity of a single dish on its own plate, carefully

arranged in an attractive composition, to let each dish shine. The effect is lovely, especially when many small plates of different foods are set before each diner. In the Japanese manner, keep your portion sizes small, allowing space on the plate to make an eye-catching presentation. (Modest portioning will also slow the meal down to enhance your enjoyment of the naturally delicate Japanese flavors.) In Japanese restaurants and homes, one way that cooks underscore the seasonal freshness of their dishes is by decorating them with natural materials such as vegetable garnishes, autumn leaves, or cherry blossoms. Anything goes, as long as it comes from nature. Use your imagination to create a Japanese-style masterpiece.

THE JAPANESE MEAL

There are several types of traditional Japanese meals, some with a format similar to that of Western meals. But the typical dinner eaten at home, as well as the typical lunch taken to work or school, differ dramatically from their American counterparts. These styles of serving can be an exciting part of your foray into basic Japanese cooking.

If you're entertaining guests, a formal *kaiseki* meal, which in Japan is a very expensive kind of meal served at a restaurant, or a banquet, is bound to make a splash. This grand meal is a multicourse affair somewhat like a formal Western meal—especially the format known as the chef's tasting menu served at some high-end American restaurants, in which dishes are presented one at a time in a progression of many courses. A multicourse *kaiseki* starts with a light opener such as raw vegetables. Then come two delicate courses—clear soup or broth, followed by sashimi, a thinly sliced raw food that the Japanese consider to be the highest test of a chef's skill. Next is a series of fuller-bodied dishes in the traditional order: grilled, steamed, simmered, deep-fried, and then vinegary items. To close, plain rice, miso soup, and pickles are served alongside one another. It's all capped off with green tea, and perhaps some fruit—sweet desserts aren't usually served with this meal.

Of course, everyday Japanese meals are much simpler, and are a great model for your casual dinners at home. The governing principle is *ichijū-sansai* (“soup and three”). Four dishes—a clear or miso soup accompanied by three *okazu* (main or side dishes)—are brought to the table together, each in a separate vessel. Traditionally, the *okazu* are sashimi, a grilled or pan-fried dish, and a stewed or

simmered dish, any of which may be based on vegetables, fish, or meat. As in the *kaiseki*, home meals finish with rice, pickles, and green tea. There's often fruit, but in general no sweets.

Japanese lunches vary, one popular style being *bento* or *obento* (literally, “convenient”), a great option for a healthy, fun meal in the middle of your day. Bento is served in the Japanese version of the lunch box, which may be made of anything from commercial plastic or Styrofoam to one-of-a-kind black lacquerware. The bento box is partitioned into several sections that hold different foods, which can range from very simple to very elaborate. Classically, a bento includes a starch (usually rice, sometimes noodles), which is the largest portion; one or more proteins (fish, meat, sushi, or eggs), which is the second-largest portion; at least two kinds of vegetables (cooked, raw, or pickled); and a fruit. In practice, though, Japanese cooks put all kinds of food in bento boxes—pasta, hot dogs, you name it—and some bento are configured into intricate designs such as landscapes or cartoon characters. Bento may be hot or cold and, as in other Japanese meals, include a variety of colors and textures.

THE BASICS OF JAPANESE COOKING

As a beginning Japanese cook, you'll encounter a variety of food styles, a few special ingredients and tools, several fundamental techniques, and some wonderful new ways to serve appetizing meals.

Preparation Styles

By following the basic recipes in this book, you can create dishes in a range of traditional Japanese styles. Most of these preparation styles have counterparts in American cookery, so apart from their names, they're really not as exotic as you might have imagined. Spread your wings and try them all!

AEMONO: Raw and cooked vegetable or seafood salads sauced with thick dressings and served cool

AGEMONO: Deep-fried dishes, including battered foods such as tempura; foods dredged in flour, such as fried chicken and pork cutlets; and foods fried without any coating at all, such as fish and potatoes

ITAMEMONO: Stir-fried dishes, including any combination of vegetables, tofu, eggs, seafood, meat, and/or noodles

MUSHIMONO: Steamed dishes such as fish, dumplings, and savory custard

NIMONO: Simmered, boiled, and braised dishes, including vegetables, proteins, stews, and hot pots

SASHIMI: Raw sliced fish dishes, and a few meat varieties

SHIRUMONO: Soups and broths

SUNOMONO: Raw and cooked vegetable or seafood salads sauced with light vinegar dressings and served cool

SUSHI: Raw sliced fish or vegetables with rice

TSUKEMONO: Vegetables pickled with salt or vinegar and served cool, often with rice

YAKIMONO: Grilled, broiled, sautéed, and pan-fried dishes, such as teriyaki and yakitori

Basic Ingredients

The majority of the ingredients you'll be using in basic Japanese cooking will be very familiar to you. Most of the vegetables, fruits, proteins, starches, and even some of the condiments are the same as those you've been cooking with for years. Others, such as tofu and miso, are very common in American cooking, though you may not have used them before. A few items may be less familiar, or entirely new to you, but all of them are easy to find in supermarkets, health-food stores, specialty or gourmet food stores, and online (see the [Appendix](#) for useful shopping websites). Here's a short glossary of ingredients you should know.

ADZUKI (ADUKI, AZUKI, ASUKI): Small red beans used in some savory dishes, and to make the red bean paste that's a principal ingredient in many sweets; sold dry and canned. In some savory recipes you can substitute red kidney beans.

AGAR (AGAR-AGAR): A gelatin derived from algae, used in many traditional sweets; sold as powder, flakes, or dried strips (see [Chapter 11](#)).

BONITO FLAKES: Shavings from the dried fillets of the bonito, a type of Japanese tuna, used as a garnish and as a main ingredient in the basic broth known as dashi (see below); sold in packets and jars.

DAIKON: A large (eight to twelve inches, or longer), cylindrical white radish, often grated as an ingredient in dipping sauces, served

raw with sashimi, or pickled. You can substitute other types of white radish (the red ones are too spicy), or sometimes jicama.

DASHI: Seaweed-bonito broth; the fundamental flavoring in countless Japanese dishes (see [Chapter 2](#)).

EDAMAME: Fresh immature soybeans in the pod, steamed, salted, and eaten on their own as a snack or appetizer; also available frozen.

GINKGO NUTS: Pale, mild nuts of the Ginkgo tree (*Ginkgo biloba*), used fresh in hot pots and custards, grilled on skewers, or deep-fried. In the United States, they're usually sold in cans.

GLUTINOUS RICE: Sticky rice (see [Chapter 3](#)).

GREEN TEA: The primary tea drunk in Japan; it comes in many varieties and may be brewed from dried leaves (loose or bagged), powder, twigs, or buds. It is also used in cooking, and is touted for its health benefits, such as preventing cancer, heart disease, and dementia.

HIJIKI: A stringy, dark brown-green seaweed used in soups and salads. Sold dried; it must be reconstituted in water before use.

JAPONICA RICE: Category of rice that includes basic Japanese rice (see [Chapter 3](#)).

KABOCHA SQUASH (JAPANESE PUMPKIN): A green, turban-shaped winter squash with yellow or orange flesh; often used in soups and tempura. You can substitute butternut or acorn squash.

KAMPYO: Dried strips of flesh from the calabash squash (gourd), most often used in sushi rolls. To use them, you must first wash and boil them.

KOMBU (KONBU, KELP): A type of seaweed with flat, broad leaves that can be yards and yards long. Sold dried, it is a main ingredient in dashi (see above), and is also used as a vegetable. In some soups, wakame (see [here](#)) can be used instead.

KUZU STARCH: A powdery white thickener for sauces, derived from the kuzu plant. You can substitute arrowroot powder.

LOTUS ROOT: A crunchy, mild root vegetable used in tempura and vinegared salads. Hollow, tube-like spaces run through the length of the root; crosswise slices resemble wagon wheels. Sold fresh and in cans. If you're not using slices for decorative purposes, you can substitute water chestnuts or jicama.

MIRIN: Sweetened rice wine (see [Chapter 2](#)).

MISO: Fermented soybean paste (see [Chapter 2](#)).

MOCHI: Chewy chunks (round or square) or sheets of pounded glutinous rice paste, eaten grilled with dipping sauce and used as the basis of many sweets (see [Chapter 11](#)). Sold vacuum-packed or in the refrigerator section. There is no substitute.

MUSHROOMS, FRESH OR DRIED: Japanese cuisine uses a range of varieties that have more distinctive flavors and textures than American white or button mushrooms. Common types include shiitake, enoki, cloudear, wooddear, black fungus, maitake (hen-of-the-woods), and matsutake. When dried, they must be rehydrated by soaking in water. Depending on the mushroom, you can substitute regular white, portobello, or oyster mushrooms, or the universally available shiitake.

NORI (SUSHI-NORI, ANORI): Sheets of dark green seaweed used in sushi rolls (see [Chapter 8](#)).

RAMEN: Chinese-style wheat noodles, or the soup made with them (see [Chapter 5](#)).

RICE: See [Chapter 3](#).

RICE FLOUR: Comes in two varieties: made from regular Japanese rice or glutinous rice (see earlier in this list); used in many sweets.

RICE VINEGAR: Made from fermented rice (see [Chapter 2](#)).

SAKE: An alcoholic beverage made from fermented rice (see [Chapter 2](#)).

SESAME OIL: Oil pressed from sesame seeds (see [Chapter 2](#)). There is no substitute.

SHICHIMI TOGARASHI (SEVEN-SPICE POWDER): A dry, salt-free seasoning blend based on ichimi togarashi (see [Chapter 2](#)).

SHOCHU: A clear distilled spirit made from barley, buckwheat, rice, sweet potatoes, or other fermentable ingredients; drunk on its own or in mixed cocktails.

SHOYU: Soy sauce; made from fermented soybeans (see [Chapter 2](#)).

SOBA: Buckwheat noodles (see [Chapter 5](#)).

SOMEN: Fine wheat noodles (see [Chapter 5](#)).

SOYBEANS (SOYA BEANS, DAIZU): Dried version of the protein-rich soybean. They are cooked and used like other dried beans; also the primary ingredient in soy sauce, tofu, miso, soy oil, soy milk, and soy flour.

SURIMI: Processed fish products such as kanikama (also called kani, the imitation crabmeat in California rolls) and kamaboko, a cylindrical log that can be cut into individual fish cakes. Made from finely ground white fish such as pollock and sea bream, plus various additives and artificial ingredients. Extremely popular in Japan.

TOFU: Bean curd made from dried, boiled soybeans (see [Chapter 7](#)).

TOGARASHI (ICHIMI TOGARASHI): Flaked or ground red chili pepper (see [Chapter 2](#)).

UDON: Thick wheat noodles (see [Chapter 5](#)).

UMEBOSHI (PICKLED PLUMS): Very sour, dried, salt-cured Japanese plums, eaten with rice and in rice balls and sushi; sold in jars and plastic packets. There is no substitute.

WAKAME: A mild, dark, crisp, green seaweed used in soups and salads. Sold dried, it must be softened in water before using. In some soups, kombu (see earlier in this list) can be used instead.

WASABI: Japanese “horseradish” (see [Chapter 2](#)).

YUZU: A sour, acidic, yellow citrus fruit that looks like a round, bumpy lemon (see [Chapter 2](#)).

TOOLS

You can cook most basic Japanese recipes without buying a single Japanese utensil, but you will probably want to get a few basic tools. A well-equipped kitchen makes any kind of cooking a whole lot more fun.

Must-Have Western Tools

- *Broiler and broiler pan*
- *Colander*
- *Cooling/draining rack*
- *Covered glass or ceramic dishes, for marinating and pickling*
- *Cutting board*
- *Graters: regular and fine*

- *Grill*: An outdoor charcoal grill will give you the best results, but a gas grill will also work. If you can't grill outdoors, use a ridged cast iron stovetop grill pan (which you can also put in the oven). The majority of countertop electric grills don't generate enough heat to give a good sear.
- *Knives*: These are your most important tools and should be kept very sharp. It's essential to have an eight-inch chef's knife and a five- to six-inch paring knife of the highest quality you can afford.
- *Ladle*
- *Mixing bowls*: various sizes, stainless steel or glass
- *Pots and pans*: Enameled cast iron works best, but heavy stainless steel (not nonstick) does the job as well. Keep various sizes on hand, with lids.
- *Slotted spoon*
- *Steamer basket*
- *Strainer*: fine-mesh
- *Tongs*
- *Whisk*
- *Wooden spoons*

Highly Recommended Western Tools

- *Gas burner*: If you don't have a gas stove, a single gas burner will give you a great advantage in Japanese cooking, which is best carried out over a hot, open flame. When turned on, a gas burner goes instantly to full heat, and adjustments are also instantaneous, with no lag time for heating up or cooling down. You can control the heat more precisely than with the precalibrated settings on an electric range.
- *Knife steel (honing rod)*: A steel or ceramic honing rod (avoid diamond rods) maintains a knife's edge between full sharpenings, although they don't actually sharpen. The cylindrical rods, which have a roughened surface, are about twelve inches long, with a handle at one end. If you refresh your blade every time before you start working on a meal, cutting will be noticeably easier and produce more precise results; you'll also be less likely to hurt yourself. Knives that haven't been sharpened in a while should go to a reputable professional who can do them by hand, not on a machine. Your results are unlikely to be as good if you try to do it yourself with a whetstone or an electric sharpener. Using a steel

regularly means you won't have to have to take your knives to the shop as often.

Nice-to-Have Western Tools

- *Citrus reamer or juicer*
- *Citrus zester*
- *Deep-fryer*
- *Food processor*
- *Hot plate*
- *Slow cooker*: a decent alternative to an electric Japanese rice cooker

Must-have Asian Tools

- *Bamboo mat (makisu)*: Used for rolling sushi and omelets, this looks like a miniature version of the roll-up bamboo window shades seen in college dorm rooms. The standard size is about ten inches square.
- *Skewers (kushi)*: Both bamboo, for yakitori and kebabs, and metal, for other types of grilling.

Highly Recommended Asian Tool

- *Electric rice cooker (suihanki)*: An essential appliance in every Japanese home and restaurant kitchen, this is the world's very best tool for cooking any kind of rice—short-grain, long-grain, white, brown, Asian, Western. All you have to do is measure your rice and water, put on the lid, select the setting for the type of rice you're cooking, and leave the cooker to do its job. It can also double as a slow cooker. Prices range from \$25 to \$1,500, though a \$50 to \$100 cooker is just fine.

Nice-to-Have Asian Tools

- *Bamboo draining baskets (zaru)*: These come in various sizes and shapes and are great for many kitchen tasks, such as rinsing, draining, and tossing.
- *Bamboo steamer (mushiki)*: This multitier steamer can cook several dishes at once. Each level is a circular frame with woven bamboo bottom; they stack on top of each other over a pot of boiling water, with a lid on the top tier.
- *Covered earthenware pot (donabe)*: These are made of a type of clay that can withstand cooking over direct heat, which other

types of earthenware, stoneware, and ceramic cannot. Glazed on the inside and porous on the outside, they are ideal for hot pots, as well as simmered and braised dishes.

- *Drop lid (otoshi buta)*: This wooden lid fits into a cooking pot to float on top of simmering dishes. It keeps solid ingredients submerged for even cooking, and prevents them from breaking up in the simmering liquid.
- *Japanese grater (oroshigame)*: Used for grating ginger and wasabi, these aren't perforated like Western graters, but have a flat surface studded with tiny spikes.
- *Japanese knives*: Famous worldwide for their ability to hold an extremely sharp edge, these knives do a beautiful job on fish and vegetables because their blades are significantly thinner than those of Western knives, and they have small hollows up and down their edges that capture juices and prevent foods from dragging on the knife. The santoku is an all-purpose, six-to seven-inch knife with a straight or subtly curved cutting edge and a top edge that curves down at the tip. The nakiri and usuba are straight-edged, square-tipped vegetable knives. The yanagiba is a long, slender knife designed for cutting fish for sashimi and sushi.
- *Kitchen chopsticks (hashi, saibashi)*: Twelve inches or more in length, these wooden or bamboo utensils are joined at one end with a string. They work like tongs, but are better for handling small or delicate foods.
- *Mesh scoop (ami-shakushi)*: This scoop with a mesh or net bowl is used for lifting items into and out of hot oil.

PREPARATION AND COOKING TECHNIQUES

Basic Japanese recipes use many of the same preparation and cooking methods as Western cuisines. Others vary slightly from what you already know. There are also a few specialized but easy techniques that will come in handy.

Preparation

CHOPPING AND MINCING VEGETABLES: Use a chef's knife or a Japanese vegetable knife. Gently hold the vegetable in place on the cutting board with the first knuckles of your fingers (fingertips curled under). Position the knife blade just above the vegetable, with the tip resting lightly on the cutting board. Bring the knife down

sharply. Lift the blade back up (no higher than your knuckles), and swing it slightly right or left to make the next chop.

CLEANING FISH: There's no need to learn Japanese techniques for scaling, gutting, filleting, or skinning fish, because you can have your fishmonger do those for you.

PARBOILING: Many Japanese recipes call for parboiled vegetables. These include leafy greens, potatoes, fresh beans, snow peas, eggplant, and cabbage. Parboiling removes the excess moisture and harsh flavors, but is so quick that vegetables still have all their color and texture. To parboil, add a dash of salt, vinegar, or baking soda to the water to preserve the color of the vegetables. If you're prepping tougher, denser vegetables such as broccoli or carrots, put them in the pot while the water is still cool, and bring the water to a boil. If you're prepping tender vegetables such as spinach or green beans, add them once the water reaches a boil. Cook only a few minutes (or sometimes seconds with very delicate items such as spinach), until the ingredients are barely tender. Drain sturdier ingredients such as cabbage and eggplant and set them aside to cool to room temperature. More tender items, such as leafy greens, should be plunged into ice water to stop cooking as soon as they're taken out of the pot. A quick boil followed by an ice water bath is also known as blanching.

SALTING: Before cooking fish, the Japanese salt it to remove excess moisture, as well as any undesirable odors (most fresh fish won't have any). The method, amount of salt used, and length of time it's left on vary according to the type of fish being cooked; each recipe will tell you what to do. You might soak the fish in a saltwater bath for up to thirty minutes, then sprinkle on a little salt and let it sit for up to an hour. Otherwise, dredge the fish in a heavier salt coating and let it sit for up to ninety minutes.

SLICING BONED FISH OR CHICKEN, CLEANED SEAFOOD, OR COOKED OMELETS: Use a very sharp chef's knife or sushi knife. Gently hold the ingredient in place on the cutting board with the first knuckles of your fingers (fingertips curled under). Start with the handle end of the blade resting on the far edge of the fillet. Draw the entire length of the knife toward you across the surface of the fillet, pressing down lightly and evenly. A sharp blade will do most of the work itself, without pressure, ensuring that the flesh isn't torn or mashed.

SLICING, CUBING, AND DICING VEGETABLES: Use a chef's knife or a Japanese vegetable knife. Gently hold the vegetable in place on the cutting board with the first knuckles of your fingers (fingertips curled under). Position the knife blade just above the vegetable, with the tip resting lightly on the cutting board. Bring the knife down while driving it quickly away from you about one inch. Lift the blade back up (no higher than your knuckles) and move the vegetable, not the knife, to make the next cut.

SOAKING VEGETABLES: Some vegetables, such as avocados, potatoes, sweet potatoes, lotus root, and apples, start to turn brown as soon as they're cut. To slow this process, and to remove any bitter flavor, immerse them in an acidulated solution of two tablespoons lemon juice or vinegar per quart of water. Leave them in the bath until you're ready to use them (not more than half an hour). Some vegetables are also cooked in acidulated water to keep their colors bright.

Cooking Methods

Traditional Japanese cooking is done entirely on the stove or grill, or in the broiler, though a few recipes in this book have been adapted for oven roasting. See the descriptions of [cooking styles](#) earlier in this chapter for additional information.

BOILING (FOR NIMONO RECIPES): Nothing could be simpler than cooking ingredients in boiling water on a hot stove. Ingredients may be added to the water before it's heated or after it reaches a boil.

BRAISING (FOR NIMONO RECIPES): The food cooks slowly, at low temperature, in a covered pot on the stove, in liquid such as broth or vegetable juice. The braising liquid is often used as a broth.

BROILING (FOR YAKIMONO RECIPES): In Japanese cooking, the term "broiling" refers not to cooking under a broiler but to cooking over a fire, similar to grilling (see below). Food may be seared directly over a flame or in hot coals, or separated from the fire by a mat or metal container. (You'll broil in the conventional American sense as a substitute when you don't have access to a grill. But a grill, especially a charcoal grill, is preferable because it can generally achieve higher heat with better results than a broiler.)

DEEP-FRYING (FOR AGEMONO RECIPES): Several inches of good-quality blended vegetable oil are heated in a heavy pot, to a very high temperature for meat and fish, and a somewhat lower

temperature for vegetables. Battered, flour-dredged, or uncoated ingredients are lowered into the oil and cooked to a golden brown, then drained on paper.

GRILLING (FOR YAKIMONO RECIPES): Japanese grilling, whether of bite-size pieces of tofu or of whole fish (vegetables are seldom grilled), is done on skewers laid on a grate above a fire. Items are often marinated before they're grilled. What little fat exists drips away, while juices are sealed in and flavors intensify. If you don't have access to a grill, use your oven's broiler (see broiling, above).

MARINATING: Marinades are quite simple, often no more than a combination of soy sauce, mirin, and sake. Fish and chicken marinate well, for anywhere from five minutes to overnight, depending on the recipe.

PAN-FRYING (FOR YAKIMONO RECIPES): Cooking in a small amount of oil over very high heat is the typical way to prepare yakimono recipes such as teriyaki. The main ingredient is browned and then covered to cook for a few minutes. When done, it's removed from the pan and a sauce is made with the juices. To finish, the main ingredient simply goes back into the pan to coat with the sauce.

PICKLING (FOR TSUKEMONO RECIPES): Japanese vegetables are pickled in salt, vinegar, or rice bran, sometimes with flavorings such as kombu or mustard. They're covered with the pickling medium and packed tightly in a light-proof, covered vessel. The process can take anywhere from a couple of hours to several months.

SIMMERING (FOR NIMONO AND SHIRUMONO RECIPES): Ingredients are most often parboiled before simmering. When ready, they're placed in a small amount of seasoned cooking liquid and cooked, covered, at a low simmer or high boil, depending on the recipe.

SAUTÉING: This is essentially the same as Western sautéing, with a little bit of oil at medium to medium-high heat in a skillet.

STEAMING (FOR MUSHIMONO RECIPES): Vegetables and seafood are the stars of the steamer basket, which holds them above a small amount of boiling water in a covered pot. To infuse the food with extra flavor, simply add seasonings to the water.

STIR-FRYING (FOR ITAMEMONO RECIPES): Imported from China centuries ago, this technique involves cooking small pieces of food in a very hot large skillet or wok. The ingredients are stirred or tossed constantly and cook very quickly.

TABLEWARE

When eating in Japanese restaurants, you've probably noticed that each part of your order—sashimi, teriyaki, sushi, and so on—arrives on or in a small individual vessel. These plates most likely vary in material, color, shape, weight, and finish. Most often, they have rustic glazes, varied coloring, or naturalistic, abstract, or geometric patterns such as flowers or fish. Some plates and dishes are shaped like fish, flowers, or leaves. This is the traditional Japanese style, meant to enhance the presentation of the meal, which is extremely important.

You don't need to invest in Japanese tableware (the most authentic of which is handmade and relatively expensive), or even in decorative Western plates. But you may want to have a few of the following practical items on hand, whether of Japanese or other Asian manufacture or made in the West.

- *Chopstick rests:* small, decorative ceramic pieces that keep the tips of chopsticks off the table when you lay your chopsticks down between bites or courses. One per place setting.
- *Donabe bowls:* covered, round casserole dishes ranging from about seven inches in diameter and four inches deep (for one or two people) to about twelve inches in diameter and six inches deep (for five to six people). For serving hot pots. One or more per table.
- *Entrée plates:* ceramic plates seven to nine inches square or nine to eleven inches in diameter. One per place setting.
- *Noodle bowls:* round ceramic bowls six to eight inches in diameter and two to four inches deep. Often with a lid. One per place setting.
- *Reusable chopsticks:* colorful lacquered wood or bamboo chopsticks tapered at the working end. Plastic ones are also available. One set per place setting.
- *Rice bowls:* round, ceramic, footed bowls four to five inches in diameter and two to three inches deep. One per place setting.
- *Sauce cruets or pitchers:* decorative ceramic or porcelain cruets that resemble small tea or coffee pots without handles, closed

with a lid or cork. They hold three to six ounces of liquid, and are for dispensing soy sauce and other sauces and salad dressings. Two or three per table.

- *Saucers*: ceramic dishes about one-inch deep, either square (about three-by-three inches) or round (three to four inches in diameter). For condiments, sauces, and small bits of food. Three per place setting.
- *Serving dishes*: round, square, or rectangular ceramic or glass plates of varying sizes. Three per table.
- *Soup bowls*: round, footed lacquerware or plastic bowls four to five inches in diameter and two to three inches deep. A domed lid keeps the soup warm. Can also be used for rice. One per place setting.
- *Sushi plates*: rectangular ceramic plates about eight-by-five inches, sometimes slightly convex. One per place setting.
- *Tea set*: cast iron, ceramic, or porcelain teapot with two to six handleless cups. The pot handle may be curved and attached at the top or back, or straight and attached at the side. One per table.



FLAVORINGS

ICHIBAN DASHI

MISO DRESSING

SANBAIZU DRESSING

PONZU SAUCE

TSUYU SAUCE

TERIYAKI SAUCE

YAKITORI SAUCE

SEVEN-SPICE POWDER *Shichimi Togarashi*

When it comes to flavor, the Japanese manage to produce a lot with a little; compared to Western cooking, Japanese cooking makes use of relatively few flavoring ingredients. But these ingredients are combined in dozens of ways to create an incredible range of results, from subtly salty to tangy sweet. Dishes are seasoned lightly to allow the natural flavors of the main ingredients to shine through and be enhanced by the added flavorings.

Basic Japanese cooking involves very few spices and herbs, relying instead on flavorings based on fermented ingredients, salt, and sugar. Seaweed, ginger, hot peppers, and citrus commonly appear in supporting roles.

Scientists have long known that our taste buds are attuned to four basic flavors: sweet, sour, salty, and bitter. But in the early twentieth century, Japanese scientists described a fifth taste—umami. Best translated as “savory,” the Japanese word umami describes a flavor that’s present in most Japanese cuisine. Also important in cuisines throughout the world, umami makes your mouth water; it feels rich, or acts like a coating on your tongue, sort of like a combination of salt and fat (think potato chips). In scientific terms, umami comes from chemicals called glutamates (an element of MSG), which are especially plentiful in seafood, mushrooms, certain vegetables, aged and fermented ingredients such as soy sauce and rice vinegar, and green tea. All of these are prevalent in Japanese cooking.

DASHI: THE ESSENTIAL FLAVOR

If any single ingredient can be called the quintessential Japanese flavoring, it's dashi (pronounced *DAH-shee*). Delicious on its own as a clear soup, dashi permeates nearly every dish Japanese cuisine has to offer and serves as the basis of many soups, sauces, and other dishes. The success of your finished dish is dependent on the quality of the dashi you start with.

Dashi is full of umami flavor, yet is very simple to make, with only water and one or two other ingredients: dried *kombu* (kelp) and/or *katsuobushi* (dried bonito flakes; bonito is a kind of tuna). Unlike Western-style stocks, which are generally made by boiling ingredients for a long period of time to extract and concentrate the flavors as much as possible, dashi extracts only the essential essence of the flavoring ingredients—like dried seaweed and fish—by simmering them only briefly and then straining the liquid. Variations use dried baby sardines, dried shiitake mushrooms, and other types of fish.

Dashi is widely available today in instant powdered form, but that version is likely to include added ingredients such as sugar and MSG. The traditional recipe is so easy, though, there's no reason not to make much better dashi yourself. There are many different types of kombu, and they can vary widely in price. It doesn't really matter what kind you use, but be aware that they impart different flavors. If you can't find kelp or bonito flakes in the Asian section of your supermarket, or in your health food store, you'll have no problem finding them online. Here is the most basic recipe.

ICHIBAN DASHI



MAKES 1 QUART

COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

Literally “primary dashi,” Ichiban Dashi is the foundation of dishes that require a delicate dashi flavor. Simply leave out the bonito flakes for Kombu Dashi. A stronger preparation known as “secondary dashi” (niban dashi) is cooked using the kombu and bonito flakes strained from a finished batch of Ichiban Dashi, and is used in dishes requiring a bolder dashi flavor.

1 ounce dried kombu pieces (about a 12-inch square piece)

1 ounce bonito flakes (about ½ cup, loosely packed)

1. Put the kombu and 1 quart of cold water in a pan and leave it to soak for 15 to 30 minutes. (To enhance flavor, soak the kombu overnight.)
2. Put the pot, uncovered, on the stove and bring the water close to a boil (bubbles will begin to form on the edges of the pan) over medium heat, about 10 minutes. Do not allow the water to boil.
3. Check the texture of the kelp with your thumbnail if it is soft, remove it from the pot and discard it. If it is tough, continue cooking it at a low simmer, adding ¼ cup of cold water if needed to prevent the water from boiling, and check every 2 minutes until the kelp softens. Discard the kelp.
4. Add the bonito flakes along with ¼ cup of cold water. Bring the broth to a boil, then immediately remove it from the stovetop. Allow it to stand until most of the bonito flakes settle to the bottom, about 1 minute.
5. Pour the dashi through a fine-mesh strainer lined with a coffee filter or cheesecloth. Discard the strained bonito flakes.
6. Serve the dashi as a hot soup, or allow it to cool completely and use it in other recipes. Store it in a tightly sealed container for up to 3 days in the refrigerator or 2 months in the freezer.

Japanese Sauces and Condiments

Almost every sauce or marinade begins with a combination of three, four, or five of the following ingredients. It's preferable not to switch other ingredients for these, but if you're really in a bind you can make the substitutions suggested here.

MIRIN (*MIR-in*): a sweet, clear, golden rice wine that's low in alcohol, mirin adds a mellow aroma and subtle sweetness to food. Substitute sake, white wine, or sherry sweetened with a small amount of sugar (¼ teaspoon sugar to ¼ cup wine).

MISO (*MEE-soh*): fermented soybean paste used as a soup base and flavoring in sauces, dressings, and marinades. There are numerous varieties, including white, yellow, red, and dark, with different flavors, textures, and uses. It's sold in the refrigerated section of supermarkets. You may substitute some types of miso for others, depending on the recipe, but there is no substitute for miso in general.

RICE VINEGAR, RICE WINE VINEGAR (*komezu, koh-MAY-zoo*): made from fermented rice (not from sake), this is much less acidic than Western vinegars and lends a milder flavor. Use it in sauces and pickling. Substitute white wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar.

SAKE (*SAH-kay*): a clear alcoholic beverage made from fermented rice. Sometimes referred to as rice wine (it's about as alcoholic as wine), sake is actually made using a brewing process similar to that used for making beer. Like beer, it is not aged and must be refrigerated. There are many varieties, ranging from delicate to heavy and very dry to very sweet. It is both drunk as a beverage and used as a flavoring in sauces and marinades. In cooking, you may substitute dry white wine, but as a beverage, there is no substitute.

SALT (*shio, SHEE-oh*): sea salt, especially Japanese sea salt, is the best option for Japanese recipes, but regular white table salt is fine. No substitute.

SOY SAUCE (shoyu, *SHOY-yoo*): made from fermented soybeans and wheat, soy sauce has an intense umami flavor and is used in many, many Japanese recipes, as well as at the table. Light soy sauce is what's generically called "soy sauce"; dark soy sauce is slightly thicker and sweeter; low-sodium soy sauce is just like light soy sauce, but with less salt. Substitute a blend of three parts beef bullion, three parts cider or balsamic vinegar, and one part molasses.

SUGAR (satou, *sa-TOH*): ordinary white, granulated table sugar. There is no substitute.

YUZU (*YOO-zoo*): a sour, acidic, yellow citrus fruit that looks like a round, bumpy lemon. It's not eaten as a fruit, but used for its zest (to give aroma, or as a garnish) and juice (to give tartness). It's difficult to find fresh yuzu in most of the United States, but yuzu juice is more readily available. As a substitute, use lemon zest or juice.

Other important Japanese flavorings include:

SESAME OIL (goma, *GOH-mah*): oil pressed from sesame seeds, with a pronounced nutty aroma. Available in light and amber (toasted) forms. Substituting other oils will serve the same cooking purposes but eliminate the distinctive scent.

SHICHIMI-TOGARASHI (*shee-CHEE-mee toh-gah-RAH-shee*), seven-spice powder: a dry, salt-free seasoning blend based on ground or flaked hot chilies. It may have more or fewer than seven ingredients, but typically includes dried orange peel, nori flakes, Sichuan peppercorns, dried ginger, black and/or white sesame seeds, and poppy seeds. Substitute cayenne or ichimi togarashi plus sesame seeds and any of the other ingredients.

TAMARI (*tah-MAH-ree*): soy sauce made with little or no wheat (some types are gluten-free). It's thicker and darker than shoyu, with a deeper, less salty flavor. Substitute soy sauce plus a small amount of molasses.

ICHIMI TOGARASHI (*ee-CHEE-mee toh-gah-RAH-shee*), togarashi: flaked or ground red chili pepper, available on its own or in the spice blend shichimi-togarashi. Substitute cayenne pepper or crushed red pepper flakes.

WASABI (*wah-SAH-bee*): often called Japanese horseradish, this green root vegetable has a strong, sinus-clearing hotness. It is grated into a paste for use with sushi or powdered for use with fried snacks. Genuine wasabi is rare and expensive in the United States; most pastes labeled “wasabi” are a combination of grated Western (white) horseradish, mustard, and food coloring. Substitute horseradish mixed with a little hot mustard powder.

Aside from dashi and shichimi-togarashi, you can't make any of these flavorings at home. You can, however, make a lot of standard Japanese sauces, marinades, and dressings (which you can also buy premade) from these primary flavorings.

MISO DRESSING



MAKES 1 CUP

PREP TIME: 3 MINUTES

This thick, savory salad dressing is popular in both Japan and the United States.

1 cup white or yellow miso

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon soy sauce

3 tablespoons mirin

1. In a small bowl, mix together the miso, sugar, and soy sauce. Rapidly beat in the mirin until the dressing is smooth and creamy.
2. Refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 1 month.

SANBAIZU DRESSING



MAKES 1 CUP

PREP TIME: 1 MINUTE

COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

This tangy dressing is excellent on vegetable and seafood salads.

1/3 cup rice wine vinegar

1/4 cup soy sauce

1/4 cup mirin

3 tablespoons dashi

1 teaspoon sugar

1. In a medium pot over medium-high heat, combine all ingredients and bring to a boil. Remove the pot from the heat, pour the dressing into a heat-proof bowl, and allow to cool completely.
2. Use the dressing at room temperature, or refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 1 month.

PONZU SAUCE



MAKES 1 CUP

PREP TIME: 3 MINUTES

Basically a citrusy soy sauce, ponzu is a delicious accompaniment to sashimi and is frequently a component of marinades for poultry and meat.

½ cup soy sauce

¼ cup yuzu juice

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

2 tablespoons mirin

1. In a small bowl, whisk together all the ingredients.
2. Refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 1 month.

TSUYU SAUCE



MAKES 1 CUP

PREP TIME: 1 MINUTE

COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

This versatile dipping sauce is especially delicious with noodles or tempura.

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup dashi

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons mirin

1. In a small pot over medium heat, combine all the ingredients and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat and allow to cool completely.
2. Use the sauce at room temperature, or refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 1 month.

TERIYAKI SAUCE



MAKES 2 CUPS

PREP TIME: 1 MINUTE

COOK TIME: 10 TO 15 MINUTES

No matter what quantity of teriyaki sauce you choose to make, simply combine equal parts mirin, sake, and soy sauce, plus sugar according to your personal taste.

1 cup soy sauce

1 cup mirin

1 cup sake

¼ cup sugar

1. In a medium pot over medium heat, mix together all the ingredients until the sugar dissolves. Bring to a boil, turn the heat down to a simmer, and cook to reduce by one-third, 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool completely.
2. Use the sauce at room temperature, or refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 1 month.

YAKITORI SAUCE



MAKES 3 CUPS

PREP TIME: 1 MINUTE

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Traditional yakitori sauce uses roasted chicken bones, but this recipe produces a tasty version with less investment of time and effort. It's also vegetarian.

1 cup soy sauce

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup mirin

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup sake

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup tamari

1. In a medium pot over medium heat, combine all the ingredients. Bring to a boil and cook for 8 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool completely.
2. Use the sauce at room temperature, or refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 1 month.

SEVEN-SPICE POWDER

| *Shichimi Togarashi*



MAKES ¼ CUP

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

Traditionally, this peppery blend of dried Japanese spices contained seven ingredients (some variations contain more or fewer). It's used to flavor many dishes, including noodles, grilled poultry and meat, and broiled eel.

2 tablespoons whole sichuan or black peppercorns

1 tablespoon crushed dried tangerine peel

2 teaspoons toasted black sesame seeds

1 teaspoon toasted white sesame seeds

1 teaspoon toasted poppy seeds

1 tablespoon ground togarashi (Japanese hot pepper) or cayenne pepper

2 teaspoons flaked dried nori

1. With a mortar and pestle or electric spice grinder, grind the peppercorns and tangerine peel to a coarse consistency. Add the sesame and poppy seeds and grind until they reach a coarse consistency as well. Add the hot pepper and nori and grind briefly to combine.
2. Store in an airtight container. The powder will keep in a cool, dry place for 3 to 4 months.



RICE

BASIC RICE *Gohan*GLUTINOUS RICE *Okowa*BROWN RICE *Genmai*MUSHROOM RICE *Kinoko Gohan*RED RICE *Sekihan*RICE WITH GREEN TEA *Ochazuke*RICE BALLS *Onigiri*CHICKEN CURRY RICE *Kare Raisu*

There is no more indispensable ingredient in Japanese cuisine than rice. For breakfast, lunch, and dinner, this staple is on the menu. Unlike Western cuisine, which puts rice on the side as an accompaniment to the main course, Japanese cuisine features rice front and center, with fish, poultry, and meat as the accompaniments.

Rice is also the primary component in countless main dishes (not to mention sushi), and is prepared in dozens of ways. From rice comes many other key Japanese ingredients, including sake, vinegar, and flour, as well as a whole array of snacks and sweets. It is so fundamental a food that the word for cooked rice, *gohan* (or, less formally, *meshi*), is generically used to mean “meal.”

The Japanese have cultivated rice for more than 2,000 years, but for centuries it was eaten only by the wealthy and powerful; by law, rice farmers had to pay as much as 80 percent of their crop as taxes. Rice served as currency and, along with sake and sticky rice cakes (mochi), was the ultimate offering to the gods and ancestral spirits.

Gradually, the poor gained access to brown rice, but polished white rice remained the food of emperors and tycoons. Only in the twentieth century did white rice become a staple food of every class. It now appears on the five-yen coin, and people still eat it on religious occasions as a means of communion with the divine. The word for uncooked rice, *okome*, is an honorific title that reflects the nobility of this most important food.

VARIETIES OF JAPANESE RICE

In Japan, the term “rice” refers specifically to Japonica, a category of short-grain rice that has plump, almost round grains and is somewhat stickier than the long-grain type prevalent in most of Asia and the rest of the world. There are three main varieties of Japonica, each of which (like all rice) is gluten-free.

HAKUMAI (WHITE RICE): Most of the rice used in Japanese cuisine has been polished to remove the brown hull and bran, yielding white rice. Its uncooked grains are translucent and pearly. After cooking, it is glossy and tender yet firm, and it clings together lightly.

MOCHIGOME (GLUTINOUS RICE, STICKY RICE, SWEET RICE): The white, opaque grains of this variety lose some of their form when cooked and become very sticky. Japanese cuisine takes advantage of this characteristic in a range of recipes, most often by turning the rice into chewy rice cakes called mochi, which in turn is generally made into sweet desserts and treats. It’s no wonder that glutinous rice is the second-most consumed rice in Japan, even though crop yields are much lower. (The descriptive “glutinous” simply refers to its stickiness—the rice does not contain the gluten that aggravates celiac disease or gluten intolerance.)

GENMAI (BROWN RICE): The hard hull of this rice is removed, but it isn’t polished, so the bran and its nutrients remain. Nutty in flavor and slightly chewier, it’s not as popular as white or glutinous rice, but growing health consciousness has increased the Japanese market for brown rice.

RICE COOKERS

The Japanese invented electric rice cookers, which today are as prevalent in Japan as toasters are in the United States. Nearly every household has one on the kitchen counter. A decent model will cook rice perfectly every time, without the unpredictability of stovetop cooking (Is it done? Soggy? Dried out? Burned?). It may seem like an extravagance, but if you cook rice regularly—any kind of rice, not just Japanese and not just white—an automatic rice cooker is a terrific time-saver. You put the rice and water in the bowl, put the lid on, push a button, and the machine will alert you when the rice is ready.

Home models can handle anywhere from three to twelve cups of cooked rice. Most have a removable inner pot that’s dishwasher-

safe. These are usually nonstick, with measurements for water and different types of rice marked on the inside—no need to use measuring cups. Nowadays, the majority of electric cookers have digital controls that can be programmed for the type of rice being cooked (different types require different cooking times). The machine automatically stops cooking at the end of the cycle and switches to a stay-warm mode that keeps the rice at the optimum temperature until you're ready to eat. Another common feature is a timer that allows you to set the cooker to start automatically, even when you're not home.

Typically, electric rice cookers are heated by conventional electric elements, but induction cookers are now on the market as well. Pressure-cooking models are available, too. The most advanced rice cookers use built-in programming to control the cooking process more precisely than regular rice cookers. Once you press the “cook” button, the machine can detect and adapt to variables such as the age (dryness) of the rice, quantity, and altitude, to adjust timing and temperature more precisely.

In addition to cooking white rice, many electric cookers can be used for brown rice, glutinous rice, porridge, soup, or stew. Some can also be used as a steamer, others double as a slow-cooker, and a few are even equipped for making yogurt, proofing dough, and baking bread. Over the years, Japanese brands have been considered the best, but cookers from other manufacturers have improved rapidly. You can get a very good digital, multifeature Japanese rice cooker for about \$100, and a decent quality simple, single-function cooker (Japanese or not) can cost as little as \$25.

TIPS FOR COOKING JAPANESE RICE

- In Japanese cooking, there is no substitute for short-grain Japonica rice, whether white, glutinous, or brown. Don't try to use any of the long-grain varieties, such as Carolina, basmati, or jasmine, common in the rest of the world, or non-Japanese short-grain rice such as those from Italy and Spain. They aren't sticky enough to work in Japanese recipes. Rice imported from Japan is widely available in the United States, and producers in California, Arkansas, and Texas grow some good-quality Japonica and Japonica hybrids.
- Buy the best quality rice you can afford. Japanese-grown Koshihikari is considered the finest type of Japonica (and can

be the most expensive), followed by Japanese Akita Komachi. Both are available in white and brown versions. Among American-grown varieties, Tamanishiki (a Koshihikari hybrid) and Tamaki (pure Koshihikari) are excellent.

- One cup of uncooked Japonica yields two cups of cooked rice. Don't try to cook less than one cup of dry rice at a time, as it is more difficult to control the process. (This might not apply for certain rice cookers that are calibrated for smaller amounts, so check your rice cooker's instructions.)
- For each cup of dry rice, use one cup plus two tablespoons of water. If you're using a rice cooker, follow the rice and water markings on your cooker.
- Before cooking, thoroughly wash and rinse Japanese rice to remove excess starch. This will prevent the cooked rice from being too sticky. See the [Basic Rice](#) (Gohan) recipe for washing directions.
- Drain the rice thoroughly after rinsing it.
- Soak the rice for thirty to sixty minutes after washing to soften it slightly before cooking. (If you're using a rice cooker, check to see if the cooking time includes a soak cycle. If so, the rice won't need soaking before going into the cooker.)
- Don't open the pot or cooker while the rice is cooking. This releases steam and reduces the pressure in the pot, throwing off the cooking time and the ultimate results.
- After cooking, remove the pot from the heat and leave the lid on for ten to fifteen minutes so any remaining moisture will be absorbed. (If you're using a rice cooker, check to see if the cooking time includes a rest cycle. If it does, you can skip this steaming step.)
- After the rice has steamed, toss it with a rice paddle or shallow cooking spoon to fluff it up. Then cover the pot or rice cooker again and leave it until you're ready to eat. Your rice cooker should alert you to fluff the rice between the steaming and "keep warm" cycles.

BASIC RICE | *Gohan*



MAKES 2 CUPS

PREP TIME: 40 TO 70 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 30 TO 45 MINUTES

White Japonica rice has the perfect properties for Japanese cooking (except for sweets, which require glutinous rice). It has a heartier mouth feel than the long-grain rice eaten by most Americans, and a slight stickiness that makes it easier to eat with chopsticks. To store cooked rice, allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in an airtight container. It will keep for three or four days.

1 cup white Japonica rice

Water

1. Put the rice in a medium pot and add enough cold water to cover it, plus about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Use your hands to churn the rice and water until the water turns cloudy, about 15 seconds. Drain the water from the pot, being careful not to lose any rice.
2. Repeat Step 1 twice.
3. Repeat Step 1 one more time, but leave just enough water in the pot to cover the rice. Gently massage the rice between the palms of your hands for about 1 minute. Drain and rinse, repeating until the water is almost clear.
4. Drain the rice thoroughly through a fine-mesh strainer.
5. Put the rice in an electric rice cooker or a medium, heavy cast iron or enameled pot with a lid that fits snugly. Add 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons of fresh, cold water.

If using an electric rice cooker:

6. Put the lid on the rice cooker. If your cooker includes a soak cycle in the total cooking time, turn it on to the “regular” or “white” setting. Let the cooking process run to completion without opening the lid. If your cooker doesn’t have a soak cycle, let the rice soak for 30 to 60 minutes, then turn the cooker on to the “regular” or “white” setting. Let the cooking process run to completion without opening the lid.

7. If your cooker includes a “rest cycle,” the cooking process concludes when the rest cycle is complete. If your cooker doesn’t have a rest cycle, leave the lid closed when the cooking process has finished, and let the rice steam for 15 minutes.
8. Open the lid and toss the rice with a rice paddle or wooden spoon to fluff it. Close the lid to keep the rice warm (leave your rice cooker on the “keep warm” cycle, if it has one) until you’re ready to serve.

If on the stovetop:

6. Let the rice soak in the pot with the cooking water for 30 to 60 minutes.
7. Put the pot on the stove, uncovered, over medium heat. Bring the water to a boil, then turn the heat up to high and put on the lid.
8. Don’t open the lid at any time during this step. Boil the rice for 1 minute, then turn the heat back down to medium and cook, covered, for 4 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and continue cooking, covered, for 10 minutes.
9. Uncover the pot. If the rice has not completely absorbed the water, turn the heat up to high and cook until the remaining water evaporates.
10. Take the pot off the heat and put the lid back on. Let the rice stand for 15 minutes.
11. Open the lid and toss the rice with a rice paddle or wooden spoon to fluff it. Cover the pot to keep the rice warm until you’re ready to serve.

GLUTINOUS RICE | *Okowa*



MAKES 2 CUPS

PREP TIME: 3 TO 24 HOURS

COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

The traditional way to cook glutinous rice is to steam it over a pot of boiling water. It's eaten plain, or used in recipes for sweet dishes. Here are two simpler methods of preparing it. To store the rice, allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in an airtight container. It will keep for up to two days.

1 cup glutinous Japonica rice

Water

1. Put the rice in a medium pot and add enough cold water to cover it, plus about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Use your hands to churn around the rice and water until the water turns cloudy, about 30 seconds. Drain the water from the pot, being careful not to lose any rice.
2. Repeat Step 1, but leave just enough water in the pot to cover the rice. Gently massage the rice between the palms of your hands for about 1 minute. Drain the rice thoroughly through a fine-mesh strainer.
3. Put the rice in an electric rice cooker or a medium, heavy cast iron or enameled pot with a lid. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of fresh, cold water. Cover and soak for at least 3 hours, and up to 24 hours. Soaking the rice longer lends the cooked dish a superior flavor and texture.

If using an electric rice cooker:

4. Put the lid on the rice cooker. Turn the cooker on to the “sticky” setting and let the cooking process run to completion without opening the lid.
5. If your cooker includes a “rest cycle,” the cooking process concludes when the rest cycle is complete. If your cooker doesn't have a rest cycle, leave the lid closed when the cooking process has finished, and let the rice steam for 8 to 10 minutes.
6. Open the lid and toss the rice with a rice paddle or wooden spoon to fluff it. Immediately transfer the rice from the cooker to a

medium bowl. Depending on how you'll use the rice and how sticky you want it, serve it warm or leave it in the bowl covered with a towel to cool. The longer glutinous rice stands, the stickier it becomes.

If on the stovetop:

4. Put the pot of rice and water over high heat, uncovered, and bring to a boil. Turn the heat to medium low and put on the lid, slightly off center, to leave a crack for steam to escape. Cook 10 minutes.
5. Uncover the pot. If the rice has not completely absorbed the water, replace the lid and continue cooking. Cook until all the water has been absorbed, checking every 2 minutes.
6. Turn off the heat and close the lid completely. Let the rice steam for 8 to 10 minutes.
7. Open the lid and toss the rice with a rice paddle or wooden spoon to fluff it. Immediately transfer the rice from the pot to a medium bowl. Depending on how you'll use the rice and how sticky you want it, serve it warm or leave it in the bowl, covered with a towel to cool. The longer glutinous rice stands, the stickier it becomes.

BROWN RICE | *Genmai*

MAKES 2 CUPS

PREP TIME: 2 TO 4 HOURS

COOK TIME: 1 TO 2½ HOURS

If you enjoy the nutty taste of brown rice and want to tap into its health benefits, it's worth the extra time it takes to prepare. The soaking and cooking times are longer than with white rice, but the prep work is easier. To store the rice, allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in an airtight container. It will keep for three or four days.

1 cup brown Japonica rice

Water

1. In a fine-mesh strainer, rinse the rice under cold, running water. Shake the sieve to drain the rice thoroughly.
2. Put the rice in an electric rice cooker or heavy cast iron or enameled pot with a tight-fitting lid. Add 1½ cups water, cover the pot, and let the rice soak for 2 to 4 hours. The longer the soak, the more evenly the rice will cook.

If using an electric rice cooker:

3. Put the lid on the rice cooker. Turn the cooker on to the “brown” setting, and let the cooking process run to completion without opening the lid.
4. If your cooker includes a “rest cycle,” the cooking process concludes when the rest cycle is complete. If your cooker doesn't have a rest cycle, leave the lid closed when the cooking process has finished, and let the rice steam for 15 to 20 minutes.
5. Open the lid and toss the rice with a rice paddle or wooden spoon to fluff it. Close the lid to keep the rice warm (do not use your rice cooker's “keep warm” cycle) until you're ready to serve.

If on the stovetop:

3. Uncover the pot and put it on the stove over medium heat. Bring the water to a boil, turn the heat down to low, and cover the pot. Cook for 1 hour. Quickly remove a few grains from the pot,

allowing as little steam as possible to escape. Taste the rice to test the texture. If it's too firm, continue cooking, covered, and check for doneness every 15 minutes. The rice can take up to 2 hours to cook.

4. If the rice reaches the desired texture before it has absorbed all the water, uncover the pot and turn the heat up to high. Cook until the remaining water evaporates.
5. Remove the pot from the heat and put the lid back on. Let the rice stand for 15 to 20 minutes.
6. Open the lid and toss the rice with a rice paddle or wooden spoon to fluff it. Cover the pot to keep the rice warm until you're ready to serve.

MUSHROOM RICE | *Kinoko*

Gohan

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 90 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

This comforting, savory dish is a classic in autumn, when wild mushrooms are harvested. Thanks to commercial mushroom cultivation, you can now enjoy it year-round.

4 dried shiitake mushrooms

1 piece kombu seaweed (about 6 by 1½ inches)

Water

1 package or bunch (3½ ounces) enoki mushrooms, root ends cut off

4 oyster mushrooms, coarsely chopped

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons sake

2 cups uncooked white Japonica rice

1. Put the shiitakes and kombu in a bowl with 3 cups of warm (not hot) water and soak for 15 minutes. Strain the mushroom water into another bowl and discard the kombu. Squeeze the shiitakes to add any excess liquid to the mushroom water.
2. Trim the shiitake stems from the caps and discard. Cut the caps into ¼-inch slices.
3. In a medium bowl, combine the shiitakes with the enoki and oyster mushrooms. Mix in the soy sauce and sake, and massage the liquid into the mushrooms with your hands until they soften a bit. Set aside.
4. Wash the rice according to the directions in the [Basic Rice](#) (Gohan) recipe. Put it in an electric rice cooker (recommended) or a medium, heavy cast iron or enameled pot with a lid that fits snugly. Add 2¼ cups of the mushroom water, then the mushrooms with their marinade. Let the rice soak for 1 hour.
5. Cook the rice according to the directions in the [Basic Rice](#) (Gohan) recipe. Serve right away.
6. To store the rice, allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 or 3 days.

RED RICE | *Sekihan*



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 2½ HOURS

COOK TIME: 45 MINUTES

A special-occasion food in Japan, red rice is eaten to celebrate things like weddings, births, and holidays. The festive pink dish is made with glutinous rice and adzuki beans, two of the major ingredients in Japanese sweets.

½ cup uncooked adzuki beans

1½ cups uncooked glutinous Japonica rice

¾ cup uncooked white Japonica rice

1½ teaspoons sea salt

1 tablespoon roasted black sesame seeds

1. In a fine-mesh strainer, rinse the beans and pick out any debris. Put the beans in a medium pot with 2 cups of water, turn the heat on to medium high, and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down to medium low and cook until beans are softened but not mushy, about 30 minutes. Pour through a strainer or colander, reserving the cooking liquid in a bowl. Set the liquid and beans aside separately, and allow them to cool.
2. Wash the glutinous and white rice together according to the directions in the [Basic Rice](#) (Gohan) recipe. Put the rice in an electric rice cooker or a medium, heavy cast iron or enameled pot with a lid that fits snugly. Add 2½ cups of the reserved bean liquid; if you don't have that much, supplement with water. Close the lid and let the rice soak for 2 hours.
3. Stir in the beans and ½ teaspoon of the salt, and cook the mixture according to the directions in the [Basic Rice](#) (Gohan) recipe.
4. While the rice cooks, mix together the remaining salt and the sesame seeds to make a common seasoning called gomashio.
5. When the sekihan is done cooking, fluff it to distribute the beans evenly. Serve in bowls, sprinkled with the gomashio.
6. To store the sekihan, allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in an airtight container. It will keep for up to 2 days.

RICE WITH GREEN TEA |

Ochazuke



SERVES 2

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

This traditional and oh-so-simple recipe combines two favorite Japanese foods—rice and green tea—in one inviting bowl. Cooks tend to top it with whatever they've got in the fridge, so feel free to experiment with other vegetables, fish, and flavorings.

2 cups cooked white or brown Japonica rice, prepared according to the [Basic Rice](#) (Gohan) or [Brown Rice](#) (Genmai) recipe

½ cup shredded carrot

½ cup mung bean sprouts

2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

2 teaspoons crumbled toasted nori flakes

1½ cups brewed Japanese green tea, hot

2 teaspoons soy sauce (optional)

1. Spoon 1 cup of rice into each of two bowls. Top with the carrot and sprouts and sprinkle with the sesame seeds and nori.
2. Pour the green tea over the top. Drizzle with soy sauce (if using).
3. Do not save any leftovers, as this dish will not keep well once it's assembled.

RICE BALLS | *Onigiri*



MAKES 8 TO 10 RICE BALLS

PREP TIME: 50 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Making any meal at once pleasing and portable, onigiri are a favorite bento box lunch treat. You can fill them with just about anything you like, but seafood is especially well suited. A crispy fried tempura shrimp in the middle adds a nice crunch.

For the tempura shrimp:

About 4 cups peanut or vegetable oil, for frying

2 cups all-purpose flour

1½ tablespoons baking powder

2 tablespoons sesame oil

2½ cups ice water

½ pound peeled, deveined prawns with tails

For the onigiri:

1½ cups water, at room temperature

¼ teaspoon salt

4 cups cooked white Japonica rice, prepared according to the [Basic Rice \(Gohan\)](#) recipe and cooled to room temperature

10 fresh shiso leaves

2 sheets toasted nori cut into 1-inch-wide strips, or 8 to 10 precut toasted nori strips

To make the tempura shrimp:

1. Line a plate with paper towels and fill a medium saucepan with about 4 inches of vegetable oil. Heat the oil over medium-high heat to 325°F.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and sesame oil. While whisking continuously, slowly add the ice water. Whisk until the ingredients are just combined (don't worry if the batter is lumpy).
3. Dunk the shrimp into the batter one at a time, then drop them into the hot oil. Cook the shrimp in batches so as not to crowd the pan. Cook each shrimp for about 2 minutes, turning each over once, until each is golden brown and crisp all over.
4. Transfer the cooked shrimp to the paper towel-lined plate. Continue until all of the shrimp have been cooked.

To make the onigiri:

1. In a medium bowl, stir together the water with the salt.
2. Place the rice in a medium bowl, and place the bowls of water and rice next to each other. Dip your hands into the salt water to wet them, then shake off the excess.
3. With one hand, scoop up about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of rice and roll it between your palms to form a loose ball. Holding the ball in one palm, make an indentation with the thumb of your other hand. The walls around the indentation should be thick enough to hold together after you put in the filling.
4. Place a shiso leaf into the indentation in the rice ball, then top it with a tempura shrimp, letting the tail sticking out on one side. Cup your palms around the ball to close the opening, squeezing slightly so the rice sticks together around the filling in an even layer (the tail of the shrimp should be sticking out one end).
5. Set the ball on the work surface and press down just firmly enough to flatten about one-fourth of the ball on the bottom. Hold your hands in flat paddles and press the rounded part of the ball into a three-sided pyramid, pressing firmly enough so the rice holds together in the pyramid shape.
6. Lay one nori strip on a clean, flat surface, shiny-side down. Place the onigiri in the center of the strip and fold the strip up around two sides of the pyramid. Press lightly so the nori sticks to the rice, then place the onigiri on a serving plate.
7. Moisten your hands again and repeat steps 1 through 6 until you've used up all the ingredients.
8. To store, wrap each onigiri individually in plastic wrap. Put them in a tightly sealed container and refrigerate. They will keep for 1 or 2 days.

CHICKEN CURRY RICE | *Kare Raisu*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 60 TO 75 MINUTES

Curry spices didn't appear in Japan until the nineteenth century, but curry dishes are now quite popular. You can buy garam masala, a blend of ground ginger, cinnamon, cloves, black pepper, and sometimes other spices, in your local supermarket. According to your preference, this recipe can be prepared with beef, pork, shrimp, or tofu instead of chicken.

For the chicken:

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 onion, quartered and sliced
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 medium potatoes, cut into bite-size cubes
- 2 medium carrots, sliced ¼-inch thick
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable broth

For the sauce:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ½ teaspoon garam masala

For the curry rice:

- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 4 cups cooked white or brown Japonica rice, prepared according to the [Basic Rice](#) (Gohan) or [Brown Rice](#) (Genmai) recipe

To make the chicken:

1. In a large pot over medium heat, heat the oil and add the onion. Sauté until the onion is golden brown, about 15 minutes.
2. Raise the heat to high and add the chicken. Brown the meat, then turn the heat back down to medium. Add the potatoes and carrots, and sauté for 5 minutes.
3. Pour the broth into the pan and bring it to a boil. Turn the heat down to low and simmer until the meat and vegetables are fork tender, 30 to 50 minutes.

To make the sauce:

1. In a medium pot over medium heat, melt the butter and add the onion. Sauté until the onion is golden brown, about 15 minutes.
2. Add the ginger and garlic to the pan, and sauté for 2 minutes. Stir in the flour and curry powder.
3. Turn the heat up to medium high and slowly pour 3 cups of water into the pan, stirring constantly to prevent the sauce from forming lumps. Bring the sauce to a simmer and turn the heat down to medium. Cook, stirring often, until the sauce is smooth and creamy, 5 to 10 minutes.
4. Add the honey and sprinkle in the garam masala. Stir to combine thoroughly.

To make the curry rice:

1. Stir the sauce into the chicken-and-vegetable mixture. Simmer for 10 minutes. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, and serve over the rice.
2. To save the curry for later, allow everything to cool completely and refrigerate the curry and rice in separate, tightly sealed containers.



SOUPS, STEWS, AND HOT POTS

CLEAR ONION SOUP *Miyabe*CLEAR VEGETABLE SOUP *Kenchinjiru*CLEAR SHRIMP SOUP *Ebi Suimono*SIMPLE MISO SOUP *Misoshiro*MISO-EGG SOUP WITH PEAS *Tamago to Kinusaya no Suimono*MISO SOUP WITH PORK AND VEGETABLES *Tonjiru*FISH CAKE STEW *Oden*FISH HOT POT *Chirinabe*CHICKEN HOT POT *Mizutake*BEEF HOT POT *Sukiyaki*

Soup in Japan is part of nearly every traditional meal, including breakfast, at home or when dining out. The two basic types of soup are clear (*suimono*) and miso (*misoshiro*), made with fermented soybean paste. Both are simple in form and simple to make, but rich in flavor and lovely to the eye. *Suimono* is considered the ultimate display of a cook's skill, and is sipped almost reverently from elegant bowls.

Almost all Japanese soup is based on *dashi*, the clear broth made from seaweed and dried bonito flakes (see [Ichiban Dashi](#)). Note that the Japanese don't usually eat their soup with a spoon; instead, they most often drink it directly from the bowl, a sip at a time, sometimes with a slight slurping to cool the broth. Chopsticks are used to push solid ingredients into the mouth.

Hot pots (*nabemono*) and stews (*oden*) are richer and contain more ingredients, from vegetables and fish to beef and dumplings. *Nabemono* are traditionally served family style, the pot of broth set over a low flame or hot plate at the center of the table to simmer, while diners put various ingredients into the pot to cook. Usually, the cooked food is dipped in a sauce just before it's eaten. These hearty dishes are excellent comfort food.

CLEAR ONION SOUP | *Miyabe*



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 40 MINUTES

You'll find miyabe all over the United States in "Japanese steakhouses"—completely inauthentic restaurants where the chefs cook on a hot table, sometimes theatrically tossing knives and ingredients in the air while diners watch from their seats around the table. Nevertheless, the soup itself is authentic and delicious.

6 cups Ichiban Dashi

1 white onion, halved

1 carrot, coarsely chopped

1 celery stalk, coarsely chopped

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup milk

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour

1 cup vegetable oil

Salt (optional)

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup thinly sliced button or cremini mushrooms

4 scallions, chopped

1. Pour the dashi into a large pot over medium-high heat. Coarsely chop half the onion, and add it to the pot along with the carrot and celery. Bring the broth to just short of a boil. Turn the heat down to medium low and simmer for 20 minutes.
2. While the broth is cooking, cut the remaining onion into thin slices and separate the rings. Put the milk and the flour into separate shallow bowls. In a medium skillet over medium heat, heat the oil.
3. A handful at a time, put the onions in the milk, lift them out with your hand or a slotted spoon, and allow the milk to drain back into the bowl. Toss the onions in the flour, then place them in the pan with the oil. Fry, stirring often, until the onions are lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Remove them from the oil and drain on a paper towel. Repeat the process until you've cooked all the onions. Set aside.

4. When the vegetables in the soup are fork tender, add salt if desired. Strain the soup through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl, discarding the vegetables or saving them for another use. Pour the soup back into the pot over low heat and bring it to a simmer.
5. To serve, ladle the hot soup into 4 bowls. Garnish with the fried onion, mushrooms, and scallions.
6. To store the miyabe (although it's not recommended), allow it to cool completely and refrigerate the soup, fried onions, mushrooms, and scallions in separate sealed containers. They will keep for 1 day. The fried onions will get soggy, so crisp them in the oven before serving.

CLEAR VEGETABLE SOUP |

Kenchinjiru



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 40 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

Also called “Buddhist soup,” kenchinjiru is named for the Zen Buddhist temple where it was supposedly invented. In its original form, made with kombu dashi, it is vegan, but use regular dashi if you’d like a fuller flavor. Don’t leave out the burdock root (gobo), which lends the soup its signature earthy character, and be sure to soak it to remove its bitterness.

2 dried shiitake mushrooms

3 cups kombu or [Ichiban Dashi](#)

4 teaspoons sesame oil

1 carrot, coarsely chopped

1 sweet potato, peeled and coarsely chopped

1½-inch slice of daikon, peeled and coarsely chopped

One 6-inch piece of burdock root, peeled, thinly sliced, and soaked in a bowl of cold water for 10 to 15 minutes

¼ cup soy sauce, divided

2 tablespoons sake

Salt (optional)

5 ounces firm tofu, diced

16 snow peas, strings removed

1. In a small bowl, soak the shiitake in 1 cup of tepid water for 30 minutes. Remove the mushrooms from the water and shake off the excess. Reserve the water. Remove the stems from the shiitake and discard. Chop the caps coarsely and set aside.
2. In a large pot over medium heat, combine the shiitake liquid and the dashi. Cover the pot and bring the broth to just short of a boil. Turn the heat down to low and cover.
3. In a medium skillet over medium heat, heat the oil. Add the carrot, sweet potato, and daikon. Drain the burdock root and add it to the pan.

4. Stir-fry until the vegetables start to soften, about 5 minutes; they should still be fairly firm. Add the drained shiitake to the pan, stir in 2 tablespoons of the soy sauce, and toss the vegetables to coat.
5. Transfer the cooked vegetables to the broth. Stir in the remaining soy sauce and the sake. Simmer until the vegetables are fork tender, about 20 minutes. Season with salt, if desired.
6. Add the tofu and snow peas, bring the soup to a boil, and serve.
7. To store the kenchinjira, allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 to 3 days.

CLEAR SHRIMP SOUP | *Ebi*

Suimono



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

When prepared in its most basic form, with only two or three ingredients, clear suimono is one of the glories of the Japanese table. Seen through the pale broth, a few pieces of seafood or vegetable artfully arranged in the bottom of the bowl add the simplest touch of sophistication.

4 cups kombu or [Ichiban Dashi](#)

4 raw, shelled, and deveined jumbo shrimp (21–25 count, preferably wild-caught)

½ cup diced carrot

½ cup diced celery

Salt

¼ cup watercress leaves

1. In a large pot over medium heat, bring the dashi to just short of a boil. Add the shrimp and cook until they turn light pink, or until one of them floats to the top, about 5 minutes.
Immediately strain the broth through a fine-mesh sieve. Set the shrimp aside (do not refrigerate) and return the broth to the pot.
2. Add the carrot and celery, and bring the broth to just short of a boil. Turn the heat down to low, cover the pot, and simmer until the vegetables are fork tender, about 15 minutes. Season with salt as desired.
3. Place 1 shrimp in the bottom of each of 4 bowls. Pour the soup over the shrimp, and garnish with the watercress. Serve immediately. (The soup does not keep well.)

SIMPLE MISO SOUP | *Misoshiro*



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

In Japan, a day without misoshiru is like a day without ... food. It's commonly eaten at breakfast, and sometimes at lunch and dinner, too. For the subtlest flavor and color, use white miso, but you can try darker varieties as well. This recipe calls for wakame, a dark-green seaweed that you can buy dried, in plastic packets.

2 tablespoons chopped dried wakame

¼ cup white miso

5 cups Ichiban Dashi

4 ounces soft tofu, cubed

2 scallions, chopped

1. Soak the wakame in ½ cup of warm water for 10 minutes. Drain off the liquid and reserve the seaweed.
2. In a small pot, whisk together the miso and ¼ cup of water. Place over medium heat and simmer, continuing to whisk, until all the miso is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.
3. In a large pot over medium heat, bring the dashi to just short of a boil. Turn the heat down to medium low, add the miso mixture, and stir well. Add the wakame and tofu, and simmer to heat through, about 3 minutes.
4. Ladle the soup into 4 serving bowls and garnish with the scallions.

MISO-EGG SOUP WITH PEAS |

Tamago to Kinusaya no Suimono

SERVES 6

PREP TIME: 2 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

The Japanese version of egg-drop soup, this is smooth and soothing when you're feeling under the weather. Even when you're feeling great, it makes a terrific light lunch, served alongside steamed veggies.

2 tablespoons white miso

2 tablespoons water

6 cups Ichiban Dashi

1 cup frozen peas

2 teaspoons soy sauce

6 eggs, lightly beaten

1. In a small pot, whisk together the miso and water. Place over medium heat and simmer, continuing to whisk, until all the miso is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.
2. In a large pot over medium heat, bring the dashi to just short of a boil. Turn the heat down to medium low and add the peas. Simmer until the peas are bright green and tender but not mushy, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the miso mixture and the soy sauce.
3. While the soup continues cooking, start stirring slowly but constantly. Now, slowly pour in the eggs in a thin stream. Switch your stirring direction every 15 seconds until you've added all the eggs. The eggs will set into strands and ribbons in the broth. Serve immediately.
4. To store the soup, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for about 2 days.

MISO SOUP WITH PORK AND VEGETABLES | *Tonjiru*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Also known as butajiro, this is a classic Japanese winter dish and a standard in the repertoire of home cooks. It's based on a soup called sukii-jiru, which is served at Japan's ski resorts—quite appropriately, its name translates as “skiing soup.”

6 cups [Ichiban Dashi](#)

1 tablespoon mirin

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon sake

8 ounces pork (your choice of cut), sliced thin and cut into 1-inch squares

One 3-inch piece burdock root, peeled, cut into thin slices, and steeped in a bowl of cold water for 10 to 15 minutes

1 sweet potato, peeled and cubed

One 3-inch piece daikon, peeled, quartered lengthwise, and cut into thin slices

1 small carrot, quartered lengthwise and cut into ¼-inch slices

½ cup chopped white onion

1 scallion, chopped

4 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stems removed and caps coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons red miso

¼ cup water

[Seven-Spice Powder](#) (Shichimi Togarashi)

1. In a large pot over medium heat, combine the dashi, mirin, soy sauce, and sake. Bring to just short of a boil, turn the heat down to medium low, and add the pork. Cook for 1 minute, then add the burdock root, sweet potato, daikon, carrot, onion, scallion, and shiitake. Turn the heat down to low, cover the pot, and cook until the vegetables are fork tender, about 15 minutes.
2. While the soup cooks, prepare the miso. In a small pot, whisk together the miso and water. Place over medium heat and simmer, continuing to whisk, until all the miso is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

3. When the vegetables are ready, stir the miso mixture into the soup and remove from the heat.
4. Serve with the shichimi togarashi on the side, for sprinkling.
5. To store the tonjiru, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 to 3 days.

FISH CAKE STEW | *Oden*

SERVES 6

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 30 TO 40 MINUTES

With this favorite wintertime dish, the Japanese take a detour around their obsession with fresh ingredients. Oden is based on store-bought, precooked tofu and processed fish products known collectively as surimi. These mildly flavored foods are made from a mix of white fish such as pollock and sea bream, which are milled into a paste. Egg whites, starch, and other additives—including artificial flavorings and MSG—are blended in, and the paste is cooked, resulting in a smooth, chewy product. You're probably familiar with one type of surimi: kanikama, the stringy imitation crabmeat (aka "krab" or crabsticks) that goes into America's own sushi invention, the California roll. The other surimi in this recipe is kamaboko, a dense, chewy fish cake formed into small logs that are often dyed bright pink on the outside. It's relatively easy to find packaged surimi (look for MSG-free brands). If your supermarket doesn't have it, you can order it online.

1 quart chicken broth

1½ pounds daikon, peeled and cut into ¾-inch slices (if the daikon is more than 2 inches in diameter, cut it in half lengthwise and then crosswise, into half moons)

1 quart Ichiban Dashi

3 medium yukon gold potatoes, peeled and quartered

½ cup soy sauce

6 tablespoons sake

6 tablespoons mirin

6 hardboiled eggs, peeled

1½ pounds firm, pre-grilled or prebaked packaged tofu, cut into 1½-inch cubes

12 ounces kanikama, cut into 1½-inch pieces

12 ounces kamaboko, cut into ½-inch slices

2 tablespoons hot Asian mustard powder (karashi)

1. In a large donabe or heavy, flame-proof pot over high heat, bring the chicken broth to a boil. Add the daikon and bring the

broth back to a boil. Boil until the daikon is tender but still crisp, 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Turn the heat down to medium and add the dashi. Bring the broth to just short of a boil, and add the potatoes, soy sauce, sake, mirin, eggs, tofu, kanikama, and kamaboko. Simmer until the potatoes are fork tender, about 20 to 25 minutes.
3. About 10 minutes before the oden is ready, prepare the mustard. In a small bowl, mix cold water into the mustard powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of water at a time, until the paste reaches the consistency of jarred mustard. Let it set for about 10 minutes to develop its flavor and heat (longer, and it will start to lose its potency).
4. To serve, put a ladle in the oden and set the donabe on a trivet in the center of the table. Spoon a little of the mustard paste into each of 6 small dishes, and set a bowl at each place setting. Diners serve themselves out of the communal pot, mixing as much mustard as desired into their bowls.
5. To store the oden, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. The flavor actually improves in the 24 hours after you make it. Make fresh mustard paste each time you serve this.

About Hot Pot (nabemono)

There is seemingly endless variety in the Japanese culinary category of nabemono, known in English as “hot pot” or “one pot” dishes. The word *nabemono* translates literally as “things in a pot,” and indeed you can include just about anything in one of these feasts. The meal begins with a variety of cut-up raw vegetables and protein sources arranged on a platter, while a simple broth simmers in a communal pot placed over a heat source in the center of the table. Everyone seated around the table drops ingredients into the pot to cook, scoops out what they want, dips it in sauce, and eats what they cook. The camaraderie of the evening is as important as the food.

To serve nabemono, you need a vessel you can keep heated on the table. The traditional Japanese pot is called a donabe, a round, thick, lidded bowl made of a special kind of earthenware that doesn't crack over direct heat (as other earthenware does). You should be able to find these fairly easily in quality American cookware stores and Asian markets, but if you can't, just improvise. Heavy, flame-proof ceramic (such as a fondue pot), enameled metal (such as a casserole), and cast iron (such as a pot or small Dutch oven) do a fine job.

Whatever your cooking vessel, it needs to be set over a heat source to keep the cooking broth hot. Many Japanese favor portable gas rings, but you can also use a portable electric coil or a can of fuel gel under the rack from a fondue pot or chafing dish. An electric skillet works well, too, as does a camp stove. With any of these arrangements, be very careful about the risk of fire. Keep the heat source away from anything flammable, and keep any electric cords tucked out of sight and not underfoot.

FISH HOT POT | *Chirinabe*

SERVES 6

PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES

Fish and vegetable stews such as chirinabe highlight the seasonality of Japanese cuisine. They make use of the freshest ingredients possible, cooked lightly and served simply to focus attention on the flavors of the season. Both fish and vegetables are best in season and when served very, very fresh. Fugu, the poisonous blowfish, is a favorite in chirinabe, but this recipe calls for much safer white fish varieties.

12 Chinese cabbage leaves, thick center stems cut out

1 medium carrot, cut into ¼-inch slices

3 pounds filleted, firm-fleshed white fish, such as sea bass, sea bream, or snapper

One 4-inch-square kombu, wiped with a damp paper towel and scored 3 to 4 times

3 quarts [Ichiban Dashi](#)

Two 12- to 14-ounce packages firm tofu, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into 6 slices

3 leeks, trimmed and cut into ½-inch slices

2 packages or bunches (7 to 8 ounces total) enoki mushrooms, root ends cut off and mushrooms separated into 6 bunches

¾ cup [Ponzu Sauce](#)

6 teaspoons [Seven-Spice Powder](#) (Shichimi Togarashi)

1. Parboil the cabbage (see [here](#)), then lift the leaves out of the water with tongs or a slotted spoon and pat dry. Two leaves at a time, roll the cabbage up like cigars and cut them crosswise into 1-inch segments. Set aside.
2. Parboil the carrots in the same water for 2 minutes and drain thoroughly.
3. Rinse the fish under cold running water and pat dry. Cut into 2-inch cubes, skin on, and refrigerate, covered, until you're ready to serve.
4. In a large pot over medium heat, put the kombu in the dashi and bring to just short of a boil. Remove the kombu and discard.
5. Pour 2 quarts of the dashi into a donabe or heavy pot, reserving 1 quart on the stove. Turn off the heat and cover the reserved broth to keep it warm.

6. *Very carefully* carry the donabe to the table and place it on or over the portable heat source. Turn on or light the heat source. The broth should simmer gently throughout the meal.
7. On a large serving platter, arrange the cooked vegetables, fish, tofu, leeks, and mushrooms in an attractive pattern. Place the platter on the table.
8. Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of ponzu into each of 3 small bowls. Put 2 teaspoons of shichimi togarashi into each of 3 small bowls or dishes. Arrange the seasonings around the table so each guest can easily reach them.
9. To eat, put a small assortment of the ingredients to be cooked (enough for all 6 people to have a taste of everything) in the dashi and allow them to cook. As the pieces become ready, diners can pluck them out of the pot with chopsticks or fondue forks and transfer them to their plates, leaving the broth in the pot. All of the ingredients should be removed from the pot before the next batch goes in. If the broth boils down by one-quarter to one-third at any point during the meal, replenish it with some of the reserved dashi.
10. Dip the cooked items into the ponzu and/or shichimi togarashi, then eat right away.
11. When everything is cooked and eaten, spoon the broth into individual bowls for a light end to the meal.
12. By its very nature, a hot pot can't be refrigerated for later and reused. If you have any leftover ingredients, refrigerate them in separate, tightly sealed containers and save for another use. They should keep for 1 or 2 days.

CHICKEN HOT POT | *Mizutake*



SERVES 6

PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

As in all nabemono recipes, the vegetables in this one are parboiled before being brought to the table. Parboiling gives them a head start on cooking, yet leaves them firm and flavorful. One of the dipping sauces here is goma dare, a classic Japanese sesame sauce.

For the goma dare:

¼ cup Japanese or Chinese sesame paste

6 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

2 tablespoons sake

1 tablespoon sugar

¼ cup [Ichiban Dashi](#)

For the hot pot:

3 bunches baby bok choy, leaves separated from the base and well washed

1 large bunch watercress, large sprigs cut in half

1 medium carrot, cut into ¼-inch slices

3 quarts [Ichiban Dashi](#)

One 4-inch-square kombu, wiped with a damp paper towel and scored 3 to 4 times

3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 2-inch cubes

12 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, large caps cut in half

1 marble-size piece peeled fresh ginger

¾ cup [Ponzu Sauce](#)

1½ cups grated daikon

4 scallions, chopped

To make the goma dare:

1. In a small bowl, mix together the sesame paste and soy sauce.
2. Add the vinegar and sake and combine thoroughly. Stir in the sugar.
3. Pour in the dashi and blend into a smooth sauce.

To make the hot pot:

1. Parboil the bok choy, watercress, and carrots. (See [here](#) for parboiling directions.)
2. Put the dashi, kombu, and chicken in a large pot over medium heat, and bring to just short of a boil. Remove the kombu and discard. Reduce the heat to medium low, add the shiitake, and simmer the chicken until cooked but still tender, about 20 to 30 minutes. Leave the chicken in the broth and add the ginger.
3. Divide the ponzu into 3 small bowls. Do the same with the daikon, scallions, and goma dare.
4. Serve the hot pot and seasonings as described for [Fish Hot Pot](#).

BEEF HOT POT | *Sukiyaki*

SERVES 6

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

Unlike many other hot pots, sukiyaki doesn't use a broth bath. Instead, there's oil with just enough water to cover the bottom of the pan. For this dish, use a Japanese sukiyaki pan or a flat-bottomed cast iron skillet or fry pan, 12 to 14 inches in diameter and 2½ to 3 inches deep. The pan must have a heavy bottom to keep the sukiyaki from cooking too fast (even thick-bottomed steel pans cook too quickly). An electric skillet at medium-low to medium heat will also work.

2 pounds well-marbled, boneless sirloin, flank, or strip steak, sliced very thin

3 leeks, trimmed and cut into 1½-inch slices

1 bunch watercress, large sprigs cut in half

12 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, large caps cut in half

2 (12- to 14-ounce) packages firm pre-grilled or prebaked tofu, cut into 1½ inch cubes

6 teaspoons vegetable oil

¼ cup sugar

½ cup soy sauce, plus more if desired

½ cup sake, plus more if desired

6 very fresh eggs (optional), free-range or organic, if possible

1. On a large serving platter, arrange the beef, leeks, watercress, mushrooms, and tofu in an attractive pattern, and place the platter on the table.
2. Fill a decorative pitcher with 1 quart of tepid water, and place it on the table.
3. Put the vegetable oil into a decorative bowl and place it on the table. Do the same with the sugar, soy sauce, and sake.
4. Crack 1 egg into each of six small bowls, and place a bowl at each place setting.
5. Set up the heat source in the center of the table. Put an empty sukiyaki pan or skillet on the heat source. When the pan is hot but not smoking, add all the oil and heat it until it shimmers. Lay one-third of the steak slices in the pan, and pour in about ½ cup water so the bottom of the pan is just covered.

6. Cook until the steak barely starts to lose its pinkness, then scatter the sugar evenly over the top. Stir, then sprinkle the soy sauce and sake onto the steak. Stir again to coat.
7. According to his or her taste, each diner should add a few of the other ingredients to the pan from the plate of vegetables and tofu. If they want to use the raw egg dip, they should lightly beat their egg in their own bowl. When the hot ingredients (including the meat) are cooked to their liking, they pluck one piece at a time out of the pan with chopsticks or a fondue fork, and immediately dip it into the egg. When the egg cooks on the surface, the tidbit is ready to eat.
8. As the cooking continues, add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water to the pan as needed, to prevent the sauce from overly reducing and to keep the pan from drying out. Add more soy sauce and/or sake as you go if you want to adjust the flavoring.
9. By its very nature, a hot pot can't be refrigerated for later and then reused. If you have any leftover ingredients, refrigerate them in separate, tightly sealed containers and save for another use. They should keep for 1 or 2 days.



NOODLES

COLD SOMEN WITH DIPPING SAUCE *Hiyashi Somen*

UDON WITH CREAMY VEGETABLE SOUP *Ankake Udon*

UDON WITH EGGS AND FISH CAKE *Nabeyaki Udon*

UDON WITH MUSHROOMS, CHICKEN, AND LEEKS

COLD SOBA WITH DIPPING SAUCE *Zaru Soba*

TEMPURA SOBA

MISO RAMEN

RAMEN WITH BRAISED PORK BELLY *Chashu Ramen*

STIR-FRIED BEEF RAMEN *Yakisoba*

Noodles (menrui) are big in Japan. You'll find them not only at home and in restaurants, but in noodle shops almost everywhere you look. On the street, noodles are peddled from stalls and carts. In Osaka, where udon noodles are king, there are even udon taxis that take hungry folks on the noodle equivalent of a pub crawl. Noodles show up at celebrations year-round, from housewarmings to New Year's Eve. They're often eaten as a snack or small plate, rather than as an entrée or full meal. And they're slurped with abandon: noisy noodle eaters cool down hot broth by sucking in some air with their soup.

Whether served hot in a soup, cool with a dipping sauce, or fried with meat and vegetables, noodles are both comforting and filling. Preparations vary from city to city and region to region, where locals are fiercely loyal to their favorites.

Unlike rice, which has to soak and then cook for up to an hour, noodles can be prepared quickly, which is one reason they're perfect for eating in a hurry. They're incredibly versatile: served both hot and cold, they pair well with all kinds of vegetables, proteins, and flavorings. In most recipes, you can use any kind of noodle—somen, udon, soba, or ramen.

Japanese noodle connoisseurs insist on handmade noodles. But for day-to-day cooking, most people typically use storebought dried, refrigerated, or frozen versions. These are readily available at most supermarkets throughout the United States, as well as at health food stores and Asian markets.

TYPES OF NOODLES

SOMEN: An extremely thin, white wheat noodle, usually eaten cold as a summertime treat. On a hot day, it's served in ice water, with a soy sauce–based dipping sauce flavored with ginger and condiments such as wasabi, scallions, and shredded nori. Chilled, light ingredients such as seafood, fish, and spring vegetables sometimes top a dish of cold somen. This noodle also appears in some delicate soups.

UDON: Thick, white, and chewy, udon is a wheat noodle that's especially delicious hot (though it can also be served cold). Its substantial texture withstands long simmering in a hot pot. Classic versions include udon in rich curry broth, or topped with deep-fried tofu or a raw or poached egg.

SOBA: With a buckwheat base, this thin, pale brown noodle also contains wheat, whose gluten holds the dough together. Cold soba is served with dipping sauce, with seaweed, vegetables, or many different toppings. Hot soba floats in dashi with ingredients such as fish cakes or sliced duck and leeks.

RAMEN: This noodle made of wheat and eggs is thin and pale yellow. You've probably seen the ultra-cheap packaged ramen that comes with packets of seasoning, but real Japanese and Chinese ramen is better. If you don't mind spending more, you can find good ramen at Asian markets and high-end supermarkets, as well as online. Ramen is served with an endless variety of ingredients, in four basic types of broth: miso; *shio*, a clear dashi-and-chicken broth; *shoyu*, flavored and darkened with soy sauce; and *tonkotsu*, a creamy, white pork bone broth.

COLD SOMEN WITH DIPPING SAUCE | *Hiyashi Somen*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

Super-thin somen cooks in about two minutes and chills quickly in ice water. It's so popular in summer that some restaurants serve it nagashi-somen style: cold water flows past customers along a long split-bamboo flume, and diners use chopsticks to pick the noodles from the stream and eat them with a dipping sauce such as dashi-soy tsuyu.

1 pound dried somen noodles

Ice cubes

1 cup Tsuyu Sauce

One ½-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and grated

2 scallions, thinly sliced

4 teaspoons wasabi

1. In a large pot over high heat, bring 1 gallon of water to a boil. Drop the somen into the water and boil for 2 minutes (more, if you like them softer). Drain the noodles in a fine-mesh colander and rinse under cold, running water, tossing until they're cool.
2. Fill each of 4 large bowls with about 2 cups of cold water, and put 4 ice cubes in each. Divide the somen into equal portions and put in the bowls with the water and ice.
3. Pour ¼ cup of the tsuyu into each of 4 small bowls, and put the ginger, scallions, and wasabi into separate communal bowls.
4. To eat, diners can mix any garnishes they like into their tsuyu. Use chopsticks to lift the somen out of the water, let the excess water drip off, and dip briefly in the tsuyu before eating.
5. To store cooked somen for later (although it is not recommended), toss the drained noodles in a light splash of sesame oil (so they don't stick together). Refrigerate the somen, sauce, and garnishes in separate, tightly sealed containers. The somen will keep for 1 day.

UDON WITH CREAMY VEGETABLE SOUP | *Ankake* *Udon*



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

The starch used here thickens the broth (ankake) to the consistency of heavy cream, making this a hearty, warming dish. For an even heartier meal, add half a pound of sliced, sautéed chicken or pork.

2 quarts [Ichiban Dashi](#)

¼ cup soy sauce

¼ cup mirin

¼ cup sake

4 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, caps cut into ¼-inch slices

16 fresh snow peas, threads removed

8 ounces firm tofu, cut into ½-inch cubes

2 scallions, thinly sliced

¼ cup potato starch or cornstarch

1 pound dried udon noodles, cooked according to the package directions and kept warm

1 tablespoon [Seven-Spice Powder](#) (Shichimi Togarashi)

1. In a large pot over medium heat, heat the dashi until steaming but not boiling. Stir in the soy sauce, mirin, and sake. Add the mushrooms and snow peas, and simmer until the snow peas are tender but still crisp, about 3 minutes. Add the tofu and scallions.
2. Mix the starch with enough cold water to form a thick, smooth liquid.
3. Turn the heat up to medium high and bring the broth to just short of a boil. Slowly stir the starch mixture into the broth. Turn the heat down to medium low, and simmer the soup, stirring constantly, until it thickens, 2 or 3 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat.

4. Portion the warm udon into 4 bowls. Pour the soup over the top, and serve with shichimi togarashi on the side.
5. To store the ankake udon, allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. The soup will keep for 2 days.

UDON WITH EGGS AND FISH CAKE | *Nabeyaki Udon*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

The traditional version of this recipe uses negi, which in English is called Welsh onion. It's somewhere between the leeks and scallions you typically see in American supermarkets, and either of those can take its place. If you prefer not to use fish cake, simply substitute eight medium shrimp.

6 cups Ichiban Dashi

⅓ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons mirin

1 bunch enoki mushrooms, base cut off and separated into smaller bunches

2 bunches baby bok choy, cut crosswise into 1-inch pieces

1 leek, trimmed and cut crosswise on the diagonal into ¼-inch slices

1 pound dried udon noodles, cooked according to the package directions and kept warm

One 4-inch piece of kamaboko fish cake, cut into 8 slices

4 eggs

1. In a large, heavy pot over medium heat, mix together the dashi, soy sauce, and mirin and bring the broth to a simmer. Add the mushrooms, bok choy, and leek, and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the udon, lay the kamaboko on top, and simmer for 4 minutes.
3. Remove the pot from the heat and crack the eggs into the soup, evenly spaced. Cover the pot and let the soup steam until the eggs are firm, about 5 minutes.
4. To serve, portion out the noodles, soup, and fish cake into 4 bowls. Carefully spoon a cooked egg into each bowl.
5. To store the nabeyaki udon, prepare the soup without the eggs. Allow it to cool completely and refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. The soup will keep for 2 days. When you're ready to eat the soup, put it in a large pot over medium-high heat, and

bring it to a simmer. Remove the pot from the heat and crack the eggs into the soup, evenly spaced. Cover the pot and let the soup steam until the eggs are firm, about 5 minutes.

UDON WITH MUSHROOMS, CHICKEN, AND LEEKS



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

This Japanese version of chicken noodle soup—layered with the complex flavors of dashi, mirin, leeks, and mushrooms—is quick to prepare and very satisfying. You could substitute chicken breast for the chicken thigh in this recipe if desired, but the dark meat of the thigh is more tender and flavorful.

6 cups Ichiban Dashi

⅓ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons mirin

2 thin-skinned potatoes, cut into ½-inch-thick slices

3 skinless boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces

12 shiitake mushrooms, bases cut off

1 leek, trimmed and cut crosswise on the diagonal into ¼-inch-thick slices

1 pound dried udon, cooked according to the package directions and kept warm

¼ cup cilantro leaves, for garnish (optional)

1. In a large, heavy pot over medium heat, mix together the dashi, soy sauce, and mirin and bring the broth to a simmer. Add the potato slices and simmer until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes.
2. Add the chicken, mushrooms, and leek, and simmer until the leeks are tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the udon and simmer for 4 minutes.
4. To serve, portion out the noodles, soup, chicken, and vegetables into 4 bowls. Serve hot, garnished with cilantro (if using).
5. To store, allow the dish to cool completely and refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 2 days.

COLD SOBA WITH DIPPING SAUCE | *Zaru Soba*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

This classic cold soba dish takes its name from the zaru, the slatted Japanese bamboo trays on which it is traditionally served. You can find these inexpensive items at stores that sell imported housewares, or online. But you don't need zaru to enjoy this dish; just serve it on some small, attractive plates.

12 ounces dried soba noodles, cooked according to the package directions and chilled

4 sheets toasted nori, julienned

1 cup [Tsuyu Sauce](#)

2 scallions, thinly sliced

One 3-inch slice daikon, grated

4 teaspoons wasabi

1. Put one-quarter of the soba on each of 4 zaru or small plates. Scatter the nori over the top.
2. Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the tsuyu into each of 4 dipping bowls (large enough to accommodate a mouthful of noodles). Arrange one-quarter of the scallions, daikon, and wasabi next to one another in 4 small bowls. Set a bowl of sauce and a dish of garnishes at each place setting.
3. To eat, diners top their soba or flavor their dipping sauce to their taste with the garnishes. Use chopsticks to pick up a bite of noodles, and dip it in the tsuyu.
4. To store the zaru soba (although it is not recommended), toss the chilled noodles with a light dash of sesame oil (so they don't stick together). Refrigerate the soba, tsuyu, and garnishes in separate, tightly sealed containers. The soba will keep for 1 day.

TEMPURA SOBA



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Nothing could be more Japanese than a bowl of warm, chewy noodles in a soy-flavored broth. This simple preparation adds some flair with crisp and succulent shrimp tempura. Vegetable tempura is also a good match.

10 ounces fresh baby spinach

2 quarts Ichiban Dashi

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon sugar

1 pound dried soba noodles, cooked according to the package directions and kept warm

2 sheets toasted nori, julienned

2 scallions, thinly sliced

8 pieces shrimp tempura (see [Shrimp Tempura with Two Sauces](#))

4 teaspoons Seven-Spice Powder (Shichimi Togarashi)

1. Parboil the spinach (see [here](#)) and drain it in a colander. Squeeze out the excess moisture and chop the spinach very coarsely. Set aside.
2. In a medium bowl over medium heat, heat the dashi until it's steaming but not boiling. Add the soy sauce and sugar, and stir until the sugar dissolves. Add the parboiled spinach and cooked soba, and simmer to heat them through, about 2 minutes.
3. Ladle the soup into 4 large bowls, and garnish with the nori and scallions. Top each bowl with two tempura shrimp, and serve with shichimi togarashi on the side.
4. Tempura soba must be eaten as soon as it's cooked. It does not keep well.

MISO RAMEN



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Easy and quick to prepare, this dish makes a good choice for weeknight dinners. It calls for instant dashi granules (dashinomoto) instead of premade dashi, a common convenience food that's readily available in the Asian food section of most supermarkets. White miso has a more subtle flavor than other misos, and calls for vegetable or pork broth rather than chicken or beef, which have too strong a flavor for this dish.

¼ cup white miso

¼ cup water

2 quarts pork or vegetable broth

1 teaspoon instant dashi granules

1 tablespoon soy sauce

10 ounces dried ramen noodles, prepared according to the package directions

½ cup fresh or frozen and thawed corn kernels

½ packed cup fresh or frozen and thawed spinach

1 cup mung bean sprouts

4 hardboiled eggs, peeled and cut in half

1 scallion, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon [Seven-Spice Powder](#) (Shichimi Togarashi)

1. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the miso and water. Simmer, continuing to whisk, until all the miso is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.
2. In a large pot over medium-high heat, bring the broth, instant dashi, and soy sauce to a boil. Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the dissolved miso.
3. Put the ramen into 4 large soup bowls. Arrange the corn, spinach, bean sprouts, and 2 egg halves on top of the noodles in each bowl. Give the soup a stir, then ladle it into the bowls. Garnish with the scallions.
4. Serve with shichimi togarashi on the side.

5. To store, toss the ramen with a light dash of sesame oil (so it doesn't stick together). Refrigerate the ramen, vegetables, eggs, and broth in separate, tightly sealed containers. It will keep for 1 or 2 days.

RAMEN WITH BRAISED PORK BELLY | *Chashu Ramen*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES (EXCLUDING MARINATING TIME)

COOK TIME: 90 MINUTES (EXCLUDING COOLING TIME)

Traditional Japanese recipes for succulent braised pork belly (chashu) involve an otoshibuta, or wooden drop lid that completely covers the contents of the pot and floats on top. The lid holds the chunks of pork in place, while the shallow pool of cooking liquid swirls around it, ensuring that the ingredients cook quickly and evenly, and the meat stays tender and moist. If you don't have an otoshibuta, use a piece of heavy foil folded into a double layer and crimped around the edges so it forms a circle that fits snugly inside your pot.

For the pork belly:

- 1/3 cup sake
- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 2/3 cup water
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 pound block pork belly
- 1 small leek
- 1 quart chicken or pork broth

For the ramen:

- 10 ounces dried ramen noodles, cooked according to the package directions and kept warm
- 8 ounces parboiled and thinly sliced woodear, cloudear, or shiitake mushrooms (see [here](#))
- 2 heads baby bok choy, coarsely chopped and steamed but still crisp
- 1 cup mung bean sprouts
- 1 (8-ounce) can bamboo shoots, rinsed and drained well
- 1/2 cup crushed nori

To make the pork belly:

1. In a large, sealable glass or plastic storage dish, whisk together the sake, soy sauce, water, garlic, ginger, and sugar.
2. Cut the skin off the pork belly and discard, but leave on the layer of fat underneath. Put the meat in the dish with the marinade, and turn it over a few times to coat every side. Cover the dish and put it in the refrigerator. Marinate for as long as possible—at least 2 hours or, ideally, overnight.
3. Put the pork and the marinade in a medium, heavy pot. Cut off the white part of the leek and reserve it to garnish the ramen. Slice the green part crosswise into 2-inch segments, separate the layers, and add them to the pot.
4. Form a double layer of heavy foil into a circle that fits exactly in your pot. Place this drop lid on top of the meat, turn the heat to medium high, and bring the liquid to a simmer.
5. Turn the heat down to medium low and simmer, occasionally checking the level of the liquid and turning the pork, until the liquid reduces by three-quarters, about 45 minutes.
6. Start monitoring the pot closely to keep the meat from burning while the liquid continues cooking. When the liquid becomes a thick, bubbling sauce (about 10 minutes more), remove the pot from the heat and take out the drop lid.
7. Turn the pork a few times to coat all sides with the glaze, and transfer it to a sealable glass or plastic storage container. Cool for 15 minutes, then close the container and refrigerate until the meat is chilled all the way through, about 1 hour.
8. Pour the broth into the pot with the leftover sauce, and place it over medium-high heat. Deglaze the pot, scraping any brown or sticky bits off the bottom and sides. Bring the soup to a boil, and cook for 10 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and let it cool for 15 minutes, then cover the pot and refrigerate until the soup is thoroughly chilled, about 45 minutes.
9. When the pork belly is chilled, cut it into thin slices and set it aside to come to room temperature. When the soup is chilled, skim the fat off the top. Pour it into a medium pot over medium heat, and bring to a simmer.

To make the ramen:

1. Slice off the root end of the reserved white part of the leek. Cut the leek in half lengthwise, and place the halves cut-side down; julienne by slicing it into very thin lengthwise strips. Set aside.
2. Put the warm ramen into 4 soup bowls. Arrange the mushrooms, bok choy, bean sprouts, and bamboo shoots over

the noodles, then pour the hot soup over everything. Lay the pork slices on top, and garnish with a tangle of julienned leek and a scattering of nori.

3. To store, allow the noodles and soup to cool completely. Toss the ramen with a light dash of sesame oil (so it doesn't stick together). Refrigerate the ramen, soup, pork, and vegetables in separate, tightly sealed containers. It will keep for 1 or 2 days.

STIR-FRIED BEEF RAMEN |

Yakisoba



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Despite its name, this dish contains no soba. Rather, yakisoba (“fried noodles”) is made with ramen. In the most basic version of the dish, the ramen is stir-fried with seafood, poultry, or meat, plus cabbage, carrots, and tangy-sweet tonkatsu sauce. The recipe for the sauce, whose main ingredients are ketchup and Worcestershire sauce, may seem odd, but it is, in fact, authentically Japanese.

For the tonkatsu sauce:

⅓ cup ketchup

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

1 tablespoon soy sauce

For the yakisoba:

12 ounces flank steak, thinly sliced

½ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

2 cups coarsely chopped cabbage

2 medium carrots, grated into long strips

12 ounces dried ramen noodles, cooked according to the package directions

2 scallions, thinly sliced

⅛ teaspoon ground white pepper

16 slices gari (red pickled ginger)

To make the tonkatsu sauce:

1. In a small bowl, thoroughly combine all the ingredients.
2. Set aside.

To make the yakisoba:

1. Sprinkle the sliced steak with the salt.

2. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil. Add the steak and stir-fry until it just starts to change color, about 1 minute. Transfer the meat to a plate and set aside.
3. Put the cabbage and carrots in the same pan and stir-fry until they're crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Add the ramen, scallions, and remaining tablespoon of oil. Stir-fry until the noodles separate, adding 1 to 2 tablespoons of water if they stick together. Cook until the water (if any) evaporates.
4. Turn the heat down to medium low. Return the beef to the pan, and add the tonkatsu and white pepper. Toss to warm through and coat all the ingredients with the sauce.
5. Serve on 4 plates, each garnished with 4 slices of gari.
6. To store, refrigerate the yakisoba and gari in separate, tightly sealed containers. They will keep for 2 days.



SALADS, VEGETABLES, AND GARNISHES

CHILLED SPINACH SALAD *Ohitashi*

CUCUMBER SALAD *Sunomono*

HIJIKI SEAWEED SALAD

SALTED EDAMAME

CABBAGE-CARROT-CUCUMBER PICKLES *Tsukemono*

GRILLED EGGPLANT *Nasu Dengaku*

VEGETABLE STIR-FRY *Yasai Itame*

BROCCOLI WITH SESAME DRESSING *Burokkori Goma-ae*

CARROTS SIMMERED IN SOY SAUCE AND SAKE *Kinpira Ninjin*

VEGETABLE TEMPURA

SHREDDED DAIKON GARNISH *Tsuma*

CUCUMBER BLOSSOMS GARNISH

CARROT CURLS GARNISH

Vegetables are in almost every dish in Japanese cuisine. Very few recipes omit fresh produce entirely; even in meat-heavy dishes, there's almost always a little bit of seaweed, some chopped scallion, pickles, or a vegetable garnish. Two qualities epitomized by vegetables—purity and seasonality—are cornerstones of Japanese cuisine.

The Buddhist influence on Japanese culture, dating back to the sixth century, has fostered vegetarianism. One type of vegetarian cuisine, *shojin ryori* (“devotion cuisine”), arose from Zen Buddhism in the thirteenth century and is widely considered to be the point of origin for Japanese cuisine today. That said, most Japanese food is not vegetarian. Fish is almost as prevalent as vegetables. For example, it's a prime component in dashi, the seaweed and bonito broth that's one of the most important ingredients in Japanese cooking. But meat and fish are most often supporting players to vegetables.

You can cook completely authentic Japanese food with the vegetables you already know, such as cabbage, carrots, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, potatoes, scallions, and spinach. If you go deeper into your supermarket's produce section and Asian foods section, you'll find items like bamboo shoots, burdock, daikon,

edamame, enoki mushrooms, hen-of-the-woods mushrooms, dried seaweed, and fresh and dried shiitake mushrooms, among many others.

CHILLED SPINACH SALAD |

Ohitashi



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 2 MINUTES

Ohitashi translates as “dipped spinach,” but in fact it’s briefly marinated. Thanks to the combination of dashi and soy sauce, this light, cool side dish is packed with umami.

2 bunches fresh spinach, stems cut off

1½ cups Ichiban Dashi, cooled to room temperature

2 tablespoons soy sauce

6 teaspoons dried bonito flakes

1. Parboil the spinach (see [here](#)). Squeeze out as much of the water as you can, then chop it very coarsely, just 3 or 4 cuts.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the dashi with the soy sauce. Add the spinach and toss to mix well. Put the bowl in the refrigerator to chill the spinach slightly, about 15 minutes. Then toss the spinach again, and drain in a colander to get rid of the excess liquid.
3. Portion the spinach into 4 bowls, and top each with 1½ teaspoons of bonito flakes.

CUCUMBER SALAD | *Sunomono*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

The word sunomono applies to any vegetable or seafood salad dressed with vinegar. Soy sauce and dashi are usually added, and sometimes other ingredients, such as mirin or sugar, for a truly refreshing result.

2 unwaxed Japanese or English cucumbers, thinly sliced

1 teaspoon salt

¼ cup rice vinegar

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon mirin

1 tablespoon sugar

½ cup shredded carrot

4 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

1. Put the sliced cucumber in a medium bowl and sprinkle with the salt. Toss thoroughly and set aside for 10 minutes.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the vinegar, soy sauce, mirin, and sugar. Stir until the sugar dissolves.
3. Using your hands, pick up batches of the cucumber slices and squeeze out the liquid. Transfer the cucumber slices to a large bowl, pour the dressing over them, and toss well. Refrigerate the salad for 1 hour before serving.
4. Portion the salad into 4 bowls, garnish with the carrot, and sprinkle the toasted sesame seeds over the top.
5. To store, refrigerate the sunomono in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 1 day.

HIJIKI SEAWEED SALAD



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

Somewhat different from other Japanese varieties of seaweed, such as kombu and nori, hijiki is stringy rather than flat. It's sold dried and looks almost black. When reconstituted, it has a pleasant chewy texture and a flavor that's not at all "seaweedy." Remarkably nutritious, hijiki contains twenty-seven times more iron than spinach, thirteen times more calcium than milk, and nearly five times more fiber than oatmeal.

- 1½ ounces dried hijiki
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons mirin
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 small carrots, julienned
- 1 cup shelled edamame
- 4 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

1. Rinse the hijiki in cold water. Put it in a small bowl, add water to cover, and let it soak for about 15 minutes.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, mirin, oil, and salt.
3. Drain the hijiki and use your hands to squeeze out the excess moisture. Place it in a medium bowl and add the carrots and edamame. Pour on the dressing and toss well.
4. Serve the salad in 4 bowls, sprinkled with the sesame seeds.
5. To store the salad, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 1 day.

SALTED EDAMAME



MAKES 3 CUPS

PREP TIME: 2 TO 3 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 5 TO 7 MINUTES

Before soybeans become the dried or canned legumes you can cook like any other dried beans, they're edamame. The pods of green soybeans make a tasty (not to mention incredibly nutritious) snack when they're salted. You eat the beans and discard the pods. Just use your fingers to remove the beans and pop them into your mouth.

- 1 pound fresh or frozen and thawed edamame pods
- 3 tablespoons salt, plus more for sprinkling
- 2 teaspoons [Seven-Spice Powder](#) (Shichimi Togarashi) (optional)
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce (optional)
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice (optional)

1. If you're using fresh edamame, trim off their stems.
2. In a large pot over high heat, mix the salt into 1½ gallons of water. Bring the salted water to a boil, and add the edamame. Boil until the pods soften but are still bright green, 3 to 4 minutes.
3. Drain the edamame and transfer them to a plate lined with a paper towel. If they're not salty enough for you, sprinkle on some additional salt.
4. Let the edamame air dry for 2 minutes. If you like, sprinkle on some shichimi togarashi, soy sauce, or lemon juice. Serve in a bowl.
5. To store the edamame, allow them to cool completely and refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. They'll keep for 1 or 2 days.

CABBAGE-CARROT-CUCUMBER PICKLES |

Tsukemono

MAKES 1½ CUPS

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

Served daily, most often as an accompaniment to rice, tsukemono (pickles) have been a focal point of Japanese cuisine for centuries. A wide variety of vegetables can be pickled in salt, vinegar, miso, or rice bran, for anywhere from a few hours to a few months. This common recipe is quick, yielding mild, crisp pickles.

- 1 small (1-pound) cabbage, cored and roughly chopped
- 1 medium carrot, julienned
- ½ unwaxed Japanese or English cucumber, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 1 teaspoon julienned yuzu or lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

1. Put the vegetables in a large bowl and add the salt, zest, and pepper. Use your hands to toss well and massage the seasoning into the vegetables.
2. Press a layer of plastic wrap over the vegetables. Find a plate that's small enough to rest directly on the vegetables and large enough to cover most or all of them. Place the plate on the vegetables, right-side up, then set a very heavy item (such as a gallon jug of water) on top of the plate. Leave the weighted bowl in the refrigerator overnight.
3. Drain the pickles in a colander (rinse them if you want them less salty), and shake the colander vigorously to drain out the moisture.
4. To store the pickles, refrigerate them in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 2 to 3 days.

GRILLED EGGPLANT | *Nasu*

Dengaku

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 35 MINUTES

This recipe departs from Japanese tradition in a couple of ways. Dengaku means “grilled,” the traditional way to prepare this dish, but broiling is used here (you can, of course, grill the eggplant if you prefer). Smaller and more tender than the eggplant typically available in American supermarkets, Japanese eggplant is best suited for dengaku, but the regular variety will still work just fine.

4 Japanese eggplants or 2 small regular eggplants, cut in half lengthwise

1 teaspoon vegetable oil

2 tablespoons sake

2 tablespoons mirin

¼ cup white miso

2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons sesame seeds

2 scallions, chopped

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. Score the cut side of each eggplant with crisscrossing diagonal lines. Brush the scored side of each eggplant with the oil. Place the eggplants on a baking sheet, cut-side down, and bake until they're tender throughout, 20 to 30 minutes.
3. In the meantime, combine the sake and mirin in a small pot over medium heat, and bring to a simmer. Whisk in the miso until the sauce is smooth. Stir in the sugar, turn the heat down to low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat.
4. When the eggplants are cooked, remove them from the oven and turn the oven up to broil. Spoon the sauce onto the eggplants, and spread it around to coat the whole surface of each. Place them cut-side up in the baking pan.

5. Slide the baking pan under the broiler, and cook until the sauce starts to bubble up and caramelize, about 1 minute. Monitor the cooking closely so the glaze doesn't burn.
6. Remove the pan from the broiler and sprinkle the eggplants with the sesame seeds and scallions. Serve immediately.
7. To store the eggplants (although it is not recommended), place them glazed-side up in a tightly sealed container and refrigerate. They will keep for 1 or 2 days.

VEGETABLE STIR-FRY | *Yasai*

Itame

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Invented by the Chinese and adapted by the Japanese, stir-fry (yasai itame) is a great way to use up any leftovers in your refrigerator. Here's a vegetarian version, but yasai itame is traditionally made with pork as well. To spice it up, throw in some crushed red pepper flakes or add some Thai sriracha sauce.

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon sake

1 tablespoon sugar

1 teaspoon sesame oil

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional) or 1 teaspoon sriracha sauce (optional)

1 (14-ounce) block firm tofu, cut into 2-by-½-by-½-inch pieces

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

½ onion, sliced

4 cups roughly chopped cabbage

1 medium carrot, thinly sliced

1 cup broccoli florets

4 large fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, caps sliced into ¼-inch strips

1 large red bell pepper, seeded, ribbed, and cut into ¼-inch strips

2 scallions, white ends discarded and green parts cut into 2-inch segments

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger

1. In a glass baking dish, whisk together the soy sauce, sake, sugar, sesame oil, and pepper flakes or sriracha (if using). Place the tofu in the dish, and turn it a few times to coat the pieces on all sides. Set aside for 30 minutes, then remove the tofu from the sauce and place it on a plate. Reserve the sauce.
2. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon of the vegetable oil. Add the tofu and stir-fry it for 2 to 3 minutes.

Put it back on the plate.

3. Pour the remaining tablespoon of vegetable oil into the skillet, and let it heat up until it almost smokes. Add the onion and stir-fry until tender, about 3 minutes. Add the cabbage and carrot and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Add the broccoli and shiitake and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add the bell pepper and scallions and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Add the garlic and ginger and stir-fry for 1 minute.
4. Add the tofu to the stir-fry, and pour in the reserved sauce. Stir-fry to coat all of the ingredients, about 1 minute. Serve immediately.
5. To store the itame, allow it to cool completely, then refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 days.

BROCCOLI WITH SESAME DRESSING | *Burokkori Goma-ae*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 7 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

Goma-ae is a sesame-soy dressing widely used throughout Japan. Most often, this salad is made with spinach, but goma-ae is a perfect complement for just about any green vegetable.

4 cups broccoli florets, larger ones cut into halves or quarters

3 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon [Ichiban Dashi](#)

1 teaspoon white miso

2 teaspoons sugar

1. In a large pot over high heat, bring 2 gallons of water to a boil. Add the broccoli and boil until crisp-tender and bright green, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain well and set aside to cool.
2. Put the sesame seeds in a small bowl, and crush them slightly with the back of a spoon. Set aside.
3. Combine the soy sauce and dashi in a large bowl. Add the miso and whisk until the dressing is smooth, then add the sesame seeds and sugar and whisk well.
4. Add the cooled broccoli to the bowl with the dressing, and toss to coat all the florets. Serve at room temperature.
5. To store the broccoli, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 days.

Tempura

For home cooks—Japanese as well as American—tempura is among the most intimidating dishes to prepare. In Japan, there are specialized tempura restaurants that devote themselves exclusively to making this deep-fried dish; other restaurants don't usually serve it. But don't be afraid to try it yourself. If you follow a few basic rules, you too can make a delicate, crunchy, non-greasy tempura.

Rule #1: Prepare the Ingredients Properly

To produce the best-tasting tempura, start with the freshest ingredients available. Clean and prepare them before you start cooking. If they need to be cut up, slice them into pieces small enough to cook through in a minute or two, and make sure all the pieces of each ingredient are the same size so they cook evenly. Pat the pieces dry and dredge them in flour before battering them, so the coating sticks well. Make the dipping sauce in advance, too.

Rule #2: Set Up Your Work Area Ahead of Time

This will allow you to work quickly and efficiently, so everything cooks properly. Fill the deep-fryer or stovetop pot with the proper amount of oil, and set up your cooking station as follows:

- To one side of the deep fryer or pot, arrange the raw ingredients on a platter.
- Place chopsticks (preferred) or tongs next to the platter for placing the ingredients in the oil.
- Nearby, place the bowl of flour, and beside it leave a space closest to the deep fryer or pot for the bowl of batter.
- Farther away from the pot, gather the flour, eggs, bowl, and chopsticks for making the batter, along with a bowl of ice water.
- On the other side of the deep fryer or pot, place a mesh scoop (preferred) or a slotted spoon for removing the cooked items from the oil, and a

draining rack covered with two layers of paper towels.

Rule #3: Make Lumpy, Cold Batter

To ensure that your tempura coating fries up light and crisp, you should use cold batter ingredients, mix them as little as possible, and use the batter immediately. Doing these things prevents the gluten in the flour from developing its characteristic stickiness, which will make the fried coating heavy and chewy. Put ice cubes in the water, and leave the eggs in the refrigerator until the moment you need them. Don't make the batter until your oil has reached frying temperature. Chopsticks are the ideal tool for beating the batter very lightly so you don't over-mix it. Stir it only a few times, until the ingredients are just loosely combined and the batter is very lumpy. Don't let the batter stand for more than a couple of minutes; start with half as much as you need and make another small batch when you need it.

Rule #4: Cook at the Right Temperature

A deep fryer is the best tool for this, but if you don't have one, use a deep, heavy saucepan and a candy or oil thermometer. In general, an oil temperature around 340°F works well for tempura. If you're using tougher ingredients, such as root vegetables or winter squash, which take longer to cook, set the temperature lower (about 320°F) and cook longer. If you're using quick-cooking ingredients, such as mushrooms or summer squash, set the temperature higher (about 356°F) and cook for less time. This will ensure that the vegetables and batter will be done at the same moment. Cook the lower-temperature ingredients first, and raise the temperature as required as you progress to the higher-temperature ingredients.

Rule #5: Maintain a Constant Temperature

Again, a deep fryer makes it easy to monitor the temperature. As you cook each category of ingredients (slow cooking, regular, and fast cooking), the oil should maintain a constant temperature. Place only a few pieces

of food at a time in the oil, spaced over about half the surface of the oil, to prevent the temperature from dropping too much. If the oil gets too hot, add a little more from the bottle. Before you fry the next batch of ingredients, let the oil return to the proper temperature.

Rule #6: Clean the Oil Between Batches

If bits of batter come loose from your frying ingredients, skim them from the oil between batches. Left in the pot, they'll burn and give the oil a less-than-fresh flavor.

CARROTS SIMMERED IN SOY SAUCE AND SAKE | *Kinpira*

Ninjin



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 4 MINUTES

Kinpira—it translates as “sauté and simmer”—is a simple home-cooking technique that’s ideal for preparing root vegetables quickly and delectably. Carrots are most commonly used, and they come out crisp and sweet. This dish provides an excellent option for brightening up a meal.

2 tablespoons sesame oil

4 medium carrots, julienned into matchsticks

2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons mirin

4 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons sesame seeds

1. In a medium skillet over medium heat, heat the sesame oil until it shimmers. Add the carrot strips and stir to coat them with the oil and brighten their color, about 30 seconds.
2. Add the sugar and stir to coat the carrots. While the sugar melts, quickly cook off the carrot juice, about 1 minute.
3. Pour in the mirin and stir, then add the soy sauce. Coat the carrots and continue to cook, stirring, until the liquid evaporates, about 1 minute. Transfer the carrots to a bowl, and let them cool to room temperature.
4. Serve the kinpira with the sesame seeds sprinkled on top.
5. To store, leave off the sesame seeds and refrigerate the kinpira in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 3 or 4 days. When you’re ready to serve, sprinkle on the sesame seeds.

VEGETABLE TEMPURA



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

You've probably ordered vegetable tempura many times at a Japanese restaurant but thought it would be too difficult to make at home. In reality, this dish is actually quite simple to prepare. To avoid an uneven cook, use the freshest ingredients you can find and cut them into pieces of same size. Feel free to substitute vegetables to suit the season or your palate.

1½ quarts vegetable oil

2½ cups all-purpose flour, divided

2 egg yolks

2 small sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into ⅛-inch-thick slices

¼ small (9-inch) kabocha or turban squash or ½ medium butternut squash, seeds removed, skin trimmed off, flesh cut into ⅛-inch-thick crescents

12 fresh green beans, ends trimmed

4 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and caps cut into ¼-inch slices

1 medium zucchini, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices

1 cup [Tsuyu Sauce](#)

1. In a deep fryer, a heavy pot, or a Dutch oven over medium-high heat, heat the oil to 320°F.
2. Set up your work area according to [Rule #2](#) (see [here](#)), using a bowl with 2 cups of cold water plus 6 ice cubes, and a medium plate spread with ½ cup of the flour.
3. When the oil is hot, put 1 egg yolk in a medium bowl and beat lightly with chopsticks. Stir in 1 cup of the ice water (without ice cubes). Add 1 cup of the flour in a single batch and stir a few times until the ingredients are just combined—the batter should be lumpy. Put the bowl at the cooking station.
4. Starting with the sweet potato, use your fingers to pick up each piece, dredge both sides in the dish of flour, and shake off the excess. Drop the dredged potato in the batter and immediately remove it with chopsticks or tongs. Let any excess batter drip off, then carefully slide the potato into the oil. Repeat the

process until the frying potatoes cover half the surface of the oil.

5. Fry the potatoes, flipping them over when the undersides are puffy and light golden, 30 to 60 seconds. Fry on the other side for another 30 to 60 seconds. Transfer the cooked pieces to the draining rack.
6. Skim any leftover fried bits from the oil and repeat the frying procedure until all the potato slices are cooked.
7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 for the squash.
8. When the batter runs out, prepare another batch with the remaining egg yolk, ice water, and flour, according to the instructions in step 3.
9. Increase the temperature of the oil to 340°F. Fry the green beans, following steps 4 through 6.
10. Increase the temperature of the oil to 356°F. Fry the mushrooms and zucchini, following steps 4 through 6.
11. Plate one-quarter of each ingredient on 4 separate dishes. Pour ¼ cup of tsuyu into each of 4 bowls, and place 1 bowl at each place setting, for dipping.
12. Tempura must be eaten hot out of the fryer, as it will get soggy if stored for later.

SHREDDED DAIKON

GARNISH | *Tsuma*



MAKES 2 CUPS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

As sold in American supermarkets, this long, large radish measures 8 to 10 inches long and 1½ to 2 inches in diameter, sometimes bigger. Daikon appears in a wide variety of Japanese dishes, from salads and pickles to hot pots and stir-fries. As a garnish, white shreds of daikon are a popular bed or topping for many dishes, including sushi and sashimi. Japanese chefs traditionally prepare shredded daikon in a time-consuming manner that requires superb knife skills, but simpler, quicker techniques yield similar results for the home cook.

1 medium daikon, peeled, ends sliced off

1. You can approximate professional daikon shredding in three simple ways:
 - a. With a vegetable peeler: Peel lengthwise down the daikon to create long strips.
 - b. With a grater: Holding the daikon almost parallel to the grating surface, grate lengthwise over the largest holes in a box grater.
 - c. With a mandoline: Use either the julienne blade or the spiral slicer attachment, both at the thinnest setting.
2. Soak the cut daikon in a bowl of cold water for 15 minutes. Drain well and pat dry before using.
3. To store, refrigerate the daikon in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 1 day.

CUCUMBER BLOSSOMS GARNISH



MAKES ABOUT 10 BLOSSOMS

PREP TIME: 55 MINUTES

Japanese cuisine celebrates the seasons, so it's no wonder so many of its garnishes take the form of flowers. Turnips, tomatoes, radishes, and other fruits and vegetables are cut and bent into chrysanthemums, daisies, and more. Cucumbers, with their pale flesh and dark green skin, make an especially striking flower.

1 thin, unwaxed Japanese or English cucumber, about 12 inches long

1 tablespoon salt

1. Cutting crosswise at a 45-degree angle, slice off the rounded ends of the cucumber and discard. The angles of the ends should be parallel. On the same angle, cut the cucumber into very thin slices.
2. Place the cucumber slices in a medium bowl, sprinkling each layer with a little salt. Toss to coat well, and let the cucumber rest 5 minutes. Drain the cucumber slices in a colander or mesh sieve, and rinse thoroughly under cold running water. Shake off the excess water, then pat the slices dry.
3. On a flat work surface, lay 10 slices end to end in a straight line, like a row of fallen dominoes. The ends of the slices should overlap like shingles by about one-quarter the length of each slice.
4. From the end where the overlapping starts (the first slice you laid down), roll up the line of cucumbers like a cigar, not too tightly. Turn the roll perpendicular to the work surface and hold it at the bottom. Starting with the outer layer, use the thumb and forefinger of your other hand to gently bend the top edges of the slices down and out, to about half the height of the roll. The “flower” will open up as you go.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until all the cucumber slices are used up.
6. Place the blossoms alongside or atop plated food. They may open up a bit more as you handle them.

7. To store the blossoms, push a toothpick through the bottom of each to hold it in place. Refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. The blossoms will keep overnight.

CARROT CURLS GARNISH



MAKES 20 CURLS

PREP TIME: 1 HOUR AND 25 MINUTES

Bright orange carrots add an appealing splash of color to any Japanese plate. When transformed into whimsical curls, delicate strips of carrot make an elegant dish seem even more special.

1 medium carrot, peeled, ends cut off

1. Fill a medium bowl about two-thirds full of cold water. Use a vegetable peeler to cut strips down the length of the carrot. Make the strips as long as possible.
2. Roll a strip tightly around a chopstick, spiraling slightly along the stick. Slide the roll off the stick, and push a toothpick through to hold it together. Put the roll in the water. Repeat until all the strips are used up.
3. Put the bowl in the refrigerator, and let the curls soak for an hour. Drain well and shake dry. Remove the toothpicks to release the curls.
4. Place the curls alongside or atop plated food.
5. To store the curls, refrigerate them in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 1 or 2 days.



TOFU AND EGGS

CHILLED TOFU WITH TOPPINGS *Hiyayakko*TOFU WITH THICK MUSHROOM SAUCE *Kinoko Ankake*FRIED TOFU IN BROTH *Agedashi Tofu*GRILLED TOFU *Tofu Dengaku*SWEET OMELET *Usuyaki Tamagoyaki*SAVORY OMELET *Dashimaki Tamagoyaki*FRIED-RICE OMELET *Omurice*SAVORY CUSTARD *Chawanmushi*

Both tofu and eggs are important sources of protein in the traditional Japanese diet. It makes sense that, with only 3 percent arable land but a population density more than ten times that of the United States, the country focuses on growing crops that turn a little bit of land into a whole lot of nutrition. Soybeans and laying hens fit that bill.

Tofu, also called bean curd, doesn't sound glamorous. It's just coagulated soy milk. Nonetheless, the Japanese have transformed it into a thing of beauty. It comes in regular and silken forms, textures from soft to extra firm, fresh or precooked, refrigerated or shelf-stable. What does tofu taste like? Essentially, it tastes like whatever it's cooked with. Stir-fried with vegetables, simmered in soup, marinated for grilling, or dressed up in a salad, tofu absorbs other flavors like a sponge. Endlessly versatile, tofu is an ideal protein if you're trying to cut down on fat.

Bacon and eggs, hardboiled eggs, breakfast burritos: Americans eat a lot of eggs. Believe it or not, though, the average Japanese person eats even more of them. You probably don't associate eggs with Japanese cuisine, but they turn up at breakfast, lunch, and dinner—generally, in at least one meal almost every day. They're hardor softboiled and added to stews, cracked whole into soups, beaten into omelets, rolled into sushi, and stirred raw into rice for breakfast. Sometimes, they even show up on the same plate as tofu.

Tofu Tips

REGULAR TOFU: When you want tofu to keep its shape during cooking, regular tofu is the way to go. It comes packed in water in plastic containers that you can find in your supermarket's refrigerator or produce section. There are extra-firm, firm, medium, and soft versions that are drained and pressed for varying times and have different levels of moisture and sturdiness. Firm and extra-firm are good for stir-frying, grilling, and the like, while medium and soft are better for scrambles and other recipes that call for crumbled tofu.

SILKEN TOFU: Softer and creamier than regular tofu, silken tofu is often used as a substitute for soft cheeses, cream, or oil in foods such as thick salad dressings and desserts like "cheesecake." Its high moisture content makes it fall apart easily, so it needs to be handled gently. Silken tofu is often packaged in aseptic boxes (like juice boxes) that can keep it fresh, unrefrigerated, for up to a year. Once you open a box, you need to refrigerate any unused silken tofu.

FRESHNESS: As with meat, eggs, fruits, and vegetables, tofu is better the fresher it is. For the freshest, best-tasting tofu, you can make your own. That takes a lot of time and effort, though, and store-bought tofu can be almost as good. If you can find fresh, unpackaged tofu at an Asian or health food grocery store, buy it. If you buy it packaged, whether in a plastic tub or an aseptic box, choose the containers marked with the latest expiration date. Once you open the package, use the tofu immediately or put it in fresh water and refrigerate it in a tightly sealed container. Change the water daily. The tofu will keep for up to one week.

SIZE AND WEIGHT: In the ingredients lists in this book, tofu is measured in ounces. Standard blocks of water-packed tub tofu weigh anywhere from 13 to 19 ounces, with 14 ounces being the most common. Aseptic boxes of silken tofu typically weigh about 12 ounces. Whatever amount of tofu is called for in the following

recipes, simply give or take a few ounces if you can't find a package of tofu in that exact size.

MOISTURE: Before tofu is used, it usually needs to be pressed to drain some of its moisture so it doesn't fall apart while cooking. This doesn't apply to silken tofu, and extra-firm regular tofu has already had enough moisture pressed out so that you might not need to press it any further. But most water-packed tofu should be drained. It's easy to do, whether you choose to press it in whole-block or sliced form. First, rinse and pat dry the tofu. On a flat work surface, lay out a folded kitchen towel topped with three or four layers of paper towels. Place the tofu on the paper towels, lay a plate or cutting board on top, and weigh it down with a couple of cans of soup, a dictionary, or another 2-pound object. If you've sliced the tofu, you won't need to press it for very long—perhaps 15 to 30 minutes—but if you're pressing a whole block, you'll want to give it an hour or more.

CHILLED TOFU WITH TOPPINGS | *Hiyayakko*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

Summers are hot in most parts of Japan, and the Japanese have created a whole slew of savory and sweet tofu recipes to help them keep their cool. Chilled tofu is one such dish, and it's especially soothing when made with silken tofu. This dish doesn't require any actual cooking, and you can top it with whatever appeals to your fickle hot-weather appetite. Among the traditional toppings are bonito flakes, grated ginger, hot mustard, chopped scallions, and sesame seeds, along with soy sauce.

1½ pounds silken tofu, chilled and cut into ½-inch cubes

4 tablespoons soy sauce, divided

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger, divided

2 scallions, chopped

1 tablespoon bonito flakes

1. Divide the tofu among 4 small bowls. Drizzle each serving with 1 tablespoon of the soy sauce and add a ¼-teaspoon dollop of the ginger.
2. Sprinkle with the scallions and top with the bonito flakes.
3. To store the hiyayakko, refrigerate the tofu and toppings in separate, tightly sealed containers. They will keep for 1 day.

TOFU WITH THICK MUSHROOM SAUCE | *Kinoko Ankake*



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 1 HOUR

COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

This recipe brings a rich heartiness to tofu, with deep flavors that are perfect for chilly weather. The addition of mirin lends a slight sweetness to the kinoko ankake (“mushrooms in thick sauce”). This dish can also be served over noodles.

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 pound firm tofu, pressed and cut into quarters

2 cups Ichiban Dashi

¼ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons mirin

8 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, caps cut into ¼-inch slices

2 bunches enoki mushrooms, bottoms cut off and mushrooms separated

1 tablespoon cornstarch, dissolved in ¼ cup cold water

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat the oil until it shimmers. Add the tofu and fry, turning the pieces over, until they're golden brown on all sides. Remove to a plate covered with 2 layers of paper towels, and lay a sheet of foil over the top to keep the tofu warm. Set aside.
2. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the dashi, soy sauce, and mirin to a high simmer. Add the mushrooms and cook until they're tender, about 2 minutes.
3. Slowly add the cornstarch mixture to the pot, whisking to keep lumps from forming. Continue stirring until the sauce comes to a boil and thickens, 3 to 4 minutes.
4. Put 1 piece of tofu on each of 4 plates. Pour the sauce over the top and serve.
5. To store, refrigerate the tofu and sauce in separate tightly sealed containers. It will keep for 2 days.

FRIED TOFU IN BROTH |

Agedashi Tofu

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

This dish of deep-fried (age) tofu in a dashi-based broth is golden on the outside and smooth on the inside. Though it's fried, it's wonderfully light, with a delicate flavor.

2 cups Ichiban Dashi

⅓ cup soy sauce

⅓ cup mirin

2 cups vegetable oil

⅓ cup potato starch or cornstarch

18 ounces silken tofu, cut into 1½-by-1½-inch cubes

½ cup Shredded Daikon Garnish

4 scallions, very thinly sliced

2 tablespoons bonito flakes

1. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the dashi, soy sauce, and mirin to just short of a boil. Turn the heat down to low and keep the broth warm.
2. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat the oil to 340°F. Place a double layer of paper towels on a large plate. Spread the starch on a medium plate.
3. Lightly dust each cube of tofu on all sides with the starch. Put the cubes in the hot oil and fry, turning occasionally, until they're light golden on all sides, about 4 minutes. Transfer the fried tofu to the paper towel-lined plate to drain.
4. While the tofu is still hot, divide the cubes among four medium bowls. Pour one-quarter of the hot broth over each bowl, and top with the daikon, scallions, and bonito flakes. Serve immediately.
5. Agedashi tofu must be eaten as soon as it's cooked. It will not keep.

GRILLED TOFU | *Tofu Dengaku*



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Grilled (or broiled) and glazed with a sweet-salty barbecue sauce, dengaku will win over even hardcore tofu critics. The tender and sticky tidbits, eaten right from the skewer, make festive party food.

½ cup red miso

¼ cup Ichiban Dashi

3 tablespoons sake

3 tablespoons mirin

3 tablespoons sugar

14 ounces firm tofu, pressed

1 tablespoon sesame seeds, for garnish

2 scallions, very thinly sliced, for garnish

1. Preheat the grill or broiler to high.
2. If you're grilling, cut 20 bamboo skewers in half and soak them in a pan of water for 30 minutes.
3. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the miso and dashi. Simmer, continuing to whisk, until all the miso is dissolved, about 3 minutes.
4. Stir in the sake, mirin, and sugar. Cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce bubbles and thickens to the consistency of barbecue sauce, 1 to 3 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and set aside.
5. Slice the block of tofu in half lengthwise. Cut each half crosswise into slices about 1 inch thick, then cut each slice into 1-inch cubes.
6. Cook the tofu.
 - a. To grill: Thread 2 tofu cubes onto each skewer. Lay the tofu on the grill and cook for 1 or 2 minutes, until the bottom just slightly browns. Turn the tofu over and grill the other side the same way. Transfer the skewers to a pan or platter.

- b. To broil: Cover a broiler pan with foil and arrange the tofu pieces on top, about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch apart. Slide the pan into the broiler about 2 inches below the heat, and cook until the tops crust lightly. Remove the pan from the broiler.
7. Brush the sauce onto one side of the tofu, and sprinkle the tofu pieces with sesame seeds. Return the tofu to the grill or broiler, and cook the sauced side until it bubbles, about 1 minute. Watch closely so the glaze doesn't burn.
8. Transfer the dengaku to a serving platter, leaving the skewers in (if using). Serve the dengaku hot, garnished with sesame seeds and scallions.
9. To store, refrigerate the dengaku in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 days. Garnish with the sesame seeds and scallions just before serving.

SWEET OMELET | *Usuyaki*

Tamagoyaki



MAKES 2 ROLLED OMELETS

PREP TIME: 3 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Literally “grilled egg,” tamagoyaki is often referred to as tamago. The Japanese cook these very thin, slightly sweet omelets in special rectangular pans, but a regular skillet does a fine job. Usuyaki tamagoyaki are eaten in a variety of ways; in the United States, you’ve probably seen them in sushi at Japanese restaurants.

6 eggs

3 tablespoons sake (recommended) or water

2 tablespoons sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

Vegetable oil for the pan

1. In a large bowl, use a fork to gently beat together the eggs and the sake or water. Add the sugar and salt and beat until they dissolve.
2. Pour the egg mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bowl. This strains out any froth or unblended material that might make your omelets lumpy. You should have about 1½ cups of batter.
3. Use a paper towel to wipe a scant amount of oil onto the surface of an 8-inch nonstick skillet. Put the pan over medium-low heat until a bead of the batter sizzles when dropped onto the surface.
4. Pour in 3 tablespoons of the batter, and tilt and swirl the pan to cover the bottom. Cook until the egg starts to set, about 30 seconds. With a fork or chopsticks, loosen the edges and roll up the omelet toward one side of the pan; if you have trouble rolling, fold the omelet over like a letter, in three or four folds. Leave the roll in the pan.
5. Wipe the exposed part of the pan surface with a little oil on a paper towel, removing any stray bits of egg. Put 3 more tablespoons of batter in the pan and swirl to coat the bottom,

lifting the first roll up a little bit to allow some batter to flow under it. Set the roll back down and cook the new batter until it starts to set. Roll or fold the first layer back across the pan to wrap the second layer around it.

6. Repeat step 5 twice more.
7. Place the finished tamagoyaki, seam-side down, to one edge of a clean kitchen towel. Roll the omelet up tightly in the towel and, if necessary, gently press down on the top to form it into a slightly flattened tube.
8. Repeat steps 3 through 7 to make a second omelet from the remaining batter.
9. Serve the omelets whole with a little soy sauce on the side, or cut them into ½-inch slices for use in sushi.
10. To store the tamagoyaki, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 2 days.

SAVORY OMELET | *Dashimaki*

Tamagoyaki



MAKES 2 ROLLED OMELETS

PREP TIME: 3 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

A savory version of the rolled omelet, dashimaki tamagoyaki makes an especially delicious breakfast, appetizer, or addition to a bento box. For variety, add a small amount of filling, such as toasted nori, a bit of regular or sushi rice, or some grated carrot, between the second and third layers.

6 eggs

⅓ cup Ichiban Dashi

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon sugar vegetable oil for the pan

1. In a large bowl, use a fork to gently beat together the eggs, dashi, and soy sauce. Add the sugar and beat until it dissolves.
2. Pour the egg mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bowl; this strains out any froth or unblended material that might make your omelets lumpy. You should have about 1½ cups of batter.
3. Prepare the omelets, following steps 3 through 8 in the [Sweet Omelet](#) (Usuyaki Tamagoyaki) recipe.
4. Roll the tamagoyaki in the kitchen towel a little less tightly, to keep from squeezing the moisture out of this wetter omelet.
5. Serve the omelets whole with a little soy sauce on the side, or cut them into ½-inch slices for use in sushi.
6. To store the tamagoyaki, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 2 days.

FRIED-RICE OMELET | *Omurice*



MAKES 2 OMELETS

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

This dish—an omelet filled with ketchup-flavored fried rice—may sound peculiar, but it’s very popular in Japan, especially with kids. An example of modern Japanese-Western culinary fusion, omurice gets its name from the Japanese pronunciation of omelet (omu) and rice (raisu). It’s typically filled with chicken rice (chikin raisu), and was first served around the turn of the twentieth century. If you prefer, substitute pork, shrimp, or tofu instead, and use up your leftover rice.

4 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided

1 small onion, chopped

1 boneless, skinless chicken thigh, rinsed, patted dry, and cut into

½-inch cubes

¼ teaspoon salt

⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons ketchup

2 teaspoons soy sauce

2 cups cooked rice, prepared according to the [Basic Rice \(Gohan\)](#) recipe

¼ cup frozen peas, thawed

¼ cup frozen diced carrots, thawed 2 eggs

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat 2 teaspoons of the oil until it shimmers. Add the onion and cook it until it’s soft and translucent, about 2 minutes.
2. Add the chicken and sprinkle on the salt and pepper. Cook, stirring, until the chicken loses its pinkness, about 2 minutes. Push the chicken to the side of the pan.
3. Put the ketchup in the space cleared in the pan. Heat until it reduces slightly, about 30 seconds. Add the soy sauce to the ketchup and stir to combine.
4. Put the rice in the pan and blend it with the sauce, breaking up any lumps with the side of your spatula.
5. Mix in the chicken and cook for 2 minutes. Stir in the peas and carrots, and cook to warm them through, about 1 minute.

Remove the pan from the heat.

6. In a small bowl, beat the eggs with a fork.
7. In a medium skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 teaspoon of the oil until it shimmers. Pour half of the beaten egg (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) into the pan, tilting and swirling to cover the bottom. Lower the heat.
8. When the egg begins to set (30 to 45 seconds), spoon half the fried rice across the middle of the circle. Fold the sides over the filling. Carefully slide the omelet onto a plate and cover it with a paper towel. Use your hands to mold the omelet into its typical shape, which resembles an American football. Leave the paper towel on to keep the omurice warm.
9. Repeat steps 7 and 8 to make the second omurice.
10. Plate the two omurice and squirt each with a squiggle of ketchup.
11. To store the omurice, leave off the ketchup squiggle and refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 1 or 2 days.

SAVORY CUSTARD |

Chawanmushi



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

This creamy custard side dish is the epitome of Japanese comfort food. Flavored with dashi, soy sauce, and mirin, chawanmushi (“steamed in a teacup”) traditionally contains shiitake mushrooms, plus chicken and/or shrimp and/or fish cake. The marks of truly authentic chawanmushi are lily roots—virtually impossible to find in the United States—and ginkgo nuts, which are available but still challenging to find (try online); you’re most likely to find them canned. However, your chawanmushi will be delectable even without them.

3 teaspoons soy sauce, divided

2 teaspoons sake, divided

3 ounces of chicken thigh, cut into bite-size pieces

4 medium shrimp, shelled, deveined, and halved lengthwise

4 eggs

2½ cups [Ichiban Dashi](#)

1 teaspoon mirin

½ teaspoon salt

2 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, caps cut into thin slices

12 canned ginkgo nuts (optional)

⅔ cup chopped baby spinach

1 scallion, chopped

1. Place an oven rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350°F.
2. Mix ½ teaspoon of the soy sauce with ½ teaspoon of the sake in a small bowl. Add the chicken and toss to coat. Let the chicken marinate for 15 minutes, then drain and discard the marinade. Set the chicken aside.
3. In a separate small bowl, combine another ½ teaspoon of the soy sauce with ½ teaspoon of the sake. Add the shrimp and toss

to coat. Let the shrimp marinate for 5 minutes. Drain and discard the marinade. Set the shrimp aside.

4. In a large bowl, use a fork to beat together the eggs, dashi, 2 teaspoons of the soy sauce, 1 teaspoon of the sake, the mirin, and the salt. Beat lightly, so foam doesn't form. Pour the egg mixture through a fine-mesh strainer to remove any solid bits and ensure a smooth custard.
5. Put one-quarter of the chicken, shrimp, shiitake, and ginkgo nuts (if using) into each of 4 custard cups or ramekins. Pour $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the egg mixture into each cup, followed by $\frac{1}{4}$ of the spinach; then divide the remaining egg mixture among them.
6. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, bring 6 cups of water to a simmer. Meanwhile, cover the chawanmushi cups with foil, and place them in a baking dish at least as deep as the cups and large enough to hold them without touching. Slide out the oven rack and place the dish on it. Pour enough hot water into the dish to come up the sides of the cups about two-thirds of the way. Carefully slide the rack back into the oven and close the door.
7. Steam the custard for 15 minutes. Check for doneness by inserting a toothpick into the center of one cup and pulling it out. If the toothpick comes out clean and the broth that oozes out is clear, the custard is done—it should still be jiggly. If not done, continue to cook, checking every 5 minutes. Don't let it overcook, or it will get too firm. If the top cracks, forms a skin, or looks pitted, the custard is overcooked.
8. When the custard is ready, take the cups out of the dish and set them on saucers. Sprinkle the scallion over the tops and serve hot.
9. To store, allow the chawanmushi to cool completely. Cover each cup tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate. It will keep for 1 day.



SUSHI

SUSHI RICE *Shari*CUCUMBER ROLL *Kappamaki*

AVOCADO AND CARROT ROLL

LARGE ROLL WITH VEGETABLES *Futomaki*

TUNA AND CUCUMBER ROLL

SPICY SALMON ROLL

ALASKA ROLL

RAINBOW ROLL

CALIFORNIA ROLL

YELLOWTAIL–SCALLION TEMAKI

SPICY SCALLOP TEMAKI

TAMAGOYAKI OMELET NIGIRI

MACKEREL AND PICKLED GINGER NIGIRI

SHRIMP AND KIWIFRUIT NIGIRI

CHIRASHIZUSHI

Today, from rice farming to fishing to restaurant sales, sushi is a \$14 billion global industry. You probably think of raw fish when you think of this Japanese specialty, but sushi is actually defined by shari (“sour tasting”), the vinegar-seasoned rice that’s its foundation. And it didn’t originate in Japan. More than one thousand years ago, sushi was a Southeast Asian method of preserving fish. By packing salted fish in smelly fermented rice, people were able to keep fish from spoiling for months. The Japanese adapted the formula relatively recently, replacing fermented rice with fresh, vinegared rice; during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, nigirizushi (raw fish on rice balls) became wildly popular in Japan.

Sushi came to the United States in 1953, introduced by Prince Akihito, but it didn’t really catch on until the 1960s, in Los Angeles, where the California roll was probably invented. Sushi became a national phenomenon in the 1980s, with new, distinctly American combinations entering the repertoire and some of them even making their way back to Japan. These days, sushi is popular worldwide. This has given rise to “new-style” sushi that combines international flavors.

SUSHI STYLES

Norimaki

In *norimaki* (“nori rolls”), toasted nori (squares of dried, pressed seaweed) and sushi rice wrap a cylindrical core of fish, vegetables, and condiments. The nori can be on the outside, as is traditional, or, less commonly, on the inside (as in *uramaki*, or inside-out rolls). The cylinders can have a diameter of around an inch, as for *hosomaki* (thin maki), or 2 inches, as for *futomaki* (fat maki), and the rolls are typically cut into six to eight bite-size pieces. Popular *hosomaki* include *tekka* (tuna); *negitoro* (tuna belly with scallions); julienned carrots or cucumbers; and combinations such as pickled plum and cucumber (*umekyu*), or crab sticks, avocado, and cucumber (California roll). *Futomaki* have more numerous and usually vegetarian fillings—daikon oshinko (pickles), shiitake mushrooms, boiled spinach, kampyo (dried gourd), and shiso (perilla) leaves are a few.

Temaki

These infinitely varied 4-inch-long cones contain potentially endless combinations of the same ingredients that go into *nigirizushi* or *norimaki*—in other words, just about anything. They are served in a single piece, and diners pick them up with their hands to eat. *Temaki* (“hand rolls”) are so easy to make and convenient to eat that some aficionados throw *temaki* parties, with the fillings, rice, and nori arrayed on a table where guests gather to roll and nosh. Devour them as you assemble them, because they don’t keep well for later. The nori quickly absorbs moisture from the rice, getting soggy and difficult to bite through.

Nigirizushi

Sushi in Japan means *nigirizushi* (literally, “hold sushi”), hand-pressed ovals of sushi rice draped with thinly sliced rectangles of fish. Especially popular toppings are *maguro* (tuna in its many forms, including *toro*, the fatty cut from the belly area), *amaebi* (raw shrimp) and *ebi* (cooked shrimp), *hamachi* (young yellowtail), *anago* (saltwater eel), *unagi* (freshwater eel), *ika* (squid), *hotate-gai* (scallop), and *saba* (mackerel). Wasabi—more or less of it according to personal preference—adds subtle-to-bracing contrast.

Chirashizushi

The style of sushi that's simplest of all to make, *chirashizushi* ("scattered sushi") comes in two forms: *edomae chirashizushi*, a bowl of sushi rice with sashimi or vegetables exquisitely arranged on top; and *gomokuzushi*, with cooked or raw ingredients mixed into the rice and served family style. Pieces of raw salmon, albacore tuna, yellowtail, fluke, striped bass, or other sashimi are favorite toppings, as are Japanese pickles and slices of fresh vegetables.

SUSHI INGREDIENTS

The Basics

FISH: salmon, albacore or bigeye tuna (either the toro cut or the steak-like akami cut), ahi (yellowfin tuna), tai (red snapper), ohyo (halibut), and hirame (fluke or flounder) are commonly used, as well as hamachi, maguro, saba, and anago.

SEAFOOD: typically, tako (octopus), zuwaigani (snow crab legs), tarabagani (king crab), sofuto sheru kurabu (soft-shell crab), uni (sea urchin), kanikama (crab stick—pressed artificial crab leg made of puréed, pressed white fish and fillers), plus hotate-gai, ika, and amaebi or ebi.

NORI (DRIED SEAWEED): red algae seaweed is formed into paper-like sheets about 7 or 8 inches square. It holds sushi rolls together and adds crunch and flavor. Nori must be toasted to make it less chewy. Many producers offer pretoasted nori, or you can make your own at home by holding the sheets briefly over a gas flame. Use a full sheet for futomaki, or a half for hosomaki and temaki.

ROE: for crunch, texture, and color. Varieties include small, translucent, briny, orange tobiko (flying fish roe); smaller and less expensive bright orange masago (capelin roe); and red, translucent ikura (salmon roe).

SHARI (SUSHI RICE): short-grain Japonica rice is cooked tender-firm and seasoned with vinegar and sugar. The level of seasoning determines how your sushi will taste.

TAMAGOYAKI: literally, "grilled egg"; sweet or savory omelets. Some say they define a chef's skill. (See [Sweet Omelet](#), *Usuyaki Tamagoyaki* and [Savory Omelet](#), *Dashimaki Tamagoyaki*.)

SUSHI GLOSSARY

- AHI:** yellowfin tuna
- AKAMI:** steak-like cut of tuna
- AMAEBI:** raw shrimp
- ANAGO:** sea eel
- BINTORO:** albacore
- CHIRASHIZUSHI:** scattered sushi
- EBI:** cooked shrimp
- EDOMAE**
CHIRASHIZUSHI: bowl of sushi rice with sashimi or vegetables on top
- FUTOMAKI:** fat maki
- GOMOKUZUSHI:** cooked or raw ingredients mixed into sushi rice and served family style
- HAMACHI:** young yellowtail
- HIRAME:** fluke, flounder, or any flat, white fish
- HOSOMAKI:** thin maki
- HOTATE-GAI:** scallop
- IKA:** squid
- IKURA:** salmon roe
- KAMPACHI:** amberjack
- KANIKAMA:** crab stick—pressed artificial crab leg
- MAGURO:** tuna in its many forms
- MAKI:** sushi roll
- MASAGO:** capelin roe
- NEGITORO MAKI:** tuna belly with scallions
- NIGIRIZUSHI:** raw fish on rice balls
- NORI:** squares of dried pressed seaweed
- NORIMAKI:** nori rolls
- OHYO:** halibut
- SABA:** mackerel
- SAKE:** fatty salmon
- SASHIMI:** sliced raw fish, served without rice
- SHARI:** sushi rice
- SOFUTO SHERU**
KURABU: soft-shell crab
- TAI:** red snapper
- TAKO:** octopus
- TAMAGOYAKI:** omelet (literally, “grilled egg”)
- TARABAGANI:** king crab
- TEKKA MAKI:** tuna
- TEMAKI:** hand rolls
- TOBIKO:** flying fish roe

KURODAI: sea bream

UNI: sea urchin

ZUWAIGANI: snow crab
legs

CONDIMENTS, FLAVORINGS, GARNISHES, AND SAUCES

ASATSUKI: chives; used in so-called “new-style” sushi that combines international flavors.

DAIKON: Japanese white radish; made into a tangle of crunchy curls for garnish. (See [Shredded Daikon Garnish](#), *Tsuma*.)

GARI: thinly sliced fresh ginger that’s salted and pickled in a somewhat sweet rice vinegar solution. Used as a palate cleanser and garnish. Shin shoga (young ginger) has a natural pinkish color; more mature ginger may be artificially colored or left its natural color.

HANAGATA-GIRI: vegetables cut into flower shapes and used as a garnish. (See [Cucumber Blossoms Garnish](#).)

KURA GOMA: black sesame seeds, a slightly nutty-flavored decoration for insideout rolls.

KYURI: mild Japanese cucumbers with bumpy, edible peels. English cucumbers can be used as a substitute.

MAYONNAISE: Japan’s creamy, umami-packed mayo contains egg yolks, a blend of vinegars, and MSG. Known as Kewpie, for the most popular brand.

NEGI: thin Japanese leeks, used in rolls or as a bouquet of slivers on the plate. Scallions may serve as a substitute.

NINJIN: carrots; used as a garnish, grated into noodle-like ribbons and curled into a tangle (see [Carrot Curls Garnish](#)), or sliced and cut into flowerlike shapes.

OSHINKO: crunchy pickles made by salting and pressing cucumbers, carrots, radishes, cabbage, and many other types of vegetables; sometimes brightened up with food coloring.

RAYU: chili oil; generally used for “new-style” sushi.

SHISO: fresh-tasting, ruffled leaves of the perilla plant. The green version garnishes sushi platters or is chopped and mixed into rice for extra savory flavor.

SHOGA: fresh ginger.

SOY SAUCE: see [Chapter 2](#).

SPICY MAYONNAISE: often made from 1 tablespoon Kewpie, 1 teaspoon sriracha hot sauce, and an optional teaspoon of lemon juice.

SRIRACHA SAUCE: a hot, vinegar-based Thai chili-and-garlic sauce.

TSUME: a sweet, thick glaze made of soy sauce and seafood broth; short for *nitsume* (“reduction”).

UMEBOSHI: pickled plums (see [Chapter 2](#)).

UNAGI SAUCE: a reduction of eel bone broth, soy sauce, rice wine, and sugar; rarely made at home. Some eel restaurants have built their sauce over a century, adding to their base sauce daily.

WASABI: green Japanese horseradish; grated and spread on nigiri or maki, or set as a pyramid on a shiso leaf for garnish (see [Chapter 2](#)).

YUZU: see [Chapter 2](#).

YUZU KOSHO: grated red and green chili with yuzu peels, this paste adds aromatic acidity and heat to “new style” sushi, fish, chicken, rich dishes, and noodle soups.

SUSHI EQUIPMENT

NEEDLE-NOSE PLIERS OR TWEEZERS: Use them to pull out stray bones from fish fillets.

KNIVES: A boning knife and a chef’s knife are good Western substitutes for a Japanese workhorse *deba* knife and slender-bladed *yanagi* fish knife. Both of the Japanese knives traditionally have an edge that’s beveled on one side (as opposed to double-beveled Western knives) and a blade with shallow hollows on the other side. The sharper your knife, the easier and neater your work—a dull blade will mash your maki and bruise your fish. (See [Chapter 1](#) for more on knives.)

MAKISU (ROLLING MAT): When rolling maki, you can put all the ingredients on a piece of plastic wrap laid on top of a kitchen towel, but the approximately 10-inch-square bamboo mats known as *makisu* make it easier to maintain even pressure. Better-quality mats

—whose slats are flat on top and round on the bottoms—yield better results.

SUSHI-MAKING TIPS

MAKING SUSHI RICE: See the [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari) recipe. When you combine the rice and vinegar, mix gently to keep it light and airy. Have the rice at room temperature when preparing and serving the sushi. It will be easier to work with and will better complement other ingredients.

BUYING RAW FISH: It is not safe to simply buy fish anywhere and eat it raw. Parasites can lurk unseen in raw fish; quick freezing at a very low temperature (faster and colder than anything you can achieve in your own freezer) is what kills them, and proper handling keeps the fish fresh enough to be tasty and safe when eaten raw. Look for a fishmonger who's experienced in selling fish for sushi. Whether or not you find a specialist, a good fish market should be spotless, with quick turnover of the inventory. Choose your fish with the following in mind:

- Whole fish should be buried in ice; steaks and fillets should be on trays atop the ice rather than in direct contact with it.
- Ask when the fish came in. If the type you want isn't super-fresh, pass it up for one that is.
- In whole fish, look for clear eyes and bright red gills. Fillets and steaks should be moist, shiny, and firm—the flesh should bounce back when you or the fishmonger touches it. If an indentation remains, or if there are gaps between the segments of flesh, choose another piece.
- To avoid parasites, make sure the fishmonger knows that you intend to eat the fish raw. A simple “sushi-grade” label is nonspecific, for marketing purposes, and isn't regulated by the government.
- Previously frozen fish isn't necessarily less desirable than never-frozen, depending on how soon after harvest it was frozen and how it was handled before and after freezing. (Note that fattier fish freezes better than lean.) Your fishmonger is in the best position to advise you.
- Some fish comes in blocks ready to cut for nigiri; otherwise, choose the thickest portion of the fillet (a “half side”), which is easier to work with.

STORING FISH: Fish stays freshest when stored at 32°F, out of contact with its own juices. Handle it gently to avoid bruising, which speeds up spoilage. If you're keeping fish for more than one day (not recommended), wrap it in watertight packaging and lay it on top of an ice pack or a watertight bag of ice. Wrap the whole thing tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate. Take the fish out daily to rinse it and pat dry, then give it fresh, dry wrapping. Make sure the ice pack stays frozen, or replace it with one that is. If you have any doubt at all about the freshness or safety of your fish, cook it. You can still prepare it like sushi, and it will be a tasty dish.

PREPARING YOUR WORK AREA: Before taking fish out of the refrigerator, get all of your other ingredients and tools ready. Be sure to keep raw seafood cool while you work.

FRESHEN THE FISH: Before using fish, rinse it gently under cold running water and pat dry.

CUTTING FISH:

- Pull out any pin bones with needle-nose pliers.
- Don't saw when cutting fish. Place the handle end of the knife blade where you want to begin the slice, and *pull* the knife through the fish, cutting smoothly across the flesh in one pass.

SLICING FISH FOR NIGIRIZUSHI, CHIRASHIZUSHI, OR SASHIMI:

- Cut the fillet lengthwise, across the grain of the connective tissue, into three sections: the narrow, brown middle section, known as the bloodline, where the grain changes direction; and the two usable sections on either side. Discard the bloodline. Cut off the area at the bottom of the belly where the grain changes direction again. You should end up with a rectangular piece of fish. Reserve spare pieces for norimaki, or for diced or minced fillings (such as spicy tuna roll).
- Remove the skin: Gently hold the block of fish down on the cutting board. Starting at the side closest to you, insert the tip of a boning knife between the skin and flesh, and make a shallow cut to separate the two. Hold the exposed flap of skin down on the cutting board with your fingers, and slide the edge of the knife into the gap. Tilt the top of the blade down toward you so the cutting edge of the blade forms a sharp angle with the cutting board, the point of the angle aiming away from you.

Slice outward to separate the skin from the flesh. Discard the skin.

- Hold a chef's knife perpendicular to the grain of the fillet, with the cutting edge at one corner of the rectangle. Slide the blade toward you across the fillet to cut off a triangle, so that end of the fillet is at a diagonal to the sides. Reserve the triangle to use in norimaki.
- Place a boning knife parallel to the diagonal, and hold it at a 45-degree angle to the cutting board. Cut slices about a ¼-inch thick and reserve any oddshaped bits for norimaki.

SLICING FISH FOR NORIMAKI OR TEMAKI:

- Remove the bloodline and skin according to the nigirizuchi procedures above, except don't cut off the area at the bottom of the belly.
- Lay half of the fillet on the cutting board pointing straight away from you.

Using a chef's knife, position the cutting edge at the far end of the fish, roughly perpendicular to the grain of the flesh, so the handle end of the blade rests on the fish. Slide the blade toward you along the length of the fillet to cut a narrow strip. Continue cutting long strips until the fish is completely sliced. Repeat for the other half of the fillet.

- To prepare fish for use in spicy rolls, cut or mince the strips into the size dice you prefer.

HANDLING NORI: Keep your hands dry when touching nori; this is not always easy, because your hands need to be damp when handling the rice. To toast, heat nori briefly above a gas burner until the nori turns bright green and crinkles very slightly.

HANDLING SUSHI RICE: Make sure the sushi rice is the same temperature as your hands—it has a tendency to stick to cold hands. Keep moistening your hands in a bowl filled with one part rice vinegar to three parts water, plus a teaspoon of salt for each cup of water. Always use a light touch, so as not to mash the rice.

PLATING SUSHI: Sushi should be served at room temperature. Placing sushi on simple, dark plates makes a striking presentation, particularly if the plates have unusual shapes. Combine a balance of sushi colors, shapes, textures, and flavors.

GARNISHING SUSHI: If desired, put a 1-teaspoon dollop of wasabi on the plate and add vegetable garnishes. Garnishes are most visually effective clustered in one area, rather than dotted all over the plate. A tangle of julienned or shredded daikon or carrots, or a cluster of colorful vegetables cut into ¼-inch matchsticks, ⅛-inch julienne, or fun shapes help create an attractive plate.

EATING SUSHI: Place a small bowl at each place setting and a cruet of soy sauce on the table. Diners can pour as much soy sauce as they desire into their bowl and, if they wish, stir in some wasabi. Pick up norimaki and chirashi with chopsticks; pick up temaki and nigiri with your fingers or with chopsticks. Barely dip the sushi in the soy sauce and remove it quickly to prevent the rice from soaking up too much of the sauce, which will overpower the taste of the fish.

STORING SUSHI (NOT RECOMMENDED): Sushi is best eaten as soon as it's made, because nori will become soggy and tough if not eaten right away. But if you must save it for later, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. If the sushi contains raw fish, eat it within 24 hours.

SUSHI RICE | *Shari*



Makes 4 CUPS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 30 To 45 MINUTES

Rice seasoned with vinegar is the foundation of sushi; in fact, the word sushi means “vinegared rice.” Rice made in an electric cooker will give you the best results.

4 cups cooked white Japonica rice, prepared according to the [Basic Rice \(Gohan\)](#) recipe

¼ cup rice vinegar

3 tablespoons sugar

2 teaspoons salt

1. While the rice is cooking, combine the vinegar, sugar, and salt in a small pot. Cook over low heat until the sugar and salt dissolve. Pour the mixture into a small bowl and let cool.
2. As soon as the rice has finished cooking and steaming, use a rice paddle or flat wooden spoon to transfer it into a large, wide glass, ceramic, wooden, or plastic bowl (not metal). Spread the rice out as much as you can.
3. Start tossing the rice by slicing straight lines through it with the edge of the paddle or spoon and flipping the rice over. Cut and toss lightly so as not to mash the rice. While tossing, sprinkle the rice with the cooled vinegar mixture. Continue tossing for 10 minutes to cool the rice. Stop occasionally to fan it, or have a helper fan it continuously while you toss.
4. Cover the bowl with a damp cloth until you're ready to use the rice. Don't refrigerate it. Use it as soon as possible on the day you make it, because it doesn't keep well.

HOW TO MAKE NORIMAKI



1. Prepare sushi rice according to the [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari) recipe.
2. Prepare the fillings. If you're using fish, cut it according to the "Slicing Fish for Norimaki or Temaki" procedure in [Sushi-Making Tips](#). If you're using other toppings, cut or mix them according to the individual recipe.
3. Cut sheets of nori in half to yield two 4-by-7-inch pieces.
4. Lay out your work area: a small bowl containing one part rice vinegar, three parts water, and a teaspoon of salt; the nori, rice, and sliced fish or other fillings; a knife for cutting the rolls; and a clean, damp cloth.
5. Lay a sushi mat (or, alternatively, a kitchen towel topped with plastic wrap) on a work surface with the flat sides of the slats facing up. Cover the flat sides of the mat with a piece of plastic wrap. (If you're making an inside-out roll, wrap plastic wrap all around the mat.)
6. Lay a half sheet of nori on the mat—shiny-side up for inside-out rolls, shiny-side down for all others.
7. Moisten your hands in the bowl of vinegar and water, then spread $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of rice on the nori in a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch layer, using the tips of your fingers to distribute it without mashing it down. Cover the nori all the way to three of the edges, leaving a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch strip unfilled along one of the long edges. Don't overfill, and keep the layer of rice sparse to thin.
8. Position the mat so the exposed edge of the nori is farthest away from you. Along the edge that's closest to

you, lay down a thin line of fillings about an inch and a half wide. Start with the softest ingredients, then add the firmer ones.

9. Put your thumbs under the mat at the filled edge, then gently roll it over and away from you until the end of the mat touches the rice. Softly push down on the center and ends of the roll until its shape is somewhat square, then repeat the process until the roll reaches the far edge of the mat and meets the unfilled strip of the nori. Run a wet finger along that edge and seal the roll. Form the roll into a cylinder and let it rest briefly, then make sure the edge is sealed before cutting.

10. To cut, dip a sharp knife in your vinegar water (see the “Handling Sushi Rice” procedure in [Sushi-Making Tips](#)) and let the excess drain off. Position the handle end of the blade crosswise at the center of the roll, and draw the knife toward you, all the way to the point. Quickly push the knife away from you and the rest of the way down to the board. Wipe the blade, wet it, and let it drain.

11. Repeat step 10 to cut each half of the roll in half, then repeat to cut each quarter in half.

12. Serve and eat immediately. To store maki rolls (not recommended, because nori will become soggy and tough if not eaten right away), refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. If the sushi contains raw fish, eat it within 24 hours.



CUCUMBER ROLL | *Kappamaki*



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

Named after the Japanese water monsters called kappa, who favor cucumbers, these simple rolls are filled with julienned cucumbers, cut according to a traditional method developed over decades. Japan's second-most-popular sushi, they are crunchy, fresh-tasting, and a great palate cleanser.

- 1 Japanese or English cucumber, at least 8 inches long and as symmetrical and straight as you can find, ends cut off
- 2 sheets toasted nori, cut in half to yield four 4-by-7-inch pieces
- 2 cups [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

1. Cut the cucumber in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds, leaving a smooth hollow.
2. Discard the seeds, and turn the cucumber over on the cutting board, cut-side down. Slice it into strips about 1/8-inch thick and 8 inches long.
3. Using 1 piece of the nori, 1/2 cup of the rice, and one-quarter of the cucumber, make a roll according to the "[How to Make Norimaki](#)" instructions.
4. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls.
5. Serve immediately.

AVOCADO AND CARROT ROLL



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

This quick-to-make roll filled with fresh vegetables is a vegetarian version of the popular California roll. Sprouts and carrots replace the imitation crabmeat and make it a simple yet colorful vegetarian sushi option.

½ avocado, pitted and peeled

2 teaspoons lemon juice

2 cups [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

2 sheets toasted nori, cut in half to yield two 4-by-7-inch pieces

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

2 teaspoons prepared wasabi (optional)

1 carrot, peeled and cut lengthwise into thin slices

½ cup alfalfa sprouts

1. Cut the avocado lengthwise into 8 slices. Sprinkle the avocado with the lemon juice to keep it from browning, then set aside.
2. Following steps 5 through 7 of the [“How to Make Norimaki”](#) instructions, spread ½ cup of rice over half a sheet of the nori.
3. Sprinkle the rice with ½ tablespoon of the sesame seeds and press them in.
4. Dab the rice with ½ teaspoon of the wasabi (if using).
5. Using 2 avocado slices, one-quarter of the carrots, and one-quarter of the sprouts, make a roll according to steps 8 through 11 of the [“How to Make Norimaki”](#) instructions.
6. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls. Serve immediately.

LARGE ROLL WITH VEGETABLES | *Futomaki*

MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 60 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 1 HOUR AND 15 MINUTES

Futomaki (thick sushi rolls) use full sheets of nori and contain as many as six ingredients, often vegetarian. Typical fillings include cucumber, lotus root, takenoko (bamboo shoots), and tamagoyaki (omelet). This recipe calls for a classic Japanese ingredient called kampyo, a type of dried gourd strips available in Asian markets and online.

3 dried shiitake mushrooms

2½ tablespoons sugar, divided

1½ tablespoons mirin, divided

2½ tablespoons soy sauce, divided

½ ounce kampyo 1 teaspoon salt

1 Sweet Omelet (Usuyaki Tamagoyaki)

4 cups Sushi Rice (Shari)

4 sheets toasted nori

One 5-ounce bag fresh spinach, stems removed, chopped, and parboiled (see [here](#))

1. In a medium bowl, cover the shiitake in 3 cups water for 30 minutes. Drain, reserving 1½ cups of the soaking liquid.
2. Cut off the stems and put the caps in a small saucepan with ½ cup of the reserved soaking liquid. Put the pot over medium-high heat, bring the liquid to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer for 20 minutes.
3. Stir in 1 tablespoon of the sugar, 1 tablespoon of the mirin, and 1 tablespoon of the soy sauce, and simmer until the liquid has evaporated, about 15 minutes. Cut each mushroom cap into four slices and set aside.
4. In a small bowl, soak the kampyo in enough water to cover for 5 minutes. Drain, sprinkle with the salt, massage briefly, and rinse.
5. Put the kampyo in a medium saucepan and add enough water to cover, plus ½ inch. Bring the water to a boil over medium-high

heat, and boil for 20 minutes. Add 1 cup of the shiitake soaking water, 1½ tablespoons sugar, ½ tablespoon mirin, and 1½ tablespoons soy sauce. Simmer over medium heat until the liquid has evaporated, about 30 minutes. Cut the kampyo into 4-inch strips and set aside.

6. Trim the uneven ends off the tamagoyaki and cut it into 12 (½-inch) slices.
7. Following steps 5 through 7 in “[How to Make Norimaki](#)”, spread ½ cup of the rice over half a sheet of the nori.
8. Starting in the center of the rice, place 3 pieces of tamagoyaki crosswise, end to end, in a line. Lay one-quarter of the kampyo along one side of the egg, and one-quarter of the shiitake along the other side. Top with one-quarter of the spinach.
9. Roll and cut the futomaki according to steps 9 through 11 of “[How to Make Norimaki](#).” As you compress while rolling, some filling may protrude; simply push it back in or slice it off.
10. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls.
11. Serve immediately. To store temaki rolls (not recommended, because nori will become soggy and tough if not eaten right away), refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. If the sushi contains raw fish, eat it within 24 hours.

TUNA AND CUCUMBER ROLL



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

This is an easy-to-make maki that really lets the freshness of the tuna and the delicate, crisp flavor of cucumber shine. Bluefin tuna is one of the most popular tunas for sushi, prized for its rich, red meat that melts in your mouth. Other tunas, such as albacore or yellowfin, could be substituted in this recipe, but be sure to use very fresh, sushi-grade fish.

2 sheets toasted nori, cut in half to yield two 4-by-7-inch pieces

2 cups [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

1 Japanese or English cucumber, seeded and cut into 1/8-by-8-inch strips

8 ounces bluefin tuna, cut into eight 4-inch-long strips

2 teaspoons prepared wasabi (optional)

1. Using 1 piece of the nori, 1/2 cup of rice, one-quarter of the cucumber, 2 strips of the tuna, and 1/2 teaspoon of wasabi (if using), make a roll according to the [“How to Make Norimaki”](#) instructions.
2. Repeat the steps for the remaining 3 rolls.
3. Serve immediately.

SPICY SALMON ROLL



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

To make this roll, you can use precut slices of fish or odds and ends left over from preparing nigirizushi or sashimi. To vary the flavor, try substituting albacore tuna or yellowtail, using chives instead of scallions, or adding ¼ teaspoon of sesame oil to the fish mixture.

- 1 tablespoon Japanese mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon sriracha sauce
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds
- 6 ounces salmon, cut into ¼-inch dice
- 2 sheets toasted nori, cut in half to yield four 4-by-7-inch pieces
- 2 cups [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)
- ½ cup thinly sliced scallions

1. In a medium bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, sriracha, oil, and sesame seeds. Add the salmon and stir to coat.
2. Using 1 piece of the nori, ½ cup of the rice, one-quarter of the salmon mixture, and 2 tablespoons of the scallions, make a roll according to the “[How to Make Norimaki](#)” instructions.
3. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls.
4. Serve immediately.

ALASKA ROLL



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

This inside-out roll is a variation on the California roll, but contains raw fish.

2 sheets toasted nori, cut in half to yield four 4-by-7-inch pieces

2 cups [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

1 Japanese or English cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into sixteen 8-inchlong strips

One 6-ounce salmon fillet, sliced lengthwise into 8 strips

½ avocado, pitted, peeled, and cut lengthwise into 8 strips

1. Using 1 piece of the nori, ½ cup of the rice, 4 strips of the cucumber, 2 strips of the salmon, and 2 pieces of avocado, make a roll according to the “[How to Make Norimaki](#)” instructions.
2. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls.
3. Serve immediately.

RAINBOW ROLL



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

This pretty roll is striped on the outside with avocado and three colors of sashimi. Beneath this rainbow lies an inside-out roll of your choice: a spicy tuna or salmon roll as a base gives you contrasting flavors and textures.

4 uncut [Spicy Salmon Rolls](#)

8 ounces albacore tuna fillet, cut into 8 strips 1 inch wide, 1 to 2½ inches long, and ¼ inch thick

8 ounces salmon fillet, cut into 8 strips 1 inch wide, 1 to 2½ inches long, and ¼ inch thick

8 ounces white fish (yellowtail, halibut, or snapper) fillet, cut into 8 strips 1 inch wide, 1 to 2½ inches long, and ¼ inch thick

1 avocado, peeled

2 teaspoons lemon juice (optional)

1. On the outside of each salmon roll, lay 2 strips each of the tuna, salmon fillet, and white fish, in whatever decorative pattern you prefer.
2. Using a vegetable peeler, shave off thin slices of the dark green avocado meat covering the paler fruit within, and place them directly in the slots between the fish. If you don't plan to eat the rolls immediately, sprinkle the avocado with lemon juice to keep it from browning.
3. Encase each of the rolls in plastic wrap, and press it firmly into a log shape.
4. Slice each roll through the wrap into 8 pieces.
5. Serve immediately.

CALIFORNIA ROLL



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

Named for the state where they were created, California rolls ignited the explosion of Western-devised maki that contain ingredients such as cream cheese, smoked salmon, avocado, and mayonnaise. Familiar ingredients make California rolls a great starter sushi. They are usually prepared inside out, with the rice outside the nori.

½ avocado, pitted and peeled

2 teaspoons lemon juice

2 sheets toasted nori, cut in half to yield four 4-by-7-inch pieces

2 cups [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

2 teaspoons prepared wasabi (optional)

½ Japanese cucumber, seeded and cut into matchsticks

6 ounces leg-style kani (crab stick)

1. Cut the avocado lengthwise into 8 slices. Trim off the inner portions of the slices to yield half-moons. Sprinkle the avocado with lemon juice to keep it from browning and set aside. Reserve the spare pieces of avocado for another use.
2. Following steps 5 through 7 of the “[How to Make Norimaki](#)” instructions, spread ½ cup of rice over one of the half sheets of nori.
3. Sprinkle the rice with one-quarter of the sesame seeds and press them in. Pick up the rice-topped nori sheet, and flip it over on top of the plastic wrap.
4. Dab the nori with ½ teaspoon of the wasabi (if using).
5. Using 2 avocado slices, one-quarter of the cucumber, and one-quarter of the kani, make a roll according to steps 8 through 11 of the “[How to Make Norimaki](#)” instructions.
6. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls.
7. Serve immediately.

How to Make Temaki



1. Prepare sushi rice according to the [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari) recipe.
2. Prepare the fillings. If you're using fish, cut it according to the "Slicing Fish for Norimaki or Temaki" procedure in [Sushi-Making Tips](#). If you're using other toppings, cut or mix them according to the individual recipe.
3. Lay out your work area: a small bowl containing one part rice vinegar, three parts water, and a teaspoon of salt; the nori, rice, sliced fish, and other fillings; and a clean, damp cloth.
4. Dry your hands and cut a sheet of nori in half. Lay the nori shiny-side down on a dry, flat work surface, with the long side toward you.
5. Moisten your hands with the vinegar water, scoop up about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of rice, and put it on the left-hand side of the nori. Poke the rice with the tips of your fingers to spread it over the left-hand third of the nori, to a depth of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Along the edge of the nori closest to you, leave a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border free of rice.
6. Add your fillings diagonally across the rectangle of rice, from the lower right-hand corner to the upper left-hand corner. Don't pile the fillings too high.
7. Place one grain of rice in the lower right-hand corner of the nori sheet.
8. Dry off your hands so they don't stick to the nori. Fold the lower left-hand corner of the nori up and over the diagonal line of fillings so that the lower right-hand corner of the rice square becomes a point. Continue to roll the nori into a cone, until all of the plain nori is

completely wrapped around the cone that surrounds the fillings.

9. To seal the cone, press down on the nori over the single grain of rice.

10. Serve and eat immediately. To store temaki rolls (not recommended, because nori will become soggy and tough if not eaten right away), refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. If the sushi contains raw fish, eat it within 24 hours.



6



7



8



9



10

YELLOWTAIL–SCALLION TEMAKI



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

Yellowtail (hamachi) and scallions are a classic sushi combination, with the fish a buttery, delicate counterpoint to the crisp sharpness of the scallions. You can purchase the salmon roe (ikura) for this recipe online or at Asian grocery stores.

1 cup [Sushi Rice \(Shari\)](#)

2 sheets toasted nori, cut into 3½-by-8-inch halves

8 ounces yellowtail, cut into eight 4-inch-long strips

8 scallions, cut into 4-inch lengths and julienned lengthwise

2 tablespoons salmon roe

1. Construct the temaki according to steps 4 through 6 in “[How to Make Temaki](#)”, using two strips of the yellowtail and one-quarter of the scallions for each roll. Position the scallions so they stick out slightly beyond the fish. Put ½ tablespoon of salmon roe just below the top of the rectangle, to the left of the fillings.
2. Following steps 7 through 9 in “[How to Make Temaki](#),” roll the temaki.
3. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls.
4. Serve immediately.

SPICY SCALLOP TEMAKI



MAKES 4 ROLLS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

A hand roll is an excellent delivery system for both soft mixtures and slices of fish or, in this case, scallops (hotate-gai). This recipe calls for masago or tobiko, two kinds of bright orange fish roe that you can buy online or in Asian grocery stores. You could substitute spicy albacore tuna or spicy salmon with equal success.

1 tablespoon Japanese mayonnaise

1 teaspoon sriracha sauce

8 ounces scallops, diced into ¼-inch pieces

1 cucumber, julienned into ⅛-inch-thick matchsticks about 3½ inches long

8 asparagus tips, about 3½ inches long, parboiled (see [here](#))

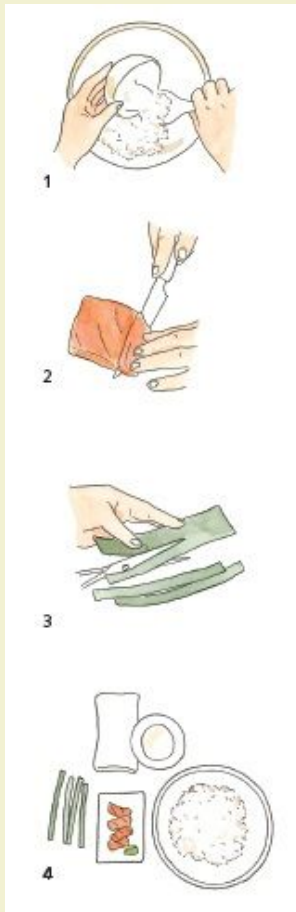
2 tablespoons masago or tobiko

1 cup [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

2 sheets toasted nori, cut into 3½-by-8-inch halves

1. Mix the mayonnaise and sriracha in a small bowl; add the diced scallops and stir to coat. Set aside.
2. Construct a roll according to steps 4 through 6 in “[How to Make Temaki](#)”, using one-quarter of the scallop mixture, one-quarter of the cucumber, and two of the asparagus tips. Position the asparagus so it sticks out slightly beyond the scallop. Put ½ tablespoon of masago just below the top of the rectangle, to the left of the fillings.
3. Following steps 7 through 9 in “[How to Make Temaki](#),” roll the temaki.
4. Repeat for the remaining 3 rolls.
5. Serve immediately.

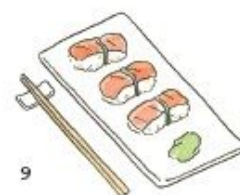
How to Make Nigirizushi



1. Prepare sushi rice according to the [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari) recipe.
2. Prepare the toppings. If you're using fish, cut it according to the "Slicing Fish for Nigirizushi, Chirashizushi, or Sashimi" procedure in [Sushi-Making Tips](#). Each slice should weigh 1½ to 2 ounces. If you can't buy your fish ready-trimmed into a block for sushi, buy one-third more than you need for the topping to allow for the trimmings you'll need to cut off. If you're using other toppings, cut or mix them according to the individual recipe.
3. If you plan to add a "belt" of nori around the nigiri, dry your hands and cut strips of nori about 1/3 inch by 3½ inches.
4. Lay out your work area, with a small bowl containing one part rice vinegar, three parts water, and a teaspoon of salt; the rice, wasabi paste, sliced fish or other toppings, and nori strips (if using); and a clean, damp cloth.
5. Moisten your hands with the vinegar water and scoop 2 tablespoons of sushi rice into your palm. Use two fingers of your other hand to shape the rice into an oval measuring 1 inch by 2 to 2½ inches. If you're planning to eat the nigiri with your hands, form the ball gently to keep it light; if you plan to eat the nigiri with chopsticks, pack the ball more firmly so it won't fall apart. If you want a smaller bite or are serving children, make a smaller ball.
6. Spread a small amount of wasabi onto the rice, using anywhere from a rice-grain-size bit to a pea-size lump,

depending on how spicy you want your nigiri. If you prefer, forego the wasabi altogether.

7. Pick up a piece of fish or other topping, and drape or spread it lengthwise over the rice. Squeeze gently to make sure the topping sticks. Use your thumb to make an indentation in the bottom of the rice.
8. If you're "belting" the nigiri with a strip of nori, rinse and dry your hands before handling the nori. Center the strip on top of the sushi, and wrap each end downward along the sides. Flip the nigiri over and dampen one end of the nori. Fold the wet end over the dry end, and press to secure the strip.
9. Serve and eat immediately. To store nigirizushi (not recommended), refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. If the sushi contains raw fish, eat it within 24 hours.



TAMAGOYAKI OMELET NIGIRI



MAKES 8 PIECES

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

A roll of thin layers of tamago (egg), the tamagoyaki used in this recipe is slightly sweet. The bright yellow omelet is secured to the lustrous white rice with a dark green nori strip, making this a particularly handsome nigiri.

1 usuyaki tamagoyaki omelet, made by dividing the [Sweet Omelet \(Usuyaki Tamagoyaki\)](#) recipe in half and rolling it into a flattened cylinder about 2 inches wide

1½ cups [Sushi Rice \(Shari\)](#)

1 sheet toasted nori, cut into eight ⅓-by-3-inch strips

1. Trim the uneven ends off the tamagoyaki and cut it into eight ¾-inch strips.
2. Using 1 slice of tamagoyaki and 1 strip of nori, make a nigiri according to steps 5 through 8 in “[How to Make Nigirizushi](#)”. Leave out the wasabi.
3. Repeat for the remaining 7 nigiri.
4. Serve immediately. (The nori will become soggy and tough if the sushi is allowed to stand.)

MACKEREL AND PICKLED GINGER NIGIRI



MAKES 6 OR 7 PIECES

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

There are a number of sushi recipes that use cooked fish, and this is one of them. The skin on the grilled or broiled mackerel (saba) turns brown and crispy, while the fatty flesh becomes moist and tender. Pickled ginger (gari) is an excellent complement to the rich fish.

2½ tablespoons rice vinegar

2½ tablespoons finely chopped ginger

2½ tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt, divided

2 cups cooked rice, prepared according to the [Basic Rice \(Gohan\)](#) recipe, covered to keep hot

One ½-pound mackerel fillet

1 tablespoon canola oil pickled ginger

1. Preheat the grill or broiler.
2. In a small saucepan over medium heat, mix together the vinegar, ginger, sugar, and $\frac{2}{3}$ teaspoon of the salt. Heat and stir until the sugar and salt have dissolved. Transfer the mixture to a small bowl and leave it to cool.
3. Following steps 2 through 4 of the [Sushi Rice \(Shari\)](#) recipe, combine the hot rice with the cooled vinegar-ginger mixture. Cover and set aside.
4. Lightly sprinkle the mackerel all over with the remaining salt. Brush the grill grate or broiler pan with the oil. Grill the fish, skin-side down, or broil it, skin-side up, 9 to 13 minutes. If the flesh has not turned white and opaque, return the fish to the heat for 1 minute more. The skin should be slightly charred.
5. Lay the mackerel on a piece of plastic wrap, skin-side down. Cover it completely with the seasoned rice and wrap the plastic tightly around the formation. Press the roll into a log shape, and allow it to rest for 5 minutes.

6. Without removing the plastic wrap, cut the roll into 1-inch-thick slices. Peel off the plastic and serve the nigiri with a mound of pickled ginger.

SHRIMP AND KIWIFRUIT NIGIRI



MAKES 8 PIECES

PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES

This is an example of gunkanmaki (“war-ship roll”), a type of nigiri with an elongated oval shape reminiscent of old-style schooners. A wide strip of nori is wrapped around the sides of the rice ball, forming a cup above the rice to hold soft toppings such as sea urchin, quail eggs, or roe.

4 ounces baby shrimp, cleaned and lightly boiled

1 tablespoon peeled, finely diced kiwifruit

⅛ teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger

½ tablespoon Japanese mayonnaise

¾ cup [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

2 sheets toasted nori, cut into 1½-by-8-inch strips

1 tablespoon salmon roe (optional)

1. In a small bowl, combine the shrimp, kiwifruit, ginger, and mayonnaise.
2. Prepare a ball of rice according to the instructions in “[How to Make Nigirizushi](#)”. Be sure to leave an indentation for the filling.
3. Dry your hands and wrap a nori strip around the ball. Press the nori collar around the rice and seal, adding a touch of moisture to the nori if needed.
4. Put 1 tablespoon of the shrimp-kiwifruit mixture into the indentation in the rice. Garnish with three or four beads of roe (if using).
5. Repeat for the remaining 7 pieces.
6. Serve immediately.

CHIRASHIZUSHI



MAKES 4 BOWLS

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

The easiest of all sushi to make, chirashizushi is simply a bowl of sushi rice with sashimi and vegetables. Traditionally, the dish includes nine toppings in a balance of flavors, textures, and colors. You can make chirashi with nigiri-style slices of fish, or make it with random bits of fish not pretty or symmetrical enough for sashimi or nigiri. Vegetable garnishes such as curls of daikon and carrot, bright green shiso leaves, and a mound of gari dress up the presentation nicely. A wide Japanese bowl is the optimal vessel, but don't overfill it.

4 dried shiitake mushrooms

1½ cups warm water

2 teaspoons soy sauce, plus more for the table

2 teaspoons mirin

2 teaspoons sake

2 teaspoons sugar

2 carrots, cut crosswise into 3-inch segments

4 cups [Sushi Rice](#) (Shari)

6 teaspoons sesame seeds

4 scallions, half the green tops trimmed off thinly sliced

12 snow peas, strings removed, parboiled, and cut lengthwise into ¼-inch strips

6 ounces salmon fillet, cut into eight 3-by-1-by-¼-inch slices

6 ounces albacore tuna fillet, cut into eight 3-by-1-by-¼-inch slices

12 ounces yellowtail or fluke fillet, cut into sixteen 3-by-1-by-¼-inch slices

1½ sheets toasted nori, cut into ¼-inch squares

½ cup pickled ginger

¼ cup rice vinegar

4 teaspoons wasabi

1. In a small bowl, soak the shiitake in the warm water for 1 hour. Drain the liquid into a small saucepan over medium heat, and add the soy sauce, mirin, sake, and sugar.

2. Cut the stems off the mushrooms and discard, then slice the caps into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch strips. Add the mushrooms to the pot and simmer for 10 minutes. Drain and set aside to cool.
3. Slice the carrot segments lengthwise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick strips. Cut the strips into $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-wide matchsticks. Put the matchsticks in a small saucepan and cover with water. Bring the water to a boil over high heat, turn the heat down to medium, and simmer until crisp-tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside to cool.
4. Put 1 cup of rice into each of 4 wide bowls. Sprinkle each with $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of the sesame seeds, then one-quarter of the scallions. Arrange one-quarter of the shiitake, snow peas, and carrots on top of each bowl. Lay one-quarter of the fish in an attractive pattern over the vegetables in each bowl, and garnish with the nori squares.
5. Serve immediately with soy sauce and the pickled ginger, vinegar, and wasabi.



FISH AND SEAFOOD

FLUKE SASHIMI WITH PONZU SAUCE

YELLOWTAIL SASHIMI WITH JALAPEÑO

SALMON SASHIMI WITH LEMON AND SPICY SAUCE

TUNA TATAKI

DASHI-SIMMERED FLOUNDER

PAN-BROILED SALMON WITH SCALLIONS

SALT-BAKED SEA BASS

ROASTED BLACK COD WITH MISO

SCALLOPS DENGAKU

SAKE-STEAMED CLAMS

SHRIMP TEMPURA WITH TWO SAUCES

GRILLED SQUID WITH CITRUS-SOY MARINADE

SEARED SESAME-CRUSTED AHI TUNA WITH STEAMED VEGETABLES AND
MISO DIPPING SAUCE

Japan, an island nation, has always relied heavily on fish and seafood as protein sources. During famines, the Japanese survived on the hundreds of different types of creatures swimming in the Pacific Ocean, the Sea of Japan, and the islands' many lakes and rivers. With the variety of fish comes a variety of cooking techniques. Slices of raw fish that are not served over or rolled up in vinegared rice are called sashimi. They also cook fish and seafood in every way imaginable, from *yakimono* (grilled and pan-fried) and *itamemono* (stir-fried), to *nimono* (stewed or boiled) and *mushimono* (steamed). Another method, *agemono* (deep-fried)—for instance, batter-fried tempura—reflects the influence of Western cuisine.

Even with the growing appetite for Western-style foods, fish and seafood remain entrenched in the Japanese diet. While the average person around the world eats about 29 pounds of fish per year and the average American eats about 44 pounds, the typical Japanese eats 155 pounds of fish per year. That includes some endangered species, such as bluefin tuna (Japan eats 81 percent of the world's fresh tuna) and eel, which Japan both catches and imports. Not surprisingly, international concern over the depletion of the world's fisheries has made its way to Japan, and interest in sustainability is

slowly rising. Fortunately, you can easily adapt virtually any Japanese recipe to ensure you're using sustainable fish.

Tips on Buying Seafood

- When shopping for seafood, look for the distinctive blue “Certified Sustainable Seafood” label that indicates the Marine Stewardship Council (www.msc.org) has approved your selection. If you don’t see the label (MSC hasn’t yet evaluated all the world’s seafood), check the latest list from Seafood Watch (www.seafoodwatch.org) for information on which fish and shellfish are best choices and which are must-avoids. Seafood Watch even has a free Sushi Guide to popular sushi and sashimi fish.
- If you’re planning to serve sushi or sashimi, always ask your fishmonger whether the fish on offer is safe to eat raw. Such fish is sometimes labeled “sushi-grade,” though that designation isn’t regulated by the government.
- See “[Sushi-Making Tips](#)” for guidelines on buying, storing, and slicing raw fish and seafood.

FLUKE SASHIMI WITH PONZU SAUCE

SERVES 4 AS AN APPETIZER

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

You might have come across hirame on your sushi bar's menu. Hirame isn't a specific fish. Rather, it's a category of flat, white fish that includes fluke (summer flounder), any other kind of flounder, turbot, and brill. This recipe works well using any of these; the light citrus flavors of the ponzu sauce complement rather than mask the delicacy of these fish. If you enjoy scallops, they are equally delicious served this way.

- 12 ounces sashimi-grade hirame fillets
- ⅓ cup Ponzu Sauce
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- ⅓ cup shredded daikon
- 6 chives, finely chopped
- Zest of 1 lime, grated
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 red radishes, thinly sliced

1. Rinse the fish under cold running water and pat it dry. With a sharp butcher knife, follow the “Slicing Fish for Nigirizushi, Chirashizushi, or Sashimi” in [Sushi-Making Tips](#) to cut the fish into 8 very thin pieces of similar size. Arrange the slices on 1 large platter or 4 smaller plates.
2. In a small bowl, mix the ponzu, oil, and lime juice. Drizzle the sauce over the fish.
3. Garnish the sashimi with a sprinkling of daikon, chives, lime zest, and pepper. Place a thin slice of radish in the center of each piece of sashimi.
4. Sashimi is best eaten as soon as it's made, but if you must save it for later (not recommended), refrigerate it in a tightly sealed container and eat within 24 hours.

YELLOWTAIL SASHIMI WITH JALAPEÑO



SERVES 4 AS AN APPETIZER

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

Fatty and delicate, yellowtail (kanpachi or hamachi) has a buttery richness that's surprising in such white flesh. The jalapeño, garlic, and tart, citrusy yuzu in the dressing make a delicious contrast to the fish.

12 ounces sashimi-grade yellowtail fillet

1 tablespoon canola oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon puréed garlic

4 tablespoons [Ponzu Sauce](#)

1½ tablespoons very thinly sliced scallions

1 tablespoon diced red jalapeño pepper

1 tablespoon diced green jalapeño pepper

1 tablespoon diced daikon

8 sprigs cilantro

1. Rinse the fish under cold running water and pat it dry. With a sharp butcher knife, follow the “Slicing Fish for Nigirizushi, Chirashizushi, or Sashimi” instructions in [Sushi-Making Tips](#) to cut the fish into 8 very thin pieces of similar size. Arrange the slices on 1 large platter or 4 smaller plates.
2. In a small bowl, mix the oil and garlic. Brush the mixture sparingly onto the fish, then drizzle with the ponzu.
3. Sprinkle the sashimi with the scallion, jalapeños, and daikon. Garnish with cilantro.
4. Sashimi is best eaten as soon as it's made, but if you must save it for later (not recommended), refrigerate it in a tightly sealed container and eat within 24 hours.

SALMON SASHIMI WITH LEMON AND SPICY SAUCE



SERVES 4 AS AN APPETIZER

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

This recipe brightens fatty salmon (sake, not to be confused with the rice wine) with lemon juice, lemon zest, and spicy sriracha, and pops on the plate with a colorful contrast of pink, white, and green.

12 ounces sashimi-grade salmon fillet
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 teaspoon sesame oil
½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1½ tablespoons Japanese mayonnaise
1½ tablespoons sriracha
2 tablespoons finely chopped chives
3 tablespoons microgreens or alfalfa sprouts
8 sprigs fresh dill

1. Rinse the fish under cold running water and pat it dry. With a sharp butcher knife, follow the “Slicing Fish for Nigirizushi, Chirashizushi, or Sashimi” instructions in [Sushi-Making Tips](#) to cut the fish into 8 very thin pieces of similar size. Arrange the slices on 1 large platter or 4 smaller plates.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the juice, oils, and zest. Set aside.
3. In a separate small bowl, combine the mayonnaise and sriracha. Set aside.
4. Drizzle the lemon and oil mixture over the fish. Scatter the chives on top, then the microgreens or sprouts. Place a dime-size dab of the spicy mayonnaise on each piece of sashimi and garnish with the dill.
5. Sashimi is best eaten as soon as it’s made, but if you must save it for later (not recommended), refrigerate it in a tightly sealed container and eat within 24 hours.

TUNA TATAKI



SERVES 4 AS AN APPETIZER

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 3 MINUTES

In tataki (literally, “pounded”), the fish is coated with a ginger paste traditionally prepared by pounding. Quickly seared and left raw at the center, the fish is cut into slices much like sashimi, with a result that is firm, meaty, and refreshing. This preparation is also excellent for well-marbled beef.

For the dressing:

- ½ teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- ⅓ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
- 2 tablespoons mirin

For the tataki:

- ½ cup minced fresh ginger
- 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon white sesame seeds
- 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon black sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 12 ounces sushi-grade tuna steaks
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed orange juice
- 2 cups mixed baby lettuce leaves
- 1 tablespoon thinly sliced scallions

To make the dressing:

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the ginger and pepper with the oils. Add the remaining ingredients, and whisk to combine thoroughly.

2. Reserve 2 tablespoons of the dressing in a separate bowl and set aside.

To make the tataki:

1. In a small bowl, combine the ginger, sesame seeds, and pepper. Spread the mixture evenly across a dinner plate.
2. Rinse the tuna under cold running water and pat it dry. Slice the surface of the fish with ¼-inch-deep slits that are parallel and spaced ¼-inch apart. Lightly salt the steaks all over with the salt, then press them into the seed mixture on both sides, so that some of the seeds stick to the fish.
3. In a large nonstick skillet heated over high heat, pour in the oil, wait a moment for it to warm, and add the fish steaks. Let the fish sizzle for 30 seconds, turn it over, and cook for another 30 seconds. Transfer the fish to a plate. It should be raw in the center.
4. Turn the heat down to medium and add the lime and orange juice. Deglaze the pan, scraping any cooked bits off the bottom and sides, then pour the pan juices over the tuna.
5. Slice the fish along the parallel cuts. You should have 20 to 24 slices.
6. Put the lettuce in the medium bowl with the dressing, and toss to coat.
7. Portion the greens onto 4 salad plates, and lay an equal number of fish slices atop each plate of greens. Drizzle ½ tablespoon of the reserved dressing over each serving of the tataki, and sprinkle the scallions on top.
8. Tataki is best eaten as soon as it's made, but if you must save it for later (not recommended), refrigerate the fish, dressing, and lettuce in separate tightly sealed containers. Eat the tataki within 24 hours.

DASHI-SIMMERED FLOUNDER

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Another recipe calling for flat, white hirame, this is a lovely way to prepare flat fish such as lemon sole (winter flounder), fluke (summer flounder), or sand dabs. It's also a quick one, since flounder cooks through in just a couple of minutes.

½ cup sake

½ cup mirin

1 cup Ichiban Dashi

½ cup soy sauce

1 carrot, peeled and sliced very thin

1 (1-inch) piece of fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced

½ cup water

2 large flounder fillets (about 12 ounces each)

8 very thin lime slices

8 sprigs cilantro

1. In a covered skillet large enough to hold the fillets without overlapping, bring the sake, mirin, dashi, soy sauce, carrots, ginger, and water to a boil over medium-high heat. Turn the heat down to medium and simmer until the carrots soften, about 5 minutes.
2. Rinse the flounder under cold running water and pat it dry. Cut each fillet in half across the middle.
3. Add the fish to the pan in a single layer, dark-side up. Cover the pan and return the liquid to a boil. Lower the heat to medium and simmer for 2 minutes. Uncover the skillet to spoon the liquid over the fish, and then simmer, basting constantly, until the fish is white and flakes easily, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Transfer the fish to 4 shallow bowls, and pour one-quarter of the stock over the fish.
5. Garnish with the carrot rounds, lime slices, and cilantro sprigs, and serve.

6. To store the fish, don't garnish it after cooking. Allow it to cool completely, then refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 1 day.

PAN-BROILED SALMON WITH SCALLIONS

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Use a cast iron skillet to get the best results with this simple dish. Salting the fish before cooking concentrates its flavor, while the peanut oil, which can withstand very high heat without smoking, allows you to get the skillet extremely hot before adding the salmon.

4 skinless salmon fillets (about 1½ pounds total)

2 tablespoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons peanut oil

½ cup mirin

¼ cup rice vinegar

2 tablespoons sesame oil

2 tablespoons soy sauce

3 to 5 scallions, finely chopped

1 lemon, quartered

1. Sprinkle the salmon generously on both sides with the salt. Let it rest for 10 minutes, then rinse it under cold running water and pat it very dry.
2. In a large skillet over high heat, heat the peanut oil almost to the smoking point. Reduce the heat to medium high. Add the salmon to the pan, and cook until it begins to turn opaque at the edges and loosens from the bottom of the pan, 2 to 4 minutes. Turn the fish over and cook for 2 minutes more.
3. Transfer the fish to 4 warmed plates, with the browner side up, and cover to keep it warm.
4. Remove the pan from the heat, and add the mirin, vinegar, sesame oil, and soy sauce. Deglaze the pan, scraping the browned bits off the bottom and sides of the pan.
5. Put the pan back on medium-high heat and bring the liquid to a rapid boil. Cook until the liquid reduces by half.

6. Pour the sauce over the salmon fillets, sprinkle with the scallions, and place a lemon quarter next to each piece of fish.
7. To store, allow the salmon to cool completely, and refrigerate it and the sauce and garnishes in separate tightly sealed containers. The fish will keep for 1 day.

SALT-BAKED SEA BASS



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

Encrusting fish in a salt-and-egg-white mixture, which hardens while the fish cooks, keeps it beautifully moist. Meanwhile, the flesh of the fish absorbs the subtle flavor of its aromatic fillings.

1 cup roughly chopped cilantro, divided

½ cup chopped scallions

½ cup slivered ginger

2 whole black sea bass, branzino, or porgy (about 1½ pounds each), gutted, scales left on

2 teaspoons sesame oil

1 lime, peeled and cut into ¼-inch slices

8 egg whites

3 cups coarse sea salt

3 cups kosher salt

¼ cup Tsuyu Sauce

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. In a small bowl, combine ¾ cup of the cilantro with the scallions and ginger.
3. Rinse the outside and cavities of the fish under cold running water, and pat them dry. Rub the cavity of each fish with 1 teaspoon of sesame oil, and stuff each fish with half of the lime slices and half of the cilantro mixture.
4. In a large bowl, beat the egg whites until soft peaks form, and stir in both kinds of salt.
5. Spread half of the salt mixture on a baking sheet, and pat it into a shape large enough to accommodate both fish. Place the fish on the bed of salt, then pat the rest of the salt mixture all over them, completely encasing each fish in a separate mound.
6. Bake the fish until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the fish reads 140°F, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove the fish from the oven and let them rest for 5 minutes.
7. To serve, tap the salt crust with the back of a spoon. Peel off the top layer of salt, as well as the fish skin. Run a boning knife or other sharp, narrow blade between the top filet and the bones,

and carefully transfer the fillet to a dinner plate. Remove the skeleton and stuffing, and transfer the bottom fillet to another plate. Repeat for the second fish, for a total of 4 plates.

8. Garnish with the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cilantro, and serve with the tsuyu sauce on the side.
9. To store, allow the fish to cool completely, then refrigerate it, the cilantro, and the sauce in separate tightly sealed containers. The fish will keep for 1 day.

ROASTED BLACK COD WITH MISO

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES (EXCLUDING MARINATING TIME)

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Black cod, also known as sablefish or butterfish, is pearly white like halibut, but fattier and very delicate. Marinating for long periods of time makes it even more flavorful.

For the marinade:

¼ cup mirin

¼ cup sake

½ cup white miso

⅓ cup sugar

For the fish

4 (6- to 7-ounce) skinless black cod fillets, about 1½ inches thick

¼ cup kosher salt

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

8 chives

4 tablespoons pickled ginger

To make the marinade:

1. In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the mirin and sake to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and add the miso and sugar.
2. Whisk the sauce until the miso is incorporated and the sugar is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Set aside to cool.

To make the fish:

1. Rinse the fillets under cold running water and pat them dry. Sprinkle them all over with the salt. Let them stand for 30 minutes, then rinse them again and pat them dry.
2. Place the fillets in a baking dish or a flat, covered plastic storage container large enough to hold them in a single layer. Pour the cooled marinade into the dish and turn over the fillets until they are coated. Cover and refrigerate for 24 to 48 hours.

3. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
4. Line a baking sheet with baking parchment and oil the paper. Scrape the marinade off the fillets and lay them skin-side down on the parchment.
5. Roast the fillets for 2 minutes, flip them over carefully, and roast until the fish is flaky, about 15 minutes.
6. Garnish each fillet with 2 chives, and serve with pickled ginger on the side.

SCALLOPS DENGAKU



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Dengaku, a style of grilling skewered food with a miso topping, is a favorite preparation for eggplant and tofu. This baked version is a luscious way to make scallops. The sauce, with its high sugar content, caramelizes when cooked, creating delicious bits of brown and black that contrast beautifully with the silken whiteness of the scallops. To make this dish extra special, serve it in scallop shells. If those aren't available, individual casserole dishes, shallow ramekins, or a shallow casserole will also work.

Tips on Buying Scallops: Sea scallops are the larger scallops; they average ten per pound. The smaller, marble-size scallops are bay scallops, which won't work for this recipe. Try to buy scallops that have been dry-packed—wet-packed scallops are plumped up in a phosphate solution that tastes vaguely metallic or slightly soapy.

For the sauce:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white miso
- 2 tablespoons sake
- 2 tablespoons mirin
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Ichiban Dashi

For the dengaku:

- 16 sea scallops
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons toasted black sesame seeds
- 4 sprigs cilantro

To make the sauce:

1. In a double boiler set over boiling water, combine the miso, sake, mirin, and sugar.

2. Whisk in the egg yolks, then add the dashi a little bit at a time, while stirring. The mixture should become thick. Set aside.

To make the dengaku:

1. Lightly sprinkle the scallops all over with the salt. Let them rest for 15 minutes, then rinse under cold running water and pat them very dry.
2. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Brush your preferred baking vessel with the sesame oil, and arrange the scallops in a single layer.
3. Spread a thin layer of the sauce onto each scallop, then sprinkle the sesame seeds over the top. Bake the scallops for 11 minutes. They should be slightly undercooked to retain their tenderness.
4. Garnish the cooked scallops with cilantro.
5. To store the scallops, allow them to cool completely. Refrigerate them and the cilantro in separate tightly sealed containers. Scallops will keep for 24 to 48 hours.

SAKE-STEAMED CLAMS



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 1 HOUR

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

If you like steamers, or mussels simmered in white wine and garlic, you'll enjoy this dish. It's a super-easy way to prepare clams.

2 pounds manila or littleneck clams

1 tablespoon salt

½ gallon cold water

12 scallions

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and thinly sliced

1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and very thinly sliced

1 cup sake

1. Scrub the clams under cold running water. In a large bowl, dissolve the salt in ½ gallon of cold water. Soak the clams for at least 15 minutes or up to an hour, so they expel any grit.
2. Cut the green ends off the scallions and reserve. Thinly slice the white bulbs and set those aside as well.
3. In a saucepan large enough to hold all the clams, melt the butter over low heat. Add the scallion bulbs, jalapeño, and ginger, and cook for 1 minute.
4. Add the clams and cook for 1 minute more, then add the sake and ½ cup of water.
5. Cover and cook until the clams open, 4 to 6 minutes. As the clams open, transfer them to a serving bowl and cover to keep warm. Discard any clams that don't open.
6. When all the clams are cooked, pour the broth through a fine-mesh strainer lined with a paper towel, letting the liquid drain into a small, clean saucepan. Set the pot over medium heat and add the reserved scallion greens. Cook until the scallions turn bright green, for about 1 minute.
7. Divide up the clams among 4 individual bowls, and pour the broth over the top of each portion.
8. Eat the clams immediately; don't store them for later.

SHRIMP TEMPURA WITH TWO SAUCES

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

Delicate, crunchy shrimp tempura is well within the skills of even home cooks, especially if you follow the simple guidelines in the [Vegetable Tempura](#) recipe. The recipe here calls for Asian chili paste, which most supermarkets carry in their Asian foods section. The jarred paste contains hot chili peppers, garlic, oil, and salt.

Tips on Buying Shrimp: *Shrimp are sized according to how many pieces make a pound. For example, a label of 41/50 means there are forty-one to fifty shrimp per pound. For tempura, 16/20 shrimp are the optimal size; 2 pounds yields four servings of eight to ten shrimp each.*

For the dips:

½ cup Japanese mayonnaise
2 tablespoons rice vinegar
2 tablespoons white miso
1 tablespoon orange liqueur
1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
1 teaspoon Asian chili paste
1 cup [Tsuyu Sauce](#)

For the tempura:

2 pounds medium shrimp
1½ quarts vegetable oil
2 egg yolks ice water
2 cups all-purpose flour
¾ cup cornstarch

To make the dips:

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, vinegar, miso, liqueur, zest, and chili paste. Put 3 tablespoons of the dip in each of 4 small bowls.

2. Put $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of tsuyu in each of 4 small bowls.
3. Place a bowl of each dip on the table at each place setting.

To make the tempura:

1. Shell and devein the shrimp, cut off the heads, and trim the tails into points. To keep the shrimp from curling while they fry, make two or three shallow cuts across the belly (inside the curve), then gently bend them backward to straighten them a bit. Rinse the shrimp under cold running water and thoroughly pat them dry. Pay special attention to drying the tails, where water can hide. Refrigerate the shrimp in an uncovered bowl, allowing them to air dry while you prepare to cook them.
2. In a deep fryer, a heavy pot, or Dutch oven over medium-high heat, heat the oil to 375°F. While the oil is heating, set up your cooking station as follows:
 - a. Place the bowl of shrimp to one side of the deep fryer or pot.
 - b. Lay a pair of chopsticks (preferred) or tongs next to the bowl for putting the shrimp in the oil.
 - c. Nearby, spread the cornstarch on a medium plate and, beside it, leave a space closest to the deep fryer or pot for the bowl of batter.
 - d. Farther away from the pot, gather the flour, eggs, a medium bowl, and chopsticks for making the batter, along with a bowl of ice water.
 - e. On the other side of the deep fryer or pot, place a mesh scoop (preferred) or a slotted spoon for removing the shrimp from the oil, and a draining rack covered with two layers of paper towels.
3. When the oil is hot, put one of the egg yolks in the medium bowl and beat it lightly with chopsticks or a fork. Stir in 1 cup of the ice water (without ice cubes). Add 1 cup of the flour in a single batch, and stir a few times until the ingredients are just combined—the batter should be lumpy. Put the bowl at the cooking station.
4. Holding a shrimp by the tail, dredge both sides in the cornstarch, and shake off the excess. Drop the dredged shrimp in the batter, and immediately remove it with chopsticks or tongs. Let any excess batter drip off, then carefully slide the shrimp into the oil. Repeat the process until the frying shrimp cover half the surface of the oil.

5. Fry the shrimp, flipping them over when the undersides are puffy and light golden, about 45 seconds. Fry on the other side for another 45 seconds. Transfer the cooked shrimp to the rack.
6. Skim any leftover fried bits from the oil, and repeat the frying procedure until all the shrimp are cooked.
7. When the batter runs out, prepare another batch with the remaining egg yolk, ice water, and flour, according to the instructions in step 3.
8. Pile the cooked shrimp on 4 separate dishes and serve immediately with the sauces. Tempura will get soggy if stored for later.

GRILLED SQUID WITH CITRUS-SOY MARINADE



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES (EXCLUDING MARINATING TIME)

COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

In Japan, grilled squid sold from pushcarts is popular street food. Charcoal lends a smoky flavor that goes well with the pungent marinade. Use a grill basket to keep smaller pieces from falling through the grill grate, or skewer them. You can also prepare this recipe under the broiler, although it will lack the smoky flavor.

2 pounds squid (bodies and tentacles), cleaned

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup soy sauce

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup mirin

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup freshly squeezed yuzu juice or lemon juice

1½ tablespoons grated fresh ginger

1. Wash the squid thoroughly inside and out, checking the cavities to make sure they're free of sand. Pat the squid dry on the outside.
2. In a large bowl, combine the soy sauce, mirin, juice, and ginger. Reserve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the marinade, and add the squid to the bowl. Turn the squid gently to coat.
3. Marinate for 30 minutes at room temperature, turning once, or for up to 4 hours in the refrigerator, turning several times.
4. Preheat the grill or broiler to its hottest temperature.
5. Grill or broil the squid, basting with the reserved marinade, until the squid turns opaque, 3 to 4 minutes. Don't overcook, or the squid will become rubbery. Serve immediately.
6. Grilled squid must be eaten immediately. It doesn't keep well.

SEARED SESAME-CRUSTED AHI TUNA WITH STEAMED VEGETABLES AND MISO DIPPING SAUCE



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Ahi tuna, the luscious deep pink or red tuna most often used in sashimi or sushi, can be one of several different species of tuna, including yellowfin or bigeye. When eaten raw, it has a delicate, melt-in-your-mouth quality. When crusted with sesame seeds and seared so that just the very outside edge is cooked while the center is left very rare, it develops a meaty flavor and a buttery texture. Because the fish is left essentially raw in the middle, it is important to use only very fresh, sushi-grade tuna for this recipe.

12 ounces thin asparagus spears, woody ends removed

12 ounces snow peas, trimmed

1 red bell pepper, seeded and cut into bite-size pieces

1 tablespoon white or yellow miso

3 tablespoons mirin

3 tablespoons sake

2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

2 teaspoons soy sauce

2 to 3 teaspoons wasabi paste

4 sushi-grade ahi tuna steaks, about 6 ounces each

Salt

3 tablespoons black sesame seeds

3 tablespoons white sesame seeds

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1. Fill a large pot fitted with a steamer basket with about 2 inches of water and bring it to a boil over high heat. Add the asparagus, snow peas, and bell pepper to the steamer basket, cover, and steam until tender, about 5 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and drain the vegetables.
2. While the vegetables are steaming, combine the miso, mirin, sake, sugar, vinegar, and soy sauce in a small saucepan set over medium heat. Cook the dipping sauce about 3 minutes, stirring frequently, until the sugar is completely dissolved. Remove the saucepan from the heat.
3. Rub a bit of wasabi paste over both sides of each tuna steak, then season both sides with salt.
4. Place both types of sesame seeds on a plate, stir to combine, and then spread them out in a thin layer. Press the tuna steaks onto the sesame seeds to coat both sides of each steak.
5. Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over high heat. When the oil begins to shimmer, add the pieces of tuna. Cook for about 1 minute per side, until the outside of the fish begins to brown and there is just a thin layer of opaqueness at the edge. Turn the fish over and cook for 1 minute, or until the second side has browned and has an equal layer of opaqueness along the edge. The center of the tuna should still be pink. Remove the tuna from the pan and let it rest for several minutes before slicing.
6. To serve, cut the tuna steaks into 2-inch pieces and thread several pieces onto a skewer. Divide the vegetables among 4 plates, top each with 1 or 2 skewers of tuna, and serve with the dipping sauce alongside.
7. Store the tuna, vegetables, and dipping sauce separately in the refrigerator for up to 1 day. If making ahead, serve the tuna chilled because reheating it will cause it to become overcooked.



POULTRY AND MEAT

CHICKEN YAKITORI

CHICKEN MEATBALLS *Tsukune*FRIED CHICKEN NUGGETS *Tatsuta Age*PAN-FRIED GINGER PORK *Buta no Shogayaki*BRAISED PORK BELLY *Buta no Kakuni*FRIED PORK CUTLETS *Tonkatsu*BEEF AND SCALLION ROLLS *Negimaki*

TATAKI BEEF WITH ENOKI MUSHROOMS, SPINACH, AND UDON NOODLES

MISO-MARINATED STEAK *Misozuke*

Historically, the Japanese have eaten very little meat and poultry, relying instead on fish, tofu, and vegetables for their protein. In part, this springs from the centuries-long dominance of Buddhism, which forbids the killing of animals (though the Japanese never gave up fish, or even all meat). Eating less meat has also been a reaction to the high cost of beef, pork, and chicken. Japanese tend to use meat and poultry as a flavoring for soups and noodle, vegetable, and rice dishes, or as a treat reserved for special meals.

However, with increasing Western influence and growing prosperity, the Japanese diet has begun to change. More and more meat and poultry now appear on Japanese tables. Long the least expensive source of animal protein, pork (*butaniku*) is hands-down the most popular meat, with Japanese people eating more pork than beef and chicken put together. For centuries, meanwhile, chicken (*tori*) was a greater luxury even than beef. Today, the tables have turned and chicken lies between pork and beef in terms of both price and popularity. But demand for beef (*gyuniku*) keeps skyrocketing, even though it's by far the most expensive meat.

As more meat has entered the Japanese diet, Japan has seen a rise in health problems associated with Western eating habits. This is especially true because of the Japanese taste for fast food. Nevertheless, Japanese cuisine still reigns in traditional dishes such as yakitori and tonkatsu.

CHICKEN YAKITORI



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

The word yakitori literally means “grilled chicken,” but the Japanese use it to refer to all kinds of foods grilled on skewers. Everything from the standard chicken thighs to chicken skin and beef tongue to bacon-wrapped asparagus are cooked as kebabs. It’s typical street food, and some city streets are lined with yakitori stalls and shops. If you don’t have an outdoor or indoor grill, you can broil your yakitori, with excellent results.

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, rinsed, patted dry, trimmed of fat, and cut into 1½-inch pieces

12 scallions, dark green tops cut off and remainder sliced into 2-inch segments

¾ cup vegetable oil

2 tablespoons salt

2 cups [Yakitori Sauce](#)

4 teaspoons [Seven-Spice Powder](#) (Shichimi Togarashi)

1. Preheat a grill or broiler to high heat. Soak 16 bamboo skewers in water for 30 minutes.
2. Thread a piece of chicken onto a skewer, then a piece of scallion, followed by another piece of chicken, another piece of scallion, and a third piece of chicken. Repeat until all the chicken and scallions are used up.
3. Lightly brush the kebabs with vegetable oil and sprinkle them with a little salt.
4. Put the kebabs on the grill or under the broiler and cook, turning a few times, until the chicken is almost cooked through, about 10 minutes.
5. Brush each side of the kebabs with the yakitori sauce, and grill for another 15 to 20 seconds on each side.
6. Place 4 kebabs on each plate, and serve hot with the remaining sauce and the shichimi togarashi on the side.
7. To store the yakitori, allow them to cool completely, then refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 2 days.

CHICKEN MEATBALLS |

Tsukune



MAKES ABOUT 8 KEBABS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Served at pubs called izakayas as an accompaniment to beer, sake, and shochu, tsukune are the quintessential Japanese bar food. Made with minced (not ground) chicken, they're usually molded in cylinders around skewers and grilled, yakitori-style. This quickie recipe makes meatballs under the broiler.

1½ pounds boneless, skin-on chicken thighs, rinsed and patted dry

1 egg

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon mirin

1½ teaspoons canola oil, divided

1 teaspoon soy sauce

2 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stems removed and caps minced

2 scallions, minced

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

1 cup [Yakitori Sauce](#)

1. Move the broiler pan to the top position and set an oven rack in the center position. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Soak 8 bamboo skewers in water for 20 minutes.
2. Cut the chicken into bite-size pieces, and then mince the pieces finely into ⅛-inch bits.
3. Put the chicken in a large bowl, and add the egg, salt, and pepper. Use your hands to combine the ingredients.
4. Add the mirin, 1 teaspoon of the oil, and the soy sauce, and mix thoroughly. Then mix in the shiitake, scallions, and ginger.
5. Drizzle ½ teaspoon of the oil onto a baking pan and spread to coat. Leave the excess oil on your hands.
6. With your fingers, scoop a small amount of the chicken mixture out of the bowl and roll it into a ball about 1½ inches in diameter. Place the meatball on the baking pan. Repeat until all

- the chicken is used up, leaving about 1 inch of space between the meatballs on the pan. There should be about 20 meatballs.
7. Put the meatballs on the center rack in the oven and cook until they're white on the outside, about 10 minutes. Take the pan out of the oven and let the meatballs cool until you can handle them.
 8. Turn the oven up to broil. Thread three meatballs onto each skewer, and lay the kebabs on the broiler pan.
 9. Broil for 2 minutes, then remove the broiler pan and brush some yakitori sauce on all sides of the meatballs. Reposition the kebabs on the broiler pan so they cook evenly, and return to the broiler. Repeat the process two or three times until the tsukune are glossy and cooked through, about 6 minutes in total.
 10. Place the skewers on 4 plates and serve hot, with the remaining sauce on the side.
 11. To store, allow the tsukune to cool completely, then refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 2 days.

FRIED CHICKEN NUGGETS |

Tatsuta Age

MAKES ABOUT 20 PIECES

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Chicken nuggets, Japanese-style. That's what chicken tatsuta age is, with a couple of twists. For a lighter result, the chicken is simply dusted with potato starch instead of coating it with batter or breading. For a deeper flavor, the chicken pieces are marinated in an umami-rich sauce.

1½ quarts vegetable oil

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons sake

2 tablespoons mirin

2 garlic cloves, grated

1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut crosswise into 1-inch slices

⅓ cup potato starch

2 scallions, chopped

1 lemon, cut into 8 wedges

1. In a deep fryer, a large, heavy saucepan, or a Dutch oven, heat the oil to 330°F.
2. In a large bowl, mix together the soy sauce, sake, mirin, garlic, and ginger. Add the chicken and toss to coat. Marinate in the refrigerator for 20 minutes.
3. Drain the chicken in a colander and shake off the excess marinade. Discard the marinade.
4. Spread the potato starch on a medium plate and dredge the chicken to coat it lightly on all sides. Shake off any excess.
5. When the oil is hot, use tongs or chopsticks to carefully lower the chicken into the pot or deep fryer. Work in batches if necessary, so only half the surface of the oil is covered with chicken pieces at a time.
6. Fry until the coating is golden brown and the chicken is cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes. Lift the chicken out of the oil, and

place it on paper towels to drain.

7. Sprinkle the fried chicken with the scallions and serve hot, with the lemon wedges on the side.
8. To store the tatsuta age, allow it to cool completely, then refrigerate it in a tightly sealed container. (Refrigerate the garnishes separately.) It will keep for 2 days. When you're ready to eat it, briefly crisp it in the oven.

PAN-FRIED GINGER PORK |

Buta no Shogayaki



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Most Japanese consider ginger (shoga) flavored, pan-fried (yaki) pork one of the all-time best dishes to eat with rice. Though it's quick and easy to prepare, the tender pork and aromatic ginger combine in a dish of subtle sophistication.

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons sake

2 tablespoons mirin

1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger

2 garlic cloves, grated

1 pound pork tenderloin, thinly sliced crosswise

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

½ large onion, sliced as thin as possible (optional)

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, sake, mirin, ginger, and garlic. Add the pork and massage it with the marinade. Marinate the pork in the refrigerator for 10 minutes.
2. In a large, nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it shimmers. Working in batches if necessary, lay the pork in the pan so the pieces don't overlap. Cook until golden brown on one side, 30 to 60 seconds. Turn the meat over and cook the other side until golden brown, an additional 30 to 60 seconds. If you're working in batches, transfer the first batch to a paper towel and repeat the process. Continue until all the pork is browned.
3. Pour the marinade into the pan and deglaze, scraping any brown bits from the bottom and sides. Add the onion (if using) and cook, stirring for 1 minute. Place the pork back in the pan and cook to coat it with the sauce and warm it through, about 1 minute. Serve immediately.
4. To store the shogayaki, allow it to cool completely, then refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 days.

BRAISED PORK BELLY | *Buta no Kakuni*

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 2½ hours

Imported from China and adapted to Japanese tastes, buta no kakuni (“square-simmered”) is braised pork belly. The traditional method of preparing this dish takes two days, but this quickie version yields succulent meat whose melt-in-your-mouth goodness will surprise you.

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1½ pounds boneless pork belly, skinned and cut into 2-by-1-inch chunks

4 scallions

1 (1½-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced

¼ cup sake

¼ cup soy sauce

¼ cup mirin

2 tablespoons honey

4 hardboiled eggs, peeled (optional)

4 teaspoons hot Asian mustard

1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it shimmers.
2. Place half of the pork chunks in the pan, skin-side down, and brown them. Turn the meat several times to brown it all over, about 5 minutes. Transfer the meat to a plate lined with a double layer of paper towels to drain. Repeat this step to cook the rest of the pork.
3. Cut two of the scallions into 2-inch segments.
4. Put the pork, cut scallions, and ginger into a large saucepan over high heat. Pour in enough water to cover the meat, plus ¼ inch. Bring the water to a boil, turn down the heat to medium low, and cover the pot. Simmer the pork for 1 hour, checking periodically and, if necessary, adding more water to cover the pork.

5. Transfer the pork to a plate and discard the cooking liquid along with the scallions and ginger.
6. In a fresh, large saucepan over high heat, combine the sake, soy sauce, mirin, honey, and 1½ cups water. Bring the liquid to a boil and add the pork and the eggs (if using).
7. Return the liquid to a boil, then turn the heat to medium low and cover the pot. Simmer for 30 minutes, then remove the eggs and set them aside. Continue simmering until the liquid reduces by half and the pork is completely tender, about 30 minutes.
8. Transfer the pork to a cutting board and cut the chunks in thirds. Return the meat to the pot and simmer another 5 minutes.
9. Cut the eggs in half lengthwise. Thinly slice the remaining 2 scallions.
10. Place a serving of pork on each of 4 plates, and spoon the sauce over the top. Set 2 egg halves (if using) next to the pork on each plate, and garnish with the sliced scallions and 1 teaspoon of the mustard on the side.
11. To store the buta no kakuni, allow it to cool completely, and refrigerate the pork and eggs in separate, tightly sealed containers. They will keep for 2 days.

FRIED PORK CUTLETS |

Tonkatsu

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

If Japan had a national pork dish, this would be it. Inspired by Western-style dishes such as schnitzel, tonkatsu (literally, “pork cutlet”) was developed during the nineteenth century. The crispy, fried dish—which is sort of like chicken-fried steak—is now so popular that it’s served in dozens of dishes, such as curries, sandwiches, egg dishes, and ramen soups. This is the traditional version.

For the sauce:

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup ketchup

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Worcestershire sauce

2 tablespoons soy sauce

For the tonkatsu:

1½ quarts vegetable oil

4 (4- to 6-ounce) pork cutlets (loin or tenderloin), about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

2 eggs

2 cups panko bread crumbs

4 cups finely shredded cabbage

$\frac{1}{2}$ lemon, cut into 4 wedges

To make the sauce:

1. In a small bowl, thoroughly combine all the ingredients.
2. Set aside.

To make the tonkatsu:

1. In a deep fryer, a large, heavy saucepan, or a Dutch oven, heat the oil to 350°F.

2. At 1-inch intervals, cut through the fat along the edge of each cutlet. This will prevent the meat from curling up when fried.
3. In a shallow bowl large enough to accommodate a pork cutlet, mix the flour, pepper, and salt. In another shallow bowl big enough for a pork cutlet, beat the eggs. Spread the bread crumbs on a medium plate. Put three layers of paper towels on a large plate.
4. Dredge 2 of the cutlets in the flour mixture to cover both sides. Dip each into the beaten eggs to coat both sides. Lay the cutlets on the bread crumbs, spreading the crumbs over the top of the meat. Press gently so the crumbs stick to the cutlets.
5. When the oil is hot, use tongs or chopsticks to carefully lower the cutlets into the pot or deep fryer. Fry until the coating is golden brown on one side, about 3 minutes. Turn the meat over and fry until the other side is golden brown and the pork is cooked through, about 3 minutes. Transfer the cutlets to the paper towels to drain, and cover them with additional paper towels to keep them warm.
6. Skim any stray crumbs out of the pot or deep fryer, and let the oil return to temperature.
7. Repeat steps 4 and 5 for the remaining 2 cutlets.
8. Cut each cutlet crosswise into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch slices, leaving the slices next to each other in the shapes of the cutlets.
9. Pile 1 cup of cabbage on each of 4 plates. Transfer the sliced cutlets to the plates, lining them up in the shapes of the cutlets. Spoon $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the sauce over each plate of pork and cabbage. Garnish with the lemon wedges and serve hot.
10. To store the tonkatsu, allow it to cool completely, then refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 days. When you're ready to eat, briefly crisp it in the oven.

BEEF AND SCALLION ROLLS

| *Negimaki*



MAKES ABOUT 12 PIECES

PREP TIME: 35 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

This excellent finger food is perfect for parties. Arrange on a platter around a bowl of sauce, and invite guests to pick up these tiny toothpick skewers, dip, and enjoy.

¼ cup sake

¼ cup mirin

¼ cup soy sauce

1 tablespoon sugar

1 bunch scallions (about 12)

1 pound flank or skirt steak, trimmed of visible fat

1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

1. Preheat the grill or broiler.
2. In a small bowl, combine the sake, mirin, soy sauce, and sugar, and stir until the sugar dissolves. Set aside.
3. Grill or broil the scallions until they just start to char, about 2 minutes. Set them aside to cool.
4. Cut the steak into ¼-inch-thick (or thinner) slices about 6 inches long and 2 inches wide. You should have about 12 slices. Place the slices on a flat work surface in a single layer, and sprinkle them lightly with salt on one side.
5. Cut the scallions into 3-inch segments. Lay an equal number of scallion pieces across each slice of meat, on one end of the slice. Tightly roll the slice around the scallions, and hold each roll together by skewering it with a toothpick.
6. In a baking dish, arrange the rolls in a single layer, pouring the marinade over the top. Turn the rolls to coat each completely with the marinade, and marinate for 15 to 30 minutes, flipping them over every 5 minutes or so. Remove the rolls from the marinade, shaking off any excess, and place them on a plate. Reserve the marinade.

7. Lightly brush the grill grate or broiler pan with the oil. Grill or broil the rolls until they're seared on all sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Put the cooked negimaki on a cutting board and let them rest for 5 minutes.
8. Pour the reserved marinade into a small pot over medium heat. Bring to a boil, and continue boiling until it thickens slightly into a sauce, 3 to 5 minutes.
9. Divide the negimaki among 4 plates. Pour some of the sauce over the top, and pour any extra into a dipping bowl for the table.
10. To store the negimaki, keep the rolls and the sauce separate, and allow them to cool completely. Refrigerate in separate, tightly sealed containers. They will keep for 2 days.

TATAKI BEEF WITH ENOKI MUSHROOMS, SPINACH, AND UDON NOODLES



SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES, PLUS 2 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES TO CHILL THE BEEF

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Tataki is a Japanese method of preparing beef tenderloin wherein the outside of the meat is cooked quickly at very high heat while the inside is left nearly raw. Traditional recipes call for grilling or searing the meat, then wrapping it in plastic wrap and chilling it in an ice water bath to quickly stop the cooking so that the interior remains very rare. Tataki beef is served cold over cooked vegetables, salad, or as in this recipe, over cold noodles with raw vegetables. It is common to offer a dipping sauce alongside the dish—either a combination of soy sauce and wasabi paste or a milder version that combines soy sauce, mirin, sugar, and dashi.

The beef and noodles can be made ahead. To store the prepared beef, wrap it tightly in plastic wrap or in a resealable bag and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Store the noodles in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Assemble the dish just before serving.

1½ pounds beef tenderloin, 2 inches in diameter, trimmed

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 teaspoon salt

1 pound dried udon noodles

4 cups baby spinach leaves

6 ounces enoki mushrooms

1. Rub the beef all over with the vegetable oil and season it on all sides with the salt.
2. Heat a grill or cast-iron pan to very high heat and fill a large bowl with cold water and ice.
3. Grill or sear the tenderloin on each side until it is just browned, about 1 to 2 minutes per side. Repeat until it is browned on all

sides.

4. Immediately remove the meat from the heat and place it in a large resealable bag. Place the bag into the ice water bath so that the meat is completely submerged but the top of the bag is sticking out of the water (to prevent water from getting into the bag and diluting the meat's flavor). Let the meat sit for about 15 minutes, until the meat is cold, then chill the meat in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.
5. Cook the noodles according to the package directions, then drain and rinse them with cold water. Refrigerate the noodles until ready to serve.
6. To serve, slice the beef into 1/4-inch-thick rounds. Divide the noodles among 4 serving bowls. Top each with several slices of beef, a handful of spinach leaves, and a clump of the mushrooms. Serve cold with the dipping sauce of your choice alongside.

MISO-MARINATED STEAK |

Misozuke

SERVES 4

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES (EXCLUDING MARINATING TIME)

COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Misozuke, or miso marinating, is an age-old Japanese technique of food preservation originally used to keep fish from spoiling. This method is still used, but today it's to prepare a delicious style of beef as well as fish, as the marinade tenderizes and flavors the meat before it's broiled or grilled. This recipe calls for red miso, which pairs particularly well with beef. If you're marinating fish, try the milder yellow or white miso.

1/3 cup red miso

1/3 cup mirin

1/3 cup sake

1/4 cup sugar

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 1/2 pounds sirloin or strip steak

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

1. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the miso, mirin, sake, sugar, and soy sauce. Bring the mixture to a simmer and remove from the heat. Its consistency should be fairly thick. Pour the marinade into a shallow, heat-proof dish large enough to hold the steak, and let it cool to room temperature.
2. When the marinade has cooled, place the steak in the dish and massage the marinade into the meat on all sides. Put the dish in the refrigerator and let the meat marinate for at least 6 but no longer than 48 hours.
3. Heat the grill or broiler. Take the steak out of the refrigerator and allow it to come up to room temperature. Remove it from the marinade and scrape any excess back into the dish. Set the marinade aside.

4. Lightly brush the grill grate or broiler pan with the oil. Grill or broil the steak, basting with the reserved marinade every few minutes. Cook to preferred doneness, about 6 minutes per side for medium rare. Discard any leftover marinade.
5. Transfer the meat to a cutting board and let it rest for 5 minutes. Cut the meat against the grain into ¼-inch-thick slices and serve.
6. To store the steak, allow it to cool completely, then refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 days.



SWEETS

FRUIT SALAD IN AN APPLE BOWL

SWEET RED BEAN PASTE *Anko*SWEET RED BEAN “SANDWICHES” *Dorayaki*SWEET RED BEAN JELLY *Mizuyokan*COFFEE JELLY *Kohii Zerii*GREEN TEA ICE CREAM *Matcha Aisu*STEAMED GREEN TEA CAKES *Matcha Mushi Pan*CASTELLA SPONGE CAKE *Kasutera*FLUFFY CHEESECAKE *Chiizukeiki*

Sweet treats have, over the centuries, left a relatively small footprint on Japan’s culinary landscape. Dessert more often consists of fresh fruit, and the word for sweets—*okashi*—also refers to all kinds of snacks, ranging from fruit to nuts. Much like the English, they enjoy sweet or savory snacks at afternoon tea time, *oyatsu*, around 3 p.m. Many of the recipes in this chapter are eaten in just this way.

Although Japan has historically consumed sugary foods in moderation, it’s famed for some of the world’s most exquisite confections, known as *wagashi*. Artisans have been turning out dazzling *wagashi* for hundreds of years, mostly for religious offerings, the emperor’s court, elaborate tea ceremonies, and the finest of gifts.

Whether extravagant or simple, Japan’s distinctive *wagashi* are based on ingredients that, if not unique to the nation, are an ancient part of its culinary tradition. The two essential components are sweet red bean paste (*anko*), made from adzuki beans, and chewy mochi, made from glutinous rice. Many *wagashi* are known for their complex, arduous preparation, including one of the two fundamentals: mochi. But there are also many simple recipes, such as those that follow, that can provide you with an authentic taste of sweet Japan.

FRUIT SALAD IN AN APPLE BOWL



SERVES 2

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

This is a fun way to serve fruit and it only takes a few minutes to make. A melon baller, grapefruit spoon, or even just a regular teaspoon can be used to scoop out the apple flesh. Use any combination of fruit you like to fill the bowl.

- 1 medium red or green apple
- 1 lemon wedge or a pinch of ascorbic acid powder
- 2 strawberries, sliced
- 4 to 6 grapes, halved
- 1 clementine, peeled and broken into segments

1. Halve the apple along the equator and scoop out the core, seeds, and some of the flesh to make 2 bowls.
2. Rub the exposed part of the apple flesh with the lemon wedge or sprinkle it with ascorbic acid powder to keep it from turning brown.
3. Fill each apple half with 1 sliced strawberry, 2 or 3 halved grapes, and a few clementine segments.

SWEET RED BEAN PASTE |

Anko



MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 2 HOURS

It may seem odd to American palates, but a sweet paste made of red adzuki beans is central to the Japanese dessert repertoire. The majority of sweets, from steamed and baked buns to grilled rice dumplings, are based on this ingredient, which is called anko. There are several types of anko, all with different textures. This recipe makes the smooth paste that's most commonly used.

1 cup dried adzuki beans


¼ cup sugar

1. Pick any foreign matter out of the beans. Rinse them thoroughly.
2. Put the beans in a medium saucepan and add enough water to cover them. Over high heat, bring the water to a boil, then turn down the heat and simmer the beans for 10 minutes. Drain and rinse the beans to remove the bitter flavor, and pour them back into the empty pot.
3. Pour in 4 cups of water, cover the pot, and turn the heat to medium-high. Bring the water to a boil, then turn the heat down to medium-low and simmer the beans until they're tender, about 1 hour. Check the water level occasionally, and add more water if it drops below the surface of the beans.
4. Stir in the sugar and simmer, uncovered, until the liquid reduces to a thick, lustrous sauce, about 20 minutes.
5. Remove the pot from the heat and use a potato masher to mash the beans thoroughly. Let the mash sit until it's cool enough to handle.
6. Transfer the mash to a sieve, and use your hands or the back of a large spoon to press it through, back into the pot. This removes the bean skins so the anko has a smooth texture. Reheat the mash over medium heat and simmer, stirring, until it's the texture of refried beans. Remove the pot from the heat,

and let the paste cool completely. It will firm up into a pliable anko that you can use in other recipes.

7. To store the anko, refrigerate in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 2 months.

SWEET RED BEAN “SANDWICHES” | *Dorayaki*



MAKES 6 DORAYAKI
PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES
COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

One of Japan's favorite sweets, red bean dorayaki are sandwiches made of anko spread between two small, puffy pancakes. Children especially love them, and you can make large batches to freeze for a convenient treat later. Spin-offs from traditional dorayaki are filled with a wide variety of ingredients, such as custard, mochi, or chestnut cream.

3 eggs

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar

1 tablespoon honey

1 teaspoon baking powder

1½ cups all-purpose flour, divided

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

1 cup [Sweet Red Bean Paste \(Anko\)](#), at room temperature

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, sugar, and honey. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of water, whisk again, and add another $\frac{1}{3}$ of cup water. Then whisk in the baking powder.
2. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the flour, and stir with the whisk to just combine the ingredients. Do the same with another $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the flour, then once more for the final $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Stir only until there are no lumps in the batter.
3. Heat a medium nonstick skillet over medium heat until it's hot, then turn the heat down to low.
4. Put $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of the oil on a folded paper towel and wipe the bottom of the pan. Too much oil in the pan will make the pancakes brown unevenly. Scoop 2 tablespoons of batter into a large spoon. Holding the tip of the spoon about 2 inches above the center of the pan, pour the batter steadily into the pan. It should spread on its own into a clean circle 3½ to 4 inches in diameter.

5. Cook the pancake until small bubbles form on the top and the bottom is golden brown, about 4 minutes. Flip the pancake and cook the other side until golden brown and puffy, 1 to 2 minutes. Do not press down on it. Transfer the finished pancake to a wire rack.
6. Repeat until all the batter is used up. Don't stack the pancakes—cool them in a single layer. You should end up with 12 pancakes.
7. When the pancakes reach room temperature, spread 2½ tablespoons of anko in an even layer on 6 of them. If the anko is too stiff, fold in a little water. Top each anko-covered pancake with a second pancake to make a sandwich.
8. To store the dorayaki, wrap each in plastic wrap and put them in a tightly sealed container. They will keep for 1 day in the refrigerator or 1 month in the freezer. Thaw before eating.

SWEET RED BEAN JELLY |

Mizuyokan



MAKES 32 PIECES

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 2 MINUTES

With a texture somewhat like gumdrops, the adzuki bean treat mizuyokan is made with agar-agar (kanten), an odorless, flavorless vegan alternative to conventional animal-based gelatin. Most supermarkets stock it in their Asian food or health food sections. Agar-agar comes in the form of powder, flakes, bars, and threads; of all these, the powder and flakes are easiest to work with. Agar-agar sets more firmly than regular gelatin, but its texture is more delicate and less springy.

3 teaspoons agar-agar powder

1 cup sugar

1½ cups Sweet Red Bean Paste (Anko)

Pinch of salt

1. Fill a large bowl halfway with cold water and add 2 trays of ice cubes.
2. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, combine 2¾ cups of water and the agar-agar. Bring the mixture to a boil and stir constantly until the agar-agar dissolves, 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and continue stirring until the solution is transparent.
3. Turn the heat down to low and add the sugar. Simmer, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the anko and salt to the pot. Stir to combine the ingredients completely, then remove the pot from the heat.
4. Immediately pour the anko mixture into a medium bowl and float the bowl in the larger bowl of ice water. Stir and twirl the bowl to cool the jelly. When it starts to thicken but before it starts to set, pour the mixture into an 8-by-8-inch pan and cover it with plastic wrap. Put it in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours to set. The texture is best if the mizuyokan is refrigerated overnight.

5. To serve, loosen the mizuyokan from the sides of the pan by running a knife around the edges. Cut it crosswise at 2-inch intervals and lengthwise at 1-inch intervals. You should have thirty-two 1-by-2-inch pieces.
6. To store, refrigerate the mizuyokan in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 4 to 5 days.

COFFEE JELLY | *Kohii Zerii*



SERVES 8

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 2 MINUTES

Here it is: Jell-O for grown-ups! Kohii zerii (coffee jelly) is like iced black coffee with a bit of sugar stirred in, magically transformed into wiggly cubes. It's not surprising that the Japanese eat tons of kohii zerii in hot weather, served any number of ways. It's often added to drinks, from milk shakes to hot coffee, or eaten on its own, topped with whipped cream or condensed milk.

2 tablespoons agar-agar powder

1/3 cup sugar

1 quart strong black coffee

1. In a small bowl, dissolve the agar-agar with 1/2 cup of water and set aside.
2. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, mix the sugar with the coffee. Stir to dissolve and bring the coffee almost to a boil. Pour the dissolved agar-agar into the pot and stir constantly to combine.
3. Pour the mixture into an 8-by-8-inch pan and cover it with plastic wrap. Put it in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours to set. The texture is best if the kohii zerii is refrigerated overnight.
4. When the jelly has set, loosen it from the sides of the pan by running a knife around the edges. Then cut it into 3/4-inch squares.
5. To serve kohii zerii, dish some cubes into a dessert bowl and top with whipped cream or condensed milk, or put some cubes in the bottom of a tall glass and add any creamy or coffee-based beverage. Better yet, try it with a shot of coffee liqueur!
6. To store, leave the kohii zerii in the pan, cover it with plastic wrap, and refrigerate. It will keep for 4 to 5 days.

GREEN TEA ICE CREAM |

Matcha Aisu



MAKES 1 PINT

PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES (EXCLUDING FINAL FREEZE)

The Japanese call green tea ice cream matcha aisu (matcha ice cream), for the special variety of green tea that's its star ingredient. Matcha, a bright green powder ground from specially grown and harvested tea leaves, has for centuries been a treasured element of the Japanese tea ceremony, but it's now available in the tea section of chain supermarkets across the United States. Matcha isn't ordinary green tea powder (which you'll also see on the shelf); be sure to buy true matcha for the best results in recipes (and in your teacup!). You can make matcha ice cream with an ice cream maker, substituting it for the vanilla extract in your favorite vanilla ice cream recipe, or you can simply take this shortcut.

1 pint ultra-premium sweet cream (preferred) or vanilla ice cream


2 tablespoons matcha

1 to 2 tablespoons cold water

1. Soften the ice cream slightly in the refrigerator, for about 20 minutes. Put a medium bowl and a serving spoon in the freezer to chill.
2. While the ice cream softens, in a small bowl, mix the matcha with the water to form a smooth paste.
3. Take the bowl and spoon out of the freezer and scoop the softened ice cream into the bowl. Add ½ tablespoon of the matcha paste to the ice cream and fold gently to combine thoroughly. Repeat until all of the paste is used up. If the ice cream starts to melt during the process, return it to the freezer for 15 minutes to firm up slightly but not freeze.
4. When the ice cream has an even green color, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and put it back in the freezer. Freeze for 2 hours before serving.
5. To store the aisu, transfer it to the original container or another resealable container, press plastic wrap onto the surface, and

cover the container tightly. The aisu will keep for 1 month.

STEAMED GREEN TEA CAKES | *Matcha Mushi Pan*



MAKES 4 CAKES

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 8 MINUTES

In Japan, steamed mushi pan cakes are snacks rather than desserts. They were long sold on the street from horse-drawn carts, and in some cities you can still buy fresh mushi pan from street vendors on bicycles or in vans. Almost every convenience store sells them, too, in dozens of flavors. Here's the matcha variety.

½ cup all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 tablespoon matcha

1 egg, lightly beaten

3 tablespoons milk

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

2 tablespoons sugar

1. Lay a clean, unfolded kitchen towel on a flat work surface, and put the lid of a large steamer or large skillet in the center, handle-side up. Fold the corners of the towel up over the top and fasten them together tightly with a rubber band.
2. Pour an inch of water into the steamer or skillet, cover it with the wrapped lid, and bring the water to a boil. Turn the heat down low and leave the cover on.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and matcha until the mixture has an even color throughout.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the egg, milk, oil, and sugar. Slowly and steadily pour the liquid into the dry ingredients and stir until the batter is smooth.
5. Place a cupcake liner in each of 4 ramekins or custard cups. Spoon the batter into the cups until they're three-quarters full. If you have extra batter, make another cup or two.
6. Turn the steamer or stove up to medium-high to bring the water back to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and place the

ramekins in the boiling water. Cover the steamer or skillet and steam over medium heat. Don't remove the lid for at least 7 minutes. The mushi pan are done when a toothpick poked in the center comes out clean, about 8 minutes.

7. Transfer the ramekins to a cooling rack and let them cool for about 10 minutes. Remove them from the cups and serve warm. You can also cool them to room temperature to eat that way.
8. To store the mushi pan, let them cool completely. Transfer the cakes from the ramekins (still in their cupcake liners) to a tightly sealed container and refrigerate. They will keep for 2 days.

CASTELLA SPONGE CAKE |

Kasutera



MAKES 1 LOAF

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES, PLUS MARINATING TIME

COOK TIME: 35 TO 50 MINUTES

Descended from Portuguese Pão de Castela, kasutera (Castella cake) is Japan's classic sponge cake. The fine, slightly springy texture, delicate sweetness, and perfect symmetry epitomize the precision of Japanese baking. A successful kasutera recipe depends on three things: bread flour (not all-purpose or cake flour) that's sifted twice for lightness and smoothness; lengthy and energetic beating of the eggs to integrate plenty of air and make the cake rise; and carefully timed baking at the correct temperature for a firm, completely baked cake that doesn't sink in the middle. Since adequately whisking the eggs by hand takes a long time and lots of muscle, using an electric mixer is highly recommended.

1 teaspoon vegetable oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup bread flour

3 tablespoons honey

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon water, warmed but not hot

4 eggs, at room temperature

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar

1. Place a rack in the middle position in the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F.
2. Starting with a 10-by-14-inch piece of baking parchment, cut a 3-inch square out of each corner. Fold the resulting flaps inward to crease a rectangle into the center of the paper.
3. Lightly grease an 8½-by-4½-inch loaf pan with the oil. Push the parchment down into the pan and smooth the bottom and sides so they stick. Set aside.
4. Sift the flour twice into a medium bowl and set aside.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together the honey and water until the honey dissolves. Set aside.

6. Connect the whisk attachment to your mixer, and add the eggs and sugar to a large mixing bowl. Beat for no less than 5 minutes at high speed. The mixture will become frothy, pale yellow, and three to four times its original volume. Turn the speed down to medium and beat for another 2 minutes. Turn the speed down to low and add the honey mixture. Beat until the ingredients are integrated, about 30 seconds.
7. Keep the mixer speed at low and add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the flour. Mix for 15 seconds, add another $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of flour, and mix for 15 seconds more. Then add the final $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of flour and mix for 1 minute. Don't overmix.
8. Pour the batter into the pan, filling it about three-quarters of the way. Zigzag a chopstick or skewer through the batter to pop any big bubbles. Lift the pan 2 to 3 inches above a flat surface and drop it to bring any remaining bubbles to the top. Drop the pan twice more to level out the top of the batter.
9. Bake the cake for 35 minutes, then check for doneness by inserting a toothpick into the middle. If it comes out clean, lightly press a finger against the top of the cake—it should feel springy. If necessary, continue baking, checking every 5 minutes until the cake is done (no more than 50 minutes). The finished kasutera will be an even golden brown on top and will slightly pull away from the pan.
10. Directly from the oven, hold the pan 1 inch over a large sheet of plastic wrap and invert it to allow the cake to slide out. Peel off the parchment paper and enclose the cake in plastic wrap while it's still warm. Seal it in a plastic zipper bag to keep in the moisture and place it upside down on a pan or plate that will flatten the top completely and evenly as the cake cools. Refrigerate immediately, for at least 10 hours.
11. To serve, place the kasutera on a plate right-side up and use a bread knife to slice off the brown outer sides. Discard those slices. Let the cake come to room temperature, then cut it into slices about 1-inch thick.
12. To store the kasutera, wrap each slice in plastic wrap, put the slices in a tightly sealed container, and refrigerate or freeze. It will keep for 4 days in the refrigerator and 3 weeks in the freezer.

FLUFFY CHEESECAKE |

Chiizukeiki



MAKES ONE 9-INCH CAKE

PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 1½ HOURS

Another Western dish adopted and fine-tuned by the Japanese is chiizukeiki (cheesecake). Sometimes called “cotton” or “cotton-soft” cheesecake, chiizukeiki is fluffy, almost soufflé-like, without the cloying sweetness or heavy crust of its Western cousins.

There are a few tricks to turning out an authentic chiizukeiki: First, while beating the egg whites, add the sugar slowly, so it doesn't weigh down the eggs and keep them from forming stiff peaks. Then, when you add the whipped egg whites to the heavier ingredients, fold gently so as not to squeeze out the air. Regarding the baking process, bake the cheesecake slowly, at low temperature in a water bath, to keep the top from cracking. Finally, cool the cake in the oven to keep its temperature from dropping too quickly, which can cause the cake to sink in the middle.

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 3 eggs, separated, at room temperature
- ⅓ cup milk, at room temperature
- 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon all-purpose flour
- 3½ tablespoons cornstarch
- ¾ cup cream cheese, at room temperature
- ½ cup confectioner's sugar, divided
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1. Place a rack in the middle position in the oven and preheat the oven to 320°F.
2. Lightly grease the sides and bottom of a 9-inch springform cake pan with the oil and line it with baking parchment. Wrap the outside of the pan in foil to prevent leakage and set aside.

3. In a small bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and milk. Set aside.
4. In a separate small bowl, sift the together the flour and cornstarch twice. Set aside.
5. Put the cream cheese, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the sugar, and the salt in a large bowl. Using an electric mixer at medium-high speed, blend them together until smooth and soft. Turn the speed down to medium and slowly pour the egg yolk mixture into the bowl. When the mixture is silky, add the butter and combine. Reduce the speed to slow and add the flour mixture all at once. Mix gently but thoroughly and set aside.
6. Put a kettle or pot of water over high heat, cover, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium low, just to keep the water hot.
7. In a clean, medium bowl, beat the egg whites at medium-low speed until they're white and foamy. Continue beating, adding the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time. When all of the sugar has been added, turn the mixer speed up to high and whip the egg whites to thick, lustrous, stiff peaks. Don't overwhip, or the whites will become dry and clumpy.
8. Scoop one-third of the egg whites into the cream cheese mixture and fold to combine. Add the rest of the whites and use a spatula to fold them in gently. Be careful not to squash the air out of the whites.
9. Pour the batter into the cake pan. Lift the pan 2 to 3 inches above a flat surface and drop it to release any air bubbles, then drop the pan once more to level out the top of the batter.
10. Put the cake pan in a large, deep roasting pan. Pull the oven rack partway out and place the pan on it. Making sure not to spill any water into the cake pan, pour the hot water into the roasting pan until it reaches halfway up the sides of the cake pan. Carefully slide the oven rack back into the oven.
11. Bake until the top is lightly browned, about 1 hour. Check for doneness by inserting a toothpick into the middle. If it comes out clean, the chiizukeiki is fully baked. If necessary, continue baking, checking every 10 minutes.
12. When the cake is done, turn off the oven and open the door a few inches. Leave the cake in the oven to cool slowly for 15 minutes.
13. Take the roasting pan out of the oven and transfer the cake pan to a wire cooling rack. Allow the chiizukeiki to cool completely, about 1 hour. Pop open the springform pan and slide the cake onto a plate. Peel the parchment off the sides of

the cake, chill in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 hours, and serve cold.

14. To store the chiizukeiki, refrigerate or freeze it in a tightly sealed container. It will keep for 3 days in the refrigerator or 1 month in the freezer.



BENTO BOXES

GRILLED TOFU BENTO *Tofu Dengaku Bento*

SOBA BENTO

FRIED-RICE OMELET BENTO *Omurice Bento*

ROASTED BLACK COD WITH MISO BENTO

CHICKEN CURRY RICE BENTO *Kare Raisu Bento*

FRIED CHICKEN NUGGETS BENTO *Tatsuta Age Bento*

PAN-FRIED GINGER PORK BENTO *Buta no Shogayaki Bento*

The word *bento* can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when it was used to describe individually packed meals that a military commander named Oda Nobunaga distributed to the people at his castle to make sure everyone was fed. Over time, such boxed meals became common for anyone working outside who didn't have time to return home for lunch—from those working in paddy fields to those working on fishing boats. Later, with the establishment of the Japanese railway system, bento lunches began to appear for sale at train stations all over the country.

Simply speaking, bento is just a boxed lunch meant to be taken to school or work. It's designed to be a convenient, healthy, and appetizing take-along meal. But like all Japanese cooking, bento making is steeped in tradition and practiced as an art. While it might be tempting to throw just anything in a portable container and call it bento, true bento is made with great thought and attention to detail.

SELECTING A BENTO BOX

The containers themselves, the bento boxes, vary widely. They can be made of wood, plastic, silicone, melamine, or lacquer. They can be brightly colored and intricately decorated or understated and minimalist. What all bento boxes have in common is that they have separate compartments, are designed to be portable, and include a well-fitting lid.

Japanese housewares or grocery shops, as well as online retailers, sell a wide assortment of genuine Japanese bento boxes, but you can likely find everything you need in local stores as well. Any type of food-safe storage container with a lid—free of

contaminants like BPA and lead—will do. You might wish to buy a thermal box for keeping hot foods (like rice or pasta) hot and one with an integrated ice pack to keep cold foods (like cold meat and dairy products) cold.

Dividers and Food Cups

Japanese retailers sell dividers and holders specifically for use in bento boxes, but a quick look around your kitchen may turn up suitable alternatives, including silicone, paper, or foil cupcake liners or baking cups, silicone egg-poaching cups, and other products. Cookware and baking supply stores stock plenty of options for containing and separating foods, and edible cups and dividers—such as lettuce or cabbage leaves, cucumber slices, carrot coins, and so on—are handy as well. Use these holders to keep flavors separate, keep dry foods dry, and stabilize bento arrangements.

Other Useful Tools

Decorative picks are great for holding foods together and can add color and whimsy to your bento boxes. If you're making bento boxes for kids' school lunches, a few colorful picks can greatly increase the chances of the box coming home empty. Kids seem to love stabbing their food with a colorful pick and popping it into their mouths.

Molds and shaped cutters are also great for adding visual interest to the food in your bento boxes. After all, who wouldn't prefer a bear-shaped rice ball or a sandwich cut into the shape of a flower? Again, Japanese manufacturers offer lots of tools specifically designed for bento use, but general cookware stores, baking supply stores, and your own kitchen cabinets will likely offer plenty of creative options as well.

Small squeeze bottles and sauce containers also come in lots of cute designs and bright colors, and are great for keeping dipping sauces and salad dressings from running all over everything in the box.

GUIDELINES FOR FILLING BENTO BOXES

Bento making has been elevated to an art in Japan, but it doesn't have to be a laborious endeavor. The key to making satisfying bento is balance. A good bento box is balanced in every way—nutritionally and aesthetically.

The first rule of bento making is all about proportions and is easy to remember: four, three, two, one.

4 parts carbohydrate

3 parts protein

2 parts vegetable

1 part treat (fruit or a sweet, for instance)

Ideally, all food in a bento box should be suitable to eat at room temperature. You can use a thermal bento box that will keep food warm or one with an integrated ice pack that will keep food chilled, but keep in mind that everything you put in such a bento should be suitable to eat at the same temperature, either warm or chilled.

Finally, bento lunches are meant to be as visually appealing as they are healthy and delicious. Although we've all heard of Japanese mothers who spend hours making elaborate *charaben* (character bento) to look like their kids' favorite anime characters, making attractive bento does not require you to be armed with an arsenal of tweezers, cutters, molds, and squeeze bottles. To the contrary, with a little bit of attention to the basic artistic rules of color, texture, and contrast, you can make a stunning bento in the same time it takes to make a typical brown bag lunch.

A few fresh vegetables and fruits, arranged with a bit of attention to detail, are usually all you need to take the most basic bento from dull and dreary to stunning and mouthwatering. Japanese bento-making experts generally recommend that each bento should contain foods from the five basic color groups: red/orange, yellow, green, white, and black/brown/dark purple. This approach not only ensures that your lunch will be visually appealing but also that you'll be including a wide range of nutrients.

BENTO MAKING MADE SIMPLE

1. *Use leftovers wisely (start by planning leftover-friendly meals).*
Bento boxes are meant to be a convenient way to take a healthy and delicious meal to work or school. You don't have to get up before sunrise to prepare your bento boxes in time for the school bus pickup. Rely on leftovers to expedite your morning bento prep. Pack individual portions of leftovers immediately after dinner, stashing them directly into your bento boxes or

wrapping them and either refrigerating or freezing them for later use.

2. *Always reheat rice (and other leftovers as appropriate) and let them cool completely before closing the lid of the bento.* This ensures that the rice will be tender and moist and reduces the risk of spoilage.
3. *Aim for balance.* There's no need to painstakingly track grams of nutrients or count calories. Using the four, three, two, one rule mentioned previously and choosing foods representing each of the five color groups will ensure that your meals are nutritionally balanced. For instance, four small scoops of white rice, a chicken thigh, a few steamed broccoli florets, several carrot curls, and a handful of blueberries makes a well-balanced and healthy lunch.
4. *Make it pretty.* There are few things sadder than opening up your lunch to find a colorless spread of beiges and grays. You don't have to carve your vegetables into intricate shapes (although no one is discouraging it if you are so inclined!). Simply choose foods mindfully, giving thought to how the colors and textures will work together visually.
5. *Pack food tightly.* What's the use of creating a visually appealing array if it gets ruined the minute the box gets jostled (which is sure to happen whether you walk, drive, or ride public transportation to school or work). Pack food tightly and use dividers—either edible or inedible—to stabilize your well-designed layout.
6. *Keep wet and dry foods separate.* Drain sauces from foods and put wet foods in cups or edible dividers, such as lettuce or cabbage leaves, to keep them from making dry foods soggy. Small squeeze bottles and dipping sauce containers are ideal for keeping sauces and dressings separate until mealtime.
7. *Be safe!* Any time you pack food to go, you risk contamination or spoilage. To be safe, always wash your hands before beginning to pack your bento boxes, handle foods with utensils instead of bare hands whenever possible, and make sure hot foods cool completely before you place them in a bento with cold foods or close the bento lid. A cold pack can help ensure that foods likely to spoil are kept at a safe temperature. Hot foods can be kept hot in a thermal container, but they must be very hot when put into the container and the container itself must be preheated (fill it with boiling water and let it sit for a few minutes, then drain and dry it).

GRILLED TOFU BENTO | *Tofu*

Dengaku Bento



Bento Contents

MUSHROOM RICE *Kinoko Gohan*

BELGIAN ENDIVE LEAVES

CARROTS SIMMERED IN SOY SAUCE AND SAKE *Kinpira Ninjin*

TOASTED BLACK SESAME SEEDS, FOR GARNISH

GRILLED TOFU *Tofu Dengaku*

GRANNY SMITH APPLE STRIPS

This vegetarian bento is a satisfying meal for a long day at the office. Filled with protein-rich tofu, savory rice, and crisp-tender carrots, it will fill you up and brighten your day. Mushroom rice is most often associated with the autumn mushroom season, making crisp green apples, crunchy endive leaves, and carrots ideal seasonal accompaniments.

Tip

Some fruits, including apples, have a tendency to turn an unappetizing brown when cut ahead of time. To keep your fruit looking fresh, you can spritz the cut fruit with water to which you've added a bit of lemon juice, rub a cut lemon wedge along the exposed part of the flesh, or sprinkle the cut edge with ascorbic acid powder (such as Fruit Fresh).

Arrange

1. Fill one-third of the bento box with the Mushroom Rice.
2. Arrange 3 Belgian endive leaves diagonally in one of the empty corners of the box.
3. Drain any excess liquid from the carrots and distribute a serving of carrots among the endive leaves. Sprinkle the carrots with the sesame seeds.
4. Arrange 3 to 5 skewers of the Grilled Tofu next to the carrot-filled endive leaves, also on the diagonal.
5. To make the apple strips, set an apple on a cutting board with the stem up. Using a sharp knife, cut off one side of the apple,

rotate the apple 90 degrees, cut off the next side, and continue until you are left with four flat-sided apple chunks and a square core. Discard the core. Cut the apple chunks into ¼-inch-thick slices. Trim the slices to fit into a square or rectangular container (such as a silicone baking cup) and place them side by side, alternating skin-side up and flesh-side up to make stripes. Place the filled container into the bento box in the remaining space next to the tofu.

6. Put the lid on the box.

SOBA BENTO



Bento Contents

COLD SOBA WITH DIPPING SAUCE *Zaru Soba*

PAN-BROILED SALMON WITH SCALLIONS

HIJIKI SEAWEED SALAD

CARROT CURLS GARNISH

SLICED STRAWBERRIES

This refreshing bento filled with cold noodles and broiled salmon is perfect on a hot summer day. Everything in this box can be made ahead of time, and the contents will likely please both kids and adults.

Tip

The noodles are meant to be served very cold, so pack them with an ice pack or, better yet, freeze an individual portion of the sauce the night before in a small, freezer-safe sauce container and pack it, still frozen, right alongside the noodles.

Arrange

1. Fill one-third of the bento box with the noodles and nestle a container of dipping sauce alongside.
2. Add the salmon to the box next to the noodles. Garnish the salmon with the scallions.
3. Fill the remaining space with the Hijiki Seaweed Salad, Carrot Curls Garnish, and sliced strawberries.
4. Put the lid on the box.

FRIED-RICE OMELET BENTO |

Omurice Bento



Bento Contents

FRIED-RICE OMELET *Omurice*

CUCUMBER BLOSSOMS GARNISH

KETCHUP

SALTED EDAMAME

SWEET RED BEAN JELLY *Mizuyokan*

ORANGE SLICES

A rice-filled omelet, flavored with ketchup, is a favorite among Japanese children. Loaded with beloved kid foods and whimsical touches, this bento is a filling and economical school lunch that can be fully prepared ahead of time.

Tip

When making the Fried-Rice Omelet, leave off the ketchup squiggle garnish. Instead, fill a small, decorative squeeze bottle (Japanese retailers and online sellers have lots of clever choices) with ketchup to add at lunchtime.

Arrange

1. Place the omelet in the bento box.
2. Place the cucumber blossoms decoratively around the omelet.
3. Fill a squeeze bottle with ketchup and tuck it in alongside the omelet.
4. Fill one corner of the bento with Salted Edamame.
5. Place a holder in the other empty corner and fill it with the red bean jelly.
6. Fan the orange slices and place them between the edamame and the red bean jelly, filling the remaining space.
7. Put the lid on the box.

ROASTED BLACK COD WITH MISO BENTO



Bento Contents

BROWN RICE *Genmai*

ROASTED BLACK COD WITH MISO

CHIVES, FOR GARNISH

PICKLED GINGER

GARDEN SALAD (LETTUCE, HALVED CHERRY TOMATOES, SHREDDED
CARROTS)

SANBAIZU DRESSING

RED GRAPES

This simple yet sophisticated boxed lunch is sure to make a bento convert of even the most skeptical. Delightfully fatty black cod soaks up tons of flavor in an overnight marinade. Paired with spicy pickled ginger, a crisp garden salad with tangy dressing, and a bit of fresh fruit, this lunch is sure to be a winner.

Prepare Ahead

Prepare the marinade and marinate the fish up to two days ahead of time. Bake the fish in the morning—it takes only about fifteen minutes—while you prep the other elements of the bento box, and you'll be on your way (and no doubt looking forward to lunchtime).

Arrange

1. Fill half the bento box with a layer of rice, leaving room on top for the fish.
2. Top the rice with a fish fillet and drizzle on some of the sauce. Garnish the fish with chives.
3. Arrange several slices of pickled ginger in a peak on top of the rice in one corner.
4. Fill one corner of the empty end of the box with a handful of lettuce leaves. Top the lettuce with 2 to 3 halved cherry tomatoes and a bit of shredded carrot.
5. Put some Sanbaizu Dressing in a small sauce container with a lid and place it in the box next to the salad.

6. Fill the remaining corner of the box with grapes (whole or halved, as desired).
7. Put the lid on the box.

CHICKEN CURRY RICE

BENTO | *Kare Raisu Bento*



Bento Contents

CHICKEN CURRY RICE *Kare Raisu*

MISO DRESSING FOR DIPPING

BLUEBERRIES

SUGAR SNAP PEAS, HALVED DIAGONALLY

RADISHES, HALVED AND THINLY SLICED

This curry tastes even better a day or two after it is made, making it an ideal bento box dish. Crisp sugar snap peas and radishes make a nice contrast to the rich, spicy curry.

Prepare Ahead

Both the curry and miso dressing can be made ahead and stored in the refrigerator. The curry also freezes well, so make a large batch and stash individual servings in the freezer to have on hand for especially busy weeks. Serving the saucy curry over rice helps keep other foods from becoming soggy or curry-flavored, but using a divider between the entrée and the other dishes is advisable here.

Arrange

1. Fill half the bento box with a layer of rice, leaving room on top for the curry.
2. Top the rice with a scoop of the curry and sauce.
3. Put some Miso Dressing in a small sauce container with a lid and place it in one of the empty corners of the box.
4. Place a second holder in the remaining empty corner. Fill this with blueberries.
5. Arrange the sugar snap peas and radish slices between the two cups, wedging them in to stabilize the arrangement.
6. Put the lid on the box.

FRIED CHICKEN NUGGETS

BENTO | *Tatsuta Age Bento*



Bento Contents

BASIC RICE *Gohan*

TOASTED BLACK SESAME SEEDS, FOR GARNISH

BROCCOLI WITH SESAME DRESSING *Burokkori Goma-ae*

FRUIT SALAD IN AN APPLE BOWL

FRIED CHICKEN NUGGETS *Tatsuta Age*

Japanese-style chicken nuggets make a great bento lunch for kids. While the nuggets won't be as crisp when they're eaten at room temperature as they are straight out of the frying pan, they are still delicious, like that all-time favorite picnic classic, fried chicken. The fully edible fruit cup is a fun and healthy treat.

Prepare Ahead

The broccoli can be made ahead of time. Be sure to drain any excess dressing before placing it in the bento box. The chicken nuggets can either be made ahead and refrigerated or frozen, or marinated overnight and cooked quickly in the morning. Let hot chicken cool completely before packing it into your bento box.

Arrange

1. Pack the bento box one-third full with rice. Use the back of a moist spoon to smooth out the rice. Sprinkle the toasted black sesame seeds over the rice.
2. Place 3 or 4 broccoli florets in a small silicone cup, cupcake liner, or lettuce leaf in one corner of the empty part of the bento box.
3. Place the Fruit Salad in an Apple Bowl in the other corner.
4. Place 3 or 4 chicken nuggets between the broccoli and apple bowl, wedging them in so the whole thing is tight.
5. Put the lid on the box.

PAN-FRIED GINGER PORK BENTO | *Buta no Shogayaki Bento*



Bento Contents

BASIC RICE *Gohan*

PAN-FRIED GINGER PORK *Buta no Shogayaki*

CHILLED SPINACH SALAD *Ohitashi*

BONITO FLAKES, FOR GARNISH

MIXED BERRIES (SLICED OR QUARTERED STRAWBERRIES PLUS WHOLE
BLUEBERRIES, BLACKBERRIES, RASPBERRIES, ETC.)

CARROT STICKS

This ginger-spiked pork dish is quick to make and is delicious served over rice, which soaks up the brightly flavored sauce. The addition of dark green spinach, crunchy carrot sticks, and colorful mixed berries make this a balanced and delightful lunch for kids and adults alike.

Prepare Ahead

The pork and spinach can both be prepared a day or two ahead of time and refrigerated. Reheat the pork before placing it in the bento box, and let it cool completely before closing the box.

Arrange

1. Fill half the bento box with a layer of rice, leaving room on top for the pork.
2. Top the rice with a scoop of the pork and drizzle some of the sauce on top.
3. Place a silicone baking cup or other container in one of the empty corners of the box. Drain any excess liquid from the spinach and place it in the cup. Garnish the spinach with bonito flakes.
4. Place a second holder in the remaining empty corner. Fill this with an assortment of berries.
5. Arrange the carrot sticks between the two cups, wedging them in to stabilize the arrangement.
6. Put the lid on the box.

APPENDIX

Online Resources for Japanese Food Products

Every year, Japanese food becomes more and more popular in the United States and home cooks have grown more adventurous. Demand for Japanese ingredients and cooking tools has skyrocketed, and formerly exotic supplies have become almost commonplace in American supermarkets, not to mention health food, Asian, and specialty food stores. Some of these specialty items, however, can still be challenging to find, especially in rural areas and communities without many Asian residents. But not to worry; you can easily find all things Japanese online. Here are a few websites to get you started.

Amazon

www.amazon.com

The six-hundred-pound gorilla of online shopping, Amazon provides storefronts to numerous small Japanese and Asian food merchants. Many of these don't have stores on their own websites (or even websites of their own), and some sell only a few products via Amazon, but put them all together and you've got a solid source for everything from udon and kombu to bamboo steamers and sushi mats. With so many vendors, you can comparison shop for the best prices and shipping policies.

Asian Food Grocer

www.asianfoodgrocer.com

From mirin and matcha to rice cookers and rice bowls, this well-stocked e-grocer carries the Japanese cooking supplies you need—or just want. The warehouse is in San Francisco, and its FedEx shipping is super-speedy.

eFooddepot.com

www.efooddepot.com

This website offers foods from every continent and scores of countries. At this writing, more than 2,500 Japanese items were available, including 201 kinds of mochi. Access to food and cooking products from all over Asia gives you thousands more choices of Japanese ingredients.

[I love Blue Sea](http://www.iloveblueseas.com)

www.iloveblueseas.com

Through this website you can purchase sustainably harvested seafood directly from the people who catch it. The seafood is shipped fresh, a few hours after it comes out of the water. You can specify the delivery time that's most convenient for you.

JapaneseChefsknife.com

www.japanesechefsknife.com

If you're looking for Japanese knives, you need go no further than this exceptional selection. All of the major premium producers are represented, along with extensive information on their history and philosophy. You can search by blade type, learn how to sharpen a Japanese knife, and more. Delivery is \$7 and takes three to five days.

[Japanese style](http://JapaneseStyle.com)

www.japanesestyle.com

Elegant tableware and cookware, including a small selection of Japanese knives, is on offer by this home furnishings vendor. Pretty sake sets and sushi sets, an astounding variety of chopsticks, and some cute kids' dishes are highlights. There's also a wonderful selection of garden ornaments and party supplies. Free shipping is included on orders over \$75.

Japansuper.com

www.japansuper.com

More fishcakes, noodles, and seaweed than you can shake a chopstick at, plus a respectable selection of sauces, condiments, and much more, make this an excellent stop for

your Japanese shopping needs. Orders are processed within twenty-four hours and arrive in one to five days.

Marukai eStore

www.marukaiestore.com

Dedicated almost exclusively to Japanese groceries, this online retailer carries a tremendous selection of ingredients and other food items. You'll find more varieties of miso, rice, and pickles here than you could possibly eat, as well as donabe pots, lacquerware, and bento boxes. The site even ships sake to thirty-five states.

Mitsuwa Marketplace

www.shop.mitsuwa.com

This e-tailer sets itself apart with a selection of fresh and frozen vegetables, seafood, and meat products shipped via next-day air, with cool packs or freeze packs. The selection of seasonings and rice cookers is notable as well.

Pike Place Fish Market

www.pikeplacefish.com

The famous Seattle fishmonger offers online shopping and ships overnight, directly to your home. They promise 100 percent sustainable seafood that's certified by the Monterey Bay Aquarium's world-renowned Seafood Watch program.

Rakuten Global Market

global.rakuten.com

You might call this website the Japanese Amazon, where you can shop for clothing, sporting equipment, toys, cosmetics, and more. Just as on Amazon, the products come from many sellers, all of whom ship internationally. Its food selection is extensive, giving you lots of options to choose from for individual ingredients and prepared items. Cooking implements, appliances, and tableware are here in abundance.

Sake Social

www.sakesocial.com

Claiming to be “the largest online retailer of Japanese sake,” this company ships eighty-six types of sake to forty states (the other states prohibit online sales of alcohol). In addition to a large and varied inventory, the site is packed with information about sake, from a beginners’ primer to food pairing recommendations to a blog covering all things sake. They even have a sake-of-the-month club.

Vital Choice

www.vitalchoice.com

This company provides quick home delivery of wild Alaskan salmon and other northwest Pacific seafood. Flash-frozen soon after it’s harvested, the products are certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council.

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