

SUSHI



TIPS & TRICKS



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GENERAL TIPS



1. Use polished (white) short-grain Japanese rice (japonica) or medium-grain California rice. These types of rice are often labeled as sushi rice or Calrose rice at the store here in the US.
2. Wash your rice to get rid of the starchy powder that clings to the grains. This starchy powder will prevent proper absorption of the sushi-su and give you less than perfect rice. To wash rice, place your measured rice into a bowl and cover it with fresh cold water. Use your hand to swish and stir the rice around and then carefully drain the water (I use a fine-mesh strainer to do this). Repeat this process until the water runs clear.
3. If you eat a lot of rice, a rice cooker is a wonderful investment because it eliminates timing problems, makes perfect rice, and many cookers offer a warming function that keeps rice fresh and warm for 24 hours.
4. It is best to mix the seasoned vinegar with the cooked rice in a sushi-oke or an unvarnished wooden bowl, but you can also use a wide shallow glass or ceramic bowl. I use a wide shallow glass mixing bowl, because that is what I have on hand. Do not, however, use an aluminum bowl, as this type of bowl will retain heat differently and give the rice a metallic taste.
5. Prepared sushi rice should be stored at cool room temperature, covered with a moist cloth or plastic wrap. It will keep this way for up to 12 hours. Do not refrigerate it or freeze it, as this destroys the texture.

How to Make Sushi-su (Seasoned Vinegar for Sushi Rice)

There are many recipes for sushi-su (seasoned vinegar), but all use the same basic components: rice vinegar, sugar, and salt. Some recipes also throw in a small piece of kombu, which adds more depth of flavor, but this is optional. I prefer my sushi-su to be not as sweet as some. Once you make your own, you can adjust the sugar to suit your personal taste! This recipe makes 1 cup of sushi-su. I like to make extra sushi-su so that I can use it as a salad dressing (you can add some sesame or olive oil, but I like it without). It is delicious tossed with baby arugula and then sprinkled with toasted sesame seeds.

The sushi-su to rice proportions that I like to use are:

3 cups cooked rice: use 1/4 – 1/3 cup sushi-su

4 cups cooked rice: use 1/2 – 2/3 cup sushi-su

5 cups cooked rice: use 2/3 – 1 cup sushi-su

Sushi-Su (Seasoned Vinegar for Sushi Rice)

1 cup rice vinegar

3 tablespoons sugar

2 1/2 teaspoons salt

1 piece kombu, 2-inches square (optional)



Combine the vinegar, sugar, salt, and kombu in a small saucepan. Place the saucepan over medium-high heat and cook, stirring until the sugar and salt dissolve. When the mixture is clear, remove the saucepan from the heat and set it aside to cool. Discard the piece of kombu. Sushi-su can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

How to Make Sushi Rice

1. Transfer the freshly cooked hot rice to a wide shallow bowl. Pour a small amount of the sushi-su evenly over the rice. Toss the rice by gently cutting into it vertically with your rice paddle (or spatula), and then lifting the rice and turning it over. As you do this, fan the rice with a hand fan or piece of cardboard (or get someone to help you). Add more of the sushi-su and continue the cutting, folding, and fanning process. Fanning the rice facilitates quick cooling, which gelatinizes the surface of the rice and gives a glossy finish to the rice. Towards the end, taste the rice occasionally to decide how much of you sushi-su you want to add.
2. Cover the seasoned rice with a moist cloth or plastic wrap until ready to use.

SUSHI-SU

MOMOFUKU PICKLED SHITAKES

Dried mushrooms at the regular grocery store can be pricey, but if you head to an Asian market you can get a one ounce bag for ninety-nine cents. Just be warned, once you start exploring the aisles you may not be able to stop at just mushrooms.

4 cups (loosely packed) dried shiitake mushrooms – about 3 ounces by weight
1 cup sugar
1 cup soy sauce
1 cup white wine vinegar (or sherry vinegar if you can find it, I couldn't)
1 thumb-sized knobs of ginger, peeled



Re-hydrate the mushrooms in hot water (doesn't have to boil, just really hot) for 15 minutes or so or until the mushrooms are softened. Once the mushrooms are soft, lift them out of the soaking liquid; strain the liquid through cheesecloth or a fine mesh strainer to remove any sand or debris and reserve the liquid. Remove the stems from the mushroom caps and discard. Slice the caps into 1/4 inch wide slices.

Combine the mushrooms with 2 cups of the reserved soaking liquid, sugar, soy sauce, vinegar and ginger in a sauce pan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, then reduce heat and simmer (gently, please) for 30 minutes. Allow the mushrooms to cool in the liquid.

Pack the pickled mushroom slices into a quart size container and add enough of the cooking liquid to cover. They'll keep in the fridge for a month or more, but they're ready to eat now, hooray!

MOMOFUKU TAMAGO RECIPE

Reference Site: <http://momofukufor2.com/2010/05/tamago-yaki-recipe/>

Tamago is a little tricky to make at home because you want the layers of egg to adhere to each other, but you don't want any browning because the pieces of sliced tamago should be a uniform yellow colour. I have a cheap tamago pan that I bought at a Korean grocery store, but I've seen people make tamago without a rectangle pan, so I know it's possible.

Special Equipment:

Tamago pan (or shallow teflon coated rectangular pan)

Chopsticks

Sushi Mat

Makes 1 Roll or 8-10 pieces

Tamago Recipe with Dashi (taken from the Washoku: Recipes from the Japanese Home Kitchen cookbook):

3 jumbo or 4 xtra-large eggs

3 TB Dashi

1 TB Sake

2 tsp sugar

¼ tsp salt

Vegetable oil for seasoning pan

1"-2" chunk daikon, about 2 oz, peeled and grated to yield about ¼ cup (optional)

1 tsp soy sauce

Tamago Recipe (vegetarian):

3 eggs

1 tablespoon mirin

1 tablespoon sugar

1 teaspoon light soy sauce



Crack your eggs and lightly mix them. You don't want to incorporate air into them so the best way is to use chopsticks: stir them gently without whipping, but make sure that the eggs and yolks are completely homogeneous. Add the mirin, sugar and soy and gently mix in.

Use a paper towel to evenly spread a bit of oil in your pan. Heat it on medium low heat, then add the eggs so they cover the bottom of the pan.

After 2-3 minutes, the egg will start to cook and solidify. The eggs don't need to be entirely cooked, in fact, they should be a tiny bit moist on top so that the egg sticks to itself. Using chopsticks or a spatula, fold the egg over onto itself twice, like how you would fold a letter into thirds. Don't flip the eggs, just push them to the end of the pan.

Use your oily paper towel to spread a tiny bit more oil in the pan and add a bit more of the eggs. Lift up the log of already cooked eggs so that the raw eggs are touching them. When the new layer of egg is almost cooked, fold the eggs over onto themselves again. Repeat until all the eggs are used.

Wrap in saran wrap and using a sushi mat, press the tamago into a rectangle shape. Let cool completely, slice and enjoy!

FUN JAPANESE FACTOIDS

A few aspects that set Japanese cuisine apart from other cuisines are its emphasis on using quality ingredients, particular seasonality, and impeccable presentation.

Tempura is not actually Japanese, but was imported from Portugal in the 16th century.

Traditionally, a sushi chef or itamae trains for 10 years before serving this Japanese food in a restaurant.

Sashimi is always the best cut of meat, and should preferably be eaten without wasabi, and using your chopsticks. Sashimi is not always fish; it can also be raw beef or lightly cooked octopus.

The Japanese often eat sashimi as the first course and then move onto sushi.

A nice muskmelon, similar to a cantaloupe, may sell for over \$300.00 US. For example, a nice specimen of Yubari melon. These are often physically perfect, not like their American counterparts with dark smudges and scars.

Coffee is very popular and Japan imports approximately 85% of Jamaica's annual coffee production.

Contrary to popular belief, whale meat is not a delicacy in Japan. Many Japanese dislike the taste and older Japanese may be reminded of the post-World War II period when whale meat was one of the few economical sources of protein.

Sake, or saké (saw-kay) is the oldest known spirit in the world. Saké was first produced in China in 4800 BC

JAPANESE DINING ETIQUETTE

While eating in Japan the chopsticks are never to be put upright into the bowl, as this is the way to offer food to the dead.

It is considered good manners to empty your dishes to the last grain of rice.

When drinking alcoholic beverages, it is customary to serve each other, rather than pouring your own beverage. Periodically check your friends' cups and refill their drinks if their cups are getting empty. Likewise, if someone wants to serve you more alcohol, you should quickly empty your glass and hold it towards that person.

Drinking sake with sushi is bad form since both are made with rice. Sake can be enjoyed with sashimi, while grape wine or beer can be enjoyed with sushi.

While it is considered bad manners to become obviously drunk in some formal restaurants, for example in restaurants that serve kaiseki ryori (Japanese haute cuisine), the same is not true for other types of restaurants such as izakaya, as long as you do not bother other guests.

Do not start drinking until everybody at the table is served and the glasses are raised for a drinking salute, which usually is "kampai". Avoid using "chin chin" when drinking a toast, since in Japanese this expression refers to the male genitals.



How to Eat....:

...Rice:

Hold the rice bowl in one hand and the chopsticks in the other. Lift the bowl towards your mouth while eating. Do not pour soya sauce over white, cooked rice.

... Sushi:

Pour some soya sauce into the small dish provided. It is considered bad manners to waste soya sauce, so try not to pour more sauce than you will use.

You do not need to add wasabi into the soya sauce, because the sushi pieces may already contain it, or may be eaten plain. However, if you choose to add wasabi, use only a small amount so as not to offend the sushi chef. If you do not like wasabi, you can request that none is added into your sushi.

In general, you are supposed to eat a sushi piece in one bite. Attempts to separate a piece into two generally end in the destruction of the beautifully prepared sushi. Hands or chopsticks can be used to eat sushi.

In case of nigiri-zushi, dip the piece into the soya sauce upside-down so that the fish enters the sauce. A few kinds of nigiri-zushi, for example, marinated pieces, should not be dipped into soya sauce.

In case of gunkan-zushi, pour a small amount of soya sauce over the sushi piece rather than dipping it into the sauce.