

夏の福神漬

Natsu no Fukujin-Zuké
Seven Good Fortunes of Summer



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Styled by Karen Shinto

Named after the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, **Shichi Fukujin**, this pickle is made from an assortment of chopped vegetables with the addition of fresh ginger and either dried red chili (*tōgarashi*) or pepper corns (black, green or pink) contributing spice and a touch of fire. A balanced blend of vinegar, sugar and soy sauce in the pickling medium provides depth of flavor while the addition of *kombu* heightens the overall effect. Herbs such as *shiso* or mint can also be added for further interest.

As the name suggests, *fukujin-zuké* is typically made with seven ingredients, but in many frugal kitchens this pickle becomes a tasty vehicle for clearing out the vegetable bin. Nearly all versions of *fukujin-zuké* include radishes, eggplant and gourds. I offer a variety of suggested ingredients below and ask you to choose seven to create your own original mélange.

This style of pickling requires a double procedure; brining PLUS marinating. Once assembled, refrigerate in a covered glass jar. The pickles are ready to enjoy within a day or two and can be kept for 4 to 5 weeks.

Fukujin-zuké is the traditional accompaniment to curried rice dishes. Finely minced and tossed in to cooked rice it becomes a tasty pilaf. It also makes a delightful salad-substitute when wrapped in crisp lettuce leaves.

Makes 3 cups

Brine:

2 teaspoons salt + 3 cups warm water

Pickling Medium:

3-inch piece *kombu* (kelp)

1/3 cup sugar

1/2 cup soy sauce

1/4 cup *saké* rice wine

1 cup rice vinegar

1 *tōgarashi* (dried red chili) pod, broken in half with most seeds removed OR

3 or 4 whole peppercorns (black, green, or pink)

1 teaspoon ginger juice extracted from grated fresh ginger

Choose 7 items from among the following vegetables:

- 3 ounces **daikon** radish, peeled or scrubbed, then cut in quarter-inch dice
- 1 small **carrot**, about 3 ounces, peeled or scrubbed, then cut in quarter-inch dice
- 2 small Kirby or other pickling **cucumbers**, each about 2 ounces, scrubbed, then cut in quarter-inch dice
- 1 **Japanese white turnip**, about 1 ounce, trimmed, cut in quarter-inch dice
- 2 ounces **burdock root** (*gobō*), scraped, cut in quarter-inch dice, blanched for 1 minute and drained (do NOT refresh in cold water)
- 2 ounces **lotus root** (*renkon*), peeled, cut in quarter-inch dice, blanched for 1 minute and drained (do NOT refresh in cold water)
- 2 ounces **cauliflower stem**, peeled if fibrous, cut in quarter-inch dice, blanched for 30 seconds and drained (do NOT refresh in cold water)
- 2 ounces **pumpkin** (*kabocha*), scrubbed, de-seeded, cut in quarter-inch dice, blanched for 30 seconds and drained (do NOT refresh in cold water)
- 1 **Japanese eggplant**, about 3 ounces, trimmed, cut in quarter-inch dice
- 1/2 small **green bell pepper**, about 1 ounce, trimmed (ribs and seeds removed), cut in quarter-inch dice
- 3 ounces **enoki mushrooms**, trimmed, then cut in quarter-inch lengths



STAGE ONE: BRINING

In a large glass or other non-reactive container, mix the salt and warm water to make brine. Place the following vegetables in the brine to soak for at least 30 minutes and up to 3 hours at cool room temperature: *daikon* radish, carrot, cucumber, turnip, burdock root, lotus root, and eggplant. Because the vegetables tend to bob to the surface use an *otoshi-buta* (pictured below) or a flat plate to keep the vegetables submerged in the brine.



Drain the vegetables, squeezing gently to be rid of excess moisture. Add the *enoki* mushrooms, green peppers, pumpkin, and/or cauliflower, and to the mixture, tossing to distribute.

STAGE TWO: MARINATING

In a wide, shallow pot bring the sugar, soy sauce and kelp to a boil. Lower the heat to maintain a steady but not vigorous simmer. Add ALL the vegetables you will be pickling, stir once, and wait until bubbles form around the rim of the pot. Stir again and remove the pot from the stove, allowing the vegetables to cool in the liquid until there is no longer any steam rising.

Using a slotted spoon transfer the vegetables to a wide-mouthed, one quart sized glass Mason-type jar. Pull out the kelp and arrange it on top of the vegetables to keep them moist as they continue to cool in the jar, un-lidded.

Add the *saké*, vinegar and *tōgarashi* or peppercorns and ginger juice to the liquid remaining in the pot. Bring this mixture to a boil and simmer for 3 or 4 minutes or until reduced by half. Remove from the stove and let this pickling liquid cool naturally.

Pour the liquid over the vegetables in the glass jar. When the jar no longer feels warm to the touch, secure the lid, label and date the jar, and refrigerate it.

The pickles will develop flavor slowly during the first week. After 4 or 5 days, open the jar and with clean chopsticks or fork pull out a sample and taste. If very intense, add 2 or 3 tablespoons of cold water to the pickling liquid, re-lid and refrigerate for another few days.

The pickle will be best one to two weeks after assembling but can be enjoyed for four to five weeks if kept refrigerated throughout. Flavors will continue to intensify, however, and you may wish to dilute the pickling liquid after a few weeks.

When ready to serve, select an assortment of chunks, draining the amount you wish to use at that time. Quickly rinse the pieces in fresh cold water, and squeeze out excess moisture. Mince the pickled vegetables then gently squeeze the pile to form a mound.