

Spinach Steeped in Broth

Hōrensō no Ohitashi ほうれん草のお浸し



The verb HITASU means “to steep.” It is the basis of an important technique in Japanese cookery and the root of the word *ohitashi*, a classic dish frequently seen on Japanese restaurant menus, family dinner tables, and packed into *obentō*, too.

Typically leafy greens (such as spinach), or other vegetables (such as asparagus, green beans or broccoli) are briefly blanched, then placed in *dashi* stock (sometimes tinged with soy sauce and *mirin*) to cool. As the vegetables cool they become infused with the flavor of the *dashi*.

This *ohitashi* preparation is the start of many dishes that are then finished with a garnish of toasted sesame seeds, dry-roasted and crushed *katsuo-bushi* fish flakes, or perhaps the steeped greens are tossed in a creamy *tōfu*, sesame or walnut-*miso* sauce. All sorts of wonderful possibilities await!

Rinse and slit spinach roots.



Using kitchen twine, tie into bundles keeping stem ends aligned.



Blanch stem ends first; invert and barely blanch leafy ends. Lift blanched greens from pot; BRIEFLY dip in cold water and immediately squeeze out excess moisture.



Transfer to a non-reactive container; remove strings (can re-use). Add *dashi* to barely cover. Season with a drop of *mirin* and *usukuchi shōyu*. Steep in seasoned broth with bunches aligned. Steeping greens can be refrigerated in broth for up to 2 days.

Just before serving, drain. If you want to serve neat cylinders (topped with sesame seeds or *katsuo-bushi* fish flakes), align the greens on a sudaré (slatted mat) alternating stem and leafy ends. Roll up and secure with rubber bands, standing the mat in a container to catch drippings. Remove from mat; cut into short cylindrical segments. Either toss segments and gently mound in a bowl. Or, serve the greens aligned. Press each bundle to sesame. Invert.

