

OHAGI and BOTAMOCHI
お萩・牡丹餅



Made from lightly pounded rice (a combination of ordinary *uruchimai* table rice and *mochigomé* sweet-sticky rice) and fudge-like sweet *adzuki* bean paste, these bite-sized sweets are associated with the vernal (spring) and autumnal equinoxes known as **OHIGAN** お彼岸.

In the spring when peonies (*botan* 牡丹 below left) are in bloom the plump sweets go by the name of *botamochi* because they resemble that flower; in the fall the sweets are called *ohagi* – again because they of their resemblance to autumnal clover called *ohagi* お萩 (below, right).



Classic *ohagi* and *botamochi* sweets have a center of lightly pounded rice wrapped in bean fudge (below, right); other versions have a bean fudge center cloaked in pounded rice. The rice-on-the-outside sweets are then dusted with toasted soy flour (*kinako*; below center) or rolled in toasted-and-crushed black sesame (below, left).



To make a total of 12 bite-sized *ohagi* or *botamochi* (4 of each kind):

Place 1 and 1/2 cups of well washed-and-drained rice (**1 cup ordinary uruchimai + 1/2 cup sweet rice mochigomé**) in the bowl of an automatic rice cooker with **1 and 3/4 cups water**. Let the rice sit in the water for at least 5 minutes (but no longer than 1 hour).

Press the start button and let the rice cook through its full cycle. Allow the rice to sit for an additional 10 minutes before unplugging. Carefully open the lid for a few seconds (count to 5) to allow some steam to escape before closing again. Let the rice sit for another 10 to 15 minutes.

If you prefer to cook your rice in a pot, stovetop, refer to page 11 of KANSHA: Celebrating Japan's Vegan and Vegetarian Traditions (Ten Speed Press, 2010) or page 137 of WASHOKU: Recipes from the Japanese Home Kitchen (Ten Speed Press, 2005)

You will also need the following to make the sweets:

2 cups Chunky Red Bean Jam (page 108 of WASHOKU or page 225 of KANSHA), Divide the pounded bean jam into 12 portions, 4 slightly larger than the other 8. The larger portions will be used to enclose rice, the smaller portions will become the center of rice-cloaked sweets.

1/2 cup kinako or **uguisu kinako** (pale green “nightingale” soy flour)

1/2 cup kuro goma (black sesame), toasted and coarsely crushed



Back to preparing the rice...

Using a wooden *shamoji* paddle or *surokogi* pestle, lightly pound and mash the still warm (but no longer hot) rice. You DON'T want a paste; you want to see bits of rice but it needs to be smooth enough to spread out (like dough) on a piece of clear plastic wrap. Divide the pounded rice into 12 portions, 8 slightly larger than the other 4. The larger portions will be used to enclose bean jam, the smaller portions will become the center of bean jam-cloaked sweets.

It will be easiest to cover a cutting board with clear plastic wrap and make the sweets on it, cutting with scissors to separate each after placing the "filling" on the "wrapper." 8 of the dozen sweets will have RICE as the wrapper; 4 will have BEAN JAM as the wrapper. Bring up opposite corners of your plastic wrap and twist lightly to enclose the filling. Turn the sweets upside down when ready to serve. Dust (with soy flour or crushed sesame) those sweets that have a rice wrapper and bean jam center.



Serve at room temperature with green tea. If you need to hold the sweets before serving, cover with clear plastic wrap to keep them from drying out. Refrigerate if it is a warm day or you need to serve them the following day. These sweets do not freeze well and should be eaten within 36 hours of preparing them.