

Spicy Smashed-Sembei Sliders

Kudaké Sembei Pirikara Tsukuné
砕け煎餅 ピリ辛つくね



I LOVE *osembei* rice crackers! Especially the black sesame-studded, soy-glazed disks pictured above. But *osembei* chip, break, crack and get crushed, easily. Stores will sometimes have specials on bags of *osembei* broken in shipping. These *waré* (broken) or *kudaké* (smashed) crackers are intended for ordinary household use; they are not offered to guests, or given as gifts. Crushed into a coarse meal, the broken bits make a TERRIFIC binder for ground meat – much tastier than plain breadcrumbs. And, when *osembei* crackers become soggy, smash them! And use the smashed crackers to make meatloaf, burgers... or these spicy sliders.

The following recipe makes 4 to 6 small sliders.



- 1/2 cup finely crushed Japanese *osembei* (rice crackers; soggy are fine)
- 10 to 12 ounces (about 350 grams) ground chicken (or other ground meat)
- 1 scallion, trimmed and finely minced; about 1 tablespoon
- 1 small knob ginger, peeled and grated
- 1/2 teaspoon aromatic sesame oil (*goma abura*)
- soy glaze:
 - 1 and 1/2 teaspoons sugar
 - 1 tablespoon *saké*
 - generous tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon *shichimi tōgarashi* (fiery 7-spice blend)

Combine crushed rice crackers with the ground meat in a bowl. Toss in the scallions and ginger and stir-and-fold to combine. Knead gently until the meat mixture forms a mass that comes cleanly away from the sides of the bowl. Lift the mass and throw it back in the bowl, as though you were throwing a baseball into a catcher's mitt. Repeat this pitching action several times until the mass is smooth and uniform (though it may be a bit sticky to the touch).

Oil the palms of your hands with a few drops of the sesame oil and divide the meat mass into either 2 portions (to make dinner-sized "burgers") or 4 to 6 smaller portions to make sliders (great for *obentō* lunchboxes or served as appetizers).



Press each portion into a patty.

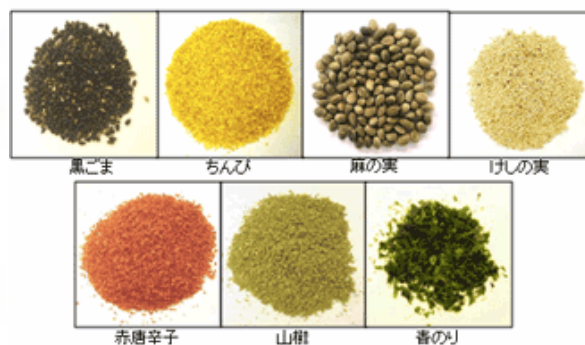
Heat a skillet and sear the patties for about 1 minute UNDISTURBED. Resist the urge to jiggle the skillet. You can observe the meat changing color around the edges of the patties. That will be your cue to try sliding a flexible spatula underneath and seeing if the meat is lightly browned and slightly crusted. Flip and cook until crusted on the other side, about 1 more minute.



Lower heat and cook, covered, for 1 minute. Remove the lid, add the soy glaze ingredients and jiggle the skillet to be sure the sugar is well distributed as it melts. The sauce will become foamy and reduce rapidly forming a glaze. Carefully flip the patties a final time to glaze evenly.

Serve the patties hot, or at room temperature, spooning extra sauce over them. Sprinkle with *shichimi tōgarashi* (fiery 7-spice blend)

shichimi tōgarashi
(fiery 7-spice blend)
七味唐辛子



Top row: black sesame, *chinpi* (dried *mikan* or *yuzu* peel), *asa no mi* (flax seed), *keshi no mi* (white poppy seed)
Bottom row, above: *aka tōgarashi* (red chili pepper), *sanshō*, *ao nori* (sea herb)