

SANUKI Sea Stock (いりこ出汁 Iriko Dashi)

The Sanuki region of Japan (what is today Kagawa prefecture on the island of Shikoku) is famous for its *udon* noodles... and for its (dried sardines) **IRIKO**. A classic Sanuki sea stock is made from *kombu* (preferably *ma kombu*) *iriiko* (dried sardines, also called *niboshi*) and *hoshi shiitaké* (dried black mushrooms). Combining these ingredients increases their *umami* power many fold.



From left: *ma kombu* (soaking in tap water) *iriiko* (dried sardines, also called *niboshi*) and *hoshi shiitaké* (dried black mushrooms)

Makes about 1 quart/liter stock.

- 7 to 8 large, or 15 to 20 small *iriiko* (dried sardines), about 15 grams/1/2 ounce
- 1 generous quart/1 liter cold water
- 1 piece *kombu* (kelp), 3 to 4 inches long and about 2 inches wide (10cm x 4 cm)
- 1 *hoshi shiitaké* (dried black mushroom) or stems from 3 or 4 dried mushrooms
- 1 teaspoon each light-colored soy sauce (*usukuchi shōyu*) and *mirin* (syrupey rice wine)



To maximize the flavor-enhancing ability of the dried sardines while keeping potential bitterness to a minimum, trim the sardines by removing the gills and contents of the belly cavity. First, snap off and discard the heads. Then, pinch each fish at midpoint along its abdomen to split the fish and remove the crumbly, blackened material in the belly cavity. Because the fish are dried, this is not a messy procedure. However, to ensure that the mineral-rich dried sardines will boost the nutrient level of the stock made with them, keep all the skeletal material as well as the meaty parts of the dried sardines.

Place the trimmed dried sardines in a 3-quart pot with the cold water and kelp. Add the dried mushrooms to the pot and allow all the ingredients to become “acquainted” with each other – about 10 minutes of soaking them at room temperature. Place the pot over medium-high heat. Wait until small bubbles appear around the rim of your pot before adjusting the heat to maintain a steady but not very vigorous simmer.



Cook the stock for about 10 minutes. If large clouds of froth appear – kelp and dried mushrooms exude a fair amount of scum -- skim it away. Remove the pot from the heat and allow the contents to sink to the bottom naturally, about 2-3 minutes. Strain the broth; it should be a pale gold. Refrigerate for up to 2 days (a sediment may form at the bottom but that is not a sign of spoilage -- an off smell is an indication of spoilage).

Season just before using with light-colored soy sauce (*usukuchi shōyu*) and *mirin* (syrupy rice wine).



The most basic of noodle soup dishes is called *KAKÉ UDON*, literally “covered-with-broth” noodles.

The Sanuki version is a generous serving of thick, slithery and slightly chewy *udon* noodles floating in a clear amber-colored, soy-tinged *iriko dashi* broth. Garnished with chopped scallions and grated ginger, this briny-yet-earthly soup noodle dish is classic comfort food.