

Uméboshi FLOW CHART 梅干しができるまで

A 4 to 6 week process to make; many are kept for 2 or 3 years before consuming.

Below, a photo-illustrated flow-chart for making *uméboshi*. Yellow-with-blush *umé* are best for *uméboshi*; green plums (*ao umé*) are better suited for *uméshu* (plum wine).

Proportions:

2 kilo ripe plums

300 grams coarse salt (at least 10% and up to 18%)

200 cc (1 Japanese sized cup) *shōchū* (35 proof); see end of flow chart for image

250-300 grams *aka-jiso* leaves + 2 to 3 tablespoon coarse salt

Prepare plums:

Wash fruit in bucket of fresh water; drain and gently but thoroughly pat dry. Moisture and/or bruises and scratches create an opportunity for unwanted molds to flourish. Most importantly, to prevent mold, carefully and completely remove the stem from each piece of fruit. Use a toothpick, angled to gouge out the stem bit. With soft cloth dipped in *shōchū*, carefully wipe each plum after removing the stem bit.



Prepare container; layer plums & salt; add weight:

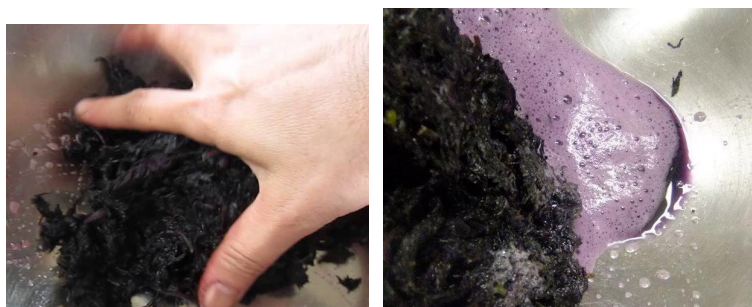


Wipe down a clean container with *shōchū* and sprinkle salt at bottom. Layer plums with salt. Pour remaining *shōchū* over all. Cover with an inner lid that sits on plums. Place weight (**twice the weight of the plums**; in this case 4 kilo) on top. Liquid will rise (this is *shiro umézu* white plum vinegar) will rise in 7 to 10 days. Once it has you can add *momi-jiso* (see next page) to tint plums pink (and add aroma and anti-bacterial qualities) and replace the inner lid. **REDUCE the weight to half** (in this case 2 kilo) and let the plums sit submerged in the red *umézu* for at least 10 days and up to several weeks.

Prepare *momi-jiso* from *aka-jiso*:

250-300 grams *aka-jiso* leaves

2 to 3 tablespoon coarse salt (10% weight of leaves)



Pluck leaves keeping 1/2 inch with stem attached. Wash and spin dry (in a salad spinner). Take half of the coarse salt and sprinkle over leaves. Apply gentle pressure gradually increase; the leaves will wilt and begin to "sweat." Squeeze to produce dark purple liquid. Save the liquid to use as a dye for thread, yarn, cloth OR discard.

Rinse, drain, squeeze and repeat with remaining salt. Rinse, drain, and squeeze. Add some *shiro umézu* (white plum vinegar); the color will bleed to produce a bright red-purple liquid.



Combine salt-pressured plums with *momi-jiso* + air-dry & store:



Add the “bleeding” leaves to the vat of pickled plums. Replace weight (reduce to half to make it the original weight of plums). Cover and store for about 4 weeks in a cool, dark spot.

Uméboshi are made during the rainy season and waiting for a dry, sunny day can be frustrating. Airing the pickled plums, and the *yukari* leaves (that is what the salt-wilted *aka-jiso* leaves are called) on a good-weather day is called *doyō-boshi*. The plums need to be turned several times to insure they are evenly dried. Store finished plums in glass (or other non-reactive) containers with the *yukari* leaves. Store at room temperature in a cool, dark, dry spot. Plums can be kept for several years.



above far right: Takara brand *shōchū* (35 proof)

OTHER USES for *umézu* (plum vinegar):

- To pickle & tint other foods (lotus root); add sugar (& water or vinegar to dilute)
- To make chilled drink (add sugar; dilute with water or soda water)
- To make gelatin/*kanten* (add gelatin or *kanten* to juice)

