



田作り (たづくり・ごまめ) **tazukuri** • **gomamé**

soy-glazed *katakuchi iwashi* sardines; symbolizes "fertility"

Miniature dried sardines (*katakuchi iwashi*) are made into a New Year's delicacy called **tazukuri** (literally "tilling the fields"). The fish, and the dish made with them, a symbol of fertility and abundance, are also called **gomamé**. One of the quirks of Japanese culinary naming is that there are often two words for the same thing (*onigiri* & *omusubi* rice bundles; *renkon* & *hasu* lotus root; *handai* and *sushi-oké* tubs for mixing cooked rice with sweetened vinegar).

Hoping for a sweet and prosperous New Year, *tazukuri* are nibbled on New Year's Day. The first time I tried these tiny, dried sardines, I admit I was a bit apprehensive: candied fish??? Toasted and glazed the fish are both sticky-sweet and savory, with a hint of bitterness (the fish are consumed whole with head, tail and skeleton intact) a culinary combo not found in any American foods I know. Now, decades later, I look forward to making, and munching on, these calcium-rich candied fish, especially when paired with a well-chilled, dry *saké*.

Makes about 1 cup (about 100 small dried sardines).

50 gr (about 2 oz) **tazukuri** (small dried sardines)

Glaze:

3 tablespoons sugar

2 and 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon water



In a heavy skillet set over low heat, dry-roast the fish until they are aromatic, brittle and slightly colored (about 5 minutes). To keep the fish from scorching, swirl the skillet and/or stir the fish with a wooden spatula. Remove the fish to a plate spreading them out to cool.

Using the same skillet, add the sugar, soy sauce and water and stir to mix.

Return the skillet to the stove placing it over low heat. Stir constantly cooking the glaze until bubbly.

When you can draw a line through the glaze and it does not fill immediately, remove the skillet from the stove.



Toss the brittle dry-roasted fish in the glaze and stir to coat lightly. Transfer the glazed fish to parchment paper to cool completely. Allow the fish to completely cool (about 15-20 minutes) before storing in a covered container (preferably glass) at cool room temperature for up to 1 month.



If you like, add toasted nuts to the candied fish as you toss them in the glaze

KITCHEN NOTES:

***tazukuri* · gomamé** 田作り are miniature dried sardines.

Store on a cool dry shelf and use before the sell-by date. Cook the entire package (usually 50 grams) at once. Or, if you must, freeze the remainder after opening. When ready to prepare, dry-roast without defrosting first. The fish are dense in calcium (the fish are eaten whole including the skeleton).

