

# お餅を頂きます

Enjoying Freshly Pounded OMOCHI  
Softening OMOCHI

In ancient times, pounding freshly steamed *mochi-gomé* rice into taffy, then allowing it to cool and harden, was a way of extending the otherwise short, shelf-life of cooked rice. While still soft, rice taffy can be shaped by hand, one-by-one, into disc-shaped cakes. These are called *maru* ("round") *mochi*. Although there are no strict rules regarding regional interpretations, **ROUND mochi is most often SIMMERED**, rather than grilled or toasted.

When warm, freshly pounded rice taffy is spread out in sheets it is called *noshi mochi*. These sheets are cut into squares (*kiri mochi*, or "cut" *mochi*) that when cool and dry become quite firm. **SQUARES of noshi mochi are most often TOASTED** just before eating to soften them. As the square heats up it bubbles and crusts, appearing round.

## Enjoying Freshly Pounded OMOCHI

Sweet toppings:

- Kuro mitsu (Brown Sugar Syrup, recipe KANSHA pg 224)
- Black Sesame Syrup (recipe, KANSHA pg 227)
- Kinako (toasted soy flour) + cinammon and/or sugar (KANSHA pg 227)
- Green tea (*matcha*) + (powdered) sugar
- Candied Ginger and/or dried fruit
- Chunky Red Bean Jam (recipe WASHOKU pg 108 and KANSHA pg 225)
- Sweet Black Beans (recipe KANSHA pg 238)
- Kuro mitsu + kinako = is known as Abekawa mochi



Savory toppings:

- Soy sauce
- Grated daikon radish (with *shichimi* spices, optional)
- Nori; bands of toasted nori to wrap *omochi* (*Isobé mochi*)
- Ao nori, sprinkled over *omochi*



## SOFTEN by TOASTING or GRILLING, stovetop...

In Japan, most households have a KONRO コンロ (net that can be placed directly over stovetop burners. They come in various configurations (with & without handles, some with adjustable height features).



Open-door toasters fitted with flat racks called OVEN-TOASTERS in Japan, are also popular. Broilers on the bottom of cake or bread ovens, though, are hard to monitor – and grilling omochi needs to be watched carefully to prevent scorching and burning.



To **MICROWAVE** at 500-600 Watts for 1-2 minutes, stovetop...

Place the pieces of hard omochi in a glass bowl and fill with water to barely moisten them. Cover with clear plastic wrap and zap for 1 (at 600W) to 2 (at 500W) minutes.



To **SOFTEN** by simmering, stovetop...

Bring several inches of water to a simmer in a wide, shallow pot. Remove the pot from the stove and place omochi pieces in the pot in a single layer. Cover the pot and let sit for 2 minutes. Return the pot to the stove, uncovered, over low heat and bring to a barely a simmer. Remove the pot from the stove, cover, and let sit for another minute or two. Test the omochi by pinching with chopsticks – it should give easily. If not, repeat the hot water soak in a covered pot.

