



## CLASSIC SU MESHI 酢飯

Used in preparing:

- Rolled **MAKI-ZUSHI** 巻寿司
- Scattered Style **CHIRASHI-ZUSHI** ちらし寿司
- Bite-sized Pom Pom **TEMARI-ZUSHI** 手まり寿司
- Stuffed Pillows/Pouches **INARI-ZUSHI** いなり寿司

Instructions for **COOKING RICE** in **KITCHEN NOTES**  
(at the end of main recipe)

To make **2 cups cooked rice**:

**1 cup raw rice (*uruchi mai*)**, washed until water runs clear, drained  
**1 + 2 tablespoons cold water + small piece kombu (kelp)** soaking in water

2 cups cooked rice is enough to make:

2 generous portions of Scattered Style Sushi (*chirashi-zushi*) **OR**  
4 mini plump rolls (each using a half-sheet of *nori*) **OR**  
20-25 bite-sized pom pom sushi (each with a topping) **OR**  
6 inari-zushi “pillows” (fried *tōfu* pockets stuffed with *su meshi*)

To make **3 cups cooked rice**:

**1 + 1/2 cups raw rice (*uruchi mai*)**, washed until water runs clear, drained  
**1 + 2/3 cups cold water + small piece kombu (kelp)** soaking in water

3 cups cooked rice is enough to make:

4 portions of Scattered Style Sushi (*chirashi-zushi*) **OR**  
6 mini plump rolls (each using a half-sheet of *nori*) **OR**  
30-35 bite-sized pom pom sushi (each with a topping) **OR**  
8-9 inari-zushi “pillows” (fried *tōfu* pockets stuffed with *su meshi*)

To make **5 cups cooked rice**:

**2 + 1/2 cups raw rice (*uruchi mai*)**, washed until water runs clear, drained

**2 + 3/4** scant **cups cold water + small piece *kombu* (kelp)** soaking in water

5 cups cooked rice is enough to make:

6 portions of Scattered Style Sushi (*chirashi-zushi*) **OR**

10 mini plump rolls (each using a half-sheet of *nori*) **OR**

50-55 bite-sized pom pom sushi (each with a topping) **OR**

8-9 *inari-zushi* “pillows” (fried *tōfu* pockets stuffed with *su meshi*)

### Begin your sushi project by **SEASONING the RICE**:

To achieve maximum flavor and texture, season the rice while it is still warm and therefore more receptive to adsorbing the seasoned vinegar. For the best results, transfer freshly cooked rice to a *handai* (a wide, shallow wooden tub for seasoning rice; see **KITCHEN NOTES**). If you don't have one, use the widest, shallowest bowl you have -- preferably not metal (it retains heat and often imparts a metallic taste to the rice). A wooden salad bowl is fine, as long as it does not reek of garlic and/or olive oil.

Toss the warm rice with a *shamoji* (paddle), while fanning it with an *uchiwa* (flat fan). When clouds of steam are no longer rising, drizzle the seasoned vinegar over the warm rice, tossing with gentle cutting and folding motions. Fan as you season the rice, adding the vinegar bit by bit. Taste occasionally to verify seasoning; err to the side of tart since some of the vinegar evaporates as the rice further cools, making it milder than you might have first thought. **For every cup of cooked rice you will need ABOUT 3 tablespoons of seasoned vinegar.**

**Seasoned vinegar**, also called *awasé-zu* or *sushi su*: **(makes 1 and 1/2 cups)**

1.5 cups *su* (preferably *komé su*, pure rice vinegar)

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

small piece of *kombu* (kelp), optional

Combine seasoned vinegar ingredients in a small saucepan. The addition of *kombu* boosts flavor. Heat, stirring, until the sugar and salt melt. Refrigerate any leftover in a lidded glass jar, with the *kombu*. Date the jar and use within 1 month.





Cover the seasoned rice with clear plastic wrap or a well rung-out cloth to keep it moist. Store it at cool room temperature until ready to use – up to 6 hours. Avoid extreme cold: refrigerated *su meshi* gets tough and crusty and frozen *su meshi* will become mushy when thawed.

Next... **divvy up** your cooked, seasoned rice into the number of units you need. Using metal or plastic measuring cups can be useful (top row, left) a 1/2 cup American measure. Rice molds of various sizes and shapes (below, right and bottom photo) can also be used.



## KITCHEN NOTES

### STOVETOP METHOD for COOKING RICE:



Place the rice in a sturdy, straight-sided pot. Pour in the *kombu*-infused water. Ideally, the rice sits in its cooking water for 10 minutes before cooking it. If pressed for time, add a few drops more water. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid.

Over high heat, bring the water in the pot to a rolling boil. Do not remove the lid to check on progress. Instead, rely on other clues; you can hear bubbling noises and see the lid begin to dance. This should take about 5 minutes.

Reduce the heat and continue to cook until the water is absorbed; you may hear a low hissing sound (about 5 minutes longer). Increase the heat to high again for 30 seconds to dry off the rice. Remove the pot from the source of heat, still tightly covered. Let the rice stand for at least 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes. This final self-steaming makes more tender grains of rice.

初めチヨロチヨロ、中パッパ、赤子が泣いても、蓋とるな！

*Hajimé choro choro, naka papa, akago ga naitemo, futa toru na!*

**First it bubbles, then hisses... Even if the baby cries, don't remove the lid!**

OR

### AUTOMATED APPLIANCE METHOD for COOKING RICE:

The measuring cup sold with rice cookers corresponds to the lines marked on the side of the appliance's inner bowl. These are very different from standard American measurements. If you want to use the lines on the appliance's bowl, you must use the measuring cup that came with the appliance. The recipe here uses STANDARD AMERICAN MEASUREMENTS.



Most Japanese rice cookers are sold with an *ichi gō* (one *gō*; traditional unit of volume, approximately 180 cc)-sized plastic cup. Traditionally in Japan, rice was measured in units called *gō* and *masu*; these measures were wooden boxes.



Left to right:

*Ich*i (1) *gō* box

*Go* (5) *gō* box

*Ich*i (1) *masu* box

Modern Japanese cups hold approximately 150 grams of raw rice when they are full; these cups are often marked for metric liquid measures with a line drawn near the top at 180 cc. These **modern Japanese rice cooker-cups hold approximately the same amount as an American 2/3 cup measure.**

In the modern Japanese kitchen, the current “standard” used to measure most ingredients is a cup that holds 200 cc (and is the equivalent of 3/4 of an American cup). To avoid mishaps, be sure to **use the same measuring tool for raw rice and water.** If you want to use the lines marked on the inside of the appliance’s bowl, be sure you measure the raw rice with the cup measure provided by the manufacturer.

HANDAI 飯台  
also SUSHI OKE すし桶



*Handai* wooden rice tubs are used when seasoning cooked rice for making *sushi meshi*. The tub I have is 36 centimeters in diameter -- the perfect size for seasoning 4-6 cups of cooked rice. Made of *sawara* (a kind of cedar), banded in copper, and reinforced with *aotaké* ("green" bamboo, above right photo shows *handai* upside down; the bamboo reinforcement is on the underside), each tub is hand crafted in the traditional manner. I have one that I have used for more than 30 years. However, even with the best and most diligent care, the wood will become stained with use. In 2008 when I bought another *handai* from Okuda Shoten (below) it cost 4,350 yen + tax.

**Okuda Shoten 03-3844-4511; Kappabashi**

オクダ商店 〒111-0035 東京都台東区西浅草 1-5-10

Closed Sundays and holidays; open other days 9 am to 5 pm

**CARE & MAINTENANCE of wooden tubs**

**HUMIDITY level** is the most important issue in proper maintenance: if too damp, molds will grow on the wood; if too dry the wood shrinks and the copper bands that help to hold the tub's shape, can slip out of place.

**BEFORE YOU USE FOR THE FIRST TIME...** remove any packing materials and set the tub in your kitchen sink (or, if not big enough to accommodate the tub, place it in your bathtub). Pour boiling water in the tub and let sit until the water is cool.

Repeat, this time adding 1 cup vinegar (*su*) to the boiling water. The vinegar will bleach and disinfect, and help to "cure" the wood while removing the sticky *yani* (sap). Wash with hot water and mild dishwashing detergent, scrubbing with the rough side of a sponge or a bottlebrush. Pay special attention to the circular edge where the side and bottom meet. Rinse thoroughly with hot water. Turn upside down to drain. When dry (still moist to the touch but light again in color), pour in vinegar (about 2-3 tablespoons total) and rub it in with your hand. Turn the tub upside down again and let it dry thoroughly, before placing it upside down in a large plastic bag (45 liter garbage bag size).

**WASHING** immediately after EACH use. Soak the tub in hot water with mild dishwashing detergent. Scrub with a brush to dislodge any rice grains that may cling to the tub. Rinse with hot water and drain. Rub vinegar (about 2-3 tablespoons total) over the inner surfaces.

**STORAGE:** Store UPSIDE DOWN so that the (slightly more narrow) bottom is on top. That way, if the copper bands loosen, they will not slip off. In the dry cold months, keep the tub in a tightly closed, large plastic bag (45liter garbage bag size) to seal in moisture. In the hot warm, humid months, keep the bag open to increase air circulation.



Should MOLD (or small insects) appear, rinse the tub with scalding hot water before treating the wooden surfaces with spent green tea leaves. Green tea kills most mold spores that grow on wood, and discourages future development and growth of them. Green tea also keeps insects from taking up residence in the grain of the wood.

Since sushi is usually served with green tea infused from *kona cha* (a green, powdery by-product of processing tea leaves), you can use spent bags (or loose tea leaves) to treat your *handai*.



Do not be alarmed if, after several green tea treatments, the wood assumes a mild tea aroma and pale green coloration.